

Submitter: Kristin Whitman  
On Behalf Of: Oregon Tech  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

Co-Chairs Steiner, Sanchez, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Kristin Whitman and I'm the director of the Oregon Tech Portland-Metro library. I'm here to testify about necessary investments to promote college affordability.

As of 2021, Oregon ranked 45th in the nation for state funding of public universities. It's critical that the public university support fund be funded at \$1.05 billion, and I also hope you'll double the Oregon Opportunity Grant and make the Tribal Student Grant a permanent program.

One way Oregon Tech makes education more affordable is by promoting the use of open educational resources, also called OER. These materials are published under an open license, and are available for free.

Research shows that using open materials can improve student performance, especially for financially vulnerable students, improving retention and equity in our universities.

Since 2015, the state has promoted the use of OER through the Open Oregon Educational Resources program.

Open Oregon grants transform courses to use open materials. To date, this program has saved students \$17 million in textbook costs, and produced impressive results statewide.

- Compared to 2015, the cost of course materials for two-year transfer degrees in Oregon has dropped 47%.
- The cost of Gen Ed materials has fallen 18%, and if our university students take Gen Ed courses at the lowest possible cost pathway, their materials costs have fallen by 82%.

Open Oregon also works to secure external grant funding to develop new open textbooks in subject areas where Oregon students face high textbook costs. As an example, right now Oregon Tech faculty in our Emergency Medical Services department, in collaboration with faculty with several community colleges, are creating a new free skills workbook for Oregon EMT students. This will displace the need for students to purchase expensive commercial materials, with a projected savings of \$100 per student. It will especially support rural EMT programs, which are often taught by volunteers through local fire stations. This work has been funded by a

grant through Open Oregon Educational Resources.

I encourage you to increase Open Oregon Educational Resources Program funding to \$5.2 million, so we can continue to work to make education more affordable. Thank you for your service to our state.