Portland State
UNIVERSITY

Office of the President

Post Office Box 751
Portland, Oregon 97207-0751

503-725-4411 tel
503-725-4499 fax

July 31, 2018

Neil Bryant
Chair, Higher Education Coordinating Commission
255 Capitol Street NE, Third Floor
Salem, OR 97210

Dear Chair Bryant:

Portland State University is Oregon's access institution. Over 20,000 Oregonians attend PSU each year. It is Oregon's most diverse campus - a place where traditionally underserved Oregonians encounter transformative opportunities. Today's PSU students are tomorrow's innovative and diverse workforce. Over 100,000 of PSU's alumni live in Oregon and contribute to the economic growth of our state. Successfully preparing these Oregon students for the jobs of the future while maintaining PSU's mission of affordability requires state investments in safe, modern facilities. The redevelopment of Science Building 1 (SB1) fulfills our commitment to engaging students of every race and socioeconomic group in scientific exploration, a commitment that is supported by over $125 million in federal grants targeting recruitment, retention and innovation in STEM focused degrees.

Renovation of SB1 will allow PSU to relocate our STEM Education and Equity Institute and our nationally-renown BUILD Exito undergraduate research program to a seismically safe facility designed specifically to improve the **success of traditionally underserved students** who commit to pursuing careers in research and the life sciences.

On behalf of the PSU community, I extend our appreciation to the Commission and the staff of the HECC for their careful consideration of this project. The difficulty of ranking projects vital to all campuses is underscored by the fact that many projects are separated by a single point or two. Every project will improve higher education across Oregon. At PSU, the renovation of SB1 will be a centerpiece of our commitment to increasing and diversifying Oregon's research and health care workforce pipelines.

The HECC staff is proposing the inclusion of a letter that highlights some constraints of the current capital review process. I want to reiterate the portion of that letter that identifies the lack of clarity around a component of the HECC capital rubric that may result in universities pitting infrastructure investments against affordability.

Section G, Leveraging Dollars, is a two-part score that was developed to encourage campuses to identify <u>external</u> investments to defray state costs and encourage early commitments from

Printed on 100 percent post-consumer waste, FSC and Green-e certified stock

funding partners. However, it also permits awarding rubric points for the use of operating funds, the majority of which are derived from tuition, as matching funds subject to this section. Consequently, institutions may receive higher scores on the rubric by leveraging tuition-supported resources.

This creates an untenable position that harms the Oregon students that can least afford to be harmed. If a university uses operating funds to increase rubric scores, it jeopardizes its ability to keep tuition low and improve access and affordability. If it does not use operating funds, it negatively impacts the ranking of critical infrastructure improvements, resulting in the university being able to retain affordability, but in an inferior academic setting. Given PSU's mission, we have chosen to maintain affordability.

We are confident that the application of this section does not align with the HECC's mission of access and affordability. Consequently, we encourage the HECC to re-assess this section of the rubric as soon as possible.

Infrastructure renovation of university facilities is critical to the development of a diverse and future-ready Oregon workforce. The Portland State community looks forward to working closely with the commissioners and the staff of the HECC to secure capital investments for Science Building 1 as well as each of the other projects on the list.

Sincerely,

Prof. Rahmat Shoureshi
President