Members of the State Board of Higher Education,

My name is Dave Coburn I am the legislative affairs director at the student government of Portland State University and I am also speaking as a member of the Oregon Student Association, which represents over 100,000 students across the state. I am opposed to the undergraduate and graduate tuition increases being proposed on my campus and statewide.

The tuition has risen more than $1,500 dollars a year from the time I began my degree. Tuition increases might only be the beginning if we allow further administrative bloat with the addition of institutional boards.

Elected officials are offering solutions through policy and the Secretary of State’s office is prodding for answers with audits. I want to know why, yet again, you are proposing tuition increases students can’t afford? This year as students we asked for at least 1 year of 0% tuition increases.

On June 15th I am going to graduate from Portland State University with about $35,000 in student loan debt. Right now I am searching for a job after I graduate. It is currently my plan to give back to the state of Oregon by being an advocate for marginalized communities but due to my debt I may be forced to take on another job which will pay more but produce less for the State of Oregon, for my community, and for marginalized communities in Oregon. Small increases have big impacts for students; an increase of 3.8% is nearly 3 months of groceries for students.

My generation is less likely to be education than our parents’. Your tuition proposal perpetuates that cycle. Please open the door to Oregon’s future and roll back these proposed tuition increases.

Thank you and I would be happy to take any questions.
Oregon State Board of Higher Education
Tiffany Dollar, Associated Students of Portland State University
Re: Opposition to Proposed Tuition Hikes

Good morning, Interim Chancellor Rose, Chair Donegan, and members of the Board of Higher education. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. For the record, my name is Tiffany Dollar. I am the outgoing Student Body President of Portland State University, and I sit on the OSA Board of Directors. I am here today to oppose the proposed tuition hikes at universities around the state.

As the elected student representative for PSU I know our students are being priced out. Portland State University made Newsweek/The Daily Beast’s annual college rankings: It’s listed among the 25 least-affordable colleges in the nation, coming in at 19th.¹ We hear a lot about PSU; we graduate the largest classes in the state; we graduate the most Oregonians; we are 40-40-20. According to our Vice President of Finance, tuition covers more than 80 percent of the operating costs of the university. This is even higher than the statewide average of two-thirds. In a December Oregonian article we learned that Portland State can also boast that our class of 2010 borrowed more than any other OUS institution at more than $26,200.²

As I approach graduation, I will be graduating with $62,000 in student debt. It’s terrifying. I’ve had to make difficult decisions about my future based off this number I will carry around with me for the foreseeable future. I am no longer planning to be a teacher because I know I cannot pay these loans off—in addition to those I’d accumulate in grad school—on a teacher’s salary. Not to mention the job market for social studies teachers was discouraging. The Graduate School of Education at PSU saw a decline in student credit hours because students can’t afford to make the decision to become educators. I urge you to keep tuition affordable. Students cannot afford these increases that are above CPI, and the HEPI.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share my comments this morning. I am happy to address any questions you may have.

To Members of the State Board of Higher Education,

I am opposed to the undergraduate and graduate tuition increases being proposed on my campus and campuses statewide. My name is Galen Russell and I attend Portland State University. Since 2007, PSU tuition has gone up by 32.8%—causing my fellow students and I to make life decisions based on debt management rather than career goals.

There are other solutions than forcing me further into debt. This legislative session students such as myself have been in the state capitol fighting for $850 million for our universities. The Secretary of State’s office is attempting to gain answers via audits. Elected officials have been looking into OUS to curb costs and cut down on administrative bloat at out universities. At PSU we have seen administrative costs soar 144% to prepare for institutional boards!

I’m lucky enough that I can live with my parents, and be able to count on them to help with books and for food. I’m fortunate that I’ve been awarded the Oregon Opportunity Grant next year, which only every 2 in 10 students who qualify actually receive. But even after all that support, after just two and a half terms at PSU, I am already over $6,000 in debt. And it is nauseating to say that I’m one of the luckier students.

Students at PSU and statewide are already stretched thin for resources as is. A 3.8% tuition increase at PSU will only further the current trend of pricing hard working Oregonians out of higher education.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my concern.

Galen Russell

Associated Students of
Portland State University
To the Members of the State Board of Higher Education,

My name is Phoenix Singer, I’m a student at Portland State University, a member of the Oregon Student Association and I am here today to speak on the state of student loan debt and the tuition increases being proposed throughout the entire state of Oregon. These tuition hikes being proposed will add to the increasing burden on the shoulders of every single student in this state and this is why I’m opposed to these increases. Students at Portland State are expecting a 3.8% increase in tuition this year, not so long after our nation has headed out of the Great Recession and a 3.8% tuition increase will mean many of us will have to take on more debt to pay for our education.

Tuition costs have increased over 32% at PSU in the last 5 years and nationally the cost of public education has more than doubled in the last twenty years. We shouldn’t forget that Portland State students on this very campus actually graduate with over $28,000 in debt - $3,000 more than national average. Last year student loan debt outpaced the growth of credit card debt in this nation – over $1,000,000,000,000 (one trillion dollars). This means students have been accumulating more and more debt and are unlikely to receive a job after graduation while tuition costs are increasing on all of our campuses. This adds to the already stressful burden Oregon students have.

As a Student Senator and an Oregon Student Association member on my campus, many of my constituents have expressed their concerns about whether or not they will be able to graduate on time or at all because of the high costs of postsecondary education. This is a bubble that will eventually pop unless we act now to curb the costs of education and unless we do, our economy will suffer. The entire state of Oregon suffers when all our students are in this much debt and can no longer afford to go to our high quality institutions. Students this year have asked for a 0% increase in tuition. Please help us open the door to Oregon’s future and roll back these proposed tuition increases.

Thank you for your time.
Members of the State Board of Higher Education,

My name is Tashiko Weinstein, I am a Portland State University student and on behalf of Oregon Student Association I want to say I am disappointed with the idea of another round of tuition increases.

When I was 12 years old I was diagnosed with hearing loss and since I entered college I have been playing catch up. With my hearing loss, ADHD, and other disabilities, I have to work twice as hard as other students just to get by. I have to sit in the front of the class to hear, group discussions are often difficult for me, and teachers don’t always have the tools necessary to help me succeed.

I am lucky enough to be part of the only 20 percent of students who both qualify and receive the Oregon Opportunity Grant. I come from a low income family and the grant is the main reason why I am still in college. Due to my disabilities, after three years I am sophomore and I still have 3 to 4 years left before I graduate. I can only receive the Oregon Opportunity Grant for another 2 years and I am worried that I will need to take out more loans.

I commuted by taking the Amtrak Train from Eugene to Portland twice a week until I finally moved to a dorm room on campus by taking out an additional student loan, I have been doing that since the beginning of the school year and my body was stressed from commuting. I have been making sacrifices to curb the cost of my education, now students like me are asking OUS to do everything possible to prevent tuition increase at universities and community colleges.

If tuition keeps on sky-rocking then I won’t be able to graduate because I refuse to drown myself in debt with no way of paying it back in the future. My disability makes it hard to find work; I need affordable education! I ask that you don’t continue to raise tuition and prevent higher education from becoming only a dream for working class citizens like myself.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my concern.
Members of the State Board of Higher Education,

My name is Tia Marie Gomez Zeller. I am a psychology and women's studies major, and I will be graduating with my Bachelors of Science on June 16th from Portland State University. Four years and nine months ago I came back to the United States. I didn't know any English, or have any money, but I knew I was going to be able to get an education.

However, today I am not here to talk about me and how hard my journey has been learning English, going to school and working four jobs to be able to pay for my education, or how stressed I am about finding a way to pay for graduate school next fall. Today I am here to talk about my siblings. Here is Benjamin; he is 11 years old, and he likes basketball. He has known he wants to be a scientist since he was 7 years old. Here is Amanda she is 13 years old. She likes music and dance and wants to follow in my footsteps and study at PSU. I am really proud of these kids.

Your proposed tuition increases worry me. They worry me because if I am already struggling and working four jobs to pay for my education then what is to become of my sibling's' dream to go to school? How are they going to afford to pay for a degree if tuition continues to rise? Tuition has risen nearly 33% at PSU in just the last 5 years! I ask not only that you think about how tuition increases will affect the students in this room here today, but think about how every time tuition rises you are putting the dream of education farther out of reach for so many people.

To me, a tuition increase means I will lose months of grocery money, it means textbooks that we won’t be able to afford any longer, or a class that I won’t be able to attend. It means a step further from my dream. For this reason I am here.

Please we beg you not to increase the tuition, please we beg you not to push away our dreams and future. Education is our right.

Thank you for your time.
WHEN I GROW UP I WANT TO BE A SCIENTIFIC

I WANT TO STUDY AT PSU AND HELP PEOPLE, LIKE MY SISTER DOES.
Dear Board Members,

Please do not approve the request by university presidents for an 5% increase in tuition costs this year for state universities.

The percentage increase for the last 6 years has already put a huge strain on students and families trying to help the children attend college.
In 2009 alone there was a tuition increase of over 11%.

My husband and I own and operate a small road construction company in the Portland area. Our income has been hit especially hard because of the downturn.
It is slowly coming back with a glimmer of hope this summer.
We have one son in college and he will be a junior at Oregon State next year.
Our daughter will be a freshman at OSU.
With no increase in income we are having to take out high interest loans and so are the kids. Both children work full time in the summer and my daughter works during the school year as well. If she is forced to get a job in college because of rising tuition, I fear her chance of success will be much lower.

Please look for other creative ways for the Universities to save money. I have read that the colleges face rising costs due to three things. Rising health care costs, state retirement system costs and employee raises. While I know personally how hard it is to manage employees and keep them happy while asking them to do more, they must not insist on raises in an economy that does not support them. The average Oregonian will not get raises this next year.
I feel that the unions and staff should not be pacified at a cost to students.

Another area that could be cut is non-essential programs and staff. Wouldn't it be better to have more access to education than to have;
Institutional Research for Performance and Measurement, Executive assistant for the Controllers Office, Sr Inst Research Sys Analyst, Institutional Research, Asst VC Inst Resrch & Planning, Institutional Research, another position called...Inst Research Systems Analyst, Institutional Research,
Assoc Dir of Institutional Res, Institutional ResearchSystems Analyst,
Inst Research Systems Analyst, Institutional Research. Just because these positions are in place now does not make them essential services that in hard economic times need to be funded.

It will be a travesty if we as Oregonians exclude our ambitious and hardworking teens from affording a higher education. That will only lead the state down a path it does not want to travel. I am sure you are all aware that money invested in education pays for itself.
I realize these are never easy choices, however the future of our state depends on leaders like yourselves making these tough decisions.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jeanie Braun
Braun Construction & Design LLC
www.BraunConstruction.org
503-638-6406 Office
503-708-4580 Cell
503-638-3219 Fax