May 10, 2010

Honorable Ron Wyden
223 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3703

Honorable Jeff Merkley
107 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20510

RE: DREAM Act

Dear Senators Wyden and Merkley:

We write to urge your serious consideration to co-sponsor the Development, Relief, Education for Alien Minors Act—otherwise known as the DREAM Act. Passage of this legislation would remove an obstacle facing states, including Oregon, as they grapple with devising strategies to educate as many students as possible—from kindergarten to post-secondary—across our country.

Currently, Oregon, as with all states, offers a free, public education to all students, regardless of documentation status. Undeniably, education represents a significant and indispensable investment in the future of our communities, state, country, and people. With obstacles codified currently in federal law, however, many states and public systems of higher education are deterred from opening the door to a group of qualified undocumented students educated in US high schools. In many instances, these students, due to no fault of their own, were brought to the United States as small children without immigration documentation. Despite this, these students successfully finished school, have positively contributed to their communities, and are poised to continue in colleges and universities across our land. Without the DREAM Act, however, the barriers facing these students—particularly with regard to cost due to lack of access to financial aid or in-state tuition—often proves too much.

States should be free to tackle the policy concerns facing education and demographics and come up with creative solutions to the challenges of our future. For many states, considering their demographics, resources, and investment in their public education system, offering in-state tuition to those that meet certain criteria, such as graduation from an in-state high school and maintaining residency for a certain period of time, might be a wise policy decision. In the interest of fairness and in the spirit of allowing our states to serve as the laboratories of democracy, we urge your co-sponsorship and support of the DREAM Act.

Sincerely,

George Pernsteiner
Chancellor
Oregon University System