

My name is Lauren Zavrel and I am the Part Time Faculty President at Clackamas Community College where I teach GED in the Clackamas County Jail.

The common denominators for almost all of my students, both in jail and on campus, are

- 1) poverty, and
- 2) the genuine desire to transcend poverty.

As one of my students recently said about what she hopes to get from college: “don’t help me *out*, help me UP.” Higher education is the *only means* for us as a state and society to meet this standard because education is the only true ladder out of poverty.

When I get on my soapbox about the importance of college, my incarcerated students understand. They don’t need another lecture about why college is so important. But it is the lack of affordability, hands down, that stops even the most bright and capable students from enrolling. How can we expect these Oregonians to invest in a quality education *when our government won’t?*

Jessica was released from jail on Friday and she starts classes on campus tonight. I invited Jessica because this Legislature needs to see who I mean when I refer to those adult and first generation community college students who want and need a hand UP to a better life. These are the students who are most impacted by tuition increases. While Jessica is a rare exception, she represents the students who will follow suit with Oregon and financially prioritize education 48<sup>th</sup> on *their* list, because the high cost says *college is not really meant for them.*

How you fund community colleges *does and will continue to send the most impactful* message to low and middle income Oregonians *who aspire to be something more than what they are.* The more you fund community colleges, the more *normal* and less *extraordinary* it becomes

for the Jessicas to attend and the stronger you demonstrate your advocacy for a diverse workforce, for true equal opportunity, and for the acquisition of The American Dream.