



EASTERN OREGON  
UNIVERSITY

**Testimony on College Affordability**  
**Submitted to the Ways & Means Subcommittee on Education**  
**Submitted by Jay Kenton, Interim President, Eastern Oregon University**  
**March 25, 2015**

Chair Monroe, Chair Komp and Members of the Committee,

Every day I work with students who want to attend college and make their lives better. They deserve to have the opportunity to learn and grow and become better people. As an educator myself and having experienced it personally, I can attest to the fact that becoming educated is one of the few things a person can do that can break the mold that society has cast for them.

At Eastern Oregon University, student affordability is involved in every thing we do. Our students have the lowest incomes in the state—over 90 percent are eligible for Pell Grants—and most work outside of school to help pay for their education. Many “stop out” and don’t attend for a term or more so they can work fulltime and earn money to pay their tuition. We provide over \$3 million in scholarships and tuition remissions to students; for many of them, a \$300 per term award makes college possible.

We’ve launched the “Eastern Advantage” to make college possible by holding the line on tuition and guaranteeing students they will graduate on time in four years. Students who enroll in this program will work closely with academic advisors to plan their path to on-time graduation, connect with our Financial Aid Office to budget or obtain financial assistance for their education, and prepare for life after college with our Career Services Office and Alumni Association.

Eastern Oregon’s demographics are rapidly changing. Today, new generations of Latino, Native American and other underserved populations are seeking college degrees to change their fate and help their families and communities thrive. For these folks and rural and eastern Oregon, education is more than an option—it’s a necessity.

Increased State support is key for EOU and all of Oregon’s public universities. The \$755 million funding level would return higher education to its funding level in 2007 and reinvests in all of Oregon—not just higher education.

Sincerely,

Jay Kenton  
Interim President