

Members of the OSU Board of Trustees,

I'm sure that you will hear this mantra repeated in some form or another or that you have heard it already from students; that is: TUITION IS TOO DAM HIGH. Though perhaps its a playful pun here at OSU—I'm sure we can all agree on that—the importance of its message cannot be overstated. In fact, the mere actuality that we have to urge you, as the Board, to recognize that we struggle in paying for school should stress the fact of that sentence, and should, ultimately, make all of us squirm a little bit in our seats.

Tuition is too dam high. Currently pursuing a degree in English and Education—definitely not a job meant for pursuing a swelling salary—and also in the process of applying to an Accelerated Graduate Platform in English, my estimated loans amount to an intimidating \$43,000.

Entering school as a first generation college student, my parents sent me off with a heedful warning. That is: we can't pay for school. I had not been surprised by this. My parents had seen little need for higher education and, subsequently, funding wasn't something that they spent much of their time on, nor saw much benefit in. In turn, I have been working to go to school before I even started attending OSU and ever since I have. In high school, not only did I work to make sure my involvement stretched in and out of the classroom, into the community, and into impactful organizations, I too worked hard at what I did. I graduated valedictorian of my class and won \$13,000 in scholarships my first year. I thought, okay, I won't have to pay for school my first year; this is great!

Then I got the bill.

I realized, with a sudden wave of mounting fear—a feeling I have never since been able to mimic—that I still had to pay for a place to live, to pay for food, for clothes, for shoes, for shampoo, for school *textbooks*. I had to pay to live and to go to school. How was this even possible?

Every year since I've been in higher education, I have taken out the highest number of loans at the highest amount that I can, though still find myself scraping into my savings in order to pay back those metastasizing, disconcerting fees. Next term, I will be taking 22 credits, three over the recommended limit. I continue to maintain all As, am involved in ASOSU—our student government—work fifteen hours a week as a Resident Assistant, am involved in the English Student Association as an English major, work within the National Society of Leadership and Success, in the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, and the Residence Hall Association. My days begin at 6:45 AM and end at midnight—though tend to, on weeks like Dead Week, end at 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning.

I don't take things like a tuition raise lightly. That's why I lobby on behalf of students for these types of issues and make sure that, even within a packed schedule, that these large-scale events will always come first. And as a representative of ASOSU, I found that when I tell students that I am acting as their voice, it's important that I know it is being heard. As a student, I am asking you to freeze tuition and stop an increase. Are you listening to us? Do you hear? Our message is loud and clear: Please SAVE STUDENTS FROM DROWNING IN DEBT.

Thank you,

Justin Bennett

Hello Chair Reser, President Ray. board members,

Tuition is too dam high.

~~Students are drowning in debt.~~

I am an immigrant. My parents and I moved to the United States when I was only two years old. My parents didn't just leave India; they left their families, their language, the only place they'd ever known to come to a completely foreign world. They did this because they wanted me to have more opportunities than they did. They grew up in utter poverty, and they wanted more for me than that. Though they came to America with heavy accents and very little money, they worked hard to earn the life they had always envisioned. Twenty years later, my family is considered middle class and my parents own a small business.

I am more fortunate than most and I recognize that. I often think about another Indian girl; the one that didn't get to leave poverty and will never see the opportunities that I have in my life. I am grateful every day to be able to attend Oregon State University to pursue a degree in Chemical Engineering. However, there is no denying that the cost of higher education has been a huge burden. My family makes too much to qualify for financial assistance, but doesn't make enough for the costs of college to be insignificant. My father works a full-time job in addition to running a small business with my mother. Despite doing everything they were supposed to, they still find themselves struggling to pay for my education. This shouldn't be the case. People shouldn't be drowning in debt as the result of pursuing a better life for themselves.

Students cannot, and will not accept a tuition increase. The Board must not vote to increase tuition. **Please save students from drowning in debt.**

Shivali Kadam

President