



Valuing Their Voice: Homeless and Foster Care Alumni Speak About Their College Experience

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FLORIDA STATE
UNIVERSITY

Today's Discussion

Unconquered Scholars Program

Student Population

Path to College

Challenges

Supports on Campus

Questions and Discussion



Unconquered Scholars Program



Foster Care

Homelessness

Relative Care

Ward of the State



Our Mission

Provide qualified Florida State University students guidance, continual mentor-ship, advocacy, security, **and a voice** to further ensure their personal academic success and long-term independence.



Engaging Student Voice

- Student Advisory Board
 - Comprised of qualified students
 - Inform programming
 - Represent needs of all Scholars
 - Collaborate with administration
 - Serve as ambassadors
 - Leadership opportunity



Student Population

- Aged Out of Foster Care
 - Over 20,000 aged out of foster care in 2015 (dhhs, 2015)
 - 50% graduate from high school (Wolanin, 2005)
 - 2-3 percent complete a bachelor's degree (Pecora, et al., 2006) (myflfamilies.com)
 - In 2015-16, 3,024 using the DCF waiver in Florida (myflfamilies.com)
- Homeless Youth
 - Estimated 1,263,323 K-12 in the United States 2014-15
 - Florida ranks fourth nationally with over 73,000 homeless K-12 homeless students (nche.ed.gov)
 - In 2014-15, 60% homeless high school seniors in Florida received standard diploma (fldoe.org)



Path to College

- Installation of hope
- Enrichment opportunities
- Plan and prepare
- Application and admissions
- Connect with campus liaison



Supports

Admission

- Early identification through application
- Alternate admission – (CARE)
 - Reduced admission requirements
 - CARE essay
- Guidance throughout process
 - Monitor application status



Application approved!

Now what?





Challenges on Campus

Academics • Funding
• Engagement •
Housing • Food • Health



Challenges

Academics

- Adjusting to college life
- Increase in academic rigor
- Autonomy; no academic micromanagement
- Lack of time management



Supports

Academics

- **Summer Bridge Program**
 - 7 week comprehensive transition program from high school to college
 - Academic assessment and class placement
- **Tutoring**
 - Mandatory study hours
- **Academic workshops**
- **Wrap-around support**



Challenges

ESTIMATED COST of ATTENDANCE

{Fall + Spring, 15 hours per semester}

Total In-State

\$18,134

Estimate*

Total Out-of-State

\$33,301

Estimate*

Tuition & Fees

In-State

\$6,516



Out-of-State

\$21,683



Housing

\$6,620



\$1,000



**BOOKS &
SUPPLIES**

Most Popular
Meal Plan

\$3,998



* The above totals do not include the cost of health insurance. Students who do not show proof of existing comparable coverage may enroll in the school-sponsored plan at a cost of \$2,344/year.



Funding

Not included:

- Summer
- Health Insurance
- Transportation
- Clothing
- Extra-curricular activities



Supports

Funding

- FAFSA/Financial Aid
 - Grant funding
 - Institutional funding
 - Scholarships
 - Student loans
- Department of Children and Families Tuition and Fee Waiver
- Florida Homeless Tuition and Fee Exemption



Challenges

Overall Stability

- University housing
 - Residence hall closures
- Food insecurity
- Health
 - Insurance/Medicaid
 - Mental health



Supports

Overall Stability

- Gap housing plan early in process
- Food pantries/free meal plans
- Insurance assistance/counseling services



Challenges

Engagement

- *Imposter* perspective
- Feeling “alone” and “different”
- Isolating behaviors
- Resistance to asking for help



Supports

- Strengths-based Perspective
 - Overcome *Imposter* view
 - Focus on past successes
 - Re-authoring
- Dedicated staff
 - One-on-one meetings
 - Cohort groups
- Cohesion building activities

Engagement



Student Voice in Action

- Unconquered Scholars Study Suite
 - “*Family room*”
 - Scholars only
 - Safe space with other Scholars
 - Grocery runs
- Suits for Scholars
- Scholars Snack Shelf



Student Voice in Action

- Parents' Weekend
 - Scholars reported academic, emotional and social decline
- *Spearmans' Scholars Weekend*
 - Strengthen *campus family* bonds
 - Have fun
 - Reflect on college life





Student Voice in Action

- *A Day in the Life of a Scholar*
 - Host visiting high school homeless/foster youth
 - Instill hope
- Scholar to Youth Mentoring

Be with other
students who “get it”



“sense of family”



Grads

90% Retention Rate • 85% Graduation Rate • 2.90 Cumulative GPA

UNCONQUERED

