13/03/2023

Dear Minister Tinetti

Congratulations on your role as Minister for Education. I have no doubt that your background and experience in the secondary school sector will provide you with unique, lived understanding of the sector, enabling effective, transformative change.

I am writing to you today to ask that you seriously consider increasing funding for tertiary educations institutions in the upcoming budget. Education across the board needs funding increases, and tertiary is no exception. To this, I hope that you can answer a few questions for me today.

* What is the average percentage increase in tertiary education funding over the last 10 years?
* What is the average percentage increase in funding for universities specifically, over the last 10 years?
* What is the maximum percentage increase to funding that tertiary educations can receive every year?
	+ How was this number calculated, or arrived at, and when was it last reviewed?
* Do you think tertiary institutions are adequately funded, to be able to perform to the best of their capabilities?
* More generally, what was university like when you attended? Did you enjoy your experience?

Education can only serve students best when it is properly funded. High inflation is impacting the tertiary sector, lecturers are burnt out and feeling under-valued, which leads to worse teaching outcomes. I do not believe that Universities cannot be expected to pick up this shortfall alone, when their funding rates are limited.

With the University of Otago publicly reporting a deficit last year, I am worried that this will ultimately lead to cuts to service and courses for students. I note Victoria announced the same. This is an issue that transcends individual institutions, and I do not believe is a result of improper financial management, rather sustained underfunding, at a time when increases are desperately needed.

This cannot continue happen, and I urge the government to step in to enable universities to ensure they can provide world class education that Aotearoas Tertiary Institutions are known for. As a former educator yourself, I don’t imagine I have to tell you how important education is in shaping the lives of young people.

Students are tired after COVID. Learning was hard, and the last thing they need is to see universities strained, and unable to provide the necessary services, or education to the same standard that they rightfully expect. Support services, those run by the university and us specifically as OUSA, are incredibly busy as a result. Increasing the funding for universities would both reduce pressures on students and staff, and enable these to be further resourced, to provide support students in need.

More broadly, this year OUSA is calling for extension of the winter energy payment to students receiving living costs from study link, expansion of the student allowance program, and better quality rentals for students. While outside of your portfolio, I hope that you will see the significance of these issues, and take the time to think about how seriously these would improve the lives of tertiary students across the country.

I’d like to take this opportunity too to invite you down to Ōtepoti at your convenience, to meet the OUSA Executive, and we would also put on an event to give you the opportunity to speak to tertiary students, and answer any questions they may have about the education sector.

I can be reached anytime at president@ousa.org.nz, or by phone on 029 779 3707.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Ngā mihi,

Quintin Jane

2023 President – Otago University Students Association.