

John Manning  
Mayor, Corvallis

Good afternoon, Chair Byer, Vice Chair Starr and committee members.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to share with you our enthusiasm and support for this regional business accelerator network: RAIN. As we have developed this concept over the past year, we increasingly see its potential to bridge "town and gown" interests – and to unite the Beavers and the Ducks -- in an unprecedented collaboration resulting in stronger companies and good jobs.

Oregon's venture-backed start-up community is growing rapidly. Although the sector still represents less than 1 percent of the state's workforce, these jobs continued to grow throughout the recession and often pay wages that are double or triple the state average. Among the local success stories: NuScale Power, which is incorporating OSU-led research to develop an inherently safe, small modular reactor for deployment in the U.S. and global markets and employs more than 150 in Corvallis and Portland. Community-based entrepreneurship is well represented at Inspired Light in Corvallis, which employs 12 and is developing solar cells that are both more efficient and less expensive than conventional solar panels. And when Polycom in Corvallis needed to expand its pool of highly skilled technicians for its fast-growing videoconferencing business, it turned to Linn-Benton Community College.

Now is the time to seize this momentum, building upon the unique assets found in the Southern Willamette Valley. Our Regional Solutions Team advisory committee agrees that a significant opportunity for collaboration lay in bringing together our major research universities and their growing investment in commercialization, excellent community colleges with their Small Business Development Centers and highly regarded workforce development programs, the assets and networks found at Oregon's Signature Research Centers ONAMI and BEST, well organized economic development and business communities, and local governments to form an integrated web of support for business acceleration and job creation. This is what Oregon RAIN is designed to do.

Previous speakers have outlined how this network will work. As mayor of Corvallis, I want you to know that we have invested our own city and county economic development funds to help further define the network and determine how local businesses outside the university can access its resources. And, as one who has lived in Corvallis for nearly 30 years, I am now seeing an unprecedented

level of commitment and strategic direction for economic development in our community. Now is the time to move forward with this innovative regional collaboration. I am convinced that it will not only result in more successful companies and jobs, but in new opportunities to work together on other important initiatives in the future. I urge you to give this concept your favorable consideration. Thank you.