

Submitter: Melanie Landon-Hays  
On Behalf Of: Destination Western  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB604

I am writing to enthusiastically share my support of funding for strong start programs at the universities, especially where I teach: Western Oregon University. Strong start grant funding has provided an exceptional beginning for so many of the students who come to WOU, and these experiences contribute meaningfully to student retention as well. I teach in our Destination Western program writing courses and it's been a highlight of my career. These programs specifically show these benefits:

1. Destination Western/Strong Start students are retained at a rate of 5-10% greater than their non participant peers
2. Destination Western/Strong Start students on average carry greater credit loads, while maintaining stronger GPA growth than their peers (leading to more on time graduations).
3. Nearly 20% of WOU students have been able to benefit from the program.

Please fund these programs...it is money well spent and makes a difference for our students, our community, our University, and our state.

Thank you, Dr. Melanie Landon-Hays