

September 22, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

On behalf of Oregon's seven public universities, we are writing to thank you for your commitment to Oregon students and college affordability, and to urge you to request that education investments in the final Build Back Better reconciliation package include a \$1,475 increase to the maximum Federal Pell Grant, consistent with the President's request. This investment is a much-needed first step towards doubling the grant and will begin addressing systemic racial and economic inequities in college access and degree completion. While the House is proposing a \$500 increase to the maximum Pell Grant award, this proposal falls far below doubling the grant, and does not come close to meeting the President's request. We hope you will work with your Senate colleagues to fulfill the President's request amount as a down-payment towards doubling the Pell Grant.

The Pell Grant is the cornerstone of federal student financial aid. Unfortunately, our students are unable to meet their costs at the current Pell Grant levels. In 1980, Pell Grants covered more than 75 percent of the cost to attend a 4-year public university. Today, the maximum award of approximately \$6,500 covers just 28 percent of the cost of attendance. For too many low-income students and their families, financial burden is the defining barrier for college access or degree completion.

It has been widely demonstrated that an individual with a college degree is more likely to achieve economic mobility and retain greater economic resilience over their lifetimes, which in turn contributes positively to the economy. Accordingly, we urge you to work with your colleagues in the Senate to meet the President's budget request of a \$1,475 increase in the Pell Grant and indexing it to inflation. This investment is part of our economic recovery and future economic resilience.

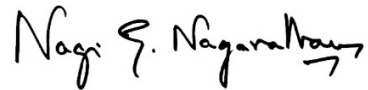
Thank you for your service to our state and commitment to ensuring Oregon students can afford and attend college, regardless of their family income. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you

would like to discuss the importance of increasing funding for the Federal Pell Grant.

In support of Oregon students,



Thomas A. Insko
President
Eastern Oregon University



Nagi Naganathan
President
Oregon Institute of Technology



Linda Schott
President
Southern Oregon University



Jay Kenton
Interim President
Western Oregon University



Becky Johnson
Interim President
Oregon State University



Stephen Percy
President
Portland State University



Michael Schill
President
University of Oregon

CC:

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
The Honorable Kurt Schrader
The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici
The Honorable Cliff Bentz