Fostering Success for Foster Youth on College Campuses:
What Universities Are Doing to Close the Achievement Gap

Youth Services Conference

Sponsored by The Bureau of Youth Services in the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

April 28, 2021
Housekeeping

- The event is being recorded and will be posted on the conference site.
- The slides are available online at [uwm.edu/fosteringsuccess](http://uwm.edu/fosteringsuccess).
- All participants are muted.
- Type your questions or comments into the chat at any time. We will also have time at the end for questions.
Agenda

1. Student Stories
2. Strategies to Increase Success
3. Fostering Success in Wisconsin
4. Resources

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Student Introductions
The reason we are here today
Hello!

I am Olivia Johnston

My friends and I in my dorm room
Hello!

I am Alisha Fox

Alisha at the UWM fountain
Foster Youth and College Success

- Going to college, either at a technical college or university contributes to economic stability.
- The majority of young people in foster care have college aspirations.
- Compared with their peers, those in foster care are
  - Less likely to enroll in college.
  - Less likely to graduate if they enroll.

**Sources:**
Barriers to College Success

1. Lack of preparation & exposure to college
   Students don’t know how or where to get help

2. Housing insecurity & food insecurity

3. Colleges not prepared to address the needs of those in foster care
   Complex processes & Professors not understanding student’s work/life balance for non-traditional students
Family Privilege

An Invisible Package of Assets

- Emotional support
- Lived “expectation” to go to college
- A guiding presence
- Financial support
- Safety net
- “Are you going back home for break?”

Individuals who grow up with this unearned advantage may fail to recognize the degree to which stable families set the stage for their success in life (SEITA, 2001).
Success After Foster Care
Strategies to Increase College Success

- Tuition waivers
- Scholarships/grants
- Educational Training Vouchers (ETV – Brighter Star) Funds
- College Success Programs

Source: https://www.ecs.org/state-level-tuition-assistance-programs-for-foster-youth-in-postsecondary-education/
Access without support is not opportunity.
Tinto and Engle, 2008
College Success Programs Across the USA

**Services and Support**
- Educate about college readiness
- Help students through the admission process
- Provide support until graduation

**Address Needs**
- Financial
- Academic
- Housing
- Social
- Emotional

**Operation**
- Most are