



Chair Komp, Chair Monroe and members of the Committee,

For the record my name is David McDonald. I have the pleasure of serving as the Western Oregon University Associate Provost.

I am the proud parent of a high school sophomore and a 4th grade student which means I lie awake at night worried about the quality of life that my children will have. I wonder if it is possible that they will live in a state that is truly less educated than it is today? Will they live in a state that has enough well educated citizens to support the next Intel or Nike?

40-40-20 is so much more than a numerical aspiration, it is an opportunity to help Oregon students and families regain the hope for a brighter future. Higher education in Oregon continues to be a paradox. As Chancellor Rose noted last Wednesday, higher education enrollment in Oregon has grown faster than any other state and we have become more diverse. Yet we continue to receive less funding and experience higher costs such as PERS and PEBB. We also have a mix of counties that have very different educational attainment patterns and this committee also noted that there appears to be a relationship between economic health of a county and its educational attainment.

This legislature has the opportunity and the challenge to create a reality today that is full of hope that our schools and universities will be able to provide a high quality education at an affordable rate for all motivated students from all Oregon counties. Last week I met with a group of about twenty parents of high school students and after listening to their heartfelt expressions of concern and frustration I asked what they needed most. Their answer was elegantly simple. They want hope. They want to know that if they and their children work hard, study hard, and graduate from high school that a high quality university education will be possible.

Western Oregon University has implemented several innovative and impactful initiatives that make our personalized education as affordable as possible. Every OUS campus has made affordability and access priorities and our success in keeping the cost per degree the 3rd lowest in the nation is evidence of both our commitment and success in this area.

In 2007 WOU created a highly innovative program called the **Western Tuition Promise** which guaranteed that new undergraduate students from Oregon would have four years of the same tuition rate. This program provided students security from unexpectedly high tuition increases and a net savings over four years of about \$1,000. When we discussed the Promise with the State Board of Higher Education and the legislature we noted that the program was viable only as long as the state support did not decline. As Vice Chancellor Kenton noted state support for higher education has in fact declined significantly. The state support for WOU has decreased by 25% in the past five years. As a result, WOU was forced in 2012 to change the Promise. We replaced the Tuition Promise with the **Tuition Choice** that provided students the opportunity to select from two tuition plans; the Promise and the Traditional. The Traditional plan has a lower first year tuition that increases annually. In the new model the tuition for the Promise was set a

Associate Provost

345 Monmouth Ave. N. • APSC 412 • Monmouth, Oregon 97361 • 503.838.8919 • mcdonald@wou.edu • wou.edu

higher rate than we would have otherwise done as an offset to the reduced state support. We refer to these programs as the "Save Now" or "Save Later" options.

In 2010 WOU received a million dollar grant from the US Department of Education to develop a **textbook rental program**. The program includes textbooks, scientific calculators and interactive remote controls that students use to answer in-class questions that help the professor gauge student understanding of different concepts. Since 2011 the rental program has saved students \$500,000 compared to having to purchase these items. The rental program will continue to slowly expand as we add new titles to the rental inventory.

A new initiative that we just announced is a partnership with Maps Credit Union of Salem. Maps and WOU have developed an approach to educate and empower new WOU students to make financially prudent decisions as a way to increase college success rates and reduce student debt. The new **Maps Peer Mentors** program will provide training and scholarship support for 43 motivated WOU students to serve as peer mentors in each of the small living communities in our residence halls. These peer mentors will also provide retention support in areas such as overall student wellness, healthy choices, and initial referrals as needed to the Counseling Center or other campus resources.

Our new and innovative partnership with Maps Credit Union effectively complements the OUS working group that has been looking into ways to increase student financial literacy as a means to reduce student debt and increase graduation rates.

There are many other efforts that the OUS universities have developed to increase both access and affordability to our high quality educations. These partnerships are built around serving students and the state. They involve K-12, community colleges and private colleges. We could spend an entire day discussing these partnerships and how they have helped open the doors to a college degree to more students. These partnerships such as dual enrollment between community colleges and universities also promise to shorten the time it takes for students to earn their degree, which is another effective way to reduce costs.

As you continue the difficult work of crafting budget recommendations amid compelling and competing needs I remind you that what Oregon needs now more than anything is realistic and vibrant hope that our children will be able to attain the lives that they deserve and that their parents dream for them. I want to be able to look at my daughter's 4th grade class and realize that we have done all that we could to prepare them to be successful citizens of this truly great state. Giving them real hope that they will be able to attend one of our wonderful public universities is perhaps the best thing we can do.

I thank you for your attention and like all my colleagues I stand ready to work with you to make 40-40-20 the reality that supports all of Oregon and all of its children.

More information

Western Tuition Choice: www.wou.edu/choice

Western Tuition Promise: http://www.wou.edu/student/admissions/tuition_promise_print.php

Textbook Rental Program: <http://www.wou.edu/admin/bookstore/RentalProgram.php>