



# Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

## Oregon Student Assistance Commission

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### NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Oregon Student Assistance Commission Draws Praise from National and State Leaders**

Eugene OR – The Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC) drew praise for serving students through its state need-based grants, private scholarships, and the ASPIRE mentoring program by U.S. Congressman Peter DeFazio, State Representative Brian Clem, Program Officer for Education & Special Funds Randy Choy of The Oregon Community Foundation, Scholarship Director Sam Rennick of The Ford Family Foundation, and many others at Sunday's (September 20) 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration as a state agency.

The event was held at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at the University of Oregon and attended by nearly 150 people including University of Oregon President Richard Lariviere, State Representative Nancy Nathanson, representatives of public, independent, and for-profit colleges, donors, and invited guests.

Congressman DeFazio, a private scholarship donor with OSAC since 1991, gave a moving story of how his scholarship was pivotal in helping a young man, who experienced hardship during his formative years, complete his college degree and later served as the superintendent of schools in several rural Oregon communities.

Representative Brian Clem, originally from Coos Bay, shared his personal story of how financial aid made it possible for him to go to college. He also praised OSAC for creating ASPIRE, a mentoring program to help high school students plan for postsecondary education and training. Clem served as an OSAC Commissioner from 2000 to 2006.

Randy Choy of The Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) reaffirmed the foundation's ongoing commitment to education and shared the story of its successful public/private scholarship partnership with OSAC that began in 1983. The scholarship program has flourished since that time and benefited thousands of Oregon students with annual awards now averaging more than \$4.5 million.

As a state agency, OSAC is unique in the nation for its scholarship administration program that connects private donors with scholarship recipients through a single common application. Last year more than 3,400 students benefited from more than 400 individual programs through the OSAC scholarship process.

Joshua Griggs, a former foster youth and recipient of the state's need-based grant (the Oregon Opportunity Grant) and federal Chafee grant for foster youth, closed the presentation with an inspiring speech about how the mentoring he received helped him with the college admissions and financial aid process. He is finishing his degree at Portland State University in social work so he can "give back" by helping foster youth like himself.

"The testimonials of all the honorees and guests in attendance affirmed the importance of OSAC programs and our mission to help all Oregon students who wish to attend college," said OSAC Executive Director Dennis Johnson.

Since it began in 1959 OSAC has served more than 650,000 Oregon students and awarded more than \$600 million to help students attain their goal of a college education.

