

James Cutz
Chemeketa Community College Student Testimony
4/2/2013

Co-chairs, members of the committee, my name is James Cutz. I am a student and serve as the executive coordinator for Chemeketa Community College's student government. Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony concerning the value of community colleges.

Prior to attending Chemeketa in 2011, I had received a bachelor's degree from Oregon State University and served nearly two years as an AmeriCorps volunteer in the mid-Willamette Valley. As my final AmeriCorps term came to a close, I began to ask myself what I wanted to come next in my life. I was not able to find employment related to my previous degree, nor was I interested in continuing work in a similar capacity as I had through AmeriCorps. I had always been interested in math and science, but never seriously considered myself as one who could excel in these areas.

I decided to take a calculus course at Chemeketa to determine if I could both succeed and enjoy an education in applied science. After success in the calculus course, I decided to enroll full-time to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering. I also applied and was accepted for a student leadership position through the student government program on campus.

The growth and opportunities that I have experienced at Chemeketa have been tremendous. Through my involvement in student government I have been able to serve my campus in a variety of capacities – helping students locate services, serving as the student representative on the Board of Education as well as a variety of standing college committees, and representing my campus as a student volunteer in Nicaragua. Through my coursework, I've been excellently prepared for transferring to a university-level engineering program, maintained a high GPA, and have been awarded a scholarship and summer research internship based on my academic efforts.

Chemeketa has given me many opportunities for personal and professional development. Were it not for resources such as the student food pantry, the tutoring center, and library and both the accountability and structure from student government, I would not have been able to achieve nearly as high a level of success as I have. My time at Chemeketa represents a chapter in my life that was been extremely productive, one where I have discovered both a passion for learning and helping those around me succeed.

It's my hope that you strongly consider funding community colleges at 453 million to ensure that the opportunities that I have been given will be available for students in the future. Thank you for your consideration.