



March 3, 2021

Co-Chairs Beyer and Gomberg and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development, I am Bob Guldberg, the Vice President and Executive Director for the Knight Campus for Accelerating Scientific Impact at the University of Oregon.

I would like to highlight the importance of the University Innovation and Research Fund (UIRF), which was not recommended for funding in the Governor's budget. This competitive grant fund of \$10 million was created by the legislature in 2019 to match competitive federal research awards, increase the competitiveness of Oregon universities for federal research funds, leverage federal grants that require matching funds, and support innovation and research capacity.

At the University of Oregon, this funding has been fundamental to our development of new cell therapies and technologies for cell therapy manufacturing. It has helped support two undergraduate students, one graduate student, two post-doctoral fellows and one full time Research Assistant.

Let me tell you a little about our work, so you can understand the importance of this funding to support the economy in Oregon, to provide world class research education within our borders, and to ultimately help patients in need. My hope is that this will show you how essential it is to restore funding to the University Innovation Research Fund in Business Oregon's Budget. The manufacturing sector around cell therapy is a rapidly growing biomedical market and could help make Oregon a player in a market sector that is conservatively projected to surpass \$10 billion worldwide within the next decade.

Cell therapies have potential applications for everything from treating cancers to repairing spinal cord injuries to reducing opioid addiction associated with back pain. And it goes beyond just potential. On Feb. 5, 2021, three weeks ago, the 4th CAR T-cell therapy which harness the patient's own immune system to fight their cancer, was approved by the FDA. Another phase 3 clinical trial demonstrated efficacy to reduce back pain for two years in patients with degenerative disc disease.

Our URIF supported project is one of many around the world focused on reducing the manufacturing cost of cell therapies to help enable greater availability of these potent but expensive therapies to more patients and for a broader range of clinical applications. Our lab is specifically working on universal media replacements for fetal bovine serum to grow cells, sensors to monitor and improve cell manufacturing quality, and a new international project to develop and test technologies that allow cells to be shipped and kept alive at room temperature rather than frozen.

The UIRF funding has also allowed us to purchase almost \$100K of essential research equipment, from Oregon companies, such as ThermoFisher.



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Our \$600K of URIF funding immediately enabled a \$600K federal subcontract from the DOD. We subsequently received a \$580K cell manufacturing grant from the NSF and then a \$2.5 million grant from NIH to develop a cell immunotherapy for trauma. Oregon is competing with many states that have similar funds to the UIRF to cover these matching fund requirements found in many federal grants. Without the UIRF, Oregon may lose out on important research opportunities.

I urge you to restore funding to the University Innovation Research Fund in Business Oregon's Budget.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robert Guldberg, PhD
Vice President and Robert and Leona DeArmond Executive Director
Phil and Penny Knight Campus for Accelerating Scientific impact
University of Oregon

Phil and Penny Knight Campus for Accelerating Scientific Impact

6231 University of Oregon, Eugene OR 97403-6231
541-346-2120 | FAX 541-346-0404 accelerate.uoregon.edu

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