



## OREGON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

November 27, 2011

To: Chairman Matthew Donegan  
Members of the Oregon State Board of Higher Education  
Chancellor George Pernsteiner

Chair Donegan, Members and Chancellor Pernsteiner:

We, the undersigned members of the Oregon Legislature, were surprised and deeply disappointed to learn of the Board of Higher Education's pending decision to not renew Richard Lariviere's contract as President of the University of Oregon. We urge you to reconsider.

The announcement of the decision to not renew President Lariviere's contract was a shock to us, to the greater UO community and to those who have been at the forefront of fighting for better educational opportunities for Oregon's youth. President Lariviere has earned the trust and admiration of elected officials, community leaders, UO students, faculty, staff, alumni, and donors. Under his leadership, the university has dramatically increased fundraising, grown enrollment, and attracted the most diverse and well qualified student body in recent history. The UO has improved its student retention rate, become better able to attract and keep top caliber faculty, and positioned itself to better educate more Oregon students than ever before.

It is no secret that there have been significant stylistic and policy differences between President Lariviere and the Chancellor and some members of the board. Differing viewpoints are acceptable in public policy discussions. Full deliberation of issues should not only be tolerated, but encouraged.

President Lariviere is a world-class university president with exceptional leadership capabilities. We believe that your pending action sends the wrong message to the public, to the academic community, to policy makers, and to other university presidents, both current and future. Whether intended or not, the result of this action is a message that the charge of university leaders is not to lead a university to the best of their ability.

This is the exact opposite of what our state needs right now. In the wake of the great recession, the challenges of managing our public institutions demand bold, innovative leadership. We believe President Lariviere's strong advocacy on behalf of Oregon's students and on behalf of the University of Oregon is exactly the type of leadership that is needed during these times.

In the last few years the UO has greatly increased enrollments – both from Oregon and outside – while also increasing the proportion of student retention. Both research grants and private gifts to the University have grown as has the University's global reputation (as witnessed by parents from outside Oregon and the United States willingness to pay a high price for their children to gain a UO education).



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Comments from UO faculty and alumni strongly suggest this is due to President Lariviere's strong and visible leadership. This is the type of innovation and leadership Oregon institutions desperately need if we are to prosper and prepare our young for a bright future.

We have heard that this is a personnel matter, not about policy. We disagree, as it appears that this is a disagreement about policy choices and how President Lariviere acted to protect and move the University of Oregon forward, in both academic excellence and long term fiscal soundness. We believe that retaining Richard Lariviere as the University of Oregon President is in the University's and State's long-term best interest in order to allow the university to continue its drive to deliver world class education, research, and innovation for the state of Oregon. We respectfully ask for the board to reconsider your pending decision and retain Richard Lariviere.

Respectfully,

Sen. Lee Beyer  
Sen. Richard Devlin  
Sen. Chris Edwards  
Sen. Jeff Kruse  
Sen. Floyd Prozanski  
Sen. Bruce Starr  
Sen. Chris Telfer

Rep. Phil Barnhart  
Rep. Terry Beyer  
Rep. Margaret Doherty  
Rep. Sal Esquivel  
Rep. Paul Holvey  
Rep. Rep. Val Hoyle  
Rep. John Huffman

Rep. Shawn Lindsay  
Rep. Nancy Nathanson  
Rep. Andy Olson  
Rep. Julie Parrish  
Rep. Patrick Sheehan

Cc:

Governor John Kitzhaber  
Members of the 76<sup>th</sup> Oregon Legislative Assembly  
Richard Lariviere, President, University of Oregon