

May 18, 2020

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kurt Schrader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Greetings:

We write in strong support of the higher education community recommendations for \$26 billion in emergency supplemental funding for federal research agencies, including \$75 million for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), in the next COVID-19 stimulus. In addition to advocacy for broadly supported high priority research agencies like the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF), please continue to bring particular focus to IES, as a research agency of special importance to the University of Oregon given the national prominence and productivity of our education researchers. The recommendations for emergency research relief in the next stimulus can be found [here](#) and are also attached.

We are grateful that [209 members of Congress have signed letters to leadership supporting emergency funding to preserve university research workforce](#). But we are deeply disappointed that emergency relief for university research workforce has not been included in *any* supplemental funding proposal. University of Oregon and its faculty, research staff, and students urgently need your support to prevent employment losses.

The situation: Put starkly, a sense of crisis is upon us and all research universities nationwide. Our research labs are largely empty of people and almost entirely shut down due to the government's stay home requirements. The only activities that remain are those of absolute necessity: care of model organisms, maintenance of expensive equipment that cannot be turned off without damage and cost, and the conduct of some COVID-related research. Our situation is typical and the reason why national associations write with such urgency in the attached recommendations.

Unless Congress acts, we are reaching a point where layoffs of grant-funded personnel will begin and accelerate as we move forward into summer. Summer is typically a time of intense research activity (e.g., both graduate and undergraduate students work full time and faculty draw summer salary). The timing is urgent now before we lose the summer period and talented research personnel seek other opportunities and students are put at further financial risk. ***Congressional action will assure that the federal funding agencies have supplemental funds to backfill losses on individual grants and thereby enable current projects to be completed once research reopens.***

Federal research grants pay the salaries, in whole or in part, of nearly 1,700 people at UO. The latest data from the Institute of Research & Innovation Science (IRIS) indicates that around 22 percent of those employed are

students, both graduate and undergraduate. Federal sponsored research expenditures exceeded \$100 million at UO in 2019. Our modeling (attached) indicates that our losses have already reached more than \$3.6 million and will hit \$14 million over four months. Summer is the period when research expenditures peak.

What it means when research is disrupted: The COVID-19 disruption to face-to-face research activities will cause excessive burden on projects and ultimately result in layoffs or furloughs of talented researchers who are dependent upon external funding. Examples of disrupted activities include:

- **Education research:** The nationwide shift to distance learning for preK-12 educational activities has fundamentally disrupted the ability of education researchers to conduct face-to-face research related to education and social and behavioral activities. Virtually all of the IES research funding requires school-based data collection, which will be on hiatus until August, at least.
- **Research infrastructure:** We have a significant amount of laser-lab research ranging from quantum sensing and computing to biological research, funded by a variety of agencies. This has been put to a stop, and in some cases will take months to restart because it takes so much time to retune the equipment.
- **Other research involving people:** Across a wide set of topics, face-to-face human subjects research has been largely stopped. At UO, this affects activities in Human Physiology, Prevention Science and Psychology and faculty who are tackling important health problems like obesity and addiction with partners such as NIH. The Lewis Center for Neuroimaging, a shared core facility familiar to most of the delegation, is completely shut down until it is safe again to use fMRI and other tools. Clinical trials are particularly disrupted and the costs of re-starting projects will exceed what was originally budgeted in some cases.
- **Model laboratory organisms:** UO was the first place in the world to clone a vertebrate, the zebrafish, and develop its use as a model laboratory organism. Now, several decades later, it is commonly used in research focused on human disease and gene-related mutations. Laboratories all over the world rely upon the University of Oregon zebrafish facility, a partnership with NIH, to maintain laboratory stocks and related genetic information. Without emergency supplemental funds, UO could lose valuable information related to genetic lines.

We are helping state and our community respond and recover: While we seek emergency supplemental funding for federal research agencies, we are acutely aware of our responsibilities to help our community.

The university has helped the state of Oregon and our immediate community respond to the COVID-19 threat by gathering PPE for donation early in the crisis, manufacturing face shields using scientific instrumentation, partnering with FEMA and the state to house an N95 mask decontamination system on our campus for community use, and acquiring equipment and providing expertise for community testing in partnership with McKenzie-Willamette Medical Center, and community monitoring in coordination with the health authority.

In addition, faculty have responded brilliantly to the challenge, securing NSF RAPID grants and philanthropic support to explore pressing questions related to understanding COVID-19. We are very proud of the way our faculty, staff and students are reaching out to serve Oregon and beyond.

The University of Oregon and its research workforce need help: We appreciate the Oregon Delegation for the support you have already provided the university and students. The Oregon delegation has consistently championed federal research activities at the state's research universities. You have visited our laboratories, met with our graduates who are employed throughout the state, and talked with founders of spin-out companies that got their start thanks to a university discovery.

We ask for your support again. Oregon's research universities will be key to our state's recovery. The University of Oregon is prepared and ready, but we need help.

Please support \$26 billion for federal research agencies to continue their essential partnership with the nation's leading research universities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Schill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael H. Schill
President and Professor of Law

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Conover". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Conover
VP, Research & Innovation

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "RW Kamphaus". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Randy W. Kamphaus, Dean
College of Education

Sent via email
Attachments