

Oregon Public University Council

Post Office Box 751 503-725-4411
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To: House Committee on Higher Education, Innovation, and Workforce
Chair Tobias Read

From: The Provosts of Oregon's Public Universities

Subject: House Bill 2728

Date: February 27, 2015

Dear Chair Read and Members of the Committee,

Oregon's Public Universities support HB2728, which creates the Oregon Talent Council and eliminates the Engineering Technology Industry Council (ETIC).

All of our universities have benefited from the targeted, strategic investments made through ETIC in engineering and computer science education over the past decade. Although we are experiencing significant gaps in skilled tech workers today, we would not have cultivated the tech ecosystem that we have today in Oregon without industry-led investments in our higher education institutions that have doubled the number of engineering graduates and provided seed funding for new and innovative technology education programs. In creating the Oregon Talent Council, HB2728 expands what has previously been accomplished by ETIC in several ways.

First, it opens the door for more high-demand sectors, such as health care and energy, to build new market-responsive educational programs, as we face the challenges of new coordinated healthcare models and the integration of renewable energy with fossil fuels. These challenges demand relevant and changing skills, and Oregon's public universities stand ready to innovate with the assistance of targeted start-up investments in high-quality degree programs.

Second, HB2728 expands the opportunity for community colleges and private non-profit educational institutions to compete for innovation start-up funds. While this creates a more competitive environment for the public universities, it also opens the door to new, creative partnerships.

This bill will work if it provides new funding to reach out and meet the needs of more industries and also to involve more educational sectors. It does not work if it simply involves transferring or diminishing the current investments in engineering education at the public four-year universities that continue to serve the state well.

Eastern Oregon University
President Jay Kenton

Oregon State University
President Ed Ray

Southern Oregon University
President Roy H. Saigo

Western Oregon University
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Oregon Institute of Technology
President Chris Maples

Portland State University
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Specifically, the innovative talent-development funds that will be invested by the newly established Oregon Talent Council must not diminish, in any way, the 24.5 million in sustaining investments in engineering and computer science education that were previously under the direction of the ETIC, and will be administered by the HECC starting in 2015-2016.

We support the bill's intent to respond to the urgent needs of the high-tech sector in the state, which is experiencing a dire shortage of skilled talent and seek your approval of HB2728.

Sincerely,

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