

# OREGON'S FUTURE STARTS HERE



## WHY A \$1.275B INVESTMENT IN OUR PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES CAN'T WAIT



*“Investing in Oregon’s public universities isn’t just an option  
—it’s essential to securing our workforce, driving innovation,  
and ensuring opportunities for every Oregonian.”*

**- Michael Dembrow, former Oregon State Senator**

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*“Our universities are critical to Oregon’s future. Without greater funding, we risk higher tuition, higher student debt, and fewer graduates. Oregon industry needs the talent that come from our universities to meet the challenges ahead.”*

**- Duncan Wyse, President, Oregon Business Council**

Oregon’s public universities are more than just places of learning—they are engines that power our economy, drive innovation, and ensure that our communities thrive. From training behavioral health professionals to preparing the next generation of engineers, **our universities are integral to Oregon’s future success.**

**But decades of underfunding have stretched our public universities to the limit, leading to higher tuition, fewer student services, and declining affordability.** If this trend continues, fewer Oregon students will have access to the education and skills needed for the state’s most in-demand jobs.

**Now is the time to invest in our public universities.** A \$1.275B investment in the Public University Support Fund (PUSF) will strengthen essential student services, alleviate the financial burden on students and families, and help to stabilize our universities, while ensuring that Oregon’s workforce and economy remains competitive with the rest of the region.

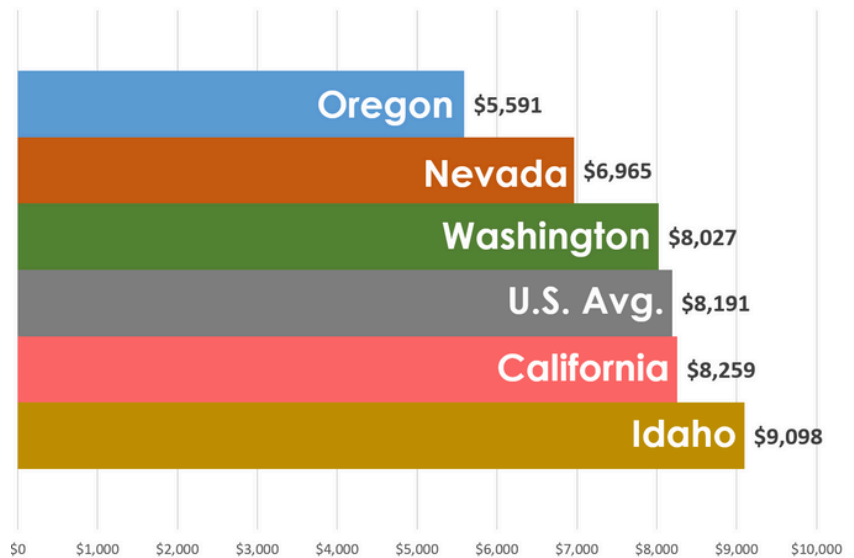
# OREGON CAN'T AFFORD TO FALL FURTHER BEHIND

**Oregon ranks far below average in state funding for public universities and is the lowest among its neighboring**

**states.** While other states recognize the benefits of investing in higher education, Oregon has been underfunding its public universities for

decades. **This chronic disinvestment not only hurts our workforce and economy—it's crushing students and families.**

FY22 State Funding of Public University Operations  
per Full-Time Equivalent Student



Data Source for State Operating Funding of Public Four-Year Institutions of Higher Education per FTE Student, COLI-Adjusted: *Four-Year State Public Operating; Four-Year Net FTE Enrollment; COLI (Cost of Living) Adjustment.* State Higher Education Executive Officers Association. (2023). State Higher Education Finance: FY 2022.

- Oregon businesses need skilled graduates now, but public universities can't produce enough job-ready graduates without sustainable funding.
- Oregon invests significantly less per student in its public universities than any neighboring state—Washington, California, Idaho, and Nevada all contribute more, making college more affordable for their students. If we don't catch up, Oregon risks losing talent and economic growth to our neighbors.
- State underfunding has pushed tuition higher, making college less affordable for Oregon families. A \$1.275B investment will help alleviate the financial burden on students and families who pay a greater share of public university costs than the state.

# AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE OF OREGON

A \$1.275 billion investment in public universities will support:



**Tuition Stability:** This funding will help keep tuition increases in check, making higher education more accessible for Oregon families. Some universities will use this funding to prevent drastic tuition hikes, ensuring that financial barriers don't block students from completing their degrees.



**Student Success:** This investment will support universities' efforts to preserve or expand academic advising, wraparound services, mental health supports, and other student services aimed at improving retention and graduation rates and closing gaps in student outcomes.



**Workforce Readiness:** Universities will be able to expand programs in high-demand fields, producing more graduates in essential industries that fuel Oregon's economy. Universities will focus on aligning degree programs with workforce needs, ensuring that graduates are job-ready.



**Expanding Student Pathways:** Universities in the most challenging financial situations will use increased investments to preserve and expand critical student services and programs.

**The Bottom Line:** The 2025 Legislature has a choice—invest in students and the state's economic future, or allow Oregon to fall further behind. A \$1.275 billion investment in the PUSF is critical to strengthen the state's public universities, protect access to higher education, and ensure our state remains competitive with our neighbors and the rest of the nation.



# STUDENT VOICES



*“During my time at SOU, I have had the opportunity to step into leadership in our student-led clubs, benefit from the TRIO Program for first-generation college students like myself, live in university housing, obtain student financial aid to help finance my higher education and receive great academic advice in preparation of my future career. Students are counting on our legislature to fund our public universities, and so is Oregon’s future economic growth.”*

**— Tiana Gilliland, Southern Oregon University**

*“As a freshman at EOU, the transition from high school to college has been relatively easy, and I owe that to the hometown feel in La Grande. If I had gone to a bigger school, I do not think the transition would have been so smooth. I like how the professors know who you are, and that you are not just a number. Having a public, four-year university in Eastern Oregon is so important. I hope the legislature will continue to adequately fund public universities like EOU so that students like me can earn a degree in all corners of the state.”*

**— Conner Fecht, Eastern Oregon University**



*“As a first-generation college student, state funding for Oregon’s public universities has been critical to my success. Thanks to the resources and programs supported by these investments, I had the guidance I needed to navigate challenges, stay focused, and achieve my goals. Public universities provide students like me with the tools and opportunities to grow academically, prepare for meaningful careers, and give back to our communities. I hope the legislature will continue to invest in Oregon’s public universities to ensure every student has the chance to thrive and contribute to our state’s future.”*

**— Zoey Alexander, University of Oregon**



*“As a first-generation student entering during Covid, I felt isolated — until I found my voice, my community and my home at PSU. I’ve stepped into many leadership positions and conquered my fear of public speaking. Here at PSU, opportunities have opened for me, including internships, individualized support, resources, and workshops that will prepare me for life after college. Receiving financial aid has been instrumental in my success and growth, both as an individual and a student. Financial aid didn’t just bring me to PSU — it made my higher education possible. A place where my dreams didn’t feel out of reach.”*

**— Brianna Vasquez, Portland State University**



# 2025 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Oregon's seven public universities are asking the legislature to invest in students and the state by making critical funding decisions this legislative session to support Oregon's communities, workforce, and future economic success. Without this funding, Oregon's pathway from education to employment will continue to narrow, and our state risks losing even more ground to neighboring states that have invested far more in higher education.

This investment is about fairness and opportunity. Oregon students shouldn't have to face higher tuition costs or take on greater debt than their peers in neighboring states because of the state's lack of investment in public universities. These investments will create a path to opportunity for every Oregonian, ensuring that students have the resources they need to succeed in school, in the workforce and beyond.

## Legislative Priorities

### MAKING HIGHER EDUCATION MORE ACCESSIBLE

Today, Oregon's public university students face the highest tuition in the West, largely due to Oregon having the lowest per-student state funding, which places the dream of a college education out of reach for many families. A \$1.275B investment in our public universities will help to level the playing field so that every Oregon student, regardless of their background, has a fair chance to earn a four-year degree and succeed here at home.

A \$1.275B investment in Oregon's public universities will:

- **Strengthen essential student services**—such as academic advising, mental health support, and career counseling—that help students thrive and graduate on time.
- **Alleviate the financial burden on students and families** who in Oregon pay a larger share of public university costs than their counterparts in neighboring states.
- **Stabilize universities** so they can continue to provide high-quality, public higher education to students in whatever corner of Oregon they live in, without making cuts to the people, programs, and services that serve students and the state.

### SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Public university students have greater needs than ever before. In order to adequately support students, public universities are requesting a \$458M investment in the Oregon Opportunity Grant to expand financial aid for students.

In addition, a targeted investment of \$7-10M aimed at enhancing student success and retention is needed for the Strong Start program.

With many students struggling to meet their basic needs while attending a four-year university, the public universities urge the legislature to support students through a \$22M package to address students' essential needs, including housing, food security, and textbook costs – issues that disproportionately impact low-income and underrepresented students. This investment ensures all students can focus on achieving their education goals without undue hardship.

### INVESTING IN WORKFORCE

Oregon's economy depends on a workforce with advanced skills that go beyond what a high school diploma can offer. Many of the highest-paying, fastest-growing jobs require specialized education that only a four-year degree can provide.

Universities are recommending an investment of \$20M to strengthen the pipeline of early childhood educators and \$25M to support workforce development in behavioral health, addressing critical workforce shortages.

In addition to specific workforce initiatives, a \$30M investment in the University Innovation Research Fund is needed to support research and innovation at Oregon's public universities.

These investments will ensure that Oregon can train and retain the skilled workers needed to fill critical workforce gaps, drive innovation, and keep our economy competitive.

### BUDGET REQUESTS BY THE NUMBERS

- **\$1.275B** for the Public University Support Fund
- **A \$458M** investment in the Oregon Opportunity Grant
- **An investment of \$7-10M** for Strong Start
- **A \$22M** package for student basic needs
- **\$20M** for Early Childhood Education workforce initiatives
- **\$25M** to support workforce development in behavioral health
- **A \$30M** investment in the University Innovation Research Fund

# THANK YOU FOR SHOWING UP FOR OREGON STUDENTS



**Invest in Students.  
Invest in Oregon.**

Invest in Oregon's Public Universities.