

April 26, 2021

HB 2472 - Student Testimony

To Senate Committee on Education:

My name is Carmen Mo and I am a Medical Laboratory Student (MLS) at the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT). I had specifically applied to this school because I had the pleasure of working with some highly respected MLS alumni. They had told me about their successful colleagues and the incredible amount of care and attention the faculty had given them to achieve such success. They described the program's curriculum and its rigorous pace and I knew immediately that I wanted to apply. Such a challenge can only produce the best in the field, and I had the pleasure of working with two of these alumni, who are held in high regard by their coworkers. Their depth of the theoretical knowledge, amazing work ethic, and intuitive ability to solve any problem were admirable qualities that I know were instilled in them by the MLS faculty members.

It is very devastating to see the same faculty being overworked, having their health benefits threatened, and inadequate compensation for all the efforts that they put into their course. As of today, after 18 months of union negotiations for a fair contract with OIT senior administration, the OIT faculty are forced to strike. This negatively impacts not only faculty members themselves, but the students as well. The OIT administration claim that they care about the students and that we all come first during this hard time, but their refusal to provide a fair contract and threatening the OIT faculty senate seems antagonistic to their goal.

Thankfully, faculty members of the MLS program have provided us instruction and online materials before the strike so we can continue our education without much interruption. I cannot say the same for other programs that may have their education essentially put on hold. I know that some graduating seniors are very worried they will not be able to graduate on time or face the possibility of a poor grade in their classes. Without the guidance of their teachers, the students are left alone in their education with little or no direction. These faculty members have years of field experience and knowledge that they would undoubtedly enjoy passing along to their students. It is unfortunate that they are forced to be away from their passion for teaching.

I have experienced this firsthand interacting with all my teachers. They are eager, wise, enthusiastic, caring, accommodating, and so concerned for the state of our well-being and academic progression especially during the pandemic. I have seen my teachers work on

lectures for hours, prepare video recordings to demonstrate proper lab bench procedures, perform grading in a timely manner, go out of their way to drive to OHSU to obtain specimens for student lab, and so much more. I am so utterly thankful for everything my teachers have done for me and my peers. We all know that they take on a large workload outside of the classroom to ensure that they are delivering our education at the highest quality. This is why OIT MLS students are so highly sought after in the job market. The OIT website claims “100% employment” and I believe this remains an incontestable fact. This program and their faculty have produced high quality scientists for decades. I have no doubt that these MLS professionals were the backbone of this country’s overwhelmed healthcare system during the pandemic. In addition, I can confidently say that the MLS faculty members helped navigate campus operations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Without the help of these experienced scientists, there would have been even more incredible challenges during these unprecedented times.

I cannot say the same about the OIT administration, whom I have never met. It seems that they do not value their faculty or the students’ concerns about their education. During almost two years of negotiations with the faculty union, they want to go ahead and designate OIT as Oregon’s polytechnic university without giving credit to the amazing faculty who have paved the way for this resolution to occur. It is shameful and disappointing to treat the faculty and students this way. Without the hard work and perseverance of the faculty throughout this time, OIT would not have the reputation it is known for today.

Thank you for your time and please take this student testimony into consideration.

Sincerely,

Carmen Mo

MLS Student

Oregon Institute of Technology