

Hello Chairs Steiner Hayward, Johnson, Rayfield and Members of the Committee:

In my day job, I am a Mortgage Consultant with Ryder Mortgage Group. In my free time, I am an active volunteer, serving as a baseball coach for my son's team, and on the board of the University of Oregon Alumni Association. I volunteer my time to support the University of Oregon Alumni Association because the MBA I received in Management and Marketing from the Charles Lundquist School of Business at The University of Oregon has allowed me to have a thriving career and be an active participant in not just my community, but our local economy.

Inside of this trying environment of figuring out funding priorities, its easy to change of mindset of thinking that University of Oregon has an endowment, private doners, and will survive this storm. I challenge this committee to flip the mindset and realize that without public funding, the foundation of public learning is weakened. As in a house, when a foundation is cracked when a home is already there, it becomes an unnecessary and uncostly to fix.

That is why I respectfully request that you support robust investments in public higher education, including funding the Public University Support Fund at \$900 million, and the Oregon Opportunity Grant at \$200 million.

As a Mortgage Consultant, I follow economic matters very closely. In fact I read about it daily. It is clear that the budget needs of Oregon's education sector are a recipe for an equitable recovery. Budget cuts to higher education would be particularly harmful during this critical time. At a time when Oregonians are struggling due to the pandemic and wildfires that raged across our state last year, we should be making additional investments in higher education and training programs that will allow all Oregonians the opportunity to succeed.

Further, we should be making higher education more accessible when students need it the most. One way that the State of Oregon can fulfill that goal is by expanding the Oregon Opportunity Grant. 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 low- and middle-income students. When it comes time for the kids I coach in baseball to go to college, I want that opportunity for all of them.

Thank you for serving our community. I know you will be forced to make tough budget decisions this session, and I hope you will prioritize funding for public education.

I will end this letter with something that I talk about with folks often during times of economic or business downturns or challenges. We all now the saying that 'a rising tide floats all ships.' What we don't talk about is what happens when the tide recedes. It exposes dangers, and sand bars. The well trained captains make sure their ship is in a position not to get beached or damaged. In this case you are the captains of the ship. Please grab the steering wheel and help the University of Oregon to safer waters.

Sincerely,
Eric Simantel
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