

April 16, 2019

Senator Frederick and Representative McLain,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience of the Fermentation Science program at Oregon State University. In 2015 I graduated from OSU having studied viticulture & enology (vineyard management & winemaking) and credit my education there for the successful career I have enjoyed. Currently my role is Grower Relations and Viticulturist for Jackson Family Wines in Oregon.

Thinking of how the program prepared me for this field, the coursework involved is the first thing which comes to mind. It provided a solid, well-rounded foundation of chemistry and biology sciences. That then built up to advanced project-based classes requiring students to put all the pieces together into understanding the complexities of growing grapes and making wine. I often find myself referring to those old notes from classes, when in doubt! The professors teaching these classes are respected for their expertise and work on the latest research regarding wine and grape growing.

Woven into our standard coursework was the chance to learn about research at the university that is relevant to ongoing industry concerns. Grapes - as with any crop - have a host of pests and diseases that growers must contend with to produce quality fruit, in order to make a quality end-product wine. The information I gained from these research topics were all pertinent to making informed decisions on the job after I had graduated.

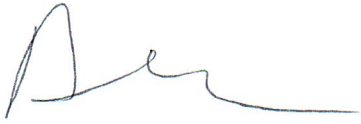
Of interest to many are the studies on crop yield/fruit quality relationships, and those on relatively lesser understood diseases to Oregon (such as red blotch virus). Coming into greater focus lately are the impacts of changing climate and smoke exposure on grapes. Without dedicated research for these issues and many more, we are at risk of not being equipped with the facts needed to operate effectively.

While coursework alone only teaches students so much about the ins and outs of grapes, the program does provide two avenues of hands-on experience. On campus is the research winery, and on the growing side is Woodhall Vineyard. As a student I worked at Woodhall Vineyard part-time, reinforcing material from the classroom and giving me the management side perspective that can only be taught in real world situations. The program strongly encourages students to get involved through these two options, and externally through internships.

Having been out in the industry for a couple of years now, there is another benefit now apparent to me in its significance post-graduation: connections that were created. Many of my fellow students are familiar faces at industry events, if not good friends to this day. Their experiences and ideas can be tapped if I have questions about something I encounter. Past professors similarly are a valuable resource happy to lend advice. The strong network of graduates, professors/researchers, and businesses cement the importance of this program. Its reputation has been built over time.

There are an innumerable amount of services and benefits OSU's Fermentation Science program provides. It is critical to developing talent for our local industries under the fermentation science umbrella, and is ensuring we are prepared to tackle challenges as they arise. I hope my experiences may help you decide on this funding decision.

Much appreciated,



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