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On Behalf Of: Destination Western
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Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB604

Please take a moment and think back to when you started high school. Most middle schools work with high schools to try and provide a transition program to acclimate students to the new environment while still living at home, having meals around the family, and hanging out with friends. Now fast forward to going to college, orientation or new student week is not nearly enough to provide the daunting transition for many first-generation students. You are not at home, have no meals around your family, are void of friends, and are thrust into learning all of the things you need to do for the next 4-5 years of your life. Not a very successful program, which is where Strong Start (Destination Western at WOU) has made tremendous strides in retention, building connections, and providing a better support system for students who desire help during this completely life-changing decision.

I have first-hand seen the positives of this program. The DW students are far more engaged and willing to risk stepping out of their freshman shells, and the students who work with these students have become very valuable student employees within Campus Recreation here at WOU. If you find yourself remembering back to your transition from middle to high school or high school to college, you may believe as I do, if I had something like this it would have made my life easier to understand what and where to go.

With fewer students coming into college should we not do our very best to ensure they are treated right and provided the best possible first step into our future workforce? I believe for our students we must help when needed, step back and allow failure when needed, and support when needed.

Thank you for the chance to provide my testimony for this program.