

Sandy Rowe, Chair  
Higher Education Coordinating Commission  
3225 25th St SE  
Salem, OR 97302

RE: OSU-Cascades Student Health and Recreation Center and Associated Land Remediation Capital Request

We write to request your support for including the OSU-Cascades Student Health and Recreation Center (SHRC) and associated land remediation project in the Higher Education Coordinating Commission's Agency Requested Budget for 2025-2027. We are part of the Central Oregon community, and we believe OSU-Cascades' success is critical for students, businesses, and non-profit organizations in the region. This next phase of land development is essential for continued campus growth and the health and recreation facility is critical for student success.

Over two decades ago, the Oregon legislature and Board of Higher Education committed to the vision of a four-year institution serving Central Oregon. Thanks to collaboration between Oregon State University and our community, OSU-Cascades is fulfilling that vision. OSU-Cascades' academic programs reflect careers found in Central Oregon's growing economy and natural resources. As employers, we look to OSU-Cascades to provide skilled workers in the key areas of high-tech, biosciences, healthcare, and outdoor products.

OSU-Cascades still needs space that supports student success. Student wellness is essential to retention, timely academic progress, and successful degree completion. The SHRC creates space dedicated to students to provide mental health counseling and clinical health services. The absence of a clinical health space means students faced with even small health issues are required to go off-campus and look toward inaccessible options due to cost, timely appointments, and insurance coverage. And, this is likely the only university in Oregon, public or private, without dedicated exercise and recreation facilities. Providing an opportunity for students to thrive inside and outside the classroom is vital and as we've seen over the years, a key factor in helping our community succeed is by protecting the mental and physical wellness of our students.

The associated remediation of the former landfill and pumice mine creates 23 acres of usable space. It will provide land sufficient for the SHRC, the next student housing project, and the next two to three academic buildings, as well as roads, paths, and recreation areas. The work is turning unusable land that was a safety concern in the heart of Central Oregon into space that contributes directly to economic growth in the region and the state.

This is an investment worth making—it generates economic return for the region and the state through higher salaries, increased tax revenues, an accessible and well-educated workforce, and partnerships that advance research and engagement addressing critical needs in the state. Building the OSU-Cascades campus is not a cost—it is an investment that will provide returns in economic growth to the region and to the state.

Thank you for your commitment to higher education access throughout the state, including here in Central Oregon. We urge the Commission to forward this funding request to the Governor for inclusion in her proposed budget.

Sincerely,

Katy Brooks  
Chief Executive Officer, Bend Chamber

Steve Gordon, MD, MPP, FACP  
President and CEO of St. Charles Health System

Lisa Hale  
Chief Executive Officer, Grace Bio-Labs