

JTUSHE Exhibits

From: Alena Volokhina <alyonav888@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 21, 2022 9:11 AM
To: JTUSHE Exhibits
Subject: Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education:

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Chair Alonso León and Members of the [Joint Task Force On Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education](#):

My name is Alyona Carnivale and I live in Portland OR. I am a UO student or alum and a first generation immigrant from Russia. I am testifying today to share my experience as a student from a background that has not historically been well-represented in higher education in Oregon.

I moved to the US when I was 11 years old and was immediately placed in the public school system. Throughout my middle and high school experience, I qualified for low income lunches, and my family lived well below the poverty line. I knew that my parents did not have the finances to pay for a 4 year University. I worked through high school, saved as much as I could, applied to over 100 different scholarships, but none of it would get me even close to the price of tuition in 2009, which was around \$7000/yr. I was starting to let go of my college dream, when I received a letter from PathwayOregon that absolutely changed my life. I still vividly remember opening this letter, which stated that my tuition and books would be covered for all 4 years at the University of Oregon through various state and federal funded grants and scholarships. This allowed me to earn my higher education without fear of putting myself or my family in crippling debt. After I graduated with my Bachelor of Arts in 2013, I was able to secure an Operations Manager role that required a 4 year college degree. Since then, I have continued to climb the management ladder at companies like Target and currently Amazon, where I'm about to celebrate 7 years of tenure. In my current job as a Senior Operations Manager, I lead over 10,000 employees in operations all across the West Coast, managing millions of dollars of product. I am also the Director of a Women in Operations affinity group, advocating for placing more women in leadership roles, and helping ensure they are promoted at the same rate as their male counterparts. I heavily credit my PathwayOregon financial aid for my accomplishments in my career. Without state and federal financial aid, people like me do not have an opportunity for higher education.

The OOG is Oregon's largest state-funded, need-based grant program for college students. It is the state's only need-based aid program. Approximately 40,000 students receive Opportunity Grants each year, yet funding limitations have meant that the grant is not available to thousands of students who demonstrate significant financial need. Funding for the OOG should be increased in order to provide a realistic possibility of college affordability for Oregon's lower- and middle-income students.

Thank you for serving our community. The experience of today's students is very different than it was 10, 20, and 30 years ago, and our college and university communities look very different. I appreciate your time and support for student success.

Sincerely,

Alyona Carnivale