

WOU Finance and Administration Committee,

Throughout the past two terms, the Tuition Advisory Committee has been a valuable resource for students. We have had the opportunity to learn more about the financial workings of Western Oregon University. We have gained insight into the rising personnel costs, the transition of state allocation models, the potential tuition rate increases, and the overall effect of these factors on WOU students. We appreciate the efforts of Eric Yahnke, Vice President for Finance & Administration, for taking time to educate students on the potential tuition rate increases for the upcoming school year.

We understand that because of the rising cost of the Public Employees Retirement System and flat funding for universities included in the Governor's Recommended Budget, there simply isn't enough money to maintain the current services level. We learned that WOU retirement costs are estimated to be nearly 8 million dollars next year, an approximately 11% increase. We want to continue to offer a wide range of academic and extracurricular programs to students, without faculty and staff facing pay cuts or layoffs.

In the Tuition Advisory Committee meetings, we have explored a few alternatives to increasing tuition. One option is to receive increased funding from the State of Oregon. While this appears to be the ideal solution to rising service costs, uncertainty remains on whether or not the legislature will increase financial support to higher education. A second option is to make budget cuts. It is possible that making strategic budget cuts will provide us with the savings necessary to offset rising service costs. Vice President's have already been asked to prepare what 5-10% cuts would look like in their divisions, while minimizing the impact on students and their ability to graduate.

Our funding from the State of Oregon currently relies heavily on enrollment, but this will shift to graduation rates over the coming years. As a result of this shift, we believe that it is necessary to invest in increasing both enrollment and graduation rates. We hope that the Administration can work to improve enrollment, retention and graduation rates, by continuing to provide valuable advising and academic support programs.

We understand the need to increase funding in order to maintain current service levels. This increase will likely create a burden for students in the form of significant tuition increases. We believe that a 10% increase in tuition will likely lead to a decline in full-time enrollment, which in turn will result in a greater fund deficit. This increase will also weigh heavily on prospective students' decisions to attend WOU.

We believe that focusing on enrollment, retention, and graduation rates will have a positive impact on long-term University funding. First, because the State will grant funds based on enrollment and graduation rates, and second, because an increase in enrollment increases revenue directly. As far as short-term funding, we understand the necessity of increasing tuition rates. We hope that those increases can remain minimal and be accompanied with strategic cuts.

The students of the Tuition Advisory Committee would like to thank the Finance and Administration Committee and those who contribute to the budget of WOU. We greatly appreciate your commitment to the students of Western Oregon University. We hope that you continue to think of students as you reflect on these financial decisions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Natalie Legras". The script is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending from the end of the name.

Natalie Legras  
Student Worker, Budget/Payroll

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosita Olalde". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first letter of each name being particularly large and prominent.

Rosita Olalde  
Intern, President's Office