

Strong Start

Pathways for University-Bound Student Success

COVID-19 caused disruptions in high school and community college instruction that negatively impacted the academic and developmental growth of incoming university students. In 2021, the Oregon Legislature funded the creation of Strong Start to support university efforts to reduce this preparation gap. The legislature continued that funding in 2022, recognizing that these academic impacts will persist for the foreseeable future.

Strong Start programs at Oregon's public universities provide residential summer bridge programs, supplemental instruction for first-year students, or both. Participants receive intensive academic support, especially in math and writing, academic advising, peer mentoring, tutoring, and study and financial literacy skills. While each university tailored its Strong Start program to meet the unique needs of its students and their current capacity to offer a new program, there were several important shared parameters. These included:

- Focus on serving BIPOC and students from underserved communities
- Summer bridge kick-off and continuing wraparound services throughout the school year
- Strong academic skill-building focus and provision of other student success skills
- Creation of a community of support for the students

Requested funding: \$20 million for 2023-25

Based on the outstanding results from the first year of Strong Start and the ongoing need created by the pandemic's continuing impact on pre-university student learning, the public universities are requesting \$20 million in funding for Strong Start to be continued through the 2024-25 academic year.

Strong Start Demonstrates Significant Return on Investment

Over 2,500 incoming and first-year students have participated in and completed Strong Start. The results of the programs are a testament to their success. Students participating in Strong Start programs demonstrated consistently higher retention, stronger GPAs, and completed more credit hours.

2022-23 Academic Year	Fall to Winter Retention		Fall GPA		Fall Credits Completed	
	Strong Start	Not Strong Start	Strong Start	Not Strong Start	Strong Start	Not Strong Start
EOU	95%	81%	3.4	3.2	15.5	11.8
OIT	94%	93%	3.15	3.19	14.2	12.9
OSU	98.5%	93.0%	3.08	3.21	13.4	13.2
PSU*	87.5%	81.5%	2.37	2.26	10.3	9.9
SOU**	97.0%	56.0%	3.02	1.89	16.1	8.8
UO***	95.5%	95.7%	3.11	3.16	13.3	13.7
WOU	97%	92%	3.06	2.99	13.4	12.5

*PSU's "Strong Start" and "Not Strong Start" data compares outcomes for students admitted below a 3.0 high school GPA.

** SOU's "Not Strong Start" student data represents a control group of 25 randomly selected Bridge-eligible students who enrolled at SOU in Fall 2022 and either declined a spot in the program or did not apply.

***UO's Summer Bridge program intentionally focuses on serving low-income, first-generation, and students of color where historic and persistent opportunity gaps exist for retention, credit completion, and GPA. Comparisons of Summer Bridge and non-Summer Bridge participant outcomes among low-income, first-generation, and students of color show even greater outcomes for traditionally underserved students who participate in the Summer Bridge program.

For More Information

Please contact Dana Richardson, Oregon Council of Presidents, at richardsond@mail.wou.edu, or the government relations staff member from any of the seven public universities. Thank you for supporting Oregon's students.