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Longtime Friends Reunite to Strengthen Educational Ties Between RCC and SOU

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RCC

Jackson and Josephine Counties, Ore. (Oct. 31, 2024) — Juliet Long and Dr. Casey Shillam, former classmates from Grants Pass High School, have reunited in their

professional lives to forge a strengthened alliance between Rogue Community College (RCC) and Southern Oregon University (SOU). Long, RCC's Vice President of Student Learning and Success, and Shillam, SOU's Executive Vice President and Provost, are now working together to enhance student transfer opportunities and career pathways across the two institutions.

Their collaboration took a tangible step forward on October 24, 2024, with the RCC/SOU Summit held at SOU. This year's summit, reimagined to foster closer relationships among faculty and staff, offered campus tours and sessions focused on admissions, advising, and transfer services, expanding the event's reach beyond its original focus.

"When I learned that Casey would be joining SOU, I was thrilled—not just to reconnect but to bring our shared passion for supporting students and our community into an impactful partnership," said Long.

The partnership is poised for further expansion on Thursday, Nov. 7, with the launch of the Rogue Valley Behavioral Health Employment and Career Opportunity Network (BHEACON) at SOU. This event will convene educational and industry leaders from across the Rogue Valley to address critical local needs for behavioral health and early childhood education professionals.

Shillam emphasized the importance of the initiative, saying, "With a critical shortage in early childhood education and behavioral health professionals, our collaboration aims to bridge the education-employment gap and provide multiple pathways for students to become care providers."

Although the shortage of early childhood and behavioral health workers is a nationwide concern, Long and Shillam are working to address these challenges locally through RCC and SOU's collaborative programming. Together, they have coordinated two grant applications and developed more than 10 transfer pathways from associate degrees to specific SOU bachelor's programs, including Business, Computer Science, Early

Childhood Development, and Health and Exercise Science. SOU now guarantees admission to all students holding an associate degree from any Oregon community college, with these students fulfilling general education requirements at the time of transfer.

The rekindled friendship between Long and Shillam has infused the RCC-SOU partnership with a renewed commitment to serving the Rogue Valley. Both leaders are eager to leverage their extensive experience to enhance access to education and career opportunities for local students, building on their shared roots in the region they call home.

For more information on the RCC-SOU partnership and transfer programs, contact RCC's Assistant to the Vice President of Student Learning and Success, Sally Snyder, at 541-956-7187 or SaSnyder@rogucecc.edu.



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