



March 16, 2020

Members of the Special Joint Committee on Coronavirus Response

Co-Chairs: Senator Roblan and Representative Holvey

Members: Senators Boquist, Knopp, Steiner Hayward, and Taylor and Representatives Barreto, Bynum, Evans, Moore-Green, Salinas, Stark

900 Court St., N.E.

Salem, OR 97301

Esteemed Co-Chairs Roblan and Holvey and Esteemed Members of the Special Joint Committee on Coronavirus Response:

Thank you for your leadership and service on the Special Joint Committee. As you engage in the critical work of developing budget and policy recommendations for the Legislature to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, I ask that you consider the impact on public institutions, and in particular, community colleges, their students, and their low-income workers.

Community college students already face substantial food and housing insecurity. The impact of coronavirus and the need to move coursework to an online format at colleges statewide will impact students directly with: increased needs for personal computers; delayed coursework for some CTE programs that require clinicals resulting in additional tuition expenses in future terms; and decreased paid time as student workers on campus, among other challenges. **I urge you to consider expanding need-based funding for community college students and implementing emergency funds for this vulnerable population who may not otherwise be included in general protections for low-income workers.**

Community college low-income workers also face significant impacts from the virus outbreak. The majority of community college faculty in Oregon are part-time, and the majority of part-time faculty lack healthcare. One in four nationwide and at LCC report relying on government assistance. This group of low-income workers will face substantial loss of employment due to inevitable drops in enrollment and class cancellations. In addition, part-time faculty frequently face difficulty in unemployment claims due to the nature of their employment and outdated administrative rules. **I request that you consider enacting emergency funding and healthcare for part-time faculty in need and that you develop special emergency guidelines to provide unemployment support to part-time faculty who suffer class cancellations and loss of employment as a result of this crisis.**

In addition, part-time hourly staff at community colleges also lack healthcare and will likely face wage loss as a result of the pandemic and merit similar consideration.

Finally, community colleges suffer from insufficient funding and historic disinvestment in public higher education. Furthermore, community college budgets are precariously balanced with tuition dollars as a critical revenue stream. Tuition revenue will likely drop precipitously in Spring and possibly beyond at the same time that colleges face increased expenses. For instance, at LCC a survey of all faculty last week indicated that 20% do not own the computer hardware (e.g. laptop) suitable for online teaching, and campus computers in faculty offices lack webcams and microphones required for extended online course delivery. This is just one example of a substantial increased cost that colleges will incur in order to maintain academic continuity at this critical time. An emergency investment in community colleges will protect against inevitable programs cuts that would ripple through the community next year and exacerbate the downward spiral of the economy. **As such, I respectfully request that you consider allocating emergency funding for community colleges.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely and with deep appreciation for your service,
Adrienne Mitchell



Adrienne Mitchell, M.A., M.Ed.
President, Lane Community College Education Association,
representing the 370 part-time and 200 full-time faculty of LCC
Treasurer, Oregon Education Association Community College Council