

I am writing in regards to the decade of work toward efforts to secure healthcare for part-time faculty, and in support of the 2021 legislative bill **HB 3007** that would provide OEBC health benefits to PERS-eligible faculty members with the state paying 90% and members paying 10%.

I have been a part-time, PERS-eligible faculty member at Western Oregon University (WOU) for 9 years now. I have worked extremely hard over these 9 years to ensure high-quality science instruction and associated education is provided to WOU students, with the primary goal of ensuring their future success. I have developed chemistry courses and curriculum from scratch to ensure that the general education requirements for non-science majors at my university can be offered and met. I have also implemented continuous improvement processes to enable high-quality and effective laboratory experiments for understanding chemistry thoroughly. I have also mentored and nurtured science major upperclassmen through teaching assistantships and facilitation of other leadership experiences.

I have not only taken great pride in my students' education, but also in my own personal growth and continued education while developing skills in the creative arts field of music, composition and songwriting.

Over my years of working at Western Oregon University, I have been thoroughly grateful for the opportunity to maintain a minimum workload of 0.5 FTE, which ultimately has allowed me to maintain my cherished healthcare benefits.

With the beginning of each term for nine years, which occurs every 3 months during the school years, and amounts to 27 times in total over my career, there has been high stress levels and concern, often followed by a scramble by myself and my immediate departmental colleagues to schedule my courses so I continued to maintain a greater-than-or-equal-to ( $\geq$ ) 0.5 FTE of work. This has often resulted in course assignments given to me at the very last minute – often within only a day or two prior to the beginning of a term, as well as an intense preparation period to have everything ready for the students prior to the first day of classes, also adding to extreme stress levels.

I recognize that I still have been extremely fortunate to have fellow tenured faculty members at my university, in my own department that value my contributions to the chemistry education of students, and have cared enough about my personal well-being to ensure that I have continued to receive healthcare benefits over the years by keeping me at 0.5 FTE or higher.

I have also been vehemently aware that most community colleges and universities around the state and the country implement an "*unspoken policy*" when hiring highly-educated, part-time instructors – those with doctorate-level and/or masters degrees in order to satisfy their educational institution accreditation requirements – at **just below 0.5 FTE** so they don't have to provide healthcare benefits to those employees, by law. That is another story, completely.

PERS-eligible educators (and less than half-time educators, frankly) are highly trained, intelligent and valuable citizens who invest their daily lives into the future of our children and

young adults – into their success of becoming contribution citizens themselves, and therefore into the future of our state and country. To be without healthcare benefits and support, especially considering the salary levels they endure, is saying that ***“educators are not valued”***, and ultimately translates to ***“we do not value investment into our future as a country”***. I have been both grateful and disgusted that my experience as an educator at Western Oregon University is a rarity in providing healthcare benefits – at least until recently.

More recently, and due to both decreased enrollment and financial mismanagement of altering enrollment levels, my institution is currently undergoing Article 15 program cuts, faculty cuts and restructuring. It has announced that they were now implementing the aforementioned *“unspoken rule”* that non-tenured (NTT) faculty must be hired below 0.5 FTE so the university can *“save NTT benefits packages”*.

I can share from personal experience that after dedicating 9 years of hard work in my life to high-quality science education for Oregon students and receiving healthcare, that this is a gut-punch. This state and this entire country definitely need a supportive healthcare system for its’ citizens, and I urge you to provide that for Oregonians as a first step. Thank you for considering the health of our PERS-eligible educators, and the overall health of our future generations.

Kind regards,  
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