

April 21, 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 Senior Instructor of Economics at the University of Oregon, and I have the honor of serving as the President of our faculty union, United Academics of UO. As a concerned educator and parent, and on behalf of my union's members, I urge you to support better higher education funding in Oregon's budget for the next biennium by appropriating \$1.05 billion for the Public University Support Fund, \$855 million for the Community College Support Fund, an additional \$25 million to provide crucial support to the Technical and Regional Universities and Portland State University, and \$400 million for the Oregon Opportunity Grant.

Oregon's public universities and community colleges are severely underfunded; we are 45th in the nation for state investment in higher education, and as of 2021, every state that borders ours invests more in their community college and public university students than Oregon does. The result of this lack of state funding has been catastrophic at many of Oregon's public universities and community colleges. Without sufficient financial support from the state, Oregon's public universities will close budgetary gaps using the same strategies that universities nationwide typically rely on: raising tuition, slashing services, suppressing wages, and chipping away at working and learning conditions.

These trends can and must be reversed, but we can only do so if we collectively choose to do better for Oregon's students, staff, and faculty. An appropriation of \$1.05 billion for the PUSF, \$855 million for the CCSF, and \$400 million for the OOG in the next biennium demonstrates a commitment to make higher education more accessible for the next generation of working Oregonians. In light of the additional challenges faced by Oregon's TRUs and PSU, I also ask that you authorize \$25 million in bridge funding to ensure the continued success of these vital institutions.

Finally, in solidarity with part-time faculty and graduate employees at UO and across Oregon, I ask that you support the part-time faculty healthcare fixes in HB2611 A and the availability of SNAP benefits for GEs in SB609 A. The modern university system cannot function without these valuable workers, and because of their low wages and limited benefits, these pieces of legislation could be life changing for many of them.

Thank you for your commitment to Oregon's students, staff, and faculty.

Mike Urbancic
President, United Academics of UO