

Portland State University

PDXScholar

Looking Back: Essays on Portland State

Remembering Portland State: Historical
Reflections and Personal Perspectives on Our
University

2013

The Best Laid Schemes . . . (1995-1996)

Clarence Hein

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/rememberpsu_essays

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Hein, Clarence, "The Best Laid Schemes . . . (1995-1996)" (2013). *Looking Back: Essays on Portland State*.
1.

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/rememberpsu_essays/1

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Looking Back: Essays on Portland State by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

The Best Laid Schemes ...

This is the story of a crucial year in the history of Portland State University, October, 1995 to December, 1996, a time when powerful external forces, waving the banner of “strategic planning,” attempted to alter and, perhaps, to stifle the institution’s development. It also is a story of a politically savvy resistance effort designed and managed by individuals among PSU staff and supporters which not only derailed a potentially damaging reorganization of the institution but also helped to solidify its position as the region’s major public university. It seems certain that PSU would be a significantly different institution today – a branch campus with limited academic offerings, for example -- had the resistance effort failed. But it did succeed, first by challenging the central plan’s assumptions and legitimacy and then by exploiting the political weakness and naivety of state higher education officials attempting to engineer a major change in a Portland institution.

The Beginning

The first public inkling that a major restructuring of Oregon higher education was in the offing appeared in a front page article in *The Oregonian* on Tuesday, Oct. 3, 1995. The story discussed Chancellor Joe Cox’s desire to establish a “strategic planning process” to achieve a potentially “revolutionary” change in Oregon higher education. The story, with extensive quotes from Cox, apparently grew out of a reporter’s take on a memo he had sent to the campus presidents a few days earlier. In it the chancellor proposed various planning teams which, over a period of months, would prepare proposals for the 1997 legislature. The day prior to the news story, at a PSU Faculty Senate meeting, Ramaley reacted to the Chancellor’s memo, saying it was “a grab bag” of ideas which further discussion might improve. However, she added, “Looking forward to new letterhead? I hope not.”

However, the appearance of the story in the next day’s paper elevated the chancellor’s memo from Ramaley’s “grab bag of ideas” to a potential threat to her university’s programs and future development. The story, essentially a review of the chancellor’s proposals, included in its fifth paragraph these two sentences: “The seven-school system would be divided between the University of Oregon and Oregon State University. Portland State University, for example, could become OSU at Portland.”

For President Ramaley, and PSU’s supporters those two sentences essentially were a declaration of war. The assertion that “informal discussions” had been going on for about a year, “mainly behind the scenes,” according to the article, further fueled the ire of President Ramaley who claimed no knowledge of them.

Judith Ramaley

PSU President Judith Ramaley had come to the campus in the fall of 1990, the first woman to head a public university in Oregon. Like most influential leaders she could be a polarizing

presence. But in her first five years in Portland she led the campus through a complete overhaul of its undergraduate program, creating University Studies, a multi-disciplinary approach to a core curriculum. University Studies earned national recognition for PSU and Ramaley but it was not without its detractors. Some criticism continues even today, nearly twenty years into the program.

As President of PSU, Ramaley also was a staunch champion of the urban university's role in higher education. Early in her tenure the university adopted the motto, "Let Knowledge Serve the City," which has proved an effective catch phrase for the idea of community engagement, a hallmark of PSU's academic programs. She worked constantly to put Portland State in the vanguard of the "urban research university" movement.

It is no wonder then that threats to the university's very existence, whether feasible or not, presented in such an off-hand and poorly thought out way, would sound alarm bells on campus, particularly for Judith Ramaley. Two aspects of her personality were critical to her reaction: First, she resented things going on behind her back; and second, she would not tolerate being lied to. As far as she was concerned, the OSSHE planning process was off to a rocky start.

