

My name is Ivy, a student at the University of Oregon, and a participant 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.

I was a part of North Star, the physics Summer Bridge program. I have never taken a physics class before yet I did not feel behind during the Summer Bridge program. Between the staff leading summer bridge, the physics grad students, and the peer leaders there was more than enough support when needed. I learned a lot of new things in SB that I may not have the opportunity to learn about again in the future. The primary academic focus of SB was robot building and coding.

As a neuroscience major on a pre-med track it is very possible that I will not encounter any types of building or coding again in my academic career. Despite likely not encountering these skills again, SB made me realize that I am capable of skills that I would not have otherwise noted. I found coding to be very difficult, however, I was still able to learn the basics which built my confidence in my ability to learn new and difficult concepts which was especially helpful during my transition into university. Building, on the other hand, I absolutely loved it. I enjoyed building the robots and customizing them when the time came.

Our groups to build the final robots were able to delegate exceptionally well. We ended up making a robot that mimicked "curious" the mars rover with a carbon dioxide sensor and soil moisture probe. I engineered a robot that was exceptional at off-roading on difficult terrain with a remote controlled "arm" to insert the moisture probe into soil. While I was working on the building portion of our robot, my teammate was working on the extensive wiring and coding that our robot required. Not only did I learn the "hard" skills of coding and building, but I also developed my "soft skills" of working in groups, communication, and delegation.

Aside from the academic portion of my experience in SB, my social life also greatly benefited. SB had an evening activity planned nearly every day. During the final activity, a white water rafting trip, I made what ended up being one of my primary friend groups outside of SB once school officially started. Having a solid group of friends coming into the beginning of the year made the transition easier and much less daunting.

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,

Ivy Mills

University of Oregon

Portland Oregon