

Oregon State Legislature  
Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301  
Via Email Only

April 25, 2022

Chair Alonso Leon and Members of the Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students:

Thank you for your service to the State of Oregon. I appreciate and share your commitment to supporting students from historically underrepresented backgrounds, and I'm heartened by the opportunity to share my experience as a University of Oregon faculty member, Dean of the College of Education, former UO trustee, and mother of two school-aged children.

As a teacher, I work with both undergraduate and graduate students in our College of Education. I am a scholar who researches complex questions relating to child development and mental health in children with disabilities. Through each of these lenses I see the stark difference between higher education investments made by other states and those made here in Oregon (ours are much, much lower), and I worry about the long-term impact of that disparity on our children, our communities, and our future.

Today's campus communities are increasingly diverse, and it's critical that our state invest in the needs of students from backgrounds that have historically been underrepresented in higher education. One of those needs is adequate financial aid. Funding for the Oregon Opportunity Grant, which disproportionately supports BIPOC students, should be increased in order to provide a realistic possibility of college affordability for Oregon's lower- and middle-income students. Oregon ranks 25th in the country for the amount of state financial aid. Receipt of state grant aid increases the likelihood that a student will complete a degree by 2.5-3%. We often hear from our students that college affordability is access. I hope you will work with your colleagues to increase access for all by increasing investments in the Oregon Opportunity Grant.

As our campuses become increasingly diverse, the needs of our students are changing and growing. We have wraparound support services that we know help students stay enrolled and persist, but these programs have been underfunded and existing resources no longer meet the needs of our students. For example, the Accessible Education Center (AEC) provides disability services and accommodations support to UO students and promotes universal and inclusive design to UO community. Five full time access advisors facilitate students' accommodations process and support. The number of students who experience disability has exponentially increased over the past years and approximately 10% of undergraduate students are registered with AEC. Our institutions need additional state investments to adequately support students with disabilities for their success and add transition for post-graduation career readiness skills.

Thank you for serving our community. I know you and your colleagues will be faced with difficult decisions and competing priorities during the next legislative session, but I hope you will make game-changing investments to ensure that every student, regardless of their background, has a realistic opportunity to attend post-secondary education and complete a degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Lee McIntyre". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "L" and "M".

Laura Lee McIntyre, PhD  
Interim Dean, College of Education  
Castle-McIntosh-Knight Professor  
University of Oregon