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April 16th, 2019

Senator Lew Frederick
Representative Susan McLain
Education Subcommittee, Joint Ways & Means

Dear Senator Frederick and Representative McLain,

I am writing you today in support of the Fermentation Sciences program at Oregon State University and to recommend that you provide full funding for fermentation research and education (HB 5024). While I will be providing public comment during the meeting Thursday, April 18th, I thought it might be helpful to add some more detail as to why I think Fermentation Sciences is a vital part of Oregon State University.

My path to the program at OSU was a circuitous one. I grew up on the coast in the towns of Gold Beach and Newport. After high school graduation, I was determined to leave and see the world and I proceeded to do that for fifteen years. A bachelor's degree at the University of Virginia led me north to New York City and what would become an eleven-year career in technology. After five years in New York, I moved to San Francisco working for six years at Yahoo!. After a decade working in cubicles, it was time to return home and make a life change.

I studied as a post-baccalaureate student at Oregon State for a year before being accepted into the Fermentation Sciences graduate program conducting graduate research in Dr. James Osborne's lab. My research focused on the effects of bacterial fermentations on the color stability of Pinot noir. Pinot noir is one of the lightest hued red grapes and consumers often confuse lighter color in red wine with lesser quality. Pinot noir also represents approximately 65% of the planted acreage in Oregon. Our research showed the impacts of various cellar techniques on Pinot noir color and even verified the correct techniques to use to improve wine color. During the project, we also discovered some interesting results regarding a widely used commercial strain of bacteria. This observation led to another research project which determined that strain was working symbiotically with a spoilage yeast and causing increased loss of wine. The strain was pulled from the market and thousands of gallons of high value Pinot were spared the indignity (and drastically reduced revenue) of smelling like the spoilage yeast.

Since graduation, I have collaborated with Oregon State researchers to learn more about various spoilage pathways (spoilage organisms and sulfur compounds) as well as participating in vineyard yield trials that have allowed us to increase our yields without an impact on quality. Oregon State has done a great job of working directly with winemakers and viticulturists to focus research on topics which have a direct impact on wine quality and economics. The Oregon wine industry now has an estimated annual economic impact of over 3.5 billion dollars.

I would also add that the Fermentation Sciences program provides an incredibly well-rounded education that deftly combines the practical and the theoretical. I would never claim that Oregon State graduates have the theoretical backgrounds of those I've seen in students from the mecca of wine research, University of California at Davis. However, Oregon State students get a much more in-depth education in the practical workings of a winery, a brewery, a distillery, a creamery and even a bakery. I have found that Oregon State graduates are much more valuable in a winery setting as a result. The first few years of a wine career very rarely involve thinking through complicated wine chemistry; they do however require lots of physical work and understanding of winery equipment. In my experience, Oregon State students from the Fermentation Sciences program far outperform those of UC Davis, Fresno State, Washington State and Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. Well-educated, prepared and ready students are a boon to our industry.

I have found my Oregon State master's degree in Enology to be a great boon to my career. This year I became the head winemaker at White Rose Estate, a beautiful winery in the Dundee Hills located on a hilltop just above the first Pinot noir vines planted in Oregon in 1965. The education I received, and the support that further research has given me in the eight years since I graduated, have helped me, and many other winemakers, continue to produce high quality Pinot noir that has made the Oregon wine region a world-class destination.

I left Oregon for fifteen years. When I came back, I was finally able to grasp just how special this state really is. Oregon State Fermentation Sciences research and education greatly support Oregon wine, one of the many pieces that make this state so great.

Thank you for your time,

Tresider Burns
Winemaker

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