

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

# American Association of University Professors

Promoting Quality Higher Education – An Investment in Oregon's Future

April 8, 2023

Senator Steiner and Representative Sanchez, Co-Chairs  
Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, Vice-Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith, and members of the Committee,

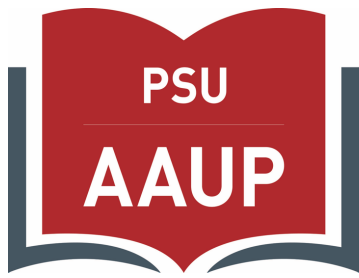
I am a librarian and Professor at Portland State University, and I have the honor to serve as the President of my union, PSU-AAUP. I also represent my union on the AAUP Oregon Executive Council. As a member of the community, and on behalf of my union and the more than 6,300 members of the American Association of University Professors in Oregon, I urge you to support better higher education funding in Oregon's budget for the next biennium. Specifically, we call on you to appropriate \$1.05 billion for the Public University Support Fund (PUSF), \$855 million for the Community College Support Fund (CCSF), and an additional \$25 million to provide emergency support to PSU and the Technical and Regional Universities.

When it comes to investing in our university and community college students, Oregon trails far behind our neighbors. Of the 14 states in the Western US, only Montana, Utah, and Arizona invest less in college students than our state does.

The result of this lack of state funding has been catastrophic at many of Oregon's public universities and community colleges. At my own institution, years of diminishing state support and the post-pandemic enrollment drop has thrown Portland State University into a staffing and student services crisis. Vital programs, faculty, and staff positions are being cut year after year due to budgetary shortfalls and administrative priorities that fail to focus on the needs of the institution's students, staff, and faculty. At the same time, the University is now a majority minority institution, meaning over 50% of our students come from traditionally minoritized communities. Without state investment in higher education, we will be failing our first generation colleague students and students of color.

Portland State is not alone in having been acutely affected by the rising challenges facing higher education; Oregon's Technical and Regional Universities have faced similar challenges, and with an additional \$25 million dollar investment from the state, these five public institutions can both address some of the issues unique to each campus and work together to untangle this complex and important

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issue. Oregon’s students thrive when there are high-quality educational opportunities available to them in their own communities. Your support for the PUSF, CCSF, and crucial bridge funding will ensure that when an Oregonian leaves their community for an education, it is a choice, not a necessity driven by a lack of options.

Finally, I’d like to highlight a few bills that would improve the lives of Oregon’s present and future educators. In solidarity with the Graduate Employees Union and the Portland State University Faculty Association, I urge you to support the part-time faculty healthcare fixes in HB 2611A and authorize access to SNAP benefits for graduate employees by supporting SB 609A. These are commonsense pieces of legislation that will ease the unnecessary burden placed on both these important parts of Oregon’s higher education community.

Thank you for supporting the students, staff, and faculty at Oregon’s public universities and community colleges.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Emily Ford'.

Emily Ford  
President, PSU AAUP

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