The Hydraulics of Access, Affordability, and Quality in Oregon Public Postsecondary Education

A balanced policy approach sustains quality colleges and universities accessible to Oregonians.

Access
Having the capacity, programs and geographic reach to give all Oregonians the opportunity to pursue postsecondary education.

Affordability
All Oregonians can manage college costs, supplemented by financial aid programs, for low-income students.

Quality
All students have the opportunity to learn, through appropriate class size, access to class choices, high quality faculty and instructions, and reasonable time to completion.

When state funding shrinks, the balance is lost.

If **access** is emphasized above other priorities…

Colleges and universities will enroll more students;

**BUT**
Quality will be compromised as students face larger classes, reduced class availability and access to faculty, thus lengthening their time to graduation and delaying entry into the workforce;

**AND**
Affordability will be restricted by relying on tuition increases to support additional enrollment beyond the per-student state appropriation… unless financial aid is improved at least to nationally acceptable levels.
If **affordability** is emphasized above other priorities…

Tuition will be held to minimal levels;

**BUT**
Access will be limited or denied as Oregon’s high school graduates and adult learners face heightened competition for fewer college spaces, since tuition revenues will not be enough to supplement enrollment beyond per-student state funding;

**AND**
Quality will be compromised as students face larger classes, reduced class availability and access to faculty, thus lengthening their time to graduation and delaying entry into the workforce.

If **quality** is emphasized above other priorities…

Institutions will offer an appropriate array of programs and courses, and will maintain optimal student-faculty ratios, allowing students to complete a quality program of study in a reasonable period of time, keeping their costs and borrowing down, and entering the workforce earlier;

**BUT**
Enrollment is limited to permit adequate support on a per-student basis;

**AND**
Tuition will have to increase moderately to support additional capacity beyond the per-student state appropriation. Without adequate financial aid, Oregon’s “F” on affordability on the 2002 national report card will be maintained.