

## Letter to the Editor of the *Western Howl*

[President Fuller](#) has stated that WOU is committed to becoming the first four-year public university in Oregon to become a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). After reading the thoughtful opinion piece that Mia Sierra wrote for the [Western Howl](#), I thought it was a great opportunity to share some context around becoming an HSI and where WOU is on that path.

Colleges and universities need to have “[25% or more Latino undergraduate full-time equivalent enrollment](#)” before they can become a federally recognized HSI. There is a time-lag between the current enrollment and when it is reported to various agencies. But, at this moment, approximately 19% of our students identify as Hispanic. In addition, our Willamette Promise students, earning WOU credits while in high school, are also factored into our enrollment. We are waiting for final confirmation but WOU appears to be close to the 25% threshold.

However, we don't just want to be a Hispanic *enrolling* institution but rather a Hispanic *serving* institution; in order to do that we need to create a space for campus community discussion and input. In pursuit those goals, a steering committee representing students, staff and faculty have been preparing to host a summit entitled *Becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution: Together We Succeed*, on April 3rd from 9:30-3:30. The goal of the summit is to provide an opportunity for the campus community to learn more about what it means to be an HSI and our current services, resources and support for our Latinx students. In addition, we are striving to create a platform for people to share ideas and give feedback so WOU can support all of our students, including Latinx students, in an effective and culturally sensitive manner. I hope you will consider participating in the Summit and adding your voice to the conversation.

*Written and submitted by Dr. Rob Winningham, WOU's Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs*

