

4/28/2023

Chairs Sanchez and Steiner,

My name is Marcus Nichols, and I am a Natural Resource Instructor in the CTE (Career & Technical Education) Department at Treasure Valley Community College in Ontario Oregon.

In my 15-year career as a community college instructor, I have witnessed times of adequate funding and times where funding was subpar. Throughout each of these periods, Treasure Valley Community College (TVCC) was the best and often only option for our students. What I see now is a period where many students are even more vulnerable than they were in the past. Inflation has impacted our most vulnerable community members in a significant way. Many of my students are barely getting by and are turning to their local community colleges for workforce training opportunities that lead to higher wage opportunities in the communities in which they live.

Now is a time for workforce training investment across the state! Funding instruction in these high demand fields is essential. When innovative programs are developed and new students are brought to campus, support staff including advisors, career counselors, IT (Information Technology) support, student service clerks and more are all increasingly needed. In times of budget shortfalls, these positions are often the first cut. The students ultimately pay the price through decreased services, lower success rates and often higher tuition bills. Sustainable funding to community colleges like TVCC is essential to hire and retain these faculty and staff that serve our region.

The part of my job that I love the most are the success stories. To date, I have seen multiple students go from the brink of poverty, including homelessness, minimum wage, public housing, food stamps and other state and federal programs to truly valuable contributors to our local economy. I have former students that are local business owners hiring dozens of workers in Malheur County, state and federal agency employees managing critical

resources for or local ag and natural resource industries as well as teachers educating Oregon youth. Many of these stories would not have happened without TVCC. Community Colleges operate on thinner financial margins than public and private universities throughout the state. When we experience cuts to funding, those cuts translate into program reductions and higher tuition or fees for the most vulnerable students. That means fewer of these students will become tomorrow's success stories.

In my humble opinion, community colleges serve the state more than they cost. Investments in community college education have an incredibly high return on investment. Increasing community college funding NOW reduces state spending later. Please support the education workforce bills so that educators in Oregon's community colleges can continue to add value to this state and the students we serve.

Thank you for your time and efforts,

Marcus Nichols

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of fluid, connected strokes that form a stylized representation of the name 'Marcus Nichols'.

Career and Technical Educator