



## Oregon Business Groups Support Increased Post-Secondary Education Funding

A strong post-secondary education system is critical for both Oregon businesses and residents. Businesses routinely identify workforce issues as one of their biggest challenges. Jobs are going unfilled because of skill shortages; in some cases, workers with the requisite skills must be recruited from outside the state. The shortages are acute in degrees relating to science, engineering, and math (STEM) and technical education.

Oregon's economy is dependent on a diverse set of industries that require a talented and prepared workforce; research shows educational attainment is a path toward middle and higher wage employment opportunities. The state's 40-40-20 goal is an acknowledgement of the importance of education for business competitiveness and individual prosperity, both of which enhance state revenues for critical public services.

Currently Oregon does not adequately invest in preparing its own residents for the quality jobs available, impacting the potential for increased earnings that come with higher educational attainment and more equitable outcomes for all Oregonians.

- Oregon's post-secondary system remains the only state program area that has not reached pre-recession funding levels.
- Oregon now ranks 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation in terms of support for post-secondary, spending approximately 63% of the national average.
- Between 2007 and 2014, state funding for undergraduate degrees decreased by 38.2%; during the same period, tuition and fees at Oregon's public universities increased 41%.

Oregon's community colleges and universities have done more with less over this time period, increasing degrees and the number of students while overall funding has gone down. Students have picked up a greater burden, making higher educational attainment increasingly out of reach for some Oregonians.

We can do better. Oregonians deserve greater opportunities for success afforded by educational attainment; businesses need an educated workforce to compete in the global marketplace. Toward that end, the state's business community supports:

- Restoring Universities and Community Colleges to pre-recession funding levels.
- Ensuring education outcomes by focusing taxpayer resources toward completion and high-demand degrees and certificates.
- Increasing investment in and revamping the Oregon Opportunity Grant to maximize access to higher education for students with the highest financial needs, particularly students from traditionally under-represented populations.