

## Sample letters to the editor

To the editor:

About two years ago, the Oregon Business Council said that our economic competitiveness depends directly on the postsecondary education. The baby boom is retiring, new jobs demand higher skills and low-skill jobs that pay relatively well have steeply declined. Global competition has changed where and by whom work is done. It's time we made huge investments in higher education, increasing the capacity of our institutions more than five-fold. This will definitely cost more money but I'm afraid if we don't heed this warning our economic future is pretty bleak. On the positive side, if we do raise our levels of education, the income of Oregonians could go up by \$5 billion a year. I hope people will ask candidates for the legislature how they propose to invest in community colleges and universities to meet our future needs. Sincerely,

To the editor:

Before 1945, fewer than 5% of Americans had college degrees. Only 2/5 of the soldiers who went off to World War II had finished high school. College wasn't even on the radar screens of most of the guys who went off to war or the middle class in general. In fact, the middle class didn't really exist as we know it today. The post-World War II GI bill paid full tuition at any school you could get into and paid for books and living expenses as well. More than 10 million WWII vets got the GI Bill. According to some estimates, in today's dollars it cost \$50 billion and returned \$350 billion to the economy – a nearly seven-fold increase. The current GI Bill offered to our soldiers returning from the Gulf Wars will barely pay for community college tuition and doesn't begin to cover living expenses, books, or the higher tuition and fees of 4-year public or private colleges. Not only is this not fair to the veterans, it is bad for the economy. Oregon needs as many college graduates as it can get. Sincerely,

To the editor:

Between 1965 and 1970, enrollments in public colleges increased from 3.9 million to 6.4 million as the baby boom started going to college. In 1960, America spent 17 million public dollars for colleges; by 1970, the contribution had swelled to more than \$57 million. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 1965, the total average cost of college tuition and required fees at a public institution was \$257. In 2006 dollars that would be \$1614.43. According to US News and World Report, the sticker price for an academic year at a typical public university now is \$5,836 for tuition and fees. Including room and board, its well over \$16,000 a year. How do we expect Oregon young people, returning veterans, and displaced workers to get a college education when it costs so much? Don't they at least deserve as good a chance as we got? Our economy sure needs workers with higher skill levels. That's why we are importing so many now from other places. Oregon needs to catch up.

To the editor:

Oregon, like the rest of the country, is facing a dangerous shortfall in trained nurses. The Oregon Center for Nursing estimates that that an additional 15,700 RN job openings are expected statewide over the next 15 years. There are more qualified nursing school applicants than the state currently has the capacity to educate. In 2006, nursing schools in Oregon reported, on average, 6 applicants for every position. Nursing programs require expensive equipment, modern lab facilities, faculty with graduate degrees, and, by law, class sizes that do not exceed 9 students per class. Almost every community college in the state is spending money on health care training facilities but few colleges have been successful passing bonds. Hospitals, clinics, doctor's offices and laboratories have been very generous to share up-to-date equipment but they can't meet the training demand and serve their current patients at the same time. And, by 2010, an estimated 92 full-time equivalent nursing faculty positions in Oregon will be open. The demand exists, the jobs are there, the students are eager but nurse-training programs can only serve one in 6 that apply. Sincerely

To the editor:

The US Department of Labor says the fastest growing jobs require education beyond high school, 32% need an AA degree or technical certification and another 23% require a bachelor's degree or higher. In fact, according to Oregon's Workforce Investment Board, Oregon will need 700,000 skilled workers by 2014 to fill openings created by growth and retirements. In 1950, 60% of the jobs available were for unskilled labor. In 2000, only 15% didn't require high skills and those jobs rarely offered a family wage. The 2000 U.S. Census also showed that in Oregon almost 37% of folks between 45 and 65 years old held an AA or higher but only 33% of those between 25 and 34 did. Our younger population is not as well educated as those approaching retirement. Who will earn these new jobs? Oregonians or foreigners? Sincerely,

To the editor:

XXX Community college is hosting a meeting about how we're going to meet the demand for high skilled workers that current job openings require. The answer is not as simple as it seems. Please come to the meeting at XX on XX to join the conversation about this. The meeting will be held at XXX. Everyone interested in the future of our community is invited. Sincerely,