

Good evening. My name is Matt Scott, and I'm a welding instructor at Portland Community College's Rock Creek Campus. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you tonight.

I am here this evening to ask that you fund Oregon's community colleges at the highest level you're able to. The reason I ask this is because there is no better investment you can make in the future prosperity of Oregonians, and in our state's ability to train and educate workers for careers in the 21st-century economy.

The program I have taught in for 27 years, the welding program, is a perfect example of what I'm talking about. Welding is a skill that translates into gainful employment, because everything from the car you drive to the roads and bridges you drive on need welders to bring them into existence, and to keep them in good repair. You can make a career, a good career, out of welding. You can earn "doctor money" as a welder.

PCC figures into this because community college is one of the few places where you can get a comprehensive, affordable welding education, and where you can be sure that the training you're receiving and the techniques you're learning meet the highest standards. It's where you can benefit from instructors who know the art of welding inside and out, and where you can benefit from the relationships we've built with employers in the private sector.

We work closely with Vigor Industrial on Swan Island here in Portland. Our students get work experience in their shipyard, and we tailor aspects of our curriculum to align with their workforce needs. In the year prior to the pandemic, we had 15 students who joined the Plumbers and Steamfitters Union, Local 290, as pipe welding apprentices and are now working for Vigor. Those are 15 careers that will support middle-class households here in our state. And all told, we award between 50-100 professional certifications each year to students who go on to work at many, many places besides Vigor.

Then the pandemic hit. It was pretty hard for us in the welding program, and in PCC's other career & technical education programs. We can teach a big chunk of our curriculum online -- and I'm really proud of some of the innovations we made to bring online instruction, demonstrations, and simulations to our students. But you can't weld two pieces of metal together over the Internet. The same situation is true for students in most of our career & technical ed programs.

So, many of our students had to hit pause on their educations and their careers. As of tonight, we have 123 students on the wait list waiting to resume their training as welders. As our COVID restrictions are gradually lifted, we need to be ready and able to welcome them back and give them everything they need to succeed. That's why I'm here to ask you to fully fund Oregon's community colleges.

But when you make this decision, I urge you to think beyond just the welders at PCC. When the pandemic passes, our economy is going to come roaring back. We're going to need far more than just welders. And right at this moment, the federal government is debating the largest investment in American infrastructure for generations. We're going to need welders, and computer-aided drafters, and diesel mechanics, and graphic designers, and medical assistants, and aviation mechanics, and computer scientists, and millwrights, and carpenters, and nurses, and many, many, other skilled professionals.

And where do you learn to be these things? At community college which is in my opinion the back bone of the American Educational system!!!!

Thank you for your time.

Matthew Scott  
PCC Welding Instructor