The next day, October 4, *The Oregonian* ran a follow up story about the reaction to the OSSHE planning proposal. Chancellor Cox said he had received both positive and negative calls which was exactly the response he had hoped for. "There's probably more energy and creativity being devoted to these questions than has been the case for many years," he said. Ramaley, while acknowledging the attention being paid to the need for change, had a somewhat different view. She characterized the suggested changes as not very meaningful. "This is just a couple of guys playing reveille and that's fine," she said. But the talk of restructuring is based on a misperception that, "PSU will never amount to anything," when, in fact, the university had evolved into a national model for urban universities. She denied that her objections were simply defending her "turf," adding, "This is not about Portland State. I'm a team player."

In the three day period of Monday through Wednesday, October 2-4, President Ramaley produced three letters in response to the Chancellor's reorganization and planning proposals. The first letter was to the Chancellor, eleven single-spaced pages. It was a critical and detailed dissection of the proposals, a direct assault on both the proposed restructuring ideas and on the planning process itself. She opened her critique by saying, "We both agree, I believe, that the document must be revised substantially before it is released to the public." To add emphasis, she underlined that statement (this was the day before the newspaper story appeared so she did not realize that it already had become public). But that was only the beginning. She went on, essentially, to tell her "boss" that he didn't know what he was doing. "(My) most serious criticism," she said, "is that it is not clear why such far-reaching restructuring is necessary." She added that there was no evidence that restructuring, by itself, would solve any problems. Within that letter were the seeds of the arguments that would be made by PSU supporters over the next 12 months.

The second letter, also eleven single-spaced pages, went to OSSHE Board President Les Swanson on October 3. It basically reiterated her points from the Cox letter. In addition she urged more “honesty and openness” in future discussions. One day later she sent an open letter to PSU Faculty, Staff and Students. She assured them that the university would be actively involved in any future planning, that she would try to steer the discussions, “away from a reactive strategy,” to a more fact based strategy. The restructuring proposals mentioned in the news media, she said, “(Were) resurrected by the Board President in the absence of more thoughtful and acceptable plans.” She asked people to provide her their thoughts and perspectives on the process.

Chancellor Cox apparently realized that publicly airing dramatic restructuring proposals was not the most effective way to get buy-in. On October 5, he issued a “public statement” about the planning process steering clear of specific ideas on programs or possible restructuring other than to say, “Structure is one means to the ends we will seek.” He announced that he would bring a planning proposal to the OSSHE Board at its November meeting and welcomed, “the energy and creativity which is being devoted to these discussions.” While he didn’t exactly say, “we were only kidding,” he did indicate that the initial negative reactions resulted from what he termed, “a misunderstanding.”

On Friday, October 6, President Ramaley spoke to a regional business group, encouraging them to join in the discussion about higher education’s future in Oregon. She seemed to be well on board with the idea of a planning process, particularly at a time when the state’s governor, the legislature and the business community were expressing keen interest. “I do not know of any other time in this state in recent years when there has been that convergence,” she said.

By the following Sunday, October 8, the public focus on the story had played out with another *Oregonian* article including quotes from Chancellor Cox, Governor John Kitzhaber, UO President David Frohnmyer and Judith Ramaley. The UO-OSU restructuring proposal was mentioned as was the opposition to it. Notably, Judith was the most critical saying, “These proposals are based on a lack of understanding about any of the institutions. They are built on perceptions, not ... reality.” She was joined in her concern by the Presidents of Eastern and Southern Oregon Universities. While she supported the idea of a comprehensive strategic planning process, Ramaley remained deeply opposed to what she believed to be poorly thought out ideas for institutional mergers, particularly those involving Portland State.

A Hostile Takeover?

Her concerns about behind the scenes plotting by the Chancellor, Board President and others are evident in an October 9th letter to her friend Lindsay Desrochers. Desrochers had been Ramaley’s Vice President for Finance and Administration at PSU before moving the University System of Georgia. Ramaley tells Desrochers, “Basically, we have uncovered three, (separate) but related, clandestine efforts to float variations on restructuring and have early, but very sketchy

indications that there may be another entirely independent process going on that even Les (Swanson) and Joe (Cox) don't know about. The third process she referred to apparently involved UO President Dave Frohnmayer who wanted, "to make all of PSU the UO Portland." She adds that each of the three – Cox, Swanson and Frohnmayer – had been having private conversations with people in Portland for at least two months.

