



Founded in 1975, OSA is a coalition of student governments dedicated to the representation, service, and protection of the collective interests of over 100,000 students in postsecondary education.

Hello Co-chairs Komp and Monroe, members of the committee: My name is Jazmin Roque, I'm a student at Southern Oregon University, one of the co-chairs for OSCC, the Oregon Students of Color Coalition with the Oregon Student Association and a member of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.

Today, you are going to hear from a lot of students and some of you weren't in college when it cost as much as it does now, so I ask you to really consider the cost of our education. We are here today representing the students on our campuses that are angry, hungry, frustrated, and hopeless. I ask that today you listen to our remarks with an open mind and know that any remarks that sound a little intense have been paired down from the more colorful feedback we hear from our peers on campus.

If tuition goes up at the 5.8% rate, or the way I think of it as 5 ½ months of groceries at SOU next year, I will have seen a 20% increase in my tuition since I started attending Southern Oregon University in the fall of 2010 as a full time student. That's 20% in 3 years. I receive every form of need-based aid you can think of on top of merit scholarships and I've held at least two jobs since I started school to help make ends meet. Yet, I still find myself having to take out an increasing amount of student loans every year just to pay for school. Disinvestment in our community colleges and universities is placing a huge burden on students and it's not a sustainable system.

My story isn't unique; it's a reality many of my peers face as well. Nationally, the average student graduates with \$25,000 dollars in debt. As of 2008, the average Southern Oregon University student graduates with \$26,000 dollars in debt. This means

that Southern graduates students with the most debt out of all the public universities in Oregon and ranks 3rd highest among private Oregon universities. Yes, our public universities are graduating students with more debt than private universities in our own state.

How is that possible? Well, since 2007, Oregon has seen a 32% decrease in per-student public support when inflation is taken into account which comes to about \$3,650 per student.

Only four other states -- Colorado, New Hampshire, Vermont and Ohio -- provide less taxpayer support per student.

This severe disinvestment has meant that students and their families are being burdened the difference. Oregon used to be considered a low-tuition state. But payments from students and their families now average \$6,100 a year across public universities and community colleges, about 20 percent above the national average.

Southern Oregon University isn't the only institution with plans to raise tuition again next year and the reality is that these tuition hikes are not only leaving graduates with obscene amounts of debts but are now entirely pricing out students from working-class families. This is not only hurting them but it's hurting the Oregon economy as well.

I am on track to graduate next year, but I will not sit idly by as the state dooms my friends and family to a high school education because they can't afford college. Education is constantly brought up as a value of this state, but we have yet to put our money where our mouth is. We want 40 percent of our students to graduate from college, and we want another 40 percent to get a degree or certificate from community colleges. But so far, our policy has been: Yeah, let's meet state goals but let's have the students pay for it.

Oregon needs to reinvest in post-secondary education. Students can't take it anymore, I can't take it anymore and enough is enough. We can't see tuition go up any more, not

this year, and not the next. These trends cannot persist for the next two to four years because this is not sustainable. Our community colleges and universities need to be accessible institutions for all Oregonians regardless of socio-economic status.

Today I am asking you, and thousands of Oregonians and students are asking you to increase the funding allocated to universities for the first time since the start of the recession. We are asking you to fund universities at \$850 million because that would keep tuition to inflation in the next biennium and it's the only funding level that will get us on track to achieving 40-40-20. If not the \$850 million that we really need, but is difficult we realize, then fund as at the same level as K-12. We should not be an afterthought in the education continuum because we are high pay tax contributors this state needs and because we are Oregonians looking to give back for what we get from our education. Of course if our debt doesn't hamstring us first. Put us back on the list of entities to fund next, treat us equal to K-12 and CCs.

Thank you.