



March 10, 2023

Joint Ways & Means Committee Co-Chairs
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez,

On behalf of the Associated Students of Oregon Institute of Technology, we are writing in support of Oregon Tech's emergency request for \$17.9 million to renovate the institution's unique geothermal heating system. This infrastructure is critical to Oregon Tech's continued operations, and in turn critical for the ability to learn, grow, and thrive for students like myself.

When we moved in the 1960s, geothermal energy has been used to provide primary heating to the Klamath Falls campus and was the primary factor for locating the campus where it is today. Oregon Tech pumps hot water ($\approx 195^{\circ}\text{F}$) from below the earth's surface through multiple wells to a storage tank, where it then flows by gravity to various parts of the campus through both underground and tunnel-encased piping. Geothermal water is now used to provide heating for campus buildings, including our housing, classes, and learning spaces, domestic hot water, and melts the snow off campus sidewalks to provide ADA pathways. Additionally, the geothermal resource is the only source of heating for most of the campus.

After 60 years of continuous usage, the geothermal wells and delivery systems are aging and experiencing multiple, repeated, single points of failure affecting critical student services and facilities. The critical nature of the system's current condition is a genuine life-safety risk with severe, immediate implications for student and employee safety and to the university's daily operations.

As a student studying mechanical engineering, I believe that it's time to stop working with stop-gap measures meant only to delay a growing inevitable problem, and instead look into reinvesting into a



sustainable long-term solution. However, don't just take my word on the matter, professionals are of a similar opinion as well. According to a thorough analysis performed by an engineering firm in June 2022 found \$14.9 million, now \$17.9 million adjusted for inflation, in estimated repairs necessary to address immediate emergent and near-term life safety risks and to avoid imminent system failure, which would require campus closure, displacing students. Our campus prides itself on its hands on learning, with it being a primary selling point, so soon after all the challenges that students faced during the pandemic, this would be absolutely devastating. College is hard enough – students shouldn't be put in a position where they are sent home or left without housing.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and your service to our state. I hope you can fund this request and support continued operations of Oregon Tech. Our students are truly dependent on the State to fulfill this request.

Sincerely,

Sasha Rabich,

ASOIT-KF President

OIT Student in Mechanical Engineering Technology