

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 17, 2018

Secretary Betsy DeVos  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

We write on behalf of one of our constituents, Chemeketa Community College, regarding the Department of Education's (Department) handling of Chemeketa's application for a Title V Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program (DHSI) Grant Award.

In April 2017, Chemeketa applied for a DHSI Grant Award. Chemeketa was notified on September 26, 2017 that it would not receive any funding due to its score falling below an established threshold. Shortly after, Chemeketa requested a copy of its score, and in its review noticed inconsistencies between the readers' comments and scoring. With an improved score, Chemeketa may be eligible this year for yet-to-be-disbursed funds. Despite reaching out to the Department several times requesting an administrative review of Chemeketa's DHSI Grant application, Chemeketa received no response or clarification from the Department. When our offices requested clarification, we were informed that the issues identified by Chemeketa were not "substantive issues," but rather a "difference of opinion."

It is the responsibility of the Department to award grants thoroughly and efficiently, not arbitrarily or by the result of inconsistent evaluations. Therefore, we ask the Department to provide us with the following information:

1. Has the Department conducted a review of Chemeketa Community College's grant application? If not, why not?
2. Why were the irregularities in scoring observed by Chemeketa Community College not seen as "substantive issues"?
3. Was the Office of the General Counsel consulted in this case to determine if this was simply a "difference of opinion" or a "substantive issue"?
4. How does the Department account for the seemingly inconsistent evaluations and scoring of the application in question?
5. How does the Department ensure arbitrary determinations do not inform the end result of grant applications?

We thank you for your prompt and fair investigation into this issue and request a response no later than August 10, 2018. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Fritz Graham at 503-589-4555 and Stacey Jochimsen at 503-362-8102 in our respective offices.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeffery A. Merkley  
United States Senator