



January 18, 2017

Dear Legislative Leadership:

As leaders on our respective campuses we write to urge you to increase investments in Universities beyond the Governor's Recommended Budget. Put simply the funding levels proposed do not account for cost increases we are facing on campuses, and will ensure tuition increases that will make a college degree out of reach for many Oregonians.

Over the last two biennia, the Governor and Legislature made Oregon's students and higher education a priority. This enabled universities to strengthen financial aid and scholarship packages and expand support services that students – especially those who are low income and underserved – rely upon to graduate on time. Despite this progress, it will take continued investments to reverse 20 plus years of cuts, improve graduation rates and keep the cost of a college education manageable for Oregon students.

For two decades, universities have had to cut staffing and services for students and raise tuition to meet the challenges of funding losses and scarce budgets. The impacts of these large tuition increases and reduction in services have taken their toll on Oregonians. Retention rates, and at many universities graduation rates, are down or stagnant and many students can no longer piece together a financial aid package of grants, loans, and work sufficient to fund a college education. Too many Oregonians are at risk of taking on college debt but not earning a degree.

Our unified funding request highlights and supports the following reality: ***To keep tuition increases below five percent at most universities, and also preserve most financial aid and student support services, state investment in the Public University Support Fund (PUSF) will need to increase by at least \$100 million above the Governor's Budget—in the 2017-19 biennium.***

Oregon has shifted the burden of financing a college education away from the state and onto the backs of students and their families, a fact that has many members of our communities rightly concerned. We want to work together with you to reverse this trend, and ensure that no Oregon student is put in a position where they graduate with a lifetime of debt.

Vibrant and adequately funded public universities are fundamental to a prosperous future for our state. We are educating the workforce and leaders of tomorrow. We are incubators of game-changing ideas

and discoveries that can improve the human condition. We are deeply integrated into the communities we serve. Like you, we are proud to call Oregon home, and we look forward to partnering with you to address the challenges that lie ahead for Oregon's students and universities.

Sincerely,



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