

Submitter: Jackie Apodaca
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

Chair Steiner, Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chairs, and Members of the Committee-

I am testifying today in support of \$1.05 billion appropriation for higher education in Oregon, and importantly the \$15 million dollar support fund for Oregon's Regional Universities and requested in the Governor's Budget.

SOU provides life changing opportunities to our region and our rural communities. The SOU Theatre program provides affordable education for young artists throughout our state, helping them see how they can turn their love of theatre into a lasting career. Theatre education is training in production (logistics) and collaboration-- incredibly important skills for workers in many fields. We at SOU Theatre provide training that surpasses most universities in the country at a fraction of the cost. SOU Theatre has long been a program of distinction in the state and I am consistently told how grateful students are to be able to access this training at a reasonable cost. My former students are currently working as lawyers, teachers, cinematographers, marketing professionals, writers, and, of course, professional theatre makers.

Unfortunately, due to chronic underfunding our students are losing access to the first rate education they deserve. SOU has just cut the Theatre program back by several important faculty members, leaving us without a full staff to provide needed education. Students can't succeed when faculty are cut back so far that they can't teach the fulness of their fields. Students today need more support than ever before, and with fewer faculty, we have fewer hours to provide that needed support. We work hard and we care deeply about our students. The lack of funding and the ever-present fear of more and more cuts puts the entire system to risk. Oregon students deserve support here in their home state. They deserve first-rate educations.

With adequate funding, we can secure faculty and staff at our institutions, increase our student service levels, and create sustainable growth for our institutions. We can offer higher education that rivals our neighboring states of CA and WA. Without an increase in our funding, we will continue to wither on the vine.

Our students' success depends on adequate funding right now and consistent support in the future. Short term bailouts may put a bandaid on the problem, but they keep us all in crisis mode, unable to invest in long term solutions. With consistent, adequate funding we could thrive. SOU could absolutely become a destination university, and draw students from throughout the West.

Faculty at my institution, alongside fellow regional universities (EOU/OIT/SOU/WOU) are united in our commitment to Oregon's future. We are united in the belief that Oregon students deserve affordable, first-rate, college educations. Oregon regional universities could rival the California State universities. We have so much to offer. We need your support.

I urgently ask that Oregon commit \$15 million dollars to supporting our Regional Universities.

Thank you,
Jackie Apodaca
Professor of Theatre - Southern Oregon University
Artistic Director - Ashland New Plays Festival