



Governor Kate Brown
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

October 5, 2018

Dear Governor Brown,

We serve as student members of the committees at Oregon State University (OSU) that recommend tuition rates to President Ray and the OSU Board of Trustees. We urge you to adopt the Agency Request Budget for Oregon's seven public universities recommended by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). The HECC recommendation included a \$186 million increase in the Public University Support Fund for a total of \$923 million for the 2019-21 biennium.

As you know, following a fractious tuition-setting process in 2017, this year the legislature passed, and you signed, HB 4141. This bill created new standards and processes by which universities make tuition decisions. The changes in this bill may help at those universities that did not previously have a well-established process for considering student views and perspectives. (At OSU, the Associated Students of OSU were satisfied with the process our Board of Trustees had in place prior to the passage of this bill.)

Nevertheless, we learned a number of lessons last budget cycle that HB 4141 did not, and cannot, solve. The state appropriations process is not in synch with the student-driven calendar by which University Boards of Trustees must make decisions regarding tuition rates and financial aid packages. In order to enable students to determine where, or if, they will be attending college in the fall, universities must make these decisions before the legislature finalizes the biennial budget. As a result, those of us who are charged with making recommendations to the Board of Trustees have only your recommended budget to rely on when making tuition decisions for the following academic year.

Two years ago, when we faced uncontrolled increases in mandated employee benefit costs, we were presented with a recommended budget that included no funding increases to address these costs, or any other cost increases. We had to choose between increasing tuition and cutting vital programs. In fact, we had to choose both. Changing the process by which these decisions are made won't change the math: We simply need more funding or the costs of employee benefit increases will be entirely borne by students and families.

The decisions you make in your proposed budget for universities will not only set the agenda for discussions among our Board of Trustees. It will set the tone around kitchen tables across our state as thousands of high school seniors, more and more of whom are first generation and represent traditionally underserved populations, sit with their families, examine tuition rates and financial aid offerings, and ask themselves if a university education is truly within reach.

Please heed the advice of the gubernatorial appointees to the HECC who have spent the last year reviewing and considering the challenges facing Oregon students. The HECC's recommended budget not only will keep tuition increases below five percent – it will enable increased investments in student services, advising, and other programs that will both increase retention and graduation rates.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Austin Carsh".

Austin Carsh
Student Member of OSU University Budget Committee

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kennedy Hedges".

Kennedy Hedges
OSU Student Budget Advisory Council Member