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## Hands-on learning prepares students for college, career

By GARRETT HECKENBERG Oregon Tech Student Oct 27, 2016

I'm a product of an Oregon high school that is fortunate enough to have a few vocational and career tech classes. Because of my shop classes, I have a clear idea of the career I want to pursue and I know how to go about getting there.

This fall, I started my third year of studying mechanical engineering and manufacturing technology at Oregon Institute of Technology. I owe it all to engineering and other career tech education I took during high school.

I'm especially glad that I took engineering and learned to use production tools and equipment such as the CNC mills and 3D printers. I became proficient in software for 3D designing and modeling.

I already was on a path toward college but, honestly, I never knew what it was that I wanted to do. I found out that engineering is what I'm supposed to be doing. My high school career tech classes changed everything for me.

That's why I support Measure 98 — high school students all across Oregon should have the opportunity to take engineering and the broad array of hands-on vocational and career tech classes.

Most don't because for years our schools have had to cut electives like shop class. Access to career tech depends on where you live and whether anyone at your school pulled together a smattering of short-lived grants and cast-off, outdated equipment. Budget cuts have reduced our opportunities.

Schools in many states are focused on career tech and offer classes like aerospace engineering, biomedical engineering, disaster response and others relating directly to careers.

Some people say this lack of enough vocational and career tech classes is contributing to our lousy graduation rate. Oregon now ranks third from the bottom nationwide for high school graduation rates.

For the academic year 2014-15, high school graduation rates in Klamath County School District and Klamath Falls City Schools are 76 percent and 65 percent respectively. For the same year, Oregon's statewide average is 74 percent and the national average is 83 percent.

With Measure 98, Klamath high schools would receive ongoing resources for education proven to make a difference for their students. For instance, hands-on learning environments of vocational and career tech classes engage students in ways that core academic classes don't. These classes let students see how their geometry lessons apply to real world situations.

Funds from Measure 98 — which equate to about \$800 per high school student per year — may be used for expanding and creating new career tech ed (modern classes and traditional ones like wood, metals and automotive shops). Schools also can add other college prep classes, such as advanced placement and early college credit course, as well as guidance counselors and tutors.

In Oregon, the graduation rate for students who take two or more career tech classes typically is 22 percentage points better than the general graduation rate.

According to estimates by the economic forecasting firm ECONorthwest, for the 2017-18 school year, Klamath Falls City Schools would receive \$914,000 and Klamath County School District would receive \$1.7 million.

High school is where young people should get introduced to career paths and learn hands-on, real-world skills.

Please join me in voting yes on 98!

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