She says that there was some good news -- state and local leaders seem ready to do something positive for Oregon higher education but that the bad news lay in the number of "secret conversations" going on that "were way out in front of most OSSHE members and most of the presidents, including me." Ramaley concludes her letter to Desrochers this way: "However, it is no longer easy to mess with either PSU or its President, as some folks are finding out. Joe and Les have scrambled to cover their tracks, and the whole important process is being restarted on a better footing."

The final public word on the planning process came in an Op Ed piece by *The Oregonian* columnist, David Sarasohn, on October 18. In his column, "Starved Colleges Turn on Each Other," he suggested that it seemed UO President Frohnmayer "is just about ready to come into the Portland State president's office and measure the drapes." He then quotes Ramaley who said she was, "Professionally offended," that people would talk about restructuring PSU without talking to PSU. "I see it as dirty politics," she said. "It feels, whether it is or not, like a hostile takeover."

Needless to say, Chancellor Cox had a different view. At an October 20 meeting of the OSSHE Board, he downplayed the earlier public disagreements. "We're academics," he said, "and sometimes the general public doesn't understand how academics work. We throw ideas up on the board and then the rest of us shoot at them; then we put them together in different ways. That's just how we've been trained ... It's debate. It's dialogue. It's the academic way of working toward a conclusion."

The PSU Advocates

President Ramaley was not the only interested party asking questions about the potential outcomes of the OSSHE. Chief among them was a group of PSU alumni called "PSU Advocates," whose creation and activities were facilitated through the office of PSU's Alumni Director, Pat Squire. The group originally formed in 1989-90 in response to a proposal by the American Electronics Association to merge PSU into UO and OSU to improve higher education in the metropolitan area. The Advocates launched an all-out lobbying effort including an advertising campaign and public testimony helping the University's new President Judith Ramaley carve out a compromise establishing a coalition of metropolitan area colleges and universities, both public and private.

The Advocates included a number of people active and experienced in political and social action. Their work over the next year proved critical in the eventual outcome of the OSSHE planning

process. The Advocates continue today as an important support group, particularly in legislative lobbying efforts.

The Advocates leader at that time was PSU activist and supporter, Joan Johnson, who also played a key role in the establishment and financing of the Nancy Ryles Scholarship, one of the University's most prestigious and generous student academic awards. "We decided," Johnson says, "we would run a political campaign and try to beat those people we felt were trying to beat down Portland State." Working with PSU staff – Pat Squire, Alumni; Debbie Murdock, Government Relations; Clarence Hein, Community Relations – the Advocates began gathering information and planning strategies for influencing the planning process. Johnson says the group was anxious to operate independently and not be seen as an arm of the University. "We were very careful," she says, "never to discuss this on PSU phones and never when they were at work."

Among the early strategies was a campaign urging PSU supporters to write letters to the Chancellor, the State Board, and legislators endorsing President Ramaley's call for a "full-fledged examination of higher education issues." Over the next few weeks that same position – that it was time for a comprehensive look at Oregon higher education -- was echoed in editorials, letters to editors and op ed pieces in major newspapers. When the Chancellor next broached the subject of planning the Advocates decided to keep a close eye on the entire process by arranging to have volunteers attend as many planning sessions as possible, both to keep tabs on what was happening and, Johnson says, "To make our presence and interest known."

The Planning Process Revealed

The first formal presentation of the higher education planning process occurred at the November OSSHE Board meeting held at the UO. The Board devoted an afternoon "work session" to the topic. Chancellor Cox outlined the need for a comprehensive plan and his hopes for the project: to gain greater clarity about Oregon's future higher education needs; to review system and institutional missions, seeking greater clarity and sharper differentiations; to focus resources in support of core missions; and, finally, to consider possible changes in governance structures. Then, the Chancellor introduced a consultant who had agreed to work with OSSHE, pro bono, to help establish the planning process. He was John Bernard, co-founder of a consulting firm with the rather grand title of World Class Management. Whether the process could live up to that billing would be determined over the next ten months.

Bernard addressed the board at length about the need for an effective planning process, one requiring, "a guiding coalition," of board members, presidents and key government and business leadership. He said the process must lead to building acceptance and force people out of their usual boundaries. "Without acceptance," he said, "a brilliant plan is worthless." He probably was unaware of how prescient his remarks were.

Bernard outlined the aspects of the process saying teams would be used along with third-party professional facilitators. Working over several months the teams would gather information, sort and prioritize it, and create key objectives and detailed plans, finishing the first phase in six months. Following Bernard's presentation, representatives of business groups voiced their support for a fundamental review of Oregon higher education including finance and greater collaboration with business.

The following month the OSSHE Board held a special work session with institutional presidents and Mr. Bernard. The purpose of the meeting was to set up the task forces and to agree on schedules and ground rules for the planning process. Several attendees commented on various aspects of the proposed process. Among them was Judith Ramaley who directed her remarks to Bernard. "You have said twice," she said, "that our goal is to change the (higher education) system. This, in my opinion, is not our goal. I believe our goal is first to be certain that we are utilizing resources currently in the system as effectively as possible to service the needs of the state.... Change of the system is not the goal ... (it) may be a means to achieve the goal."

Each of the planning task forces signed on to a set of a dozen "ground rules." Among them were these three: No turf; No destructive press; and, No hidden agendas. These rules would be sorely tested during the next few months.

A New President at OSU

During this same period the OSSHE Board appointed a new President for Oregon State University. He was Paul Risser who was currently President of Miami University of Ohio. When his appointment was announced on November 3rd he advocated "thoughtful change." He indicated that he was cautious about the restructuring plans being discussed saying the process needs to be slowed down to allow more deliberation. As for OSU, he said, "I don't think this university needs cataclysmic change. We'll move slowly. We'll move thoughtfully." It seemed to be a hopeful sign.

Another hopeful sign for the planning effort appeared in January as the task groups were beginning their work. Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber delivered his annual State of the State address to the Portland City Club. He identified five specific efforts he wished the state to tackle. Number four on his list was, "I will charge the Chancellor of Higher Education and the Community College Commissioner to work with their colleagues to create the capacity needed for the 5,000 new high school graduates we will see in the next five years." He went on to call for creation of a "virtual university," made up of high tech instruction delivered through "satellite and cyberspace."

As for the talk of institutional mergers, the chancellor's office repeatedly diverted attention from the issue, pointing out that the early activities of the planning process would be to identify Oregon's higher education needs and capacities and to "prioritize and set targets" in those areas. Never the less, they continued to receive notes of concern from Portland State constituents.

Typical was this exchange of letters in January, 1996, between Portland attorney Milton Stewart and Vice Chancellor Tim Griffin, who had been put in charge of the planning process. Stewart said, "I want to urge you to proceed carefully and cautiously with any plans the state may have for the future of Portland State University. That institution is critical to the future growth of the City of Portland and must be uniquely suited to the needs of the city, its residents and the employers within it." Griffin assured him that mergers were not on the initial planning agenda but he added that as the process continued, "I am sure that governance will emerge as a possible solution. Any such recommendation for changes in governance would require a compelling need to change."

Let's Make Plans

Over the next several weeks the four OSSHE task groups (Graduate Education & Research, Lifelong Education and Professional Development, Undergraduate Education, and Community and Economic Development) went about their business of gathering information about the state's higher education needs and the assets of the various institutions, all under the watchful eyes of the PSU Advocates. Reams of information was gathered concerning Oregon's "target industries," population projections, economic factors, enrollment trends, etc. All of this was to form a basis for establishing goals and then developing strategies to reach them. It was coincidental that Portland State had been preparing for a major planning effort at that same time to update the University's strategic plan. PSU's strategic plan update continued over six weeks beginning in May. The effort involved some 30 faculty and administrative staff in four separate groups.

It is safe to suggest that many hundreds of person-hours were devoted over several months to these planning processes. Dozens of ideas for planning activities, findings, needs, goals, strategies and suggested outcomes were circulated, amended and re-circulated among institutional presidents, task force members, the OSSHE Board and others. All of this activity occurred basically out of the public eye and nowhere among the many drafts was there any direct reference to institutional or program mergers.

However, when the task forces presented their first set of "conclusions" to the OSSHE Board in April, 1966, President Ramaley, in a note to herself attached to the task force document, appeared less than impressed with the quality of the work. What the report termed "conclusions," she characterized as, "A combination of conclusions, ideas/objectives, suggested actions and stereotypes." She suggested that the written materials needed the services of a good editor.

She was particularly concerned with the conclusions of the Graduate Education and Research task group. Point 2.7 read, "Metropolitan institutions cannot meet Portland's needs for advanced education and research." Point 2.7(a) read, "Portland's institutions cannot meet the needs for advanced education and research." Her notes continued, "What is the real meaning of (these)? And why is there a 2.7(a)? They really need an editor and the courage to be honest." She seemed

to question the motives behind those points and saw them as a clear threat to her university's future.

The PSU Advocates also were watching events closely and as May arrived and the task groups began producing lists of priorities for action the university's supporters stepped up their activity as well. The Alumni Association, acting independently from the university, produced a series of print advertisements in regional and local newspapers highlighting the accomplishments of PSU graduates in the community. The ads had two purposes: First, to build pride among alumni; and, Second, to remind the public, the Chancellor and the State Board of PSU's importance and influence in the region. The Advocates continued attending meetings and writing letters to community leaders, working to maintain public awareness of the planning effort. They needn't have worried about the lack of wide public discussion because that was about to change, not necessarily to the benefit of the Chancellor's office.

At the State Board meeting of June 21, 1996, the board began a "renewal work session" to discuss and to act on the recommendations from the planning task forces. Governor John Kitzhaber joined the Board via video conferencing later announcing the appointment of two task forces to study the state's educational system from kindergarten through graduate school and to express the hope that there would be "cross fertilization" between his effort and OSSHE's. The Board then adopted a resolution which generally praised the planning groups and to, "Adopt the strategic objectives, goals, and strategies developed during today's renewal work session."

The meeting adjourned on a positive note of good feeling. Within a few hours, however, the good feeling had all but evaporated.

Another "Misunderstanding"

It is routine procedure to issue a press release following actions by public bodies such as the Higher Education Board and, indeed, that happened shortly after the June 21 meeting. The release was headlined, "Board Agrees to Far-Reaching, Fundamental Changes for Oregon Higher Education," and listed four strategic objectives about high quality, access, efficiency and helping Oregon become a social and economic leader. It went on to list, "Changes that higher education will put into place immediately." The second "change" listed was: "Consolidating and expanding engineering and research programs under the leadership of Oregon State University and Oregon Institute of Technology." The release quoted Board President Les Swanson who said, "The Chancellor and the Board realize that some of these changes will be controversial." He was right.

Newspapers around the state carried the story of the Board meeting and each one highlighted the engineering proposal. The front page of *The Oregonian* carried the headline, "Reforms see shift in training engineers." The story said, "The most significant and specific part of the agenda ... entails the takeover of Portland State University's engineering school ... and would give OSU and OIT control over engineering teaching and research in Portland." Chancellor Cox is quoted

in the story suggesting that OSU President Risser and PSU President Ramaley had been negotiating for several weeks. This came as news to President Ramaley who flatly denied any “negotiating” with Paul Risser regarding reorganization of engineering education. Her denial was included in a June 24 “Dear Colleague” letter to the PSU campus in which she also said, “The concepts addressed by the press have been proposed by the Chancellor and supported by some members of the Board. However, the majority of the Board has not fully endorsed them and there is strong support for a more thorough and thoughtful analysis.” She concluded the letter with this: “I will make certain that PSU’s record of successful change serves as a model for the rest of the State System of Higher Education.” Copies of that letter soon found their way into the mail boxes of state legislators, a move that clearly upset Chancellor Cox.

The next few days saw a good deal of give and take between Chancellor Cox and President Ramaley, much of it played out in the public press. In a June 25th memo to Ramaley Cox seems to be saying the controversy was the result of a misunderstanding. He concluded the memo with this somewhat confusing sentence: “The articles in the Oregonian and (Eugene) Register Guard were written by the reporters at the Board meeting before the press release, which came out later and is inconsequential.”

Not Reading from the Same Page

The public disagreement prompted an editorial on June 30th in *The Oregonian*. “Obviously,” it read, “Ramaley and Cox are not reading from the same sheet of music.” It went on to suggest that the merger proposals were premature suggesting that, “The burden ought to be on the chancellor’s office and the other institutions to show that they can deliver those educational services to Portland better than PSU.” This was the lead editorial in the Sunday edition, the largest circulation day for the state’s largest newspaper.

In an effort to head off the escalating conflict, Governor Kitzhaber contacted both Cox and Ramaley, suggesting they meet and hopefully clear the air. The result was a joint statement issued on July 5th which assured the public that PSU would play a significant role in the planning process, that the single school of engineering was simply “one concept on the table,” which would either be validated or replaced, and that Ramaley and PSU fully supported the strategic planning process. The statement was duly reported in the next day’s newspapers with headlines such as, “Chancellor makes bid for unity after conflict with PSU.” Over the next few days there were seven published letters to the Oregonian Editor, each of them supporting Portland State’s position and chiding the State Board and Chancellor over reaching.

As the OSSHE task groups returned to the planning table, President Ramaley was interviewed by the editorial board of *The Oregonian*, a regular practice by newspapers seeking background on major public issues. Following the July 17 interview the newspaper devoted another lead editorial to the OSSHE planning process reminding Chancellor Cox that sound strategic planning should not start, “with a preordained conclusion,” and calling for PSU to be a full participant in

all discussions. On that same day the paper ran a story drawn from the editorial board meeting under the headline, “PSU’s Ramaley seeks openness in reform.” The story included the startling revelation that Ramaley had told the editorial board that, if the process was not “fair and honest” and did not boost PSU, she would look for work elsewhere. “If the answer,” she said, “is that we are not going to invest in an urban university then there is nothing for me here.” The story indicated that she already had been considered for the leadership of university systems in Maine and Nevada but had withdrawn from the searches before the selection process was completed. “At some point,” she told the editorial board, “it becomes too difficult to make innovations when you are being distracted by continued questions about the validity of your enterprise.”

The Summer of 96

The summer months brought renewed intensity to the OSSHE planning groups. The planning occurred largely out of the public eye and the merger controversy faded from the headlines. The summer, however, was a crucial time for the PSU Advocates who had planted the seeds of local opposition to the Chancellor’s plan and who now worked behind the scenes to nurture a full blown movement by the fall. They had decided to focus their attention on opposing the takeover of PSU’s engineering programs. Operating independently from the university, the Advocates contacted dozens of legislators, OSSHE Board members, local news media, government officials and community leaders. They had developed a series of “talking points” for alumni and other supporters who were urged to visit legislators and local civic and business leaders in support of PSU. Advocates also produced a privately funded “fact book” extolling the strengths and accomplishments of PSU. In addition, they continued to be a highly visible presence at task group public meetings.

September brought dueling “op ed” pieces in *The Oregonian* in which OSU President Risser and President Ramaley once again presented their points of view on engineering education. September also saw the resignation of Vice Chancellor Tim Griffin who was Chancellor Cox’s point man on the reorganization push. In leaving, he took a rather obvious shot at Ramaley. “There have been some individuals,” Griffin told *The Oregonian*, “who had an opportunity to be more openly supportive of what we’re doing but just slowed down the process.”

Chancellor Cox continued to press the case for an OSU takeover of engineering education well into the fall. On October 2 he urged the members of the planning committee to move forward with, “a plan for a single, consolidated school of engineering . . . and should stay focused on this task – leaving aside, for the moment, the question of lead institution.” He asked that a plan be presented to the November State Board meeting. He remained on this course in spite of growing public and private concerns about the process and outright opposition to the proposal. Several elected officials, media outlets and private citizens had aired their views publicly over the summer and fall. Then PSU Provost Michael Reardon recalled being asked to a meeting in Washington County with Cox, Risser, state board members and area state legislators to discuss the proposal in late October. Following Risser’s presentation outlining OSU’s takeover of

engineering education Cox asked for feedback. Reardon reports that “every single legislator” voiced opposition to the plan and one key committee chair evened threatened to hold up the higher education budget if the plan went through without Portland State in the leadership position. “I think they finally realized,” Reardon said, “that the proposal was dead on arrival.”

A final nail may have been hammered in on October 30 when PSU Vice Provost Roy Koch, who had been on the Risser committee since its inception, resigned from further membership. “I have participated in the process in good faith,” he said. “(However) it became clear to me that the committee was not going to directly address the real issue of providing resources for engineering in the Portland metropolitan area.” Essentially, he said, the committee was presented with a single solution – the consolidated school of engineering – and told to justify it without seeking other alternatives.

The Metropolitan Consortium

With the state board set to meet in two weeks, PSU responded to Chancellor Cox’s call for a plan with a paper titled, “The Metropolitan Consortium.” It basically would combine existing metropolitan area engineering programs and create an over-arching Oregon Board for Engineering and Technology to coordinate cooperation and improvements in regional engineering education among the area universities, colleges and community colleges. For Portland State, this plan had the advantage of maintaining independent programs while keeping overall control within the metro area. The plan was submitted to the same state board committee as the Chancellor’s merger plan. That committee was chaired by Portlander Tom Imeson, the board’s Vice Chairman.

On the Thursday evening prior to the board’s meeting (to be held at PSU) Imeson proposed adopting a plan which was much closer to PSU’s than to the Chancellor’s. It won the board’s nearly unanimous endorsement the following day (only Board Chair Les Swanson was opposed). Both Chancellor Cox and members of the board acknowledged that it was the organized and aggressive opposition from the Portland area that turned the tide. “You have folks who just aren’t prepared to go with (the merger),” Cox said. Board member Diane Christopher said, “It’s no secret that this entire board has been inundated by the Portland community about what we should do.” Imeson, who recommended the compromise, said the PSU opposition, “was a signal that the transaction cost of a merger would not be insignificant.”

The vigorous and well organized opposition should not have been unexpected. OSSHE’s apparent lack of respect or understanding of PSU’s non-traditional history, student body and mission had combined to create a defensive, chip-on-the-shoulder posture at the Portland campus. It was from this posture that the “reorganization” plan was viewed and while it could be argued that the view was distorted it was, nonetheless, the prevailing view in the metropolitan region. The breadth and depth of that view was an unpleasant surprise for the OSSHE board. It

also created an apparently irreparable divide between President Ramaley and the OSSHE leadership.

In *The Oregonian* of November 16, 1996, the headline read: “Engineering turf war ends, and PSU wins.” Seven weeks later, January 16, 1997, Judith Ramaley was appointed president of the University of Vermont, effective the next June. The campus had “won” the engineering battle but in the struggle it had lost a popular and effective president.