

Proposal to Use American Rescue Plan Funding for a Graduate Mental Health Degree Scholarship Program

Problem:

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Oregon suffered a shortage of practicing mental health professionals providing vital mental health services to Oregonians. The pandemic has only made this shortage of highly skilled mental health professionals more dire, with many Oregonians unable to receive the mental health care and treatments they need.

Solution:

A pilot program offering scholarships to reduce cost barriers for students pursuing mental health graduate degrees at Oregon graduate schools. The program could be administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. It would have a significant impact in that it would make it easier for a number of students to pursue graduate degrees in mental health, subsidizing the process of training more mental health professionals in Oregon who could go on to provide mental health services in the state.

Scholarship eligibility specifications:

- Open to graduate students and Oregon residents only
- Student must be seeking a graduate degree in a mental health field (e.g. clinical psychology, other psychology, counseling, social work) at an Oregon university (preference should be given to those attending a public institution, but those attending a private university may be eligible for an amount up to but not exceeding the maximum offered to students attending a public University)
- Preference should be given to women, BIPOC individuals, and residents of rural communities
- Available for up to 4 years per student (as resources allow)

Cost Estimate:

\$25,000 for Higher Education Coordinating Commission administrative costs.

\$500,000-\$2,000,000 for scholarships, translating to 10-40 scholarships of \$50,000, 20-80 scholarships of \$25,000, or 50-100 scholarships of \$10,000. Scholarship size could vary depending on need and other aid that a student receives.

For context, the 2020-2021 estimated cost of tuition for program completion of a graduate psychiatric mental health degree at Oregon Health & Science University is around \$94,000 for residents. The 2020-2021 estimated cost of tuition for program completion of a master's degree in social work or counseling at Portland State University is around \$45,000 for residents.

OHSU cost estimate:

<https://www.ohsu.edu/sites/default/files/2020-12/SoN%20tuition%20sheet%202020-2021.pdf>

PSU cost estimates:

Counseling-

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/e/2PACX-1vSKDj_cw7SLUr79eS9Fli1RqfQI8lbyB4XJ6JmsC3URwGr47ph2otq8LpfPTTVRZ8miUSGfHyliFXpf/pubhtml?urp=gmail_link

Social Work- <https://www.pdx.edu/social-work/msw-admissions>