

Chair Hudson and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) at the University of Oregon. As a former student participant, the SCYP experience was transformative in shaping my professional and personal development. I entered the SCYP as a graduate student within the School of Planning, Public Policy and Management (PPPM) at the University of Oregon. Though I had no experience working with local governments prior to SCYP, this program gave me the much-needed inspiration to pursue a rewarding career in public service. Since finishing the SCYP and graduating in 2018 from PPPM, I have been honored to serve four Oregon cities, two counties and two state agencies in both professional and volunteer roles. As a public servant, my goal is to serve all members of the public by providing them with the resources to build and engage in sustainable, livable communities. This is the mission and the values that SCYP instilled in me. Today, I work for Business Oregon, the state of Oregon's economic development agency.

During my time in the SCYP, I had the invaluable opportunity to work on real-world projects that addressed pressing challenges faced by local communities. I collaborated with a team of three other students to develop transportation improvement recommendations for the City of Albany's downtown sector. We then presented our recommendations to city staff and faculty members.

The SCYP provided meaningful hands-on experience and gave me practical insights into how fresh thinking, new perspectives, and evidence-based ideas can be customized to the unique contexts of local Oregon communities to improve the quality of life for residents. Collaborating with city officials, faculty, and fellow students further enhanced my technical and analytical skills, and allowed me to hone my 'soft' skills like collaborative team work, time and project management, presenting ideas to the public, and of course writing effectively – all of which are extremely important in the professional workplace. I am grateful to have had this type of training in college so that I could enter the workforce ready to contribute on day one.

In talking with friends that attended universities in other states, it is clear that the SCYP is a unique and effective program that serves as a bridge between academic learning and practical application, fostering a new generation of leaders who are prepared to address the multifaceted challenges of our time. The SCYP helped equip me and the hundreds of other students the program serves each year with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to contribute meaningfully to society.

I wholeheartedly support sustainable and on-going support of the Sustainable City Year Program and the profound benefits it offers to students, communities, and to Oregon as a whole. The SCYP truly is a model of integrating the 'public' into public higher education and the state's investment in the SCYP will help create a new generation workforce with leaders who are ready to tackle the economic, environmental, and social challenges Oregon faces.

Sincerely,

Seth Thompson, Springfield, Oregon