

My name is Megan Adamec, a student at the University of Oregon, and a Peer Leader in the Summer Bridge Program that was funded by Strong Start. I am writing in support of SB 604: The Strong Start Program at Oregon's Public Universities, which will continue funding for programs that help ease the transition to higher education by providing an early start and giving them access to additional resources.

As the common adage goes, hindsight is 20/20. While going through my first three years of college, I learned many strategies for studying, time management, course scheduling, and more that I wished I could have known earlier. There are so many small actions which make big differences in education, and I learned them either through my own experience or from students older than me who had gone through similar situations. I was lucky enough to organically make connections to older students within my major during my sophomore and junior years, but not everyone is. This is why I think the Summer Bridge Program is especially powerful. By making connections from the second students step on campus, incoming students can learn from and develop a network of established students, GEs, and academic and professional staff that are all on their team, rooting for their success.

I feel proud to have had the privilege of connecting with incoming students and being trusted with creating a positive transition to college for them. For the Leaders, it not only improves our communication, leadership, and organizational skills but is also an incredible opportunity to give back to others and help fuel success in younger generations. I have had a very positive experience with many supportive classmates, GEs, and Professors at the University of Oregon and am proud to be able to contribute to creating that same environment for others. For both Peer Leaders and Participants in this program, I feel that the benefits are significant and long lasting.

I'd like to end with one of my favorite memories from the program. My group was working together to synthesize the longest strand of nylon possible in a lab competition — a common lab experiment which was new to both me and the students in my group. During that lab, I was incredibly proud watching my group of students work so well together, even though failure after all our initial attempts kept breaking off short strands and they started feeling like progress was slower than the rest of the groups. Regardless, my students kept noting what worked and what didn't, iteratively improving their methods and helping the next students attempt to go better. All it took was one attempt for the momentum to fully shift to our favor. The strand of nylon finally wasn't breaking, and one student was able to keep it going, with the rest of the group doing everything in their power to support them.

Watching the nylon competition couldn't have made me any prouder. I watched my group work through disappointment, frustration, and despite the pressure of competition, succeed in the end. I saw all the group members making sure to do their part, ensure everyone had a good experience and had equal opportunity to participate in the experiment. This activity cemented to me that these students were ready to succeed in college, as it not only exemplified their good work and growth as scientists but also showed them developing into the type of person I believe we need more of in the world.

Over their time in the Summer Bridge Program, I had the pleasure of watching my group grow, helping to advise them, guide them, and finally allowing them the space to use the tools they had developed to succeed. I am excited to root for them and their continued success in college.

In summary, please continue funding and expanding the Strong Start Program so that more students can benefit from its impactful services. Your leadership and commitment to education will help ensure that Oregon's public universities remain places of opportunity, inclusion, and achievement.

Thank you for your time, and I hope I can count on your support of SB 604, the Strong Start Program!

Sincerely,
Megan Adamec
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