

May 11, 2021

Chairs Frederick, McLain, and Members of the Committee:

Oregon's public universities and community colleges have been partners in supporting postsecondary students in this state for many years, and we write jointly in support of robust funding for public higher education. Students who enroll at Oregon's public universities often seek professional certificates at Oregon's community colleges or start their post-secondary education in community colleges. Due to the interconnected nature of higher education, Oregon's public universities and community colleges are aligned and united in advocating for improved funding for higher education across the spectrum, and **we urge you to invest \$702 million in the Community College Support Fund, \$900 million in the Public University Support Fund, and at least \$200 million in the Oregon Opportunity Grant.**

Funding for community colleges and public universities creates opportunities for all Oregon students, and it is more critical now than ever. We may serve different populations, but universities and community colleges alike see that students are struggling to afford tuition and meet their basic needs. In fact, according to the largest national survey performed by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab (surveying students at 227 institutions nationwide in 2020), 62% of community college students and 51% of university students were food or housing insecure, and this was more prevalent among former foster youth, underrepresented students of color and first-generation students. Oregon colleges and universities have played a leading role in helping students navigate the complicated process of applying for federal benefits like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other forms of federal assistance that support basic needs. Stable funding will allow institutions to keep tuition low and continue to help students meet those needs, so they are able to complete their degrees and meet their career goals.

The pandemic has also exacerbated existing inequities for Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC), low-income, and rural students. Resources for our colleges and universities and expanded financial aid will allow institutions to support students and address these disparities as our state recovers from the pandemic.

Finally, at a time when students are struggling to meet their basic needs, it is of the utmost importance that we expand the Oregon Opportunity Grant, Oregon's only state-funded, need-based financial aid program. Funding limitations have meant the grant is not available to

thousands of students who demonstrate significant financial need. Funding for the Oregon Opportunity Grant needs to be increased to provide college affordability for Oregon's lower- and middle-income students.

We appreciate your commitment to Oregon's students and your leadership on issues of importance in this state. Thank you for investing in Oregon's future.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Insko
Chair, Oregon Council of Presidents
President, Eastern Oregon University



Cam Preus on behalf of
Cathy Kemper-Pelle
Chair, Oregon Presidents Council
President, Rogue Community College