

# 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. An additional \$275M 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 \$275M 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 \$150M increase to 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 \$18M to support workforce development in behavioral health, addressing critical workforce shortages.

In addition to specific workforce initiatives, a \$20M 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

- An additional **\$275M** for the Public University Support Fund
- A **\$150M** increase to 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
- **\$18M** to support workforce development in behavioral health
- A **\$30M** investment in the University Innovation Research Fund

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