

Date: February 18th, 2021
To: Senate Committee on Education
Re: ASWOU support for SB712, Student, Faculty, and Staff Voting Rights

Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Education committee,

My name is Liz Marquez Gutierrez, I'm a senior at Western Oregon University (WOU) and I am the Senate President of the Associated Students of Western Oregon University (ASWOU). I am writing in support of SB712 to grant students, faculty, and staff voting rights on the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC).

Throughout my time at WOU, I have witnessed how critical it is for students to be able to have an equal voice and vote on decisions that directly affect their personal well-being, finances, and academic success. More than often, there are decisions being made without student input by people who will not be directly affected by the decisions being made. This does not only happen at our institutions but at the HECC as well. Although students are invited to be on committees and on the Commission, their opinions are not validated when they are not able to vote. It is neither democratic nor equitable to deny the right to vote to people who are directly impacted by the HECC's decisions on higher education policies, funding, oversight, and accountability.

Although this year has been extremely difficult for students in higher education, I am incredibly proud of the resilience, strength and dedication that student leaders and students at large have demonstrated to save jobs, academic programs, and funding for essential services and programs to support each other during these difficult times. This is what students offer when we are allowed to fully participate in decision-making- we offer important perspectives and solutions. The HECC is a governing body that should be representative of the people it serves and students are important stakeholders that should be granted an equal opportunity to vote.

To ensure students, faculty and staff are equally represented in decisions regarding higher education in Oregon, please vote yes on HB SB712.

Liz Marquez Gutierrez
Senate President, Associated Students of Western Oregon University