

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

My name is Cody Savey and I live in Eugene, Oregon. I am first generation UO alumni. 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.

Back around 2009, college seemed almost unattainable. Although academics were not the issue, the financial cost of college was not in my family's budget. I knew to go to college I'd either have to get a ton of 4-year scholarships or take out a tremendous amount of debt, along with the stress that comes with debt. At this time in 2009, I was completely unaware of the PathwayOregon program. After completing my FASFA and receiving results, I was notified that I was awarded the PathwayOregon aid. I knew immediately that this relieved a huge financial burden off of myself and my family. To my delight, the PathwayOregon program not only provided the means for myself to attend college, but also provided other resources to help facilitate the transition. I'm from a small town in Oregon, roughly 4,000 people. Going to the University of Oregon after growing up in the same area for most of my life with the same people was a difficult transition. In high school, I was just shy of a 4.0 GPA and at the start of my college career I experienced similar success, but I can remember feeling alone my freshman year and wanting to go back home. I thought college is not for me, I just need to get a job and join the workforce. If it wasn't for my PathwayOregon mentor, I'm not sure where I would be. My PathwayOregon mentor potentially made a bigger impact on me than any direct financial resources I was provided. She was caring, kind and genuinely interested in me as a person. When I felt I had no one to turn to, and wanted to escape this new environment, my Pathway Oregon mentor was there for me and helped me through a very difficult time in my life. For that I will forever be grateful for what PathwayOregon provided me.

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.

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.

Resources for students from underrepresented backgrounds:

Today's student populations are diverse, and our campus communities are diverse. For example, the campus community at PSU is different from the campus community at UO, and different from the campus community at EOU, and we need student success services that are reflective of those differences and serve student needs. I hope you will provide investments with accountability measures to campuses that will allow them to support their individual student populations.

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,

Cody Savey, CPA
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