Board President Lorenzen, board members, institution presidents, and guests, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Adam Petkun and I am the student body president at the University of Oregon and the Board Chair of the Oregon Student Association, a group representing 80,000 students in the Oregon University System, Lane Community College, and Oregon Health & Science University. Today I would like to speak with you about three issues: recent activity in student voting, working together this session, and the great work of the Access and Affordability Working Group.

First, I would like to report on the non-partisan vote work of the Oregon Student Association and student governments across the state as a part of the Student Vote Coalition. We are happy to announce that, as a coalition, we registered 33,617 students across the state. At the U of O alone, we registered over 6,500 students. The voter registration drive was only the first step in a process that included all of our non-partisan activities: voter registration, voter education, and Get Out The Vote (or GOTV). Our goal was to educate young people on the local candidates and ballot measures and we did this by handing out over 15,000 non-partisan voter guides and giving 150 presentations on the ballot measures, as well. Once those very important hurdles were reached we then worked solely on Get Out The Vote.

Get Out the Vote was the crucial element of this campaign. We made over 20,000 phone calls, knocked on 2,000 doors, and, on campuses that did not have official drop boxes, we drove ballots to the official county elections offices. The Oregon Secretary of State is reporting statewide voter turnout at 84 percent and we are confident that our work paved the way for young people voting in record numbers.

We are very encouraged that students are participating in their democracy and, hopefully, that will translate into legislative victories for students.

That said, we are all aware of the current fiscal situation for the upcoming legislative session and the difficulties that this situation will cause. But we are hopeful, with the priority placed on higher education by the Governor and the commitment of this Board to improving access and affordability of higher education for Oregon students, that if we all work together we can be successful this legislative session despite these challenges.

Yesterday the Access and Affordability Working Group heard updates from focus groups on the proposed Oregon Opportunity Trust. Those updates only proved that there are minor speed bumps ahead on the road to higher education access and
affordability for all Oregon students. At the same time, we realize in spite of those challenges, it is heartening to see so many committed to the goal of opening doors for Oregon students. With the strong priority placed on helping Oregon’s “neediest” students and the commitment to finding new and innovative sources of funding, the Working Group is indeed thinking “outside the box” for Oregon students. I applaud the hard work of all of the Working Groups to ensure that Oregonians have access to quality, affordable higher education.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today and to bring these important issues forward to you and other higher education leaders in the state. I’d be happy to answer any questions that you might have.

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