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February 27, 2019

Senator James Manning, Co-Chair
Representative David Gomberg, Co-Chair
Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
900 Court St. NE, Room H-178
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Manning and Gomberg:

As those who are responsible for research at Oregon's public universities, we write in enthusiastic support of the University Innovation Research Fund (UIRF), a component in the Governor's education investment package for the Oregon Business Development Department (Business Oregon). The UIRF enables Oregon's public universities to better compete at the national level for federal research funds that require a local match.

Each year, the federal government issues numerous grant opportunities that could contribute to Oregon's innovation economy. These grants frequently require non-federal matching funds. The UIRF, which is aimed specifically at economic innovation, would send a strong signal to the granting authority that there is an immediate and dependable commitment for a proposal's objectives.

Oregon's public universities frequently compete individually, collaboratively, or as members of national teams for significant federally-funded grants. Our ability to compete for these grants is handicapped because of the lead time to build funding into Oregon's biennial budget. This impedes not only our ability to attract federal funds, but also our ability to partner with other nationally recognized universities, such as those in California and Washington, that have access to state-supported matching funds. Currently, we cannot point to a meaningful and solid financial commitment, even when the state has determined a federal grant would promote Oregon's interests.

The return-on-investment to Oregon is significant. For example, a \$5 million state commitment could result in a \$20 million multi-year stream of federal funds. The primary focus on large, innovation grants will assure jobs, technological advances, and secondary benefits that will accrue well into the future and across the entire state. At the discretion of Business Oregon, a designated component of the fund could be used each biennium for federal grants of less than \$500K. This would enable all universities, including Oregon's Technical and Regional Universities, to compete for grants that would allow investments in capacity to conduct research.

One of the best opportunities for helping Oregon fill its budget gap is to devote resources to initiatives that carry a significant return on investment. No money will be drawn from the UIRF without consent of Business Oregon and unless and until a university is successful in competing for federal funds. The UIRF simply enables Oregon institutions to compete effectively with and among their peers at the federal level.

We urge the Ways and Means Committee to include this component into the budget for Business Oregon.

Sincerely,



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Oregon Institute of Technology



Peter Barr-Gillespie
Chief Research Officer
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David Conover
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cc: Sen. Betsy Johnson
Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward
Rep. Dan Rayfield