



Oregon Community College Association
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To: The Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

From: The Oregon Community College Association

Re: Support for the Public Universities' Budget

Date: April 14, 2017

The Oregon Community College Association supports an increase of \$100 million above the Governor's Recommended Budget for the state's public universities. In that budget, both universities and community colleges received flat-funding, which will result in a mix of further tuition increases and program cuts for both sectors. Oregon's students cannot afford to continue shouldering the burden of the state's chronic under-funding to public higher education.

Today, students across Oregon face growing financial challenges that greatly undermine their ability complete a degree. Oregon students face not only the barrier of rising tuition but also the rising costs of things like housing, textbooks, utilities, or simply having the money to pay for food. For example, like community colleges, many public universities have active food pantries to help students who are financially unable to meet this basic need.

Oregon universities and community colleges work in partnership to ensure our students have the support they need to reach their educational goals. In this legislative session, for example, our two sectors are working to enact legislation to ensure smoother credit transfer from community colleges and universities. Flat-funding greatly undermines initiatives like this as institutions become again focused on the difficult process of balancing budgets through more cuts and higher tuition. These cycles of cuts and tuition hikes also serve to undermine the thousands of community college students hoping to transfer to a public university.

Completion of a post-secondary education is one of the biggest contributors to a living wage and job retention for our citizens. This pays dividends not just to the individual but also to the entire state in a lower reliance on public services and higher tax revenue. Moreover, public universities are major contributors to the state economy in a variety of other ways, serving as incubators of talent and innovation that are critical to building a thriving Oregon. Without adequate support from the legislature, we are narrowing the window of future opportunity for our citizens and our state as a whole.