



Oregon State  
University



Portland State  
UNIVERSITY



May 14, 2019

The Honorable Peter Courtney  
The Honorable Tina Kotek  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear President Courtney and Speaker Kotek,

The 2019 legislative session, to date, has been defined by landmark investments in early childhood and K-12 education. We applaud these efforts because Oregon's early childhood and K-12 education systems are directly linked to the success of Oregon's universities. Together, we are essential to the economic vitality of the state.

As you complete your development of the state budget for the coming biennium, it is imperative that you adequately fund higher education and increase the Public University Support Fund (PUSF). Specifically, an increase of \$120 million (for a PUSF total of \$857 million), fully funding Engineering and Technology Sustaining Fund, and sports lottery scholarships for student-athletes will protect access, affordability, and research at Oregon's public universities.

Student success does not end at grade 12. High-demand, high-wage, high-skill jobs in Oregon require a post-secondary certificate or degree. For our students and our economy, it is time to finish the job that the Joint Committee on Student Success began and invest in post-secondary education.

As the board chairs of Oregon's public universities, it is our responsibility to provide opportunities and access for all Oregon students. Without additional state funding, Oregon students will face an untenable combination of tuition increases, staggering student debt, and cuts to programs and services that will impede their ability to attain a degree.

Each of our institutions faces rising costs, many of which are mandated by the state, and others that are related to critical student safety like Title IX compliance that we simply must fund. In the absence of additional state funding to account for these increases, we will be forced to make harmful cuts to our programs and workforce, in addition to asking students and their families to close the budget gap through tuition increases.

Some lawmakers have suggested that investments should be focused on early childhood and K-12 education because institutions of higher education have another revenue source in the form of student tuition. This view ignores the reality of today's post-secondary students. As reported recently in the *New York Times*, many are food and housing insecure and often must choose between eating, paying household bills, and financing tuition and textbooks.

Increasing tuition is not a solution; it is a roadblock. It also ignores the reality of state-mandated cost drivers and sends the message to every Oregonian, but particularly those who are least able to afford college, that they are not entitled to a brighter future. This is the wrong message.

Please invest at least \$120 million in tuition stability so that we can all minimize student debt and strengthen the entire education continuum in Oregon.

Students and families across the state are counting on the Legislature to keep the cost of a college degree affordable. These efforts should include funding for student financial aid programs, and investments in programs that directly respond to the workforce needs of Oregon's employers.

As board chairs, we assure you that increased funding will directly benefit the students we serve and will pay dividends for our state well into the future.

We urge you to fully fund post-secondary education and stand ready to partner in any efforts that further that goal.

Sincerely,



David Nelson  
Chair, EOU Board of Trustees



Dr. Lisa Graham  
Chair, OIT Board of Trustees



Rani Borkar  
Chair, OSU Board of Trustees



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Chair, PSU Board of Trustees



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