Oregon State Board of Higher Education  
Finance & Administration Committee  
2014-15 Tuition & Fees hearing  
May 16, 2014

**Public Input Session**

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Members of the State Board of Higher Education,

My name is Tia Marie Gomez Zeller and I am the current Vice President of the Associated Students of Portland State University. I am a currently a Graduate student in the Postsecondary Adult Continued Education (PACE) program. Additionally, I will also be receiving a Teacher’s Certificate, Student Affairs Certificate and completing my thesis on Cultural Competency, for faculty and staff, based on research with students at Portland State University.

Five years and nine month 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 job to be able to pay back my student loans. Today, I am here to talk about my siblings. Here is Benjamin; he is 12 years old, and currently developing a sustainable way to produce energy for cities around the world. He has always known that he wanted to be a scientist since he was 7 years old. Here is Amanda, she is 14 years old. She likes music and dance and wants to follow in my footsteps and study at Portland State University. I am really proud of my siblings.

Your continued tuition increases worry me. I worry that 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 further 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,

Tia Gome Zeller
As President of the Associated Students of Western Oregon University and the chair of the Tuition Advisory at Western Oregon University, 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 less substantial raise of 2.2% 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 investment to higher education to stop tuition costs from climbing. If we do not have proper continuous investment from the Oregon legislature we will run into larger increases for public higher education.

I know that there may be concerns of where to find the money for higher education. However, this needs to be a center focus of next year to figure out a way to not just flat line, but to decrease the burden of cost on the students.

I worked as a Resident Assistant for two years and I saw too many students drop out due to the mere stress of trying to figure out a way to afford school. On campus this year, we are seeing more and more students needing assistance from the WOU food bank, because they do not know where their next meal is coming from. We should not be expecting students to have to choose between food and an education, but sadly, this is the road we are going down.

If 40-40-20 has any chance of succeeding then we as a State need to start prioritizing the issues surrounding the cost to attend our universities. In the past year, I have heard most conversations relate back to achieving 40-40-20. If we are going to come close to reaching this goal, we need more than a tuition freeze, but more investment from our state legislature. With 40-40-20 I am seeing that education is important, but not important enough to invest continuously.

Western Oregon University has even tried to create a way for students to afford college with the Tuition Promise. Without the original support from the state that makes it an appealing way to afford and pay for college, it is destined to fail.

I am thankful for the tuition zero percent increase across the state. This will help education in Oregon become more affordable for the next year, but it is only a start. It is a band aid covering the bullet hole. That will eventually bleed the students dry.

Thank you and with respect,

Travis Meuwissen
President of the Associated Students of Western Oregon University
To whom it may Concern,

My Name is Martin Martinez. I am 24 years old and I have been in the US for 20 uninterrupted years. I have completed grades k-12 in the Oregon School system. When I graduated from high school, I graduated with an honors Diploma, a 3.81 GPA and several other recognitions. After high school I pursued my Bachelors degree in Energy System Engineering by first attending COCC. In the spring of last year, 2013, I received my associated degree (AAOT). The next step that I would need to take in order to continue my education was to transfer to OSU- Cascades Campus. In the process of applying the question of tuition rate came up. After speaking with several people in the admissions department, both in Corvallis and Bend, I was told that I would have to pay nonresident rates. The reason that I was not going to be allowed to pay resident tuition was because I was not a permanent resident or temporary resident. 2 years ago I received DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), which granted me a workers permit and a social security card. Even though I told the admissions office that I had received DACA, which gave me a social security number, a legal status and even though I have been living in Oregon for more than 10 consecutive years, I was not going to be allowed to attend OSU without having to pay Out of State tuition Rates. That was some news that really broke my heart and shattered my dreams. Resident Rates at OSU are $9123 for one year of tuition and fees; that is the estimated cost for the 2014-2015 school-year. Nonresident costs are $26295 per year. The nonresident tuition rate is 3 times the amount it would cost a student who was a resident. College is already expensive enough as it is but having to pay nonresident rates is over the top. Besides the fact that someone with my “Legal Status” doesn’t qualify for FAFSA, the rates that we would have to pay are just unfair. They are unfair because I pay taxes like everyone who works in the capital building. They are unfair because I have been living in the US for 20 years. They are unfair because I did everything that you are expected to do in order to be successful. Having to pay nonresident rates has been my dream killer and because of this I have had to put my Educational career on hold. As much as I love to learn new things and as much as I want to finish my education; having to pay rates that are so high is just unreasonable. I don’t have to funds to finish one year with those rates. It was a struggle enough trying to pay tuition at COCC. If we could let students who are in my situation pay resident rates, everyone one would benefit. The economy would benefit, the colleges would benefit and each individual who completed their education would also greatly benefit. Quite frankly, it doesn’t make any sense to charge someone in my situation nonresident rates. We are only hurting ourselves. Martin Martinez
To the State Board of Higher Education:

During the 2013 and 2014 Legislative sessions I worked with my fellow student leaders from around the state to get a freeze on tuition increases for the 2013-2014 academic school year. University students throughout the OUS system have had their tuition increase every year costing them thousands of dollars additionally each year. We cannot price students out of an education. I ask that you all consider keeping any fee increases under 5% and in some cases look into freezing fees until next year or until each university moves to their own institutional board. We need to make sure to foster an environment where all seven of our public institutions are open access institutions where all students can go to prepare for their future.

Sincerely,

Evan Bryan
ASEOU President

One University Blvd.
La Grande, OR 97850
To Members of the Finance and Administration Committee,

My name is Julie Gulliford and I am a sophomore at Eastern Oregon University. I am pleased to see the continued freeze of resident undergraduate tuition, but remain opposed to increases for nonresidents, graduates and international students.

As a concerned student, the rise in tuition is making it difficult for students like me to go to school. It would be better, of course, if there was a tuition decrease or freeze for more than a year. This would allow for a more affordable college education for students of all ages.

For me, an education is important but I look around campus and most students can barely afford an education as it’s priced now.

I have to take out multiple loans to pay for school. My family helps anyway they can, but are struggling financially themselves. My on campus job pays monthly and it is barely enough to pay for tuition. With all the monetary help I receive from my family, my job, financial aid which are mainly loans, and any scholarships I have, paying for school is still such a struggle. So now I and many of my peers are in debt simply because we want to go to school.

That’s not good. The more loans we take out, the more in debt we will be and. Some students don’t get a whole lot of financial aid and pretty much the only financial aid that they do receive is mostly loans and to be honest loans aren’t aid since we are saddled with them for nearly the rest of our lives. Although some might qualify for grants, they might not actually get the grants because of underfunding and expected family contribution.

Last year, I did not qualify for grants because my dad made too much money and it affected my financial aid that I was getting. This year, my financial situation changed and I received the Pell Grant. The grant along with loans helped cover the cost of my education. It’s still not enough though. Tuition across the state is rather high and it keeps increasing. Without affordable tuition students drop out and are not able to find jobs to help pay back those loans. Many students will be in debt for the rest of their lives.

So, we need to try to decrease tuition, or have a tuition freeze for more than a year. If that can happen, many students will be able to continue school and afford a higher education. Especially if the student is the first in their family to successfully go to college and stay in school despite the financial burdens they may face as students.

Thanks,

Julie Gulliford
EOU student leader