

House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Input from Oregon's Public Universities about Affordable Baccalaureate Degrees

Greetings Chair Reardon, Vice Chairs Alonso Leon and Whisnant, and Members of the Committee,

It is a pleasure to contribute input today on behalf of Oregon's public universities about the topic of affordable baccalaureate degrees.

In addition to the report today from the HECC on HB 2973 and how other states are attempting to make bachelor's degrees more affordable, we want to offer some additional input. As the HECC will convey, Oregon's public universities have worked hard to develop programs that speed time to graduation, assist students with transfer pathways, and developed completion scholarships and other financial assistance to make degree attainment more affordable.

In addition, we offer the following ideas to help students increase affordability, and we ask you to consider these strategies as we work together to help students succeed:

- Selecting a major or career path at a community college before transferring to a university so credits count in the major at the university. The universities and community colleges have worked with this committee on HB2998 which includes a provision to encourage community college students to select a major or program before completing 45 credits. We believe this will improve student outcomes and affordability.
- Getting an applied baccalaureate degree that allows a high number of transfer credits at the university. The public universities offer 10 applied baccalaureate degrees, and are willing to partner with our community colleges to increase the number of these degrees, based on regional demand and workforce needs. The university applied baccalaureate programs all have additional capacity and many are offered online, removing location barriers for rural and place-bound students.
- Starting at a 4-year university and finishing on time often improves student outcomes and may reduce cost, even though tuition is higher at the university. Please consider ways to add Oregon's universities to the Oregon Promise program, so students can start their path to a bachelor's degree at any institution of higher education in the state.
- Taking accelerated credit courses in high school that count in a chosen major. We encourage more work with high schools, colleges and universities to ensure that accelerated credit is valuable for students, counts in their future program of study, and prepares them for higher-level courses in college. All three of these factors are needed to achieve an effective credit transfer program.

- Reducing cost of living expenses by living at home instead of paying for residence hall and food service expenses. Again, the universities have worked hard to develop more partnership programs with high schools and community colleges, and to offer more degrees online or during evenings and weekends to reduce travel time and conflicts with work schedules. Nevertheless the data are conclusive: students who live on campus during their first year have a significantly higher success rates than those who do not. This is due to the sense of community and exposure to campus-based services that are available to students who live on campus.
- Reducing tuition costs through more state support for higher education. Colleges and universities cannot offer all the course sections needed nor the support services to ensure student success and speed to degree without sufficient state support. This biennium, the universities are seeking \$100M above the GRB to continue to offer the student support services, remissions, and other affordability measures that students need.

Oregon's public universities support legislation that furthers community college-university partnerships and are willing to work with you on more affordability measures.