

Submitter: Nila Friedberg
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB604

Dear Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and members of the committee,

My name is Nila Friedberg, and I am professor of Russian at Portland State University who taught for the Summer Scholars program directed by Dr. Shoshana Zeysman-Pereyo at Portland State University for the past 2 years. I am writing my testimony in support of SB 604 (The Strong Start Program at Oregon's Public Universities). The program is absolutely crucial for providing underrepresented students with the tools necessary for college success. Most university courses expect students to succeed without teaching them how to succeed: in regular college classes, focusing on skill or concept acquisition, there is rarely any time to examine yourself, your past experiences and to formulate what methods work for you. The unique course that was designed by Dr. Zeysman-Pereyo does precisely that. Using contemporary cutting-edge psychological theories, and focusing on growth mindset, emotional intelligence, resilience, confidence, perseverance, self-control, and self-advocacy, students in class had a unique opportunity to think about their own lives and focus on the numerous strengths they already have, as well as on cases in their past where they overcame adversity. That method helped them create a narrative of success, a narrative that reshapes your life and helps with any future endeavors. I particularly remember one student who was shy and quiet most of the term, and would have been "invisible" in a regular large introductory-level university class. Towards the end of the course, just 3 weeks later, she flourished. She presented an exceptionally eloquent, nuanced, structured, thoroughly researched work. She spoke like a graduate student, a psychologist, a professor who is passionate about one's work. She would make PSU proud, and may become a researcher at a top institution in the country. I also learned something else. That student used to be homeless – the experience that, no doubt, affected her confidence, and caused the initial discomfort of talking in front of others. "Academic success" course, funded by SB 604, was a life-changer for her, and for many, many other students like her.

Please give her and people like her a chance.

Approve the bill.

Nila Friedberg
Professor of Russian
Portland State University