January 18, 2017

Dear Legislative Leadership:

As leaders on our respective campuses we write to urge you to increase investments in Universities beyond the Governor’s Recommended Budget. Put simply the funding levels proposed do not account for cost increases we are facing on campuses, and will ensure tuition increases that will make a college degree out of reach for many Oregonians.

Over the last two biennia, the Governor and Legislature made Oregon’s students and higher education a priority. This enabled universities to strengthen financial aid and scholarship packages and expand support services that students – especially those who are low income and underserved – rely upon to graduate on time. Despite this progress, it will take continued investments to reverse 20 plus years of cuts, improve graduation rates and keep the cost of a college education manageable for Oregon students.

For two decades, universities have had to cut staffing and services for students and raise tuition to meet the challenges of funding losses and scarce budgets. The impacts of these large tuition increases and reduction in services have taken their toll on Oregonians. Retention rates, and at many universities graduation rates, are down or stagnant and many students can no longer piece together a financial aid package of grants, loans, and work sufficient to fund a college education. Too many Oregonians are at risk of taking on college debt but not earning a degree.

Our unified funding request highlights and supports the following reality: To keep tuition increases below five percent at most universities, and also preserve most financial aid and student support services, state investment in the Public University Support Fund (PUSF) will need to increase by at least $100 million above the Governor’s Budget—in the 2017-19 biennium.

Oregon has shifted the burden of financing a college education away from the state and onto the backs of students and their families, a fact that has many members of our communities rightly concerned. We want to work together with you to reverse this trend, and ensure that no Oregon student is put in a position where they graduate with a lifetime of debt.

Vibrant and adequately funded public universities are fundamental to a prosperous future for our state. We are educating the workforce and leaders of tomorrow. We are incubators of game-changing ideas.
and discoveries that can improve the human condition. We are deeply integrated into the communities we serve. Like you, we are proud to call Oregon home, and we look forward to partnering with you to address the challenges that lie ahead for Oregon’s students and universities.

Sincerely,

Alan Bakalinsky  
President, Association of Oregon Faculties

Jose Padin  
President, AAUP-Oregon

Sidronio Rangel  
President, Associated Students of Eastern Oregon University

Thomas A. Insko  
President, Eastern Oregon University

Bud Hill  
President, SEIU 503 Local 81  
Eastern Oregon University

Joe Corsini  
Faculty Union President  
Eastern Oregon University

Edward J. Ray  
President, Oregon State University

Rachel Grisham  
President, Associated Students of Oregon State University

Molly Svendsen  
President, Associated Students of Cascades Campus

Robert T. Mason  
President, Oregon State University Faculty Senate
Josie Hudspeth
Administrative Council Chair
Oregon Institute of Technology

Darryn Stevens
President SEIU 503, Local 090
Oregon Institute of Technology

Darrin Thaemert
Faculty Senate President
Oregon Institute of Technology

Devora Shapiro
Faculty President, Association of Professors of
Southern Oregon University

Linda Schott
President, Southern Oregon University

Staci Martin
President, Faculty Association
Portland State University

Jay Kenton
Interim President, Oregon Institute of Technology

Nagi Naganathan
President-designate, Oregon Institute of Technology

Gaius Nikola
President, Associated Students of Oregon
Institute of Technology

Cheryl Ramirez
SEIU Local President, Southern Oregon University

Tyler Takeshita
President, Associated Students of Southern
Oregon University

Brad Hansen
Presiding Officer, Faculty Senate
Portland State University
Wim Wiewel
President, Portland State University

Liela Forbes
President, Associated Students of Portland State University

Rex Fuller
President, Western Oregon University

Mark Perlman
President, Western Oregon University Federation of Teachers

Cynthia Olivares
President, Associated Students of Western Oregon University

Richard Kavanagh
President, SEIU Local 82
Western Oregon University

Bill Harbaugh
University Senate President
University of Oregon

Michael Schill
President, University of Oregon

Chris Sinclair
Vice President, University Senate
University of Oregon

Michael Dreiling
President, United Academics
University of Oregon

Quinn Haaga
President, Associated Students of the University of Oregon

CC: Governor Kate Brown