

February 20, 2025

Dear Oregon Legislator,

My name is Dr. Kristin Latham-Scott and I am our Interim Dean for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Western Oregon University. I am writing today to request that you support the continuation of STRONG START funding for Oregon Universities with **Senate Bill 604**.

I have seen students benefit immensely from Strong Start as a way to build academic proficiency in key areas as they enter college, establish peer bonds that lead to increases in resilience and retention, and gain cultural capital with understanding how college works that many of our first-time students do not have.

At Western Oregon University, Strong Start aids retention, student success, and graduation rates for the students who are part of the program, but also their roommates and members of their peer groups:

1. Destination Western/Strong Start students are retained at a rate of 5-10% greater than their non-participant peers
2. Destination Western/Strong Start students on average carry greater credit loads, while maintaining stronger GPA growth than their peers (leading to reduced time to graduations).
3. Nearly 20% of WOU students have been able to benefit from the program.

I urge you to support the stable funding of Strong Start. It was a great way for students to get acclimated back into in person learning post pandemic and continues to be an integral program to serve underrepresented students in their transition to college. These programs show results, and with stable funding we hope to show you increased graduation rates in addition to the early data. For all these reasons, **I SUPPORT STRONG START FUNDING with Senate Bill 604**.

Thank you again for your support of Oregon students and institutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kristin Latham-Scott". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Kristin Latham-Scott, PhD