

### Key Takeaways of this Written Testimony

- My first request: **be excellent to each other.** While passions may become engaged as the session continues, I ask that, after business has concluded for the day, maybe take each other out for a friendly cup of coffee or ice cream.
- My second request: **don't cut the higher education budget.**
  - **I have written an open letter requesting an additional \$500 million dollars for the Public University Support Fund (PUSF), for a total appropriation of \$1.43 billion dollars.**
  - This open letter has been co-signed by hundreds of people.
  - This \$500 million dollar number reflects the ballpark amount needed to freeze tuition increases while allowing employee salaries to keep up with the cost of living at all the public universities.
  - As I've learned more, I have also come to recognize that \$500 million may be more aspirational than realistic.
  - **If an additional \$500 million for the PUSF isn't feasible then I ask the committee to seriously consider the numbers proposed by the Oregon Council of University Presidents instead: a total of \$1.05 billion for the PUSF, and other investments in students and capital projects.**
  - I'm not asking for tuition-free college. I am asking for us to no longer be state #45 in the nation for per-student funding for our public universities.
- **An open letter asking for more money for higher education, and a list of its hundreds of supporters as of April 20, 2023, can be found on page 5.**

**Samuel David Schwartz**  
PhD Student, University of Oregon

April 21, 2023

**Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee**

Oregon Legislative Assembly

900 Court St. NE, S-213 or H-273

Salem, Oregon 97301

**Dear Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee,**

Included on page 5 of this written testimony is an open letter. It is my pleasure to read part of it to you aloud, on behalf of the hundreds of people who have signed it, in oral testimony on Friday, April 21, 2023. I am still collecting names, and you can read the full list here, as Oregonians continue to sign on:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rH4sB-OO1PbuDaUeQhqkD6hfetdPMb-dIqD4Z1imAkA/edit>

On these first few pages, however, I speak only for myself.

**My first ask: be excellent to each other.**

Members will recall that I sent a snail-mail letter to each of you in the days after the election. It concluded with the following:

As a citizen, my top priority this upcoming legislative session is not education, nor technology, nor any other typical political issue – although all of those topics are very important to me. My top priority is a legislator's excellence to their fellow lawmakers. The strength of our democratic republic, our bedrock ebenezer which enables everything else, demands this excellence. As a younger citizen (I am in my 20s), with my future mostly in my own hands but also partly in yours, I beg this excellence.

As you work together to hash out the challenging and weighty issues before you, I continue to beg that the ideal of excellence to each other remains paramount in your deliberations. Your excellence to each other is still my top priority.

I ask this excellence of you as a hypocrite. Perhaps the most recent example of my hypocrisy is when I participated in the tuition and fee advisory board meetings for the University of Oregon this year. I regret to say that I gave one dean so much grief about her tuition proposals that I felt obligated to write a formal apology letter a month or so after the fact.

I share this story about my apology to the the dean to illustrate my belief that the act of deciding the wisest way to collect and spend vast amounts of money in a committee setting is difficult. Very difficult. I don't expect unanimous agreement on all things at all times. Nevertheless, I still think we can be excellent to each other, even when we staunchly disagree.

**My second ask: don't cut the higher education budget; please increase it.**

It is through sitting through all the boring-yet-weighty 8:15 am tuition and university budget meetings for months on end that I came up with the \$1,433.2 million dollar request in the open letter. In my view, the universities are lowballing the legislature on the amount actually needed to stop the twin crises of unaffordable student tuition and unlivable employee compensation.

It is also my view that investments in higher education will pay just as great, if not greater, dividends to our state down the road as investments to the rainy day fund.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” There are all sorts of medical sayings that are analogous to public university support. Here's another analogy: The proposed cuts to higher education are harmful bloodletting to an already sick patient. We must stop the financial hemorrhaging.

“First, do no harm.” Consider skipping payments to the rainy day + education stability fund (if possible) and instead increase university funding. **Why? Because for every expensive crisis and problem facing our state, I can point you to an example in our university ecosystem where hardworking, smart Oregonians are thinking deeply about all sorts of problems and thoughtful solutions to these problems:**

- I think of **wildfires**, and I remember a data science project done by an honors student from southern Oregon, inspired by the disasters near her hometown. Her capstone project used machine learning to predict areas for treatment by firefighters and forest workers. Or of the new center on wildfire smoke.<sup>1</sup> Imagine all the money that could be saved with 21st century digital forest management tools, powered by home-grown research from our public universities.
- I think of the **homelessness and drug addiction crisis**, and I wonder if, for many of the homeless and addicts, if access to postsecondary education and a stable financial situation upon graduation would have resulted in a situation where they were never homeless or addicted in the first place. Relatedly, I am grateful for the private philanthropy which founded UO's Ballmer Institute for Children's Behavioral Health,<sup>2</sup> which I hope will prevent burgeoning behavioral problems that are difficult to resolve in adulthood right in the bud, during childhood.

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<sup>1</sup><https://resilient.uoregon.edu/centers#smoke-center>

<sup>2</sup><https://childrensbehavioralhealth.uoregon.edu/>

- I think of our **housing affordability crisis** and I am reminded of UO's University Senate President-elect, Dr. Gerard Sandoval, a faculty member with expertise in land use and urban design who is serving a four year term on the Governor-appointed Housing Stability Council.<sup>3</sup> I often ask myself, will I ever be able to afford my own home? Or am I destined to rent forever if I want to stay in Oregon and be a teaching faculty member? I know there are experts in our universities that can help design thoughtful policy for Oregonians.
- For my part, I think about the hundreds of students I've taught in foundational computer science classes and labs. These computer science students will grow our silicon forest, some probably in the **silicon chip industry**. And when I'm not teaching, I'm more than happy to talk your ear off about technology regulation and deregulation, and what the legislature should do about ChatGPT, internet privacy and cybersecurity, advanced scientific computing tools, and more. I nerd out to this technological policy wonk stuff! And I have done it all for ~\$1,700 a month, through COVID and record-breaking inflation. But, sadly, I know that I won't get the pay raise the University of California system just gave their graduate employees (they will earn \$10,000 / year more than I do now) unless UO raises undergraduate tuition or you vote for a bigger state appropriation to higher education.

**Universities need meaningful investment to thrive.** These centers and institutes don't appear from nowhere, they need money. **And students need a break on tuition.** Now, I'm not asking for free tuition. I'm asking for funding which will lift up Oregon from being among the bottom five states in the union for public university funding per student.

But mostly, I am asking for your excellence, even as topics start to become more charged and emotions start to run hot. I am rooting you on!

Sincerely,



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Sam Schwartz  
An Optimistic Oregonian

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<sup>3</sup><http://gfsandoval.com/affordable-housing/>

**Dear members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee of the Oregon Legislative Assembly:**

Thank you for your hard work in confronting the many challenges facing our state. It isn't easy, and we are grateful for your service in the difficult task of writing the budget.

**We have concerns with Governor Kotek's proposed budget and the co-chairs' budget framework.**

In her proposal, the governor recommended that the increase for the state appropriation to Oregon's Public University Support Fund (PUSF) be a mere 1.4% for the next biennium.<sup>1</sup> Inflation for the last biennium was ten times that, at ~14%.<sup>2</sup> The co-chairs' budget framework calls for a reduction of ~\$90 million dollars from education areas outside of K-12, a decrease of -1.8%.<sup>3</sup>

While there are other funding streams besides the PUSF in Gov. Kotek's budget proposal, such as additional investments for students from underrepresented backgrounds and support for community colleges, we note that all of higher education composes only 3% of Kotek's overall proposed budget. Compare Oregon's 3% state budget allocation to postsecondary education with Nevada at more than 6%, Idaho at 7%, Washington at 8%, or Utah and California at just over 10%.<sup>4</sup>

**The practical result of Gov. Kotek's recommended budget for public universities or the co-chairs' budget framework, if adopted by the legislature, will be some combination of tuition and fee hikes, stagnant employee compensation against years of steep inflation, unfilled vacant positions, or entire program cuts.** In light of the student debt crisis and the impact of inflation in the last biennium on the poorest paid university workers, such as undergraduate and graduate student employees, this budget is simply unacceptable.

**We ask for an additional \$500 million, for a total Public University Support Fund (PUSF) appropriation of \$1,433.2 million.** This is a total of 1.2% of Gov. Kotek's proposed \$116,544 million dollar expenditure budget.

We recognize this is a tough budget cycle and this is a tall ask. We submit that investing in Oregon's people through properly funding public university education will grow our economy, reduce new student debt, and make future budget cycles significantly less tough.

Every bill begins with the phrase *Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon*. We are the students and student supporters of the State of Oregon, and we will enact amazing things in our state over the next few decades. We are Oregon's current and future scientists, teachers, silicon chip makers, technologists, innovators, judges, professors, business owners, job creators, politicians, artists, writers, and big dreamers. We need our state to invest in us, and to help shoulder the cost of a university education in ways that haven't been seen in a long time in our state. Please, don't let us down.

Sincerely,

1. Sam Schwartz, lead author, PhD candidate, Computer Science, University of Oregon

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<sup>1</sup> Gov. Kotek's recommended budget: [https://www.oregon.gov/das/financial/documents/2023-25\\_gb.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/das/financial/documents/2023-25_gb.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator: [https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Co-chairs Budget Framework: <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/lfo/JWM%20Documents/2023-25%20Co-Chair%20Budget%20Framework.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Percentages taken from the most recently enacted budgets of the cited states as of March 30, 2023.

**Note: Affiliations are primarily for identification purposes, and do not necessarily represent endorsement on behalf of the affiliated organization.**

2. Alicia Gerrity, Student Body President, Undergraduate Student, Political Science, Southern Oregon University
3. Kierra Wing, Student Body President, Graduate Student, Real Estate Development, Portland State University
4. Sasha Rabich, Klamath Falls ASOIT Student Body President, Oregon Tech
5. Joe Page, Undergraduate student and Student Fee Committee Chair, Oregon State University
6. Madison McDonald, ASUO Senate Treasurer and Programs Finance Committee Chair, University of Oregon
7. Jenna Travers, ASUO Senator and Contracts Finance Committee Chair, University of Oregon
8. Yanling Joslin, ASUO Program Finance Committee Vice Chair
9. James Taylor, Undergraduate Student, OURJ Editor-in-Chief, University of Oregon
10. Raul Patel, ASUO Senator, Computer Science, University of Oregon
11. Noah Roberts, Undergraduate Student and Member of the Student Fee Committee, Oregon State University
12. Ian Finn, ASUO Contracts Finance Committee Member, University of Oregon
13. Elise O'Brien, Graduate Student in Folklore Studies & Landscape Architecture, ASUO Senate Seat 22, University of Oregon
14. Natalie Hawkins, ASUO Contracts Finance Senator, Planning, Public Policy and Management Student, University of Oregon
15. Reece Kikuchi, ASOSU Marketing & Web Development Coordinator, undergraduate, College of Liberal Arts, Oregon State University
16. Angelina Wescott, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, ASOSU Public Relations Director, Oregon State University
17. Jordan Pridemore, ASUO Academic Senator, University of Oregon
18. Cody Campbell, ASUO PFC Senator, University of Oregon
19. Chloé Webster, ASUO Finance Senator, Erb Memorial Union, University of Oregon
20. Tiffany Huynh, ASUO Academic Senator, Undergraduate PR, University of Oregon
21. Fisher Isenberg, Undergraduate student, ASUO Departments Finance Committee
22. Kayla Krueger, ASUO Senator and Journalism Student, University of Oregon
23. Mikayla Johnson, ASUO Academic Senator, University of Oregon
24. Vithika Goyal, ASUO Academic Senator, University of Oregon
25. Yoorim Steinbach, Cultural Sustainability Coordinator, Undergraduate, Applied Linguistics, Portland State University
26. Tanner Rozendal, Undergraduate Neuroscience Major, University of Oregon
27. Arden Butterfield, Undergraduate Student, University of Oregon
28. Zevi Alter, Undergraduate student, School of Journalism and Communications, University of Oregon
29. Ally Ikehara, Undergraduate, Geophysics, University of Oregon
30. Lilia Patterson, Student, Civil Engineering, Southern Oregon University
31. Morgan Neumann, Sophomore, Media Studies & Advertising, University of Oregon
32. Carmen Valencia, Undergraduate Student, Data Science, University of Oregon
33. Reid Allenstein, Undergraduate Student, Computer Science, University of Oregon
34. Jacob Seiberg, Undergraduate Computer Science, University of Oregon
35. Melanie Wiegand, Undergraduate, Physics, University of Oregon
36. Kate Spencer, BS Student, Computer Science, University of Oregon
37. Jacob Weyhrich, Undergrad Student, Computer Science, University of Oregon

38. Michal Klopotoski, Undergraduate, Data Science, University of Oregon
39. Sorin West, Undergraduate Student, Computer Science, University of Oregon
40. Layla Martinez, Undergraduate Student, Data Science, University of Oregon
41. Jake Johns, Undergraduate, Computer Science, University of Oregon
42. Harrison Ramos, Undergraduate Student, Computer Science, University of Oregon
43. Julia Tai, Undergraduate Student, Data Science, University of Oregon
44. Ben Vessely, Undergraduate Student, Mathematics, University of Oregon
45. Oscar Epp, Undergraduate Student, Computer Science / Mathematics, University of Oregon
46. Daniel Porter, Undergraduate Student, Data Science, University of Oregon
47. Jake Edelen, Undergraduate Student, University of Oregon
48. Bryden Knows His Gun, Student, Computer Science, University of Oregon
49. Noah Weis, Undergraduate Student, Computer Science, University of Oregon
50. Michael Duffy, Student, Data Science, University of Oregon
51. Judith Gatson - Data Science Undergraduate Student, University of Oregon
52. Hayden Peabody, Undergraduate, Computer Science, University of Oregon
53. Davis Long, SOJC Student, Advertising, University of Oregon
54. Devin Vliet, Undergraduate Student, Data Science, University of Oregon
55. Mia Hanson, Undergraduate Student, Data Science, University of Oregon
56. Benjamin Horrisberger, Undergraduate Student, Computer Science, University of Oregon
57. Alder French, Undergraduate Student, Computer Science, University of Oregon
58. Keera Puett, Undergraduate Student, Department of Biology & Kinesiology, Oregon State University Cascades
59. Bronwen Maxson, Coordinator of Undergraduate Engagement & Instructional Services, UO Libraries, University of Oregon
60. Bristol Ozturgut, Undergraduate, Portland State University
61. Syrenity Greenleaf, Undergraduate Student, Multidisciplinary Science, University of Oregon
62. Kira Tronnier, Undergrad Student, Psychology, University of Oregon
63. Ayiesha Chang, Undergraduate Student, Chemistry, University of Oregon
64. Dylan Gill, Undergraduate, University of Oregon
65. Aurora Ashkar, BS Student, College of Agriculture, Oregon State University
66. Simon Scannell, Undergraduate Student, University of Oregon
67. Emma Howard, Undergraduate Student, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, University of Oregon
68. Jeremiah Perko, Undergraduate Student, Art, University of Oregon
69. Aaron Vischer, Undergraduate Student, Psychology and Philosophy, University of Oregon
70. Rivkah Zigman, BS Student, Public Policy, University of Oregon
71. Hai Le, Computer Science, University of Oregon
72. L. Carlow, Student, psychology, University of Oregon
73. Olivia Taylor, Student
74. Philip Beebe-Torres, College of Business, University of Oregon
75. Ben Hudson, Undergraduate, Business, University of Oregon
76. Zoe Gill Errada, undergrad student, BS in Environmental Studies, University of Oregon
77. Thomas Guyn, Undergraduate Student, business finance, university of Oregon
78. Tyler Posey, SOJC student, University of Oregon
79. Natalie Vogel, Undergraduate Student, Economics, University of Oregon
80. Sam Kwak, Mathematics major, University of Oregon
81. Ellison Schilling, Undergraduate Student, Computer Science, University of Oregon
82. Zachary Villagomez, Undergraduate Student, PPPM, University of Oregon
83. Dylan Powell, Undergraduate Student, Pre-PPPM, University of Oregon

84. Hanna Tran, Undergrad, Political Science, University of Oregon
85. Ceila Rodriguez, Undergraduate Student, Education, Southern Oregon University
86. Skylar Volz, Undergraduate Student, Environmental Studies, University of Oregon
87. Shelby Doden, Undergraduate Student, University of Oregon
88. Geoffrey Wolff, undergraduate, economics and political science, University of Oregon
89. Samuel Beans-Polk, University of Oregon
90. Molly Mathisen, undergraduate student, journalism, University of Oregon
91. Macy Patel, Undergraduate Environmental Studies Student
92. Kelly Schombert, Undergraduate Student in Computer Science and Art & Technology, University of Oregon
93. Amara Frost, Undergraduate Student, Linguistics, University of Oregon
94. Valentine Bentz, Undergraduate Student in Planning, Public Policy, and Management, University of Oregon
95. Arealle Seegers, Undergraduate in Ethnic Studies & Public Relations, University of Oregon
96. Isaac Allen, Undergraduate Student, University of Oregon
97. Emma Howard, Undergraduate Student, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, University of Oregon
98. Clara Morrison, Undergrad Student, Physics, University of Oregon
99. Keeley Reiners, Undergrad Student, Environmental Science and Policy, Southern Oregon University
100. Mitchell Dummer, Undergraduate Student, EMDA and Theatre, Southern Oregon University
101. Jordynn Robson, Undergraduate Student, Educational Studies, Southern Oregon University
102. Mia Santander, Undergraduate Student, Psychology, Southern Oregon University
103. Dawson Davis, Undergraduate Student, Southern Oregon University
104. Benjamin Ha, Under Graduate Student, Oregon State University - Cascades
105. Macie Stewart, Undergraduate Student, Criminal Justice/Communications, Southern Oregon University
106. Alexander Hernandez, Undergraduate Student, Health and Exercise Science, Southern Oregon University
107. Gregory Guzman-Perez, Undergraduate Student, psychology, Southern Oregon University
108. Angel Antonucci, Undergraduate Student, History, Portland State University
109. Julissa Taitano, Undergraduate Student, Educational Studies, Southern Oregon University
110. Karrah Smith, Undergraduate Student, Educational Studies, Southern Oregon University
111. Sarah Ross, Undergraduate Student, Environmental Science and Policy, Southern Oregon University
111. Noah Talavera, Undergraduate Student, Health & Exercise Science, Southern Oregon University
112. Jaymes Juarez, Undergraduate Student, Outdoor Adventure Leadership, Southern Oregon University
113. Travis Thorpe, Undergraduate Student, Outdoor Adventure Leadership, Southern Oregon University
114. Anthony Perez, Undergraduate student, Health and Exercise science, Southern Oregon University
115. Aaron Gandara, undergraduate student, health and exercise science, Southern Oregon University
116. Kennedy Peake, undergraduate student, University of Oregon
117. Jersey Santiago, University of Oregon
118. Kelly Schooler, Undergraduate Human Physiology Student, University of Oregon
119. Jack Schaffner, Undergrad, History, University of Oregon
120. Sofia Fowler, Undergraduate Student, Business Administration, University of Oregon



121. Carolina Moreno, undergraduate student, Pre- Physical Therapy, Southern Oregon University
122. John Balletti, Undergraduate Student, Business Administration, University of Oregon
123. Ezra Fenwick, undergraduate, Music Technology, University of Oregon
124. Sophia Schlieder, Undergraduate, Art, University of Oregon
125. Grace Corcoran, Political Science major, University of Oregon
126. Rook Smith, Undergrad Student, Sociology and Anthropology, Southern Oregon University
127. Sierra Garrett, Undergrad Student, Sustainability, Southern Oregon University
128. Dakota Runyon-Trapp, Undergrad Student, Digital Cinema, Southern Oregon University
129. Casey Colley, Undergraduate Student, Computer Science, Oregon State University
130. Ethan Morris, Medical Laboratory Technologist (Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory), Undergraduate Student, Computer Science, Oregon State University
131. Grace Duncan, Undergraduate, BioChemistry, Southern Oregon University
132. Taham Khosroabadi, Student, Outdoor Adventure Leadership, Southern Oregon University.
133. Emma Parr, Student, Music Education, Southern Oregon University
134. Corrin Hoyer, Student in Planning, Public Policy, and Management, University of Oregon
135. Sanaz Riahi, Master's student, Global Studies, University of Oregon
136. Cailin Carmichael, Graduate student, Chemistry, University of Oregon
137. Maxim Altan-Lu Shapovalov, M.Sc. Student, Geography, University of Oregon
138. Renee Seal, Admissions Counselor, Master of Business Administration, Southern Oregon University
139. Ian Van Dusen, Masters Student, Department of Geography, University of Oregon
140. Jesús Ramírez Silva, M.A. Student, Department of Romance Languages, School of Global Studies, University of Oregon
141. Roy Dixon, M.S. Student, Department of Urban and Public Affairs, Portland State University
142. Yas Rivera, Affirmative Action Associate and WGSS MA incoming student, Oregon State University
143. Randall Rodriguez, Graduate Employee, Department of Philosophy, University of Oregon.
144. Kindra De'Arman, Graduate Employee, University of Oregon
145. Jacob Lindsley, Graduate Student, Psychology, Oregon State University
146. Lissie connors, graduate student, Earth sciences, University of Oregon
147. Steven Walton, PhD student, Computer Science, University of Oregon
148. S. Isaac Geronimo Anderson, PhD student, Computer Science, University of Oregon
149. Matthew Trappett, PhD student, Computer Science, University of Oregon
150. Kristina Beggen, PhD student, Environmental Studies & Sociology, University of Oregon
151. Ali Hassani, PhD student, Computer Science, University of Oregon.
152. Vinita Vader, PhD student, Psychology, University of Oregon
153. Jessie Heine, PhD student, English, University of Oregon
154. Matthew Miyagi Tuten, PhD Student, Department of Philosophy, University of Oregon
155. Margaryta Golovchenko, PhD student, Art History, University of Oregon
156. Taylor J. Wilson, PhD Student, Human Physiology, University of Oregon
157. Shane L Burrell Jr, PhD Student, University of Oregon
158. Xiangchen Gu, PhD student, EALL, University of Oregon
159. Halley Fritze, PhD Student, Mathematics, University of Oregon
160. Mew Lingjun Jiang, PhD Student, Art History, University of Oregon
161. Madison Fowler-Niblock, PhD Student, Environmental Studies/English, University of Oregon
162. Cristien Arzate, PhD Student, Physics, University of Oregon
163. Meghanto Majumder, PhD Student, Computer Science, University of Oregon
164. Hunter Pearson, PhD Student, Accounting, University of Oregon
165. Yajo Li (Ya-Chiao Li), PhD student, East Asian Language and Literature, University of Oregon

166. Aidana Bolatbekkyzy, PhD student, East Asian Languages and Literatures, University of Oregon
167. Jo O'Harrow, PhD Student, Mathematics, University of Oregon
168. Yongmin Park, PhD Student, Department of Mathematics, University of Oregon
169. Meghan Sharpm PhD Student, College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences, Oregon State University
170. Hanna Hoffman, PhD Student, Mathematics, University of Oregon
171. Cade White, Ph.D. Student, Applied Economics, Oregon State University
172. R. Jack Hanni, Ph.D. Student, Physics, University of Oregon
173. Joshua Speckman, Ph.D. Student, Mathematics, University of Oregon
174. Victoria Quenessen, PhD student in Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences, Oregon State University
175. Miles Moran, PhD Student, Department of Statistics, Oregon State University
176. Kaelan Weiss, PhD Student, College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Science, OSU
177. Colin Shea-Blymyer, PhD Student, Computer Science/Artificial Intelligence, Oregon State University
178. Karly Fear, PhD Student, Bioengineering, University of Oregon
179. Madeline Martin, PhD Student, Bioengineering, University of Oregon
180. Victoria Allen, PhD Student, Biology, University of Oregon
181. Samuel Bertrand, PhD Student, Biology, University of Oregon
182. Eric Williams, PhD Student, Mathematics, Portland State University
183. Megan Schneider, EdD Student, College of Education, Portland State University
184. Moaaz Alqady, PhD student, Mathematics, University of Oregon
185. Iman von Briesen, PhD student, bioengineering, University of Oregon
186. Rudrajit Choudhuri, PhD Student, School of EECS, Oregon State University
187. Amreeta Chatterjee, PhD Student, School of EECS, Oregon State University
188. Emily Wilke, PhD Student, School Psychology, University of Oregon
189. Akshith Gunasekaran, PhD Student, Computer Science, Oregon State University
190. Viet Lai, PhD candidate, Computer Science, University of Oregon
191. Dewi Yokelson, PhD candidate, Computer Science, University of Oregon
192. Alexander Rockhill, PhD candidate, Human Physiology, University of Oregon
193. Thomas Bouley, PhD candidate, Physics, University of Oregon
194. Genevieve Connolly, PhD candidate, Physics, University of Oregon
195. Meredith Jacobson, PhD Candidate, Environmental Studies & Sociology, University of Oregon
196. Christina Cauley, PhD Candidate, Earth Sciences, University of Oregon
197. Keira Johnson, PhD Candidate, Water Resources Science, Oregon State University
198. Xiaoyan Deng, PhD Candidate, EALL, University of Oregon
199. Peter Suechting, PhD Candidate, Environmental Studies & Political Science, University of Oregon
200. Abhijeet Melkani, Phd Candidate, Physics, University of Oregon
201. Rye Davies, PhD candidate, University of Oregon
202. Hope Healey, PhD candidate, Biology, University of Oregon
203. Terrah Owens, PhD Candidate, Animal and Rangeland Sciences, Oregon State University
204. Tim Strikwerda, PhD Candidate, EALL, University of Oregon
205. Zachary Bush, PhD candidate, Biology, University of Oregon
206. Insang Song, PhD Candidate, Geography, University of Oregon
207. Amy Soudachanh, PhD Candidate, Physics, University of Oregon
208. Haisu Huang, PhD Candidate, Sociology, University of Oregon

209. Sam Horst, PhD Candidate, Biology, University of Oregon
210. Rose Al-Saadi, PhD Candidate, Biology, University of Oregon
211. Madison Phelps, PhD Candidate, Oregon State University
212. Zach Sullivan, PhD Candidate, Computer Science, University of Oregon
213. Samantha Ruth Brown, PhD Candidate, Geography, University of Oregon
214. Mitchell Fisher, PhD Candidate, Dept Human Physiology, University of Oregon
215. Rubi Ruopp, PhD Candidate, Biology, University of Oregon
216. Justin Svendsen, PhD Candidate, Biochemistry, University of Oregon
217. Zachary Hilliard, Postdoctoral Scholar, Oregon State University
218. Shiloh Drake, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Linguistics, University of Oregon
219. Stephen Rust, Senior Instructor and Faculty Senator, English, University of Oregon
220. Bjorn Smars, Senior Instructor and Faculty Senator, English, University of Oregon
221. William Streit, Cook 1, Valssetz Dining Hall, Western Oregon University.
222. Barry Walker, Instructor, Geology, Portland State University
223. Thomas W. Breyer, PMHNP Student Health Services
224. Jason Clark, Associate Professor, Oregon State University
225. David Steinberg, Senior Instructor, Mathematics, University of Oregon
226. Stefan Seiter, Senior Instructor, Oregon State University.
227. Mark Colas, Assistant Professor of Economics, University of Oregon
228. CJ Keist, Assistant Director Digital Research, Oregon State University
229. Nathan Tublitz, Professor Emeritus, Biology, University of Oregon
230. Tara Massad, Instructor, CEOAS, Oregon State University
231. Emily A. Hahn, MAT, Portland State University
232. Rebecca DesPrez, Executive Assistant, University of Oregon
233. Sammi Strawser, Library Technician II, University of Oregon
234. Cristina Calhoun, senior Instructor, Classics, University of Oregon
235. Heather Bennett, Administrative Assistant, College of Engineering, Oregon State University
236. Jason W. Roach, EH&S Professional 2, REMS Dept. Oregon Institute of Technology
237. Anne Laskaya, Assoc Professor, English, University of Oregon
238. Alexandra Cortes, Academic Counselor-College Assistance Migrant Program at Oregon State University
239. Anne Mannering, Career Lecturer, Department of Psychology, University of Oregon
240. Kristen Jennings, Dept of Fisheries, Wildlife & Conservation Sci, Oregon State University
241. Audrey Desjarlais, Grants and Contracts Coordinator, College of Education, University of Oregon
242. Jayde Hansen, Space Analyst and Planning Associate, University of Oregon
243. Catherine Flynn, Institutional Repository Manager, University of Oregon
244. Cheryl A. Ernst, Executive Director, American English Institute, University of Oregon
245. Nina Amstutz, Associate Professor, History of Art and Architecture, University of Oregon
246. Benjamin Todd, Communications Coordinator, Oregon State University
247. David Rothwell, Associate Professor, Oregon State University
248. Jennifer Crowder, Executive Assistant, University of Oregon
249. Heather Rolle, Fiscal Coordinator, Museum of Natural & Cultural History, University of Oregon
250. Christopher Still, Professor, Oregon State University
251. Bob Rickert Asst. Professor, School of Journalism and Communications, University of Oregon
252. Taylor Yoshihata, Buyer 1, Materials Management Services, Portland State University
253. Nirupama Bulusu, Professor, Maseeh College of Engineering and Computer Science, Portland State University
254. Heike Williams, Bio Tech Research Technician, Oregon State University

255. Jennifer Mirabile, Human Resources, University of Oregon
256. LeAnn K. Headrick, Assistant to the Director, School of Public Policy, Oregon State University
257. Madison Prue, Program Assistant, Environmental and Natural Resources Law Center,  
University of Oregon School of Law
258. Evan Gottlieb, Professor of English, Oregon State University
259. Jack Kemp, Media Producer, University of Oregon
260. Zachary Wallmark, Professor of Musicology, University of Oregon
261. Jaidan McLean, Admissions Receptionist and Linguistics Alum, University of Oregon
262. Ben Saunders, Professor of English, University of Oregon
263. Haley Koski, Undergraduate Advertising
264. Andrea Frei, MS candidate in comparative health sciences, Oregon State University
265. John Shuford, MA, JD, PhD, Conflict Resolution Program, Portland State University
266. John W. Davis, Adjunct Faculty, University of Oregon, parent
267. Autumn Morgan, Manager of Administrative Services, College of Design, Portland
268. Marsha Weisiger, Associate Professor, History, University of Oregon
269. Andreas Schmittner, Professor, College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences, Oregon  
State University
270. Maximilian Schmidt, Faculty Research Assistant, Center for Quantitative Life Sciences and  
OSU Open Source Lab, Oregon State University
271. Jacob Bukoski, Assistant Professor, Oregon State University
272. Ashton Robertson, External Communications Coordinator, OSU Extension 4-H
273. Bailey Garvin, Student Engagement Coordinator, Oregon State University
274. Lelsey Williams, Executive Assistant, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon
275. Rayne Vieger, eLearning & OER Coordinator, University of Oregon
276. Rebecca Maher, PhD, Institute of Ecology and Evolution, University of Oregon
277. Gerald Gast, Associate Professor of Architecture, University of Oregon
278. Cathy McDermond, Payroll Accountant, University of Oregon
279. Kurt Langworthy, Director Center for Advanced Materials Characterization, University of  
Oregon
280. Jamie Kennel, Professor, Oregon Institute of Technology
281. Abigail Rotholz, Access Advisor, University of Oregon
282. Amy Sibul, Director of Internships & Career Readiness, Human Physiology, University of  
Oregon
283. Steven Brence, Senior Instructor II, Philosophy, University of Oregon
284. Alexandra Rempel, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, University of Oregon
285. James Rankin, Library Technician, Valley Library, Oregon State University
286. Alessandra Burgos, Program Manager, Oregon State University
287. Sabrina Mostoufi, PhD graduate, Department of Biology, University of Oregon
288. James Tuttle, Education Program Assistant II, University of Oregon
289. Lindy Comrada, Research Coordinator, University of Oregon
290. Chris Larsen, Public Info Rep 2, University of Oregon
291. Audrey Lucero, Associate Professor, College of Education
292. Ernesto Javier Martinez, Associate Professor, Indigenous, Race, and Ethnic Studies
293. Steve Nash, Asst. Director - Payroll, Oregon State University
294. Becky Beach, Buyer 3, Molecular Biology, University of Oregon
295. Bree Mead, Academic Advisor, Electrical Engineering & Computer Science, Oregon State  
University
296. Sarah Lambert, Academic & Career Advisor, Tykeson College & Career Advising, UO

297. Nancy Cheng, Associate Professor, School of Architecture & Environment, College of Design, University of Oregon
298. Betsy Ruth, MSW, Office of Administration, College of Education, University of Oregon.
299. Barbara Baird, School of Music and Dance, University of Oregon
300. Solomon Weisbard, Assistant Professor, Portland State University
301. Sonja Dahl, Career Instructor, University of Oregon
302. Mitchell Block, Jon Anderson Chair, Professor of Documentary Studies and Production, University of Oregon
303. Janine Sepulveda, Senior Instructor II, American English Institute, University of Oregon
304. Vreneli Farber, retired OSU Professor of Russian
305. Dominique Bachelet, Associate professor, senior research, BEE, Oregon State University
306. James Taplin, Instructor and Program Manager, COB, Oregon State University
307. Penny Jahraus, Director of Career-Connected Learning, South Metro-Salem STEM Partnership, Oregon Tech
308. Robert Griesinger, Pro Tem Instructor, University of Oregon
309. Houssam Abbas, Assistant Professor, Oregon State University
310. Mathurin Fogg, Port Captain CEOAS Ship operations, Oregon State University
311. Charles K Sollitt, Professor Emeritus, Civil Engineering, Oregon State University
312. Solmaz Kive, Assistant Professor, University of Oregon
313. Shiao-ling Yu, Associate Professor, Oregon State University
314. John Barber, Academic Advisor, Oregon State University
315. Anne McVay, Graduate Programs Assistant, SOJC, University of Oregon
316. Lindsay Henderson, EHS Professional 3, Portland State University
317. Alison Helzer, Accounting Technician, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Oregon
318. Keli Yerian, Senior Instructor II, University of Oregon
319. Elisandra Garcia, Visiting Assistant Professor, University of Oregon
320. Sagan Wallace, LEAD Evening Supervisor, Valley Library, Oregon State University
321. Patricia Fifita, Assistant Professor, Ethnic Studies, Oregon State University
322. Dewi Roberts, Honors College Advising Coordinator, Oregon State University
323. Jasper Walton, 2017 BS Graduate, Current Staff, University of Oregon
324. Kent A. Stevens, Professor Emeritus, Computer and Information Science, University of Oregon
325. Derrick Hindery, PhD, Associate Professor of Global Studies, University of Oregon
326. Kyle Niemeyer, PhD, Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Oregon State University
327. Brian Klopotek, Associate Professor of Indigenous, Race, and Ethnic Studies,, University of Oregon
328. Charles Theobald, Web Developer, Research & Innovation, University of Oregon
329. Elizabeth Larew, Collections Assistant, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon
330. Mark O'Harra, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art Preparator/Carpenter, University of Oregon
331. Joanna Goode, Professor, Education, University of Oregon
332. Jennifer Rice, Senior Instructor II, AEI, University of Oregon
333. Stacey Wagner, AVP, Master's Programs, Knight Campus, University of Oregon
334. Louie Vidmar, Classified Employee, Technology Infrastructure, University of Oregon
335. Morning Star Padilla, Design Librarian, University of Oregon
336. Roxann Prazniak, Professor of History Emerita, Honors College, University of Oregon
337. Malgorzata Peszynska, Professor of Mathematics, Oregon State University
338. Jaga Giebultowicz, Professor Emeritus of Biology, Oregon State University
339. hannah white, Coordinator for Leadership and Community Engagement, University of Oregon

340. Mary McVein, Support Staff, School of Art + Design, Portland State University
341. Janis C. Weeks, Ph.D., Professor Emerit of Biology, University of Oregon
342. Ralph E Showalter, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, Oregon State University
343. Danielle Mericle, Curator of Visual Materials, Knight Library, University of Oregon
344. Renee L. Benoit, Campus Planning, University of Oregon
345. Jessica Dietch, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Oregon State University
346. Xavier Oberlander, Admin. Program Asst., School of Art + Design, Portland State University
347. Scott Blumenthal, Assistant Professor, University of Oregon
348. Shannon Brown, Electronic Resources Acquisitions Specialist, University of Oregon
349. Tammias Hicks, University of Oregon Alumni.
350. Mina Ossiander, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, Oregon State University; daughter of 2 OSU alumni; mother of UO & OSU alumni
351. Jay Gopalakrishnan, Professor of Mathematics, Portland State University
352. Kiri Wagstaff, Senior Instructor, Computer Science, Oregon State University
353. Wendy Larson, Professor Emeritus, East Asian Languages and Literatures, University of Oregon
354. Matt Orr, Associate Professor, Biology, OSU-Cascades
355. Puja Clifford, Instructor, Education Studies, University of Oregon
356. Joan Dobbie, Instructor, PE/REC, University of Oregon
357. Kari Marie Norgaard, Professor, Sociology University of Oregon
358. Joshua Skov, Faculty, Lundquist College of Business, University of Oregon
359. Ethan Sperry, Barre Stoll Professor of Choral Music, Portland State University
360. Jay Kim, Associate Professor, College of Public Health and Human Sciences, Oregon State University
361. Mary Flahive, Professor Emerita, Mathematics, OSU
362. Sam Logan, Associate Professor, Oregon State University
363. Darryn Stevens, Warehouse Coordinator Oregon Tech-Bargaining Delegate
364. Matt Bozigar, Assistant Professor, College of Public Health and Human Sciences, Oregon State University
365. Kristin Whitman, Library Director Portland-Metro Campus, Oregon Tech
366. Melissa Bentley, Academic Advisor, University of Oregon
367. Jen Davis, EA, College of Education, University of Oregon
368. Becky Chiao, Director of Affirmative Action, Portland State University
369. Victoria Braun, Project Manager, Center for Translational Neuroscience,, University of Oregon
370. Sierra Corbin, Assistant Professor, Communication Disorders and Sciences, University of Oregon
371. Marcin Bownik, Professor in Department of Mathematics, University of Oregon
372. Rebecca Hutchinson, Associate Professor, Oregon State University
373. Jennifer Wells, Library Technician III, Oregon State University
374. Edward Waymire, Professor Emeritus, Oregon State University
375. Elizabeth Wheeler, Professor of English, University of Oregon
376. Lucas Castillo Delgado, Staff Videographer, University of Oregon
377. Julie Voelker-Morris, Senior Instructor II, Planning, Public Policy & Management, University of Oregon
378. Christopher Anderson, Dining Manager, Oregon State University
379. Meagan Wengrove, Assistant Professor, Oregon State University
380. Holly Swisher, Professor of Mathematics, Oregon State University
381. Rakesh Bobba, Associate Professor School of EECS, Oregon State University
382. Anita Sarma, Professor, Professor School of EECS, Oregon State University

383. Karen Wiedenfeld Needham, Research Faculty, Human Physiology, University of Oregon
384. Vincent Immler, Assistant Professor, School of EECS, Oregon State University
385. Arian Mobasser, Ph.D., Men's Resource Center, University of Oregon
386. Bowen Browder, Residence Life Coordinator, Oregon Institute of Technology
387. Christopher Ian Foster, International & Global Studies and Black Studies at Portland State University.
388. Katie Harvey, Assistant Director of Career Development, College of Agricultural Sciences, Oregon State University
389. Christine Escher, Professor of Mathematics, Oregon State University
390. Thomas Schmidt, Professor of Mathematics, Oregon State University
391. Kelly McElroy, Outreach Librarian Associate Professor, Oregon State University
392. Geoffrey Henderson, Academic Advisor, University of Oregon
393. Rosalind McClure, Professor, Natural Sciences Department, Oregon Institute of Technology
394. Xavier Siemens, Professor, Department of Physics, Oregon State University
395. Michael Brooks, college union maintenance tech, OIT
396. Dawn Marie Gaid, Academic Advisor, CEOAS, Oregon State University
397. Aniko Drlik-Muehleck, Institute for Policy Research & Engagement, School of Planning, Public Policy, and Management, University of Oregon
398. Dominic Von Feldt, Area Coordinator of Residence Life, Southern Oregon University
399. Robert Flood, Facilities Supervisor, Oregon State University, Cascades Campus
400. Jadd Tryon, Administrative Program Assistant, University of Oregon
401. Daniel Lowd, Associate Professor of Computer Science, University of Oregon
402. Laurie Newman, parent of UO freshman
403. Zoé Smiley, New Student Programs Coordinator, Oregon Institute of Technology