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November 5, 2020

David Rives, Chair
Higher Education Coordinating Commission (via email)
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Rives and Commissioners:

On behalf of the nearly 35,000 students, faculty, and staff that make up our vibrant, diverse Portland State University community, I write in support of the proposed updates to the Student Success and Completion Model (SSCM). The HECC staff proposal better aligns the SSCM with the Commission's commitment to equity, access, and affordability for Oregon's public university students. I am grateful for the stronger correlation between state funding and our collective commitment to ending historic racial disparities in higher education while maintaining access to a university degree in every corner of our state.

The most fundamental change is the inclusion of base Mission Differentiation funding for each university. It is a change that acknowledges the uniqueness of each university and the students and communities they serve. For PSU, this is extremely important as it recognizes our critical role in educating low-income students and students of color. Other impactful changes are also incorporated into the proposal, including increasing funding for both transfer and underrepresented students. Collectively, these changes will improve funding and outcomes for the thousands of Oregonians PSU serves.

It is important to note that while these changes reduce the funding disparities between the highest funded institutions and lowest funded institutions, significant gaps persist. Even after these updates, PSU continues to receive the lowest funding per FTE. PSU also has the second-lowest tuition and fees. These two sources represent the vast majority of PSU's general fund revenue. The result is a profound disparity that is felt every day by our students, faculty, and staff. No other university in Oregon serves as many transfer students, students of color, or low-income Oregonians, and we are asked to do so with the lowest overall tuition revenue and state funds per resident student.

The proposal begins to erode this historic and persistent gap and merits the support of the Commission. We offer our thanks to the HECC staff and are grateful for the time, energy, and expertise required to reach this point. It was difficult work, but important. We commit to continuing to work with the commission to grow state funding for all institutions and to explore future modifications to the formula that promote access to a university degree and address the deeply embedded and unacceptable inequities faced by our students of color.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Stephen Percy
PSU President