

April 19, 2023

Member of the Ways and Means Committee
Oregon State Legislature

Chair Steiner, Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chairs, and Members of the Committee:

I am an emeritus professor and former administrator at Southern Oregon University, having retired in December of 2022. I am testifying today in support of \$1.05 billion appropriation for higher education in Oregon, and especially for the importantly the \$15 million dollar support fund for Oregon's regional universities requested in the Governor's Budget.

Southern Oregon University provides unique education opportunities to our region and our rural communities, leading to employment, civic engagement, and success for many rural first-generation students, adults returning to the workforce, and others. The faculty and staff have a commitment to the region and the students that is second to none.

As you know, today Oregon's regional universities are suffering from catastrophic funding shortfalls, leading to deep cuts to faculty and staff positions. For SOU these are expected to be 13% of the workforce. For all of the regionals, cuts threaten program offerings, and make our efforts to revitalize and sustain operations virtually impossible. And students can't succeed when institutions cut faculty and staff positions and fail to invest in programs and services.

My colleagues reports that faculty and staff are not just offering fewer classes but delaying the scheduling of required courses in ways that will overload advisors, burn out faculty, and delay students' graduation. One student I know reported that he had not gotten a passing grade in a gateway course that is a pre-requisite for other courses in his major; he told me that the next time he could retake that course would be in two years and his degree would be delayed by three years. This is the impact of cuts.

With additional funding, we can secure faculty and frontline service jobs at our institutions, promote student success, and promote sustainable growth for our institutions. Our students' success depends on strong funding right now, not on a rainy-day fund. A few years ago, I was speaking to an administrator at an institution out of state, a finance vice-president at a public university in the South. I described SOU's budget to her and she responded that "You can't run a university on that." She was right.

Faculty at my institution, alongside fellow regional universities are united in our commitment to Oregon's future. I urgent Oregon to commit \$15 million dollars to supporting our regional universities.

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