

April 14, 2017

Oregon Legislative Assembly
Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Education
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chair Monroe, Co-Chair Smith Warner, and Members of the Subcommittee:

As an alumnus of the University of Oregon (UO) and Chair of its Board of Trustees, I urge you to prioritize investment in Oregon's public university students this biennium. UO is steadfast in its commitment to its public mission of developing a community of scholars who are educated and equipped to enter the workforce in a changing economy. To realize this mission, we must maintain and build excellence in both teaching and research, as well as preserve accessibility for students across Oregon. This all requires adequately funding our public universities, including the University of Oregon. Access, affordability, completion, and excellence are, and always will always be, the key tenants of UO's strategic vision. Every choice we make must advance those tenants.

As a result of increasing cost drivers, many of which are the result of state law and beyond our ability to control, the UO Board of Trustees approved a 10.6% tuition increase for resident undergraduate students for the next academic year. That decision was made following a public process that included several months of dialogue with the campus community. Despite that tuition increase, the UO's forecasted budget for next year *also* includes nearly \$9 million in painful budget cuts and cost reductions that will impact the lives and academic experiences of students, not to mention the livelihoods of faculty and staff.

This session, the Legislature has an opportunity to cut UO's tuition increase in half by investing an additional \$100 million in the Public University Support Fund (PUSF) beyond what the Governor recommended in her December 2016 budget (GRB). This investment would bring the PUSF total to \$765 million for the biennium. The tuition and fee proposal adopted by the Board automatically ratchets down the tuition increase by approximately one percentage point for every increase of \$20 million in the PUSF beyond GRB. A total investment of \$765 million would lower UO's tuition increase to 5.1% next year. Oregon students need and deserve this type of support from lawmakers, even though it is still not enough long-term.

Operating funds are vital for universities to provide essential financial aid packages, high-quality instruction, and support services that improve completion. In addition to these operating funds, public universities are seeking flat funding of \$39.1 million for State Programs, which would allow for the continuation of dispute resolution programs, Clinical Legal Education, and the TallWood Design Institute. Finally, universities are seeking the reinstatement of one-percent of Lottery funds for the Sports Lottery program, which was eliminated in the GRB. Sports Lottery allows us to meet Title IX requirements to equitably fund women's athletics programs. It is also the only source of publicly funded graduate academic scholarships in the state.

On behalf of UO's Board of Trustees, I urge you to help Oregon students and their families by investing in the PUSF, State Programs, and Sports Lottery. These are core components of public university budgets that can continue to make a college degree accessible, affordable, and worthwhile.

Thank you for consideration.

Sincerely,



Charles M. Lillis, Ph.D.
Chair, Board of Trustees of the University of Oregon

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