

Inter-Institutional Faculty Senate

For Every Action there is a Reaction...Newton's Third Law

June 10, 2008

Office of the Governor
State Capitol, Room 160
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-4707

Dear Governor Kulongoski:

We are urging you, along with many other groups and organizations throughout the state, to support the release of the entire \$125 million state salary pool that was promised, but delayed until after the June 2008 revenue forecast by our Legislative budget leaders. As the only Governor in Oregon history to have served in all three branches of state government, one does not need to explain to you the frustration the Oregon University System faculty feel over this action. You are also aware of the consequences and impact on OUS if the entire state salary pool is not released. We need your help and leadership during this difficult time.

Your leadership has survived one of the largest budget deficits (2003) and done so with extreme courage and success. Your commitment to the PK-20 model and the future of education in Oregon has been demonstrated by your efforts to carry forth one of the “best budgets” for OUS and K-12 in decades. We share your belief that, “... the key to a strong and prosperous economy is an educated and skilled workforce, and that the single most important investment the state can make to ensure success for Oregon’s future is in education.” OUS is in trouble and the future of what we do and how well we can carry out our joint responsibility and commitment to higher education will be affected by this outcome.

Presented as a “... starting place not an ending place” the promises of budget increases were made in the Legislative 2007 Session, thus leading to campus planning. These commitments gave every campus an opportunity to live within their means and to mend serious financial difficulties while strengthening financial stability across the Oregon University System. If the salary pool is not funded, as promised, this action will toss campuses into crisis mode and the reality of where Oregon higher education is situated will not be something to be proud of. Not only will this action reverse any efforts that have been made to repair decades of under funding and neglect, the side-effects will also trickle into recruitment and retention for every campus. This area includes struggling to hire and maintain quality faculty at a time where it is essential that we recruit the best faculty and staff that we can. OUS struggles to compete for the “best and brightest

minds” in academia with salaries that simply are not competitive. Campuses such as Eastern and Southern have already gone through a retrenchment process. What could there possibly be left to cut?

Ramifications have already extended into every aspect of the University System. Students have been informed of the rising tuition rates for fall 2008. Rates that if not increased will not allow the campuses to function. There is little doubt that we need to do something different in funding Higher Education, but the with-holding of the salary pool will only exacerbate the problems we are facing and the decisions we will have to make in the future. Please take the step necessary to release the funds (the \$125 million) in June. Salary raises have already been granted. We need to be clear what is at stake here. Denying the funds to cover these raises will result in cuts across all our universities. Cutting faculty or not filling position mean fewer classes, delayed graduation, and often times loss of retention--- the very things OUS has strived so hard to improve! Not funding the universities forces broken agreements with students and families. What is the Oregon Opportunity if we cannot stand behind our promises?

As freshmen arrive to campus to enroll in fall courses across Oregon, let the message be that the government found a way to fund the future of Oregon and not that we are sorry, there are just not enough resources to support our future and a sustainable Oregon University System.

Thank you for all you have done for OUS. Your continued support and immediate attention to this matter is of the utmost urgency. Please, do not allow the system to be eroded one budget-at-a-time.

Sincerely,

Lee Ellen Ayers

Lee Ellen Ayers, EdD, PhD
Associate Professor of Criminology & Criminal Justice
Southern Oregon University
President, 2008, Oregon Inter-Institutional Faculty Senate

CC:

President Peter Courtney Speaker Jeff Merkley, Senator Alan Bates, Senator Margaret Carter Senator Betsy Johnson, Senator Frank Morse, Senator David Nelson, Senator Kurt Schrader, Senator Ben Westlund, Senator Doug Whitsett, Senator Jackie Winters, Representative David Edwards, Representative Larry Galizio, Representative George Gilman, Representative Bob Jenson, Representative Susan Morgan, Representative Nancy Nathanson, Representative Mary Nolan, Representative Chip Shields, Representative Patti Smith, Chancellor George Pernsteiner, President Mary Cullan, President Ed Ray, President Dave Frohnmayer, President Wim Wiewel, President John P. Minahan, Interim President Dixie Lund, Interim President David Woodall, Interim Provost Ed Battistella, Provost Sabah Randhawa, Interim Provost Shawn Smallman, Provost Linda Brady, Provost John Miller.