



INDEPENDENCE

Oregon's Story Begins Here

May 1, 2025

Joint Committee on Capital Construction

Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for Western Oregon University's Capital Construction Projects: Data Center and Performing Arts Renewal

Dear Co-Chairs Nosse and Girod and Members of the Subcommittee,

I am writing to express strong support for Western Oregon University's two proposed capital construction projects currently under consideration: the new Data Center and the Performing Arts Renewal.

As a neighboring city deeply connected to the vitality of Western Oregon University, we recognize the essential role the institution plays not only in educating future leaders but also in contributing to the cultural, technological, and economic well-being of our broader region.

The proposed Data Center represents a critical infrastructure upgrade that will significantly enhance the university's technological resilience, data security, and operational sustainability. The current facility—housed in an outdated masonry structure—lacks adequate HVAC systems, dust control, and seismic safety features. Modernizing this infrastructure is essential for supporting academic research, online learning, and administrative continuity. Importantly, the Data Center will also provide regional benefits, bolstering emergency preparedness and digital capacity for the surrounding communities.

The Performing Arts Renewal is equally vital. This project will transform aging and inadequate facilities into accessible, state-of-the-art spaces that better serve students, faculty, and the public. A renewed performing arts complex will support hundreds of students while also reinforcing the university's role as a cultural and economic engine for Independence and the surrounding area. Local performances and educational events enrich our community and draw visitors who contribute to the local economy.

Both projects directly support Oregon's goals for sustainability, accessibility, and educational equity. They represent a meaningful investment in the future—one that expands opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and strengthens the broader regional infrastructure.

Western Oregon University is a foundational partner in our region's identity and growth. These capital investments will enable the university to continue fulfilling its mission while delivering long-term value to our communities through innovation, job creation, cultural enrichment, and resilience.

Prioritizing funding for these essential projects would strongly support the mission of Oregon's public universities and the communities they serve. Appreciation is extended for your consideration and continued commitment to higher education in our state.

Sincerely,

Kenna L. West

Kenna L. West, JD
City Manager