

My name is Crystal Sanchez and I live in Portland, OR. I am a first generation, Hispanic, UO alum. 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 come from a low-income, single-parent home and the cost of higher education was a huge concern for me. I had many worries as to how I was going to afford college, as I did not want to burden my mother with debt in order to achieve my dreams, and there was no way for my mother or myself to pay for my college tuition out of pocket. During my senior year of high school, I had worked a part-time job in order to afford school applications on my own. As a first generation college attendee, I had to further educate myself on resources, and how to obtain financial aid.

I had applied for many in-state scholarships and grants, and was beyond grateful when I had learned that I was chosen to be a Pathway recipient at the University of Oregon. I had accepted the offer and was on my way to Eugene, OR the fall of 2012. Without Pathway, I would have been in much greater debt or may not have attended a university in general.

Student financial aid:

Attending college is significantly more expensive than it was just a few decades ago. One of the most important things you can do to support students from underrepresented backgrounds is to make investments in student financial aid.

Many students coming from low-income families rely on financial aid as their only source to afford college. Working prior to attending college or during is not a realistic way to pay for tuition. The cost of attending a university as a full-time student is about 13-15k, even when working full-time it is impossible to pay for tuition out of pocket and afford living expenses, at the same time.

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. These students deserve to be given the opportunity to attend college. 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.

Resources for students from underrepresented backgrounds:

Today's student populations are diverse, and our campus communities are diverse. As a Pathway recipient, I was assigned to a wonderful advisor that helped me through so much and pointed me to resources I had no idea were offered on campus. Continuing to provide programs and advisors that help students feel comfortable and cared for is crucial for student success. As first generation college attendees, we have no prior knowledge of how college works and it is a learning process throughout. Providing programs for ethnic, first generation students that

provide resources such as study skills, networking opportunities, how to write resumes or a safe spot for students gives students a strong sense of connectivity, and reassurance that they are not the only ones attempting to figure it all out. I hope you will provide investments with accountability measures to campuses that will allow them to support their individual student populations.

I appreciate your time and support for student success.

Sincerely,

Crystal Sanchez