

James Gorham

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, Vice-Chair Girod, Vice-Chair Gomber, Vice-Chair Smith, and Committee Members. For the record, my name is JAMES GORHAM, and I am the Chair of the Eastern Oregon University Foundation Board of Directors. I am also an EOU alum, and an owner of a local physical therapy practice. Thank you for being here on the Campus of Eastern Oregon University.

A university education is truly an investment that pays dividends and has ripple effects. I've experienced this personally, having benefited from earning my undergraduate degree from EOU.

I was well prepared for graduate school and the investment that Oregon made in my alma mater enabled me to eventually return to La Grande and establish a new business that has treated thousands of patients and created dozens of jobs to sustain our local economy. I also see the ripple effect on a daily basis.

We regularly host students as interns in our practice, and employ students in different parts of our business. Their experience with us has enabled many of them to complete their degree, and to establish their own lives in our rural communities or continue their education throughout the state to become physical and occupational therapists, athletic trainers, fitness coaches, educators, actors, business leaders, and more.

My point is that EOU is a cornerstone of eastern Oregon—not just for the education it provides, but for the economic and human impact it creates. As a business owner, I see how the university fuels our local economy. It generates millions of dollars each year in Union County alone—through jobs, student spending, and community investment. That's vital for rural communities like ours.

But I also see the impact up close. My family even rents to EOU student-athletes, many of whom are first-generation college students from low-income backgrounds.

For them, keeping tuition costs low is crucial. It's what makes higher education possible—and it keeps students rooted in and giving back to our region. These students don't just bring energy to the field or the classroom—they bring economic activity, talent, and long-term value to eastern Oregon.

I was one of those students, and EOU changed my life. Today, it continues to open doors for students from across rural Oregon, helping them build futures—and communities—right here at home. That's why I support Eastern.

Your continued investment in institutions like EOU sustains our economy and the future of our region and our State.

Thank you so much for your time and all of your work throughout this process. We appreciated the opportunity to have you in our community.