



A Decade of Collaborative Efforts to Enhance College Access for Foster Youth and Homeless Students

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FLORIDA STATE
UNIVERSITY

Today's Discussion

Student Population Overview

Unconquered Scholars Program

Challenges and Supports

Partnerships for Persistence

Advocacy through Student Voice

Questions and Discussion



Today's Takeaways

- Understand the unique barriers former foster youth/homeless students face pursuing post-secondary education and the value to individuals and communities across the state for closing the gap in postsecondary achievement for this population.
- Participants will develop an action plan to support foster youth/homeless students as they seek a college education to improve personal independence and enhance the quality of life in Florida.
- Participants will leave the session with a list of resources to utilize to support foster youth/homeless students in high school and college.



Population – Foster Youth

Nationally, almost **424,000 children** are in
foster care (DHHS, 2020)

17,500 in Florida (DCF, 2022)

Aging Out: Process of transition out of care
and into adulthood with limited state support.

Annually **20,000 in U.S.** (DHHS, 2015)

There is no
forever family



Foster Youth Education Outcomes

- 50% of youth aging out graduate high school (Wolanin, 2005)
- 84% of 17- to 18-year-old foster youth report a desire to attend college, 20% go on to enroll in college courses
- 3-11 % complete a bachelor's degree (Casey Family Programs, 2010)



Cost to the Individual

Academic Underperformance

Over a lifetime, those who do not complete high school earn approximately **\$300,000 less** than high school graduates and **\$1.3 million less** than those who graduate with a bachelor's degree.

(Carnevale, Ross & Chean, 2012)



Long Term Costs

Between 2003-2013, over **300,000 youth** left child welfare without the adequate support systems and education; the **cost associated with their less than average outcomes** in academic achievement, too early pregnancy and involvement with the criminal justice system is estimated at **\$226 billion dollars.**



Population – Experiencing Homelessness

- Pre-k to 12 (NCHE, 2018-19)
 - **1,384,301** in United States
- Post-secondary (NCHE, 2019-20)
 - Over **31,000** applicants indicated **homelessness** on the **FAFSA** (NCHE, 2019-20)
 - Almost **50%** community college and **36%** university students report **housing insecurity** (Wisconsin HOPE Lab, 2018)
 - **Homelessness** affected **12%** of community college and **9%** of university students (Wisconsin HOPE Lab, 2018)



Supports

Admission

- Early identification through application
- Alternate admission through Summer Bridge Program
 - Reduced admission requirements
 - CARE essay
- Guidance throughout process
 - Monitor application status



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



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

Books & Supplies
\$1,000

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
- Limited low cost housing for students experiencing homelessness
- 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

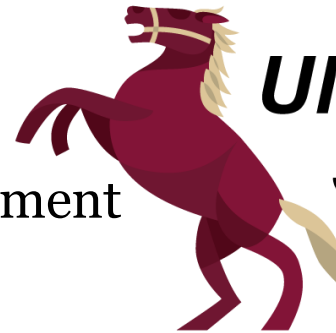
Engagement

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



Action Plan on Building a Dedicated Campus Program

- Secure allies for program development
- Identify qualified students
- Design and launch program
- Condense campus into a tightknit family
- Cultivate awareness and support



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SCHOLARS**
PROGRAM



Allies for Program Development

- Identify supporters
 - President/Provost
 - Deans and Faculty
 - Divisions & Departments
 - Admissions, Financial Aid, Student Business Services, Housing
 - Private Donors
- Find a good fit
- At FSU it was Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement
 - Center for First Generation, Pell-eligible students
 - Alternate Admissions Process
 - FGEN/Pell Eligible Students



Design Program by Engaging Students

- Invite students to participate
 - Explain overarching goal
 - Ask for their assistance with design of program
 - What is important to them?
 - How would this type of programming be useful?
 - What are their concerns about dedicated programming?
 - Honor their expertise
 - Inform program mission with their input
- Florida State University
 - Strengths-based
 - Focus on building a tight-knit campus community
 - Install a Student Advisory Board



Launch the Program

- Voluntary
- Stability is essential
- Dedicated staff
 - Mentorship, advocacy, guidance
 - Incorporates student voice in programmatic work
 - Solution-focused
- Strengths-based Perspective
 - Address *Imposter* Mindset
 - Focus on past successes
 - Re-authoring
- Cohesion building
 - Campus-family
- Student recruitment
 - Admissions
 - Financial Aid
 - Campus tours
- Engage with statewide network
 - Florida Positive Pathways



Establish Campus-family Traditions

Families have traditions, so build traditions into your program's structure

- Family Friday Meals
- Annual Mac and Cheese Cook-off/ Football Watch Party
- Easter Brunch
- Leadership Retreat
- Syllabi Supper
- Family Weekend Getaway





Outcomes

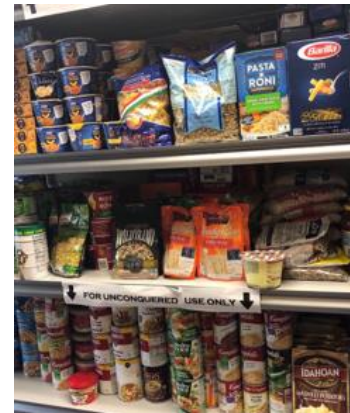
90% Retention Rate • 85% Graduation Rate • 2.90 Cumulative GPA



Student Voice – Honoring Live Experiences

Permissible Advocacy

Student Voice extends beyond campus into various domains to share their expertise and advocate for students with similar life experiences.



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