

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
ON SENATE BILL 270

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Chairman Hass, Vice Chair Knopp, and Committee Members, I am Michael Gottfredson, President of the University of Oregon. It is my pleasure to be with you today to testify in support of Senate Bill 270.

I joined the University of Oregon just over eight months ago after spending several decades as an administrator and faculty member at the University of Arizona and most recently at the University of California, Irvine.

I am here today to testify on behalf of the University of Oregon in support of SB 270. This bill is designed to enable the University to operate more flexibly to create opportunities for Oregon students; to generate greater financial resources to support education, research and public service; and to maintain the essential public nature of the University. I believe that it will do all of that and that it is a landmark piece of legislation designed to enhance the public interest.

I want to thank the Chairman and all members of the committee for their hard and careful work to bring this bill forward. I realize that the bill represents input from many relevant constituencies and seeks to enable what the University community has long sought while carefully protecting important considerations of other higher education colleagues, fiduciary responsibilities of the legislature, and the character and traditions of public higher education. You have done a remarkable job of combining the elements necessary to establish a true governing board for the University while respecting and responding to the important concerns raised in the process.

Senate Bill 270 does an admirable job of establishing those characteristics of a governing board long sought by the University community. By providing the foundation for a properly conceived governing board, SB 270 contributes significantly to modernizing Oregon's higher education structure to better serve the needs of Oregonians. Passage of SB 270 will give the University of Oregon a board that:

- Works to assist and support the university, not merely as fiduciaries, but also through intimate familiarity with the university, engagement in developing a strategic vision of the university, and dialogue with the leadership of the university;
- Provides the university with connections to the business, civic and opinion leaders of the state;
- Provides intellectual support for the university, engaging its professional schools, encouraging its leading faculty, and recognizing and broadcasting their contributions to discovery and scholarship, the state, and preparation of Oregonians;

- Provides both support and oversight for the president and the campus leadership;
- Brings expertise and an important external perspective to the university; and
- Ensures more direct connections between and accountability for the university's mission, goals, strategic plan, financial management, and performance.

Furthermore, an institutional board will allow us to tap into greater philanthropy to recruit and retain top faculty, make a UO education even more attractive and accessible to Oregon's best students, and build state-of-the-art facilities and technology to better serve the needs of Oregonians in the 21st century. And, importantly, it assures a high level of accountability as a public board.

We need look no further than to the Oregon Health and Science University, one of the nation's finest academic medical centers, to envision how such a board might operate to enhance the prospects for even greater contributions to the state welfare from the University. Governed by a board structure similar to that proposed in SB 270, OHSU is justifiably one the state's great educational points of pride.

We have an opportunity with SB 270 to achieve the same level of stature for all of Oregon's public universities and I appreciate the collaborative approach the committee has taken in working through the challenging details of this legislation to get us to this point today.

We support the appointment of a student as a voting member of a UO board. Students now pay the largest share of education costs (a shift from a time two decades ago when the state was the most important contributor) and have a very direct interest as "investors." They expect and deserve a say in how the university is governed.

We also strongly believe it is vitally important to include faculty representation on the UO board – either in a non-voting, ex-officio capacity, similar to the board status of the UO president, or as a voting member. Faculty membership on the Board is important to provide context and advice about the nature of the University, pedagogy, research mission, and strategic direction, as policy is crafted and governance is exercised by the Board.

I am deeply grateful to Senator Hass, members of this committee, and many other legislators in bringing this legislation to fruition. The particular interest by this committee and other legislators in future collaborations among OUS universities has fueled productive discussion and progress that we can build upon into the future to strengthen post-secondary education across the state.

Your commitment to educating Oregonians and bringing the wealth of discovery and innovation to our state is impressive. It is in keeping with the animating spirit of public higher education that has fueled our nation's prosperity ever since federal legislation created land grant universities and the national commitment to public research universities. Higher education is the key to individual social and economic mobility, and as a consequence, to the general public interests of our society. Access to education underlies the very idea of our democracy.

Passage of SB 270 will improve access for Oregonians and keep Oregon's best students here in Oregon. It will allow the UO to be more competitive in attracting and retaining top faculty,

reduce redundant bureaucracy and accelerate administrative and capital project timelines, and improve our ability to make critical purchases of the technology and equipment needed to serve the teaching, research, and outreach missions of the university. These outcomes are significant and will advance not only Oregon's 40-40-20 goals for educational attainment, but also Oregon's economic and civic vitality and ability to compete successfully in the global marketplace.

I thank you for bringing this about and for the privilege of testifying before you today in support of this historic legislation.

