



We believe that a higher level of educational attainment for all Oregonians is critical to positioning Oregon as a leader in the information age and global economy. Postsecondary education has become the gateway to economic opportunity, just as a high school diploma used to be. Many of the best-paying jobs with the brightest future for career advancement require training beyond high school or a college degree.

This is not the first time we have faced critical social and economic transformations. Raising the skills levels of the workforce was the impetus for the G.I. Bill, the Pell Grant, and other federal and state initiatives. These initiatives altered the lives of individuals and increased the economic power of our country and state. These efforts made postsecondary education affordable and available to Americans who aspired to go.

We are concerned. The rapid rise of college tuition and fees without a corresponding increase in student financial assistance creates an opportunity and affordability gap. This “affordability gap” is the difference between what a student **can** pay and what a student **must pay** to go to college.

Students are no longer able to “work their way through college” by taking a part-time job while they are enrolled and working full-time in the summers. To afford to attend a public university in Oregon today, a student must work nearly 50 hours a week in a minimum wage job compared to the 20 hours in the 1960s. As the cost of attendance has increased, many students face difficult enrollment decisions. Some students accumulate too much debt. Others attend part-time or sporadically to complete their degrees. Too many Oregonians believe they dare not dream or aspire to a college education.

Let us not forget the lessons of previous generations. Action is needed to reduce the barriers to getting a college education for those who aspire to go. We must make and keep a promise to every qualified Oregonian: you will have a spot in a community college or university in Oregon.

Goals and Objectives

- To expand access and make postsecondary education more affordable for all Oregonians both in the short-term and in the long-term.
- To increase the number of Oregonians who are successful in achieving their individual postsecondary goals.
- To ensure the well-educated workforce required by Oregon's current and potential employers.

Action Items

- As a first step, we intend to develop a proposal for increasing need-based financial aid for students entering postsecondary education for a first undergraduate degree or certificate.
- We intend to seek sponsorship of legislation to create and protect an endowment for need-based financial assistance that would include a constitutional amendment to be submitted to the voters.

Policy

- We intend that the funds be available for students to use at any eligible two- or four-year college or university in Oregon.
- We intend to explore various options for financially supporting students. Because a college education is a major investment, Oregonians share the responsibility for providing the resources needed for students to complete a degree or certificate program. This responsibility involves appropriate contributions by the student, the family, state and federal governments, and others who recognize that higher education for the individual also produces great benefits for Oregon.

Intentions

- We do not seek to divert existing state General Fund revenue to fund this access proposal.
- We do not intend that increased or expanded financial aid to students would result in reduced state General Fund support for public postsecondary education.