

THE OREGON IDEA

SUPPORTING STUDENTS, COMMUNITY COLLEGES, AND UNIVERSITIES TO BUILD A BETTER OREGON

Testimony of Cody Ridenour
on behalf of The Oregon Idea
re: OUS Budget

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
March 27, 2013

Co-Chairs Komp and Monroe and Committee members, for the record my name is Cody Ridenour.

I am a graduate of Newberg High School. I am currently attending Portland Community College, and I hope to attend Portland State University after one more year at PCC. I plan to double major United States History and Political Science, with possible a double minor in Economics and Civic Leadership. I guess you can say that I am touching all the bases of your 40-40-20 plan.

I am the first in my family to go on to college. My mother was 16 when she had me, so believing that it was impossible, she gave up on education, and focused her energies in raising me. She taught me that college was a requirement to acquire a good job. But as I have attended college, and have been taught, and have self-taught through my passions in history, society, and ideas, I have learned that college is much more. It is the great equalizer between rich and poor, and it is the foundation for a democratic republic. When higher education becomes more expensive, less poor are able to attend, strengthening the risk of poverty, and eventually crime, undermining our state.

I am getting a good education at PCC, but it is not easy. Without Pell grants and student loans, it would be impossible. I expect to be paying more in the future, and by bringing an AA transfer degree with me to Portland State, I hope to be able to afford the cost of a bachelor's degree. But it will be tight. If tuition continues to increase by six percent a year, I may not be able to keep up with the costs.

I appreciate all the support that the state offers to its community colleges and public universities. I appreciate all the attention you have focused on the importance of post-secondary education with your 40-40-20 goals. But, as you invite and encourage more students to pursue their educations after high school, it sends the wrong message to those students when you continually raise the price of education beyond their means and the means of their families.

Students like me are already paying the largest share of the costs of their educations after high school. All we are asking is that you match our efforts and that you not make it harder for us to complete our educations, to pursue our dreams and to contribute to our communities and this great state.

The Oregon Idea is proposing a small, but important increase in funding for OUS that will allow our universities to keep tuition costs in line with family incomes. Please consider the modest increase in funding that will help to keep college within reach of the tens of thousands of Oregon students like me who graduate from our high schools every year, who believe in the value of a college education and who would like nothing better than to join you in achieving the goal of 40-40-20 if you can make it affordable for them to do so.