

April 10, 2019

Co-Chair Roblan, Co-Chair Smith Warner, Co-Vice Chair Knopp, Co-Vice Chair Smith and Members of the Joint Committee on Student Success

Subject: Don't Leave College Students Behind in New Education Funding

Legislators have a once-in-decade opportunity to invest in Oregon students and reform Oregon's tax system, but the current plan laid out in House Bill 2019 leaves college students behind.

By 2020, 65 percent of new jobs are expected to require education and training beyond high school. To provide Oregonians the opportunity they need to thrive and for businesses to help grow the economy, we need to support students from cradle to career. Since Measure 5, Oregon students have seen tuition increases vastly outpace inflation while programs and services have been cut because state investment fell further behind. Student debt is higher than it's even been.

"Mitauye oyasin" is the phrase my people, the Lakota, use to conceptualize interconnection. Literally it translates to, "we are all related." The trauma Indigenous Americans face originated with the displacement and colonization of the natural spaces that were and are still sacred to tribes. Today there is limited or no access to these spaces and this has created distress in our culture for more than a century. I feel using the land for healing is a crucial place to begin.

My academic goals are to receive my Masters in Psychology from Portland State University. I also plan to earn Minors in Environmental Studies and Indigenous Studies and use this as a platform to start a non-profit program focused on healing trauma through conservation. I plan to serve and assist survivors in recovery by reconnecting and maintaining natural spaces.

By using natural spaces to treat trauma, we can promote healing while restoring the land. Through this we can address crises such as water disparities, pollution, and deforestation. Pursuing a career in intergenerational trauma and healing is important to me, because I wish to serve my community while honoring my ancestors. Community colleges help students like me start on the path to our dreams.

We urge you to support Governor Kate Brown's call for including post-secondary education in the spending proposal before this committee.

Ashleigh McKinney