

May 3rd, 2021

Ways and Means, Education Subcommittee  
900 Court Street, NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee,

For 20 years, Oregon's legislature has provided fundamental support for Oregon's public engineering and computer science programs through the Engineering Technology Sustaining Fund (ETSF). These direct funds have allowed for a transformative engineering program to unfold in the state, which has boasted the state's economy with a more competitive workforce. As a retired President of Oregon's largest tech company, Mentor Graphics Corporation, I saw firsthand the life-changing innovations that are produced as a result of this investment. Being a current chair on the board of trustees at Portland State University, I also get to see the direct result this funding has within our university and the incredible impact it has on our students. It is because of this tremendous success that I am in full support of this program and ask the committee to fund it at the 2021 university-requested increase.

Since its inception, the ETSF tripled the amount of engineering graduates within the state and provided substantial economic mobility for these students. This workforce has fueled important industries within the Oregon economy. The funding has also tripled our research expenditures, unlocking more potential for projects and innovation. This expansion also allows for more opportunities to leverage private donor and industry philanthropic support.

The impact of the fund goes beyond Oregon's economic growth. We also see how it enables a focus on diversifying faculty and student bodies within all the universities in an accelerated way. PSU has increased underrepresented minorities to 37% of students and 31% of students are female. This is a trend that we hope to see continued throughout all the universities as we continuously strive for a more equitable and inclusive community.

In the past, these funds have faced scrutiny and possible elimination. I caution the committee to consider the ramifications of fund reduction. Any cutbacks would cause the engineering programs to lose student recruitment, retention, access and a sudden diminishing of a regional workforce. My long presence within the engineering industry taught me the significance of how quickly and dynamic this field can change. Oregon and the universities within have tremendous opportunities by staying active and ahead of the curve. Funding ETSF in SB 5528 allows a continued investment in the state of Oregon and into the future of our students.

Thank you,

Greg Hinckley  
Chair, Board of Trustees, Portland State University