

Submitter: Daniel Johnson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB604

Hello, my name is Daniel Johnson and I am speaking on behalf of Western Oregon University and being a student at Western in hopes of supporting And reinstating the fund for the strong start program. I know that this is a late submission, but I hope you will take the time to read it hopefully. I am a first generation , Gay, disabled, college student. I never thought that college would ever be in the cards for me let alone graduating high school. So when I learned that I was accepted into western and when I learned of the destination western program, I was all up for signing. Mainly, due to not having anyone that I could turn to, and look up to when it came to pursuing higher education, but also knowing what it was like to be in a college educational setting with peers that would like me who were first gen. When I was a student in destination western, it truly did help me a lot and help me discover on who I could be as a college student and what it meant for me to be a college student. Unfortunately, I feel like that something we do take the granted, The ability to have or even pursue a higher education to begin with. So when I completed the program, I made sure to do everything in my power that I could to pursue my education. The next year I became a destination, western peer advisor. Which then I took the role on helping other students Who were in the same position that I was in at the time and still am currently. Western Oregon is a small campus. It's not like OSU. It's not like Portland State University to where it's a big campus and we have all these classes that students can choose from and a huge stadium for football games or, all these big fancy events that they have. But something that Western Does have that I truly believe triumphs over that is heart and community and the ability to bring people together even in the worst of times. Western university strives to make it and inclusive, diverse, accepting campus. By no means is a perfect, I feel like any school or university with higher education itself, always has room to improve, but I truly do feel what the destination western program. It truly does help frustration students in all walks of life. It helps them get over their fears, it helps them get over being afraid from being from home and being away from their parents from the first time. It allows the ability to understand and learn who they are as people for the first time. Also, it gives them the ability to connect to others that are just like them , but most importantly, give them the ability to just be human and just be a person and figure out what that looks like for them. That is what destination western does for people and its students. And what Western Oregon University strives to do daily. I really do hope you will consider continuing to fund this program because it truly does make a difference. I think you very much for reading my statement and I hope you have a good day.