

Hello, Chair Alonso Leon and members of the committee,

My name is Ky Anderson. I am a lot of things:

- First, I am a single mom of 2 kids, one considered Talented and Gifted and another with extreme learning disabilities. I have a lot of hopes and dreams for my kids, including that they will be successful in school and go to college one day themselves.
- I am Hispanic, and a first generation college student.
- I've had to overcome addiction and poverty.
- I am 33 years old, so a “non traditional” student.

- I am an honor student, a senior in the department of Psychology.

I've had my fair share of adversities and higher education hasn't been easy.

My days are filled with challenges like:

- How do I attend class or meet with classmates to work on a project when my kids are sick at home?

- When I'm struggling in a class (like Statistics) and don't have a family member who knows about things like “withdraw passing” – how am I supposed to find out about options like that? Another good example is this: my sister wants to send her high school daughter to college, and she heard from a client that there are people you can pay to be your college mentor and guidance counselor that will help you through the entire process of getting prepared for college, SAT's, options, choosing and applying to colleges and scholarships. I didn't know that this was a thing, neither did she until she heard her wealthy clients use this for their kids. It's my hope that my niece with that kind of guidance will not have to experience the many hurdles and set backs I have had in my college career. In my opinion, one of the most beneficial things an underrepresented college student could have is guidance; so that I'm not taking the wrong classes, how to read my degree audit so I don't have to rely on my academic advisor which have frequently led me astray and having to take more credits for their errors, what colleges should I apply to for grad school? How can I fund it? For those who are brave enough and resilient enough to walk in the doors of higher education as a single parent, first generation college student and many other adversities, those people need the tools and financial help to get a good education, in an efficient way; and efficiency can only come from tools, knowledge and awareness of strategies.

- I am going to have a mountain of student debt, and honestly being a mental health counselor won't pay great – so my hope for my future for myself and my kids rests solely on potential opportunities for student loan forgiveness, scholarships for grad school and at least the promise that my student debts die with me and won't be passed on to my kids.

I have gotten help from the people and programs at Southern Oregon University.

- Trio has helped with some tutoring, though I think there is still much more need that that program offers for students to be successful and have the knowledge and tools needed to get the education they want and in an efficient and cost-effective way.
- The financial aid, student loans and the Diversity Scholarship through SOU I receive is critical to making it through each month. I would NOT be here without it. As a single parent, it would not be possible for me. So I have enormous gratitude for these opportunities.

I haven't always gotten help when I needed it. Having to figure out on my own how college works is really hard and not for the faint of heart. I hope for other students like me that they get the help and guidance they need, like –

- Every student should have a mentor and advisor who is actively watching out for them – not just answering questions when you make an appointment. They should have the awareness of the struggles students are experiencing as well as not assume we know what to do and how things work in the higher education system.
- Students who are parents need more help, with our financial challenges and help with daycare so we don't have to make a choice between taking care of our children and completing a class.

In conclusion, I am working hard to complete my bachelor's degree and will continue to work hard to attain a masters and my hope some day to have a doctorate degree. My hopes for this and a bright future for myself and my children can only be achieved if students like me have financial opportunities to fund our education and additional needs to stay afloat during it and proper and quality guidance throughout.

Thank you for listening to me, and caring about the barriers I face in earning a college degree.