

Kitzhaber signs higher education restructuring bill



By [Portland Business Alliance](#), July 22, 2011

A significant step forward was made for Oregon's economic future. Governor Kitzhaber, joined by Senators Mark Hass and Representatives Tobias Read, Mike Dembrow and Mark Johnson, signed into law Senate Bill 242, the higher education restructuring bill. This legislation shifts the governance structure of the Oregon University System from a state agency into a public university system. Oregon's universities will now have greater control over their own costs. Additionally, students and parents will be assured that dollars spent on tuition will be reinvested back into the universities, not spent to balance the budgets of other state programs.

Improving educational attainment in Oregon is critical for the state's economic future. The state's four major business associations — Associated Oregon Industries, the Oregon Business Association, the Oregon Business Council and the Portland Business Alliance — joined together in 2010 with the Oregon University System Chancellor, university and community college presidents, and legislators, to raise awareness of the need for a strengthened post secondary education system in our state. The governor acknowledged the support of the state's major business associations, including the Alliance, as he signed SB242 into law today.

With the passage of Senate Bill 242, along with other education reform bills such as the new 0-20 Oregon Education Investment Board, funding will now be directed in the most efficient way possible to improve the educational outcomes of all Oregon students, from pre-K through postsecondary education.

The business community has long paid close attention to education quality in Oregon, individually and collectively advocating for reform, investment and overall quality improvements. Oregon's economy relies on a highly skilled and trained workforce to meet the economic demands of the present and the future. Oregon's economy also relies on an educational environment that fosters research and innovation as a key driver to attract new industry clusters. As the global economy increasingly demands advanced educational attainment, it is important for Oregon's citizens to be trained and skilled to remain competitive.

"Today a major step forward was made for preparing Oregonians for tomorrow's global economy. But the work has just begun," said Sandra McDonough, Alliance president and CEO.

“The Alliance, along with its business association partners will work with Governor Kitzhaber, the Legislature, the Oregon University System and the entire education spectrum on implementation of this important education reform. Together we can improve the educational quality and outcomes for Oregonians and ensure long term economic prosperity for Oregon.

“The Alliance thanks Gov. Kitzhaber on this issue, as well as Senator Hass and Representatives Read, Dembrow and Johnson for their leadership on this important issue. We look forward to continuing to work with them as we continue to push for a stronger post-secondary system,” she added.