



American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

AAUP-OR Calls on State and University Leaders to Enact Innovative Solutions to Pandemic and Recession Fiscal Woes

July 21, 2020

Oregon's Legislature and Governor face hard decisions as they confront our state's formidable financial challenges. The priority must be to chart the most effective path to short- and long-term economic recovery while protecting the health and well-being of all Oregonians. These goals clearly place higher education at the center of a strategy to protect and rebuild our economy through support of advanced education, research, and innovation to meet the Covid-19 challenge. For more than a century, higher education in Oregon has proven its ability to strengthen our economy, close the income gap and build tomorrow's workforce by training resilient thinkers, innovators, and workers.

We, members of the AAUP-OR (American Association of University Professors of Oregon), ask our political leaders to support higher education at this crucial moment and to join us in ensuring that state tax dollars for higher education are spent in the most effective way to meet the Covid-19 challenge, rebuild the economy, and protect the most vulnerable Oregonians. This will require not only additional funding, but progressive out-of-the-box thinking by higher education administrators and faculty. We stand ready to carry out this work and to hold higher education across the state accountable to these goals. Now is the time to join other states in accessing our [robust rainy day fund](#) and at the same time revisit the discussion about the Oregon tax kicker, [disconnect Oregon from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) loophole](#) for wealthy business owners, and [reform our tax codes](#) which privilege the rich and corporations.

Both our political leaders and our faculty must hold higher education administrators accountable to a socially conscious spending of higher education funds in the service of the educational mission for all Oregonians. Simple knee-jerk reactions such as raising tuition without protection for vulnerable students, academic worker job cuts, and wage cuts without a strong faculty voice are unacceptable. We demand that higher education administrators look instead at auxiliary functions - especially the incredibly costly athletics infrastructure and coaches' salaries - not central to the educational mission as targets for cost savings. Additionally, our university administrators should work with state and campus leaders to implement a one-time levy on the university endowments by [tapping unrestricted endowment funds or by redirecting endowment earnings](#) to crucial student services or instructional budgets.

At the campus level and at the state level, academic workers, through their multilayered expertise, their unions, and their institutions of faculty governance, are ready to work with state legislators and the governor to maximize the potential of our higher education system in meeting the Covid-19 challenge through research and action while re-starting the economy for a healthier and more just Oregon. When the pandemic hit Oregon this spring, all academic workers stepped up for all of our students and for Oregon. We continue to be ready to serve.

We call on Oregon and national leaders to:

- Direct resources to higher education, including direct investment from the federal government
- Spend from the Rainy Day Fund and Education Stability Fund to support necessary public services, including higher education
- Redirect the Kicker to necessary public services, including higher education
- Disconnect from the CARES Act loophole that benefits high earners and corporations
- Revise the tax code to improve tax fairness

We call on our universities to:

- Engage faculty, staff, graduate employees, and students in all budgetary decisions
- Tap five-year earnings from the endowment fund to support crucial student services or instructional budgets

- Prioritize funding for mission-centered activities and stop fiscal hemorrhaging from costly athletics programs
- Institute a baseline percentage of gift money regularly destined to the general fund, currently at 0% on most campuses

Signed:

American Association of University Professors Oregon
Graduate Employees Union of Portland State University
Oregon Tech American Association of University Professors
Portland State University American Association of University Professors
United Academics of Oregon State University
United Academics of University of Oregon

