Oregon Council of Presidents

To: Jim Pinkard – Director of Postsecondary Finance and Capital, HECC
From: Dana Richardson – Executive Director, OCOP
RE: Consolidated Funding Request Executive Summary
Date: May 11, 2020

On behalf of Oregon's seven public universities, please accept the attached executive summary of our consolidated operating funding request for the 2021-2023 biennium. We sincerely appreciate your collaboration and flexibility as we have worked on this submission within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is safe to say that the request and submission of our full consolidated funding request is not the one that we anticipated or would have wanted. Before the onset of Covid-19, the public universities were eager to partner with the Commission and Legislature to make significant investments in higher education, targeted at closing persistent retention and completion gaps for traditionally underrepresented students. With the advent of the pandemic and the anticipated impact on state revenues, we now find ourselves in the place where we want to partner with you to ensure that looming cuts to budgets don't exacerbate these disparities and that higher education remains a priority in our state.

We look forward to our continued work together for Oregon students, families, and businesses and the opportunity to develop and articulate budget scenarios that recognize our collective fiscal challenges and opportunities for success.

Oregon Council of Presidents

Oregon Public Universities
2021-2023 Combined Funding Request

Executive Summary

An Equitable Path to a Better Tomorrow

In the midst of the single most significant societal challenge many of us have ever faced, Oregon's seven public universities join the Higher Education Coordinating Commission in re-affirming our shared commitment to Equity, Access, and Quality for students, faculty, and workers. Through the transformative power of learning, we can emerge a stronger more resilient state.

It is a pivotal moment. The willingness of policymakers to commit resources to protect the state's fragile cradle-to-career public education system may determine if the impact of COVID-19 is measured in years or in generations. Preserving investments in today's students will create a brighter future. More than ever before, we must offer steady, supported pathways out of poverty for our most severely impacted citizens and provide hope for all Oregonians across the state.

Oregon's public universities are committed partners in reimagining a better tomorrow. The work is well underway. Creative instructors went remote in weeks. Researchers pivoted immediately to understand and cure the virus. Innovation is accelerating. Education is adapting.

Business as usual is not an option. We cannot just rebuild our economy; we must rediscover our confidence.

Empower Equitably

COVID-19 is uniquely impacting communities of color – their physical and financial well-being. It is exacerbating socioeconomic disparities across all demographics, across all of Oregon. Investments in public universities promote equity, increase opportunity, and erode income inequality. The increasingly diverse face of Oregon is reflected in the 130,000 students that enroll at Oregon's public universities.

- 1 in 3 are students of color,
- 1 in 5 are first generation students,
- 2 in 5 receive need-based grants,
- 3 in 5 are unable to meet expenses.

These first-generation, Pell-eligible, and traditionally underserved students face new and different challenges. Studies show they are more likely to be at a disadvantage before they even step onto

campus. Robust student services and affordable tuition are critical to their success. Many face profoundly disruptive housing and food insecurity that threatens their education. Empowering the new generation of Oregon university-bound students will uplift communities and help address systemic inequities that have pervaded Oregon since its founding.

Preserve Access

A university degree continues to be one of the most important steps on the path to economic prosperity. Yet without affordable tuition, too many Oregonians simply cannot attend a public university and opportunity is extinguished. For those who can attend, too many of today's students and their families are stretched to their financial limit. Students cannot afford more debt.

State investments are critical to affordability, to containing student debt, to preserving access, and to creating opportunity. Too often, economic crises lead to disproportionate disinvestments in public university funding. The burden is shifted to students and the impacts are felt long after the economy recovers, as exemplified by the Great Recession of the late 2000s.

- Student portion of tuition in 2008: 60%, student portion today: 76% (Oregon),
- Student debt in 2008: $859 billion; student debt today: $1.57 trillion (U.S),
- Average Oregon university tuition in 2008: $7,346, average tuition today: $10,111.

Oregon's university students are still paying the bill for the last recession. They cannot afford another. Maintaining state investment is critical to ensure that Oregon does not foreclose post-secondary education to an entirely new generation of students.

Protect Quality, Promote Community and Rebuild the Economy

It is vital that Oregon's public post-secondary education system retain the resources necessary to respond to the needs of communities across the state. Universities are regional bedrocks that curate the arts, convene community leaders, promote civic engagement, and drive economic vitality.

- Universities employ more than 40,000 Oregonians in living wage jobs.
- Universities stimulate over $3 billion in economic impact for the state.
- Universities graduated 5,000 engineers in five years.
- Universities graduated nearly 2,800 educators in 2018, almost a quarter of whom were people of color.

Oregon public universities serve as engines for economic growth, anchors for cultural activity, and inspiration to legions of dreamers. Today, more than ever, it is these unique features of Oregon's collegiate enterprise that will help drive recovery that reaches all corners of the state.

An Equitable Path to a Better Tomorrow

The challenges ahead are severe, and we do not always agree on the best solution for each problem. However, we are united in our commitment to protecting our collective well-being and rebuilding our way of life. A critical component of our recovery is equitable access to a quality higher education for Oregonians. Such access provides a pathway out of poverty for the many Oregon students who are working hard to overcome difficult obstacles, and a path to healing for communities and a state looking for hope in the days that lie ahead. Policymakers should pursue the following goals for post-secondary education:

- Avoid shifting the financial burden to students;
- Undertake a multi-biennial effort to restore state funding to 2008, pre-Recession levels;
- Promote town and gown integration thorough strong community programs;
- Encourage lifelong learning.

To accomplish these goals the HECC, Governor Brown, and Legislature should work together to:

- Increase funding in the public university support fund and university programs by 8.1% to ensure state funding covers ongoing base costs, and the state continues to pay 24.5% of the cost of education for Oregon students. This would increase the PUSF by $69 million and bring total funding for the PUSF to $905 million, and

- Going further by beginning a four-biennium reinvestment in higher education that would return to a model where the state paid 35% of the cost of attendance, just as they did in 2010. This investment would increase the PUSF by $138 million, bringing the total PUSF to $1.39 billion. An investment of this magnitude would keep tuition increases low, and allow campuses to invest in proven wrap around services for students thus increasing retention and graduation rates for Oregonians.