

paid advertisement



**Oregon
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An Open Letter to the Campus Community:

A recent series of articles in *The Oregonian* titled, "Majoring in Mediocrity," has again questioned the quality of Oregon's major public universities and their value as an engine of the state's future economic development.

The quality of Oregon's public higher education programs, its faculty and graduates is far better than the newspaper's comparisons suggest. Oregonians have wanted to keep their universities to human scale and relatively small, thus we do not have a mega-size campus like the University of Texas at Austin or Ohio State. Instead, all of our campuses have faculty who are distinguished in their fields of scholarship, and all of our campuses are highly-acclaimed and respected in a variety of cutting-edge programs. Growing numbers of graduate and undergraduate students from around the world enroll in our programs in forestry, law, journalism, architecture, agriculture, oceanography, urban studies, business, education, music and theatre, engineering and computer science, etc.

The students, faculty, and graduates of the Oregon University System campuses have made, and will continue to make, enormous contributions to the quality of life in Oregon. Their ideas, their energy and their dedication to Oregon stimulate every aspect of life in communities across our state.

It's a strong testament to the quality of Oregon's public system of universities and its collective academic strength that our campuses could endure a decade of disinvestment and still begin this new century with a broad array of new ideas and initiatives to make public higher education in Oregon a more vibrant force in our state and its future.

In just the past two years, Oregon's public universities have:

- Begun to reverse the out-migration of the state's top high school graduates;
- Spearheaded new partnerships with business, industry, and other education providers - like Portland State's creative Urban Center involvement with Tri-Met, expansion of Oregon State's pioneering MECOP program, the development of the first degree program in software engineering among PSU, OSU, the University of Oregon and the private Oregon Graduate Institute - to stimulate economic development, create new knowledge, new wealth and new jobs for Oregonians;
- Linked 35 public and private colleges with Oregon business through a unique service called "Knowledge Exchange;"
- Stimulated new initiatives and alliances to advance collaborative research and development, increase technology transfer, and stimulate targeted industries and business opportunities;
- Improved productivity in helping to educate greater numbers of teachers and industry-ready professionals for Oregon; and
- Prepared hundreds of graduates across the curriculum to excel on national and professional examinations.

Our campuses and our faculty make an extraordinary effort. There is nothing mediocre about their effort or their desire to lead our state through a strong and productive system of public higher education.

We fully agree with the *Oregonian's* proposition that our state's continuing high quality of life will depend upon a stronger system of public higher education. Greater support of public higher education by both the public and private sectors will determine how effective our universities can become in helping to develop the Oregon economy of the 21st Century.

It amazes and inspires me that we rank only 44th in per capita spending on public higher education, yet our Oregon public universities provide a quality education to more than 100,000 students each year. Only through the extraordinary commitment of faculty and staff is this possible. Building comprehensive excellence for the future however requires sustained support and stronger commitment to higher education by all Oregonians. It only matters if Oregon wishes to be a competitive player in this new century.

Joseph W. Cox
Chancellor
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