

**From:** Mustaf Aden <[maden@pdx.edu](mailto:maden@pdx.edu)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 10, 2020 6:51 PM  
**To:** [Info.HECC@state.or.us](mailto:Info.HECC@state.or.us)  
**Subject:** The Rising Tuition Cost

Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission  
255 Capitol St NE,  
Salem, OR 97310

Dear Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission,

My name is Mustaf Aden. I would like to first thank you for your investment in the future of our fellow Oregonians. You play a vital role in ensuring all Oregonians, especially those at a disadvantage get a fair chance at getting a higher education. As a current college student, your plans and aim for making student success, equity, affordability and economic and community impact your top priorities are greatly appreciated. While this is a great plan, affordability should be addressed urgently since students can't keep up with rising college tuition.

I'm a first-generation college student planning to hopefully become the first in my family to obtain a college degree. Without financial aid, I wouldn't be able to attend Portland State University and that's still not even enough to cover all my tuition. I recently picked up a full-time job to pay off the rest of my college tuition. Furthermore, my friend has told me numerous times that he wants to get a higher education, but with rising college tuition, he doesn't know how he would be able to afford it. My dream, his and many Oregonians depend on affordability and that's why it's important for HECC to get involved and put a cap on college tuition in Oregon.

House Bill 5024 outlines the budget bill for higher education in the state of Oregon This bill includes \$837 million for the state's seven public universities and \$641 million for community colleges (4). This is a great investment in education and a great amount of funding that should be helping students afford college. However, colleges have still increased their tuition. In fact, Portland State University wanted to initially increase its tuition by 11% this year, but after many protests from students the school finally decided to only increase tuition by 4.97%. While 4.97% might not seem a lot, it still becomes a financial struggle for low-income students like me. Other schools such as Southern Oregon University called for a 13.5% increase while the University of Oregon officials wanted a 9.7% tuition hike.

When you approved a 9.9% tuition increase for Southern Oregon University and a 7.1% percent increase for the University of Oregon, you made it even harder for low-income students to afford college. According to the Education Commission of the States, higher rising tuition leads to lower numbers in enrollment. A decline in real per-student state appropriations over time is a contributing factor to rising tuition, but research suggests that state funding reductions explain only about 32 percent of tuition increases at public colleges (2). In other words, increasing the college tuition discourages Oregonians away from college. The price of attending public colleges has risen significantly faster than what families can afford (3). With higher education being more

valuable than ever, as a commission, you have the power to overrule these hikes to make sure all Oregonians have an equal opportunity to get an education.

Some argue that tuition caps might reduce the quality of education students receive and create a scarce in resources. This isn't true because the state funds that schools are receiving is more than enough to provide a good quality of education. Furthermore, if colleges and universities stopped building football stadiums that cost millions of dollars to build, that money could be well spent in making college more affordable. Colleges should prioritize education.

The fact is that when tuitions are increased, more students are taking on more debt. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the annual tuition at public colleges has risen by more than \$2,484 or 35% since 2008. This would be more justified if wages had kept up, but they haven't. Tuition prices, as well as the living expenses students must cover, have risen rapidly while household incomes have grown slowly or even declined except for those at or near the top of the income distribution (1). The HECC's vision is to make sure every Oregonian has a chance to succeed and by capping the tuition they'll be fulfilling that promise to all Oregonians.

Thank you for your commitment to bettering Oregon's higher education.

Sincerely,

Mustaf Aden

#### Works Cited

- (1) Baum, Sandy. "How Students Pay for College." *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, vol. 50, no. 3-4, 2018, pp. 135–141.
- (2) Kelchen, Robert, and Sarah Pingel. "Postsecondary Tuition Capping and Freezing." *Education Commission of the States*, Education Commission of the States, Nov. 2018, [www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Postsecondary-Tuition-Capping-and-Freezing.pdf](http://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Postsecondary-Tuition-Capping-and-Freezing.pdf)
- (3) Mitchell, Michael, et al. "A Lost Decade in Higher Education Funding." *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 26 Apr. 2019, [www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/a-lost-decade-in-higher-education-funding](http://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/a-lost-decade-in-higher-education-funding).
- (4) The Oregonian staff and wire reports. "PSU Considers Cutting Tuition Increase from 11% to 4.9%." *Oregonlive*, Advance Local, 14 June 2019, [www.oregonlive.com/education/2019/06/psu-considers-cutting-tuition-increase-from-11-to-49.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/education/2019/06/psu-considers-cutting-tuition-increase-from-11-to-49.html).