To whom it may concern:

As President of the Associated Students of Western Oregon University, I have had the privilege to discuss with the Vice President of Business and Finance, Eric Yahnke, and Institutional President, Mark Weiss, about setting the tuition for in-state undergraduates. A council of students I handpicked from various parts of our campus community and I have been meeting monthly to talk and learn about the tuition setting process.

This year we ran into the amazing problem of having little to discuss about the rate of increase for next year due to legislation passed in the fall to have a tuition buy down for the 2014-2015 school year. With this, Western will be able to have a zero percent increase for students on the tuition choice and a 2.2% increase for the tuition promise.

This is great news for next year. I am thankful that we were able to flat line tuition for students on the tuition choice for next year. However, I do have some concerns about this one time endorsement to higher education to stop increases to tuition costs. If we do not have proper investment from the Oregon legislature in future years, we will run into a larger issue of more substantial increases.

I know that there may be concerns of where to find the money for higher education, but this needs to be a center focus of next year to figure out a way to not just flatline but decrease the burden of cost on the student. In my own personal opinion, if 40-40-20 has any chance of succeeding we need to make college more affordable to all students. Western Oregon University has even tried to create a way to help students’ costs with the Tuition Promise, but without the original support from the state that make it an appealing way to afford and pay for college. It is destined to fail and not be an alluring way of helping affordability of higher education.

We will be planning open hearings for students to discuss the tuition for next year in April or May. From the reactions of students on the Tuition Advisory Committee—as well as students I have spoken to—I believe Western Oregon University students will be in support of the set tuition for next year, but still believe that tuition is too large of a burden.

I am thankful for the tuition zero percent increase and have enjoyed working with the administration of Western Oregon University. This will help education in Oregon become more affordable for the next year, but it is only a start.

With respect,

Travis Meuwissen
Associated Students of Western Oregon University President