

Submitter: Autumn Beck
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB604

I was one of the very first students to be immersed in the program newly named Destination Western at Western Oregon University. After experiencing the community engagement and uplifting atmosphere of the program I committed to becoming a peer advisor the following year. In this program, I have witnessed the highs and lows of students leaving home to seek higher education. All students who are leaving home for the first time have innately similar experiences of excitement and fear. As a first generation, low-income student, the ability to leave home and trek into the unknown is something that brings about the extremes of both of these feelings. Connecting with students who are undergoing the same situation in a program that jumpstarts their college career is something I have cherished and I have watched many others do the same. Those who have a difficult first experience are very likely to leave the university without ever making lifelong connections such that I had the opportunity to do as a Destination Western student, and how I've continued to have the opportunity to do after becoming a Destination Western Peer Advisor and ongoing through many campus leadership positions. Not only did Destination Western strengthen my personal values, my empathetic abilities and my leadership opportunities on and off campus, but the stipend that I received both years set me up to afford my school supplies, textbooks, and many other necessities needed to support my success in the academic year that are difficult to obtain for many low-income students. I strongly advocate for the continuation of this program so that students for years to come are able to view the highlights of Western Oregon University and given their own opportunity to build the community of strong-willed, confident leaders, that are necessary for our society to remain dedicated to productive change.