

Hello Chair Alonso Leon and Task Force Members,

My name is Rick and I am a Post Bac student at Western Oregon University. I have already completed my Anthropology degree and I am currently studying psychology. I am here to share my story as a student, and as a cancer survivor who is in recovery.

Throughout my life I have been drawn to help people. Before I started school I worked with a company in Vietnam that dealt with weaving cooperatives and gave back to the rural communities by contributing donations to schools and orphanages in the region. In those communities, I was part of a project that provided children with shoes. My goal has always been to work with the community, but without a degree, I wasn't able to do as much as I could to help the people I wanted to. Originally, I went back to school to get my associates degree, but I loved school so much I jumped in further. I got my Anthropology degree because I realized I have always been doing this work throughout my life.

For my second degree, my interest in Psychology is because it goes hand in hand with Anthropology. Psychology provides a benefit to any kind of social work with different communities and it is a way to understand the nature of people, which will help me to provide better support.

I have been successful this far in school because of the support systems I have been able to get or build. In pursuit of my Anthropology degree, I used to be in the TRIO Program and I received 1-on-1 support with my classes. However, during my Post Bac, I no longer qualify for TRIO assistance and support. Since then, it has been a struggle to keep up with my assignments while also attempting to get my letters of recommendation and write my resume. For these reasons, I need 1-on-1 support so I can still do my classes while also focusing on the bigger picture, which is to make the transition from being a student to working in the workforce.

As a student, I did not receive any services for my disabilities, such as the trauma from chemotherapy and radiation. So I ended up having to work 1-on-1 with each of my teachers instead of having someone advocate for my needs like the assistance I had received while in TRIO. So I get very stressed in situations where I am in need of assistance and I do not have this continued support.

The issues I face on campus can be solved by having direct advocates for those with mental disabilities and for those who fall in between the gaps of what accommodations are provided at the school and the needs of the student.

I urge this task force to remember my story when developing legislation around higher education in Oregon. Please invest in students like me.

Thank you for your time.

Rick Tingle