

A Recipe for a Stronger Oregon

If a single trait can be used to characterize Oregonians pursuing a postsecondary education, it's a hunger for more knowledge, knowledge which will undoubtedly lead to increased opportunities for and awareness in Oregon citizens (and thus, a stronger Oregon) in the future. There exists, however, an unfortunate truth: more and more students are struggling to satiate this appetite for higher education and a better life, overall, because the cost of attending a postsecondary institution practically prevents them from even being able to afford the week's groceries.

For the past decade, state funding for postsecondary education has declined and tuition levels have risen across Oregon. While the state has had the 5th largest tuition increase in the nation since 1991, it also ranks 46th in state funding per student. Oregon students are paying more but feeling perplexed that their money seems to be doing less. Courses and professors are being cut. Student services are becoming more scarce and less accessible than ever. Also, students are being forced to stay in school longer (thus, paying even *more* money) because of the consequences of decreased financial support for higher education across the state. While postsecondary education *should* serve as an opportunity to nourish the needs and aspirations of promising Oregonians, it has turned into a bittersweet experience. The pride of educating oneself beyond high school seems to have permanently combined with the discouraging realization that this satisfaction doesn't come cheap.

Luckily, Oregon has all the ingredients it needs to improve upon the issues facing postsecondary education. Minimizing tuition increases, raising faculty salaries to recruit and retain quality professors, and augmenting student funding levels are all key steps of the reinvestment in postsecondary education in Oregon. While these goals may seem fairly basic, several steps must be taken to accomplish them. We must gain our legislators' support for the Governor's Recommended Budget and convince them of the value of reinvestment in higher education in Oregon. The Associated Students of Southern Oregon University (ASSOU), in conjunction with the Oregon Students Association (OSA), are cooking up a plan that will do just that.

On Thursday, February 22nd, students, professors, and administrators (from SOU and other postsecondary institutions from across Oregon), as well as other concerned citizens, will travel to Salem for a higher education rally at the capitol. That day we will be delivering thousands of postcards outlining recipes for a stronger Oregon to our legislators to show them that *we do* have the ingredients to reinvest in higher education.

For the next three weeks, ASSOU will be encouraging students to participate in our campaign, *Recipe for a Stronger Oregon*. Days of Action will be held in the Stevenson Union to inform students about our movement for reinvestment in postsecondary education. Students can volunteer for the project by participating in phone banking, giving class raps, attending the higher education rally on February 22nd, or simply signing a postcard. With a dash of information and a pinch of participation, students at SOU can contribute valuable ingredients for a stronger Oregon.

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