

Committee Members,

Today I come before you to ask that you support our community college's budget ask of a \$787 million investment in the future of our state and the students in it.

I graduated High School in the summer of 2005 and like so many of my peers I saw Success as attending a 4 year university. To me, the concept of community college as having a place in my future was beyond my imagination. I needed to attend the University of Oregon and graduate in the expected 4 years and anything else was unacceptable. Well, as it so often does life had a different plan.

Like so many other students a 4 year university was beyond my family financially. I applied for every scholarship I could get ahold of, filed my FAFSA, and applied for student loans. It wasn't enough. My family existed in a sort of limbo where we had too much money for me to qualify for assistance or need based scholarships, but not enough to cover what my loans could not. My first two years of school saw my dad paying an additional \$1,000 out of pocket every month in an effort to cover the gap left by my loans. We pinched and scrimped to manage this for two years but ultimately it was not sustainable and I was unable to complete that degree.

Fast forward to today and I have found myself back in Roseburg in a unique position to be able to go back to school. UCC was still here and welcomed me back with open arms. This time I had renewed vigor to get a degree and better my life and I was willing to take whatever steps were necessary to get it done. Now, I live with my dad and grandma in a tiny trailer where we exist on minimal means. I spent most of this year working 2 campus jobs and a third as a caregiver to cover my tuition costs, often forgoing basic needs such as simple dental work in favor of paying for another class.

Returning to college life after so many years away from it has been a blessing. Immediately upon returning to school I found myself getting involved as a Tutor and soon after as a member of ASUCC and a Peer Mentor. I have attended a student leadership conference, been present as a student staff member for the Student Success and Retention Conference and I sit on the schools Technology Council. I am a current member of the Queer Students Advocacy club and an Officer for Phi Theta Kappa (PTK). I am running for next year's Student Body President, President of our PTK Chapter, and for a Regional Position with PTK. Umpqua Community College has provided me with a place to take classes to earn a degree but it has done so much more than that. It is helping me develop skills and experience that I can take with me as I enter the world beyond school. I have lived in that world already and I understand that the value of this experience is incalculable.

This is truly where community colleges stand apart within the education system and why they should be receive our full support. Oregon is an incredible place to live and that we lag behind other states in funding our education is unconscionable to me. We need to support places like Umpqua Community College where more than an education is offered. Where students can be

supported as community members and learn life skills that translate into every possible area of society. This is why I am here today, to ask you to support Oregon's 17 community colleges. Community Colleges create educated community members and educated parents which in turn make for better educated children. They deserve our support and your funding.

Thank you,

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