



OREGON STATE CAPITOL,
900 Court St NE,
Salem, OR 97301

1 May 2025

Dear Senate President Wagner, Speaker Fahey, and members of the Oregon State Legislature,

Please allow me to offer my strong support for the Oregon State University's STEM Learning and Research Center capital project proposal. This project will benefit the education of students in disciplines spanning the range of academic offerings at OSU. A workforce that has a strong background in science benefits all professional disciplines including non-scientist specialties like business executives, artists and writers. The new OSU STEM Learning and Resource Center will enlighten such students who will become the workforce of tomorrow.

One important task that falls on the shoulders of the University's College of Science is to nurture students fresh out of high school and guide their transformation into highly educated nascent scientists who are fully prepared to receive further specialized advanced training in support of their dream of a lifelong career making scientific discoveries. Their successes and those of other disciplines will bring kudos to Oregon as they seek ways to improve the lives of Oregonians and people across the nation and globe.

This project will fill an important gap in the facility needs at Oregon State University. New laboratory space is needed to support physics research that is fundamental to enhancing economic growth in Oregon. Why? Because physicists address technologies that will benefit the health of people in the future. At OSU such technologies include developing clean, safe sources of energy, clean atmospheric gases and more efficient semiconductors that will alleviate the heavy power appetite of our current and future computer farms. This is especially timely because the various applications of artificial intelligence will require greatly increased energy resources.

I was a graduate student at Oregon State University, specializing in developmental physiology and radiation science. I graduated in 1972 with the M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in integrative science. My training gave me the opportunity to gain further expertise in the medical sciences at OHSU. I am just now retiring from a career spanning 5 decades as a professor, teacher, research scientist and Institute founder and director. I owe my success to the wonderful professors at Oregon State University who took me under their wing. I currently chair the External Scientific Board of the ECHO Program at the National Institutes of Health which allows me the opportunity to oversee studies in communities across the country.

It is so heartening to see the amazing progress that has occurred at OSU in recent decades. My current service as a member of the College of Science's Advisory Board has allowed me to

become acquainted with the many visionary improvements in education over recent years. The transformation is awe-inspiring. The new core curriculum and the emphasis on STEM education is exciting and places OSU in a leadership position nationally.

One feature of OSU's "new" educational strategy is the emphasis on personalized learning. The new experiential learning program that takes advantage of small groups is an example. The new methods lead to better student performance. These educational innovations are the underpinnings of the upward trend in matriculation at OSU even as other institutions suffer enrollment downturns. Physics and biophysics may sound like boring subjects, seemingly fit for social misfits. Nothing could be further from the truth at OSU. It is clear from meeting many science students in these fields that they are thriving, happy and excited about their learning experiences at OSU and are optimistic about their future. They represent a gold mine of talent.

OSU has been a leader in statewide education for many years. The STEM Learning Center will be designed to enhance that outreach. People of all ages from across the state will be welcome to participate in the science education offerings at the Center. The building will be adjacent to OSU's new and beautiful performing arts center (the PRAX) which will provide the opportunity for students to experience the joy of melding science with the arts.

The exciting feature of the proposed Center is that students from all walks of life and all disciplines will have the opportunity to participate with hands-on learning experiences. Thus, the program will seed the thrill of science across colleges and departments. It is not an exaggeration to state that the proposed Center will impact OSU and promote its energetic drive to provide a superior education to its students. In so doing OSU will further its national reputation as it impacts Oregon in a substantial way.

Please accept my enthusiastic endorsement for this new Center which will bring exciting innovations to Oregon. Its leaders are innovators and their vision is futuristic. As the largest university in the state, OSU has a long track record of success based on projects that receive state funding. Thus, investment in this Center will continue that string of successes. The Center will allow us as fellow Oregonians to be proud of our investment in the education, health and wellbeing of future generations.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kent L. Thornburg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kent" being more prominent and the last name "Thornburg" following in a similar style.

Kent L. Thornburg

OSU Graduate 1972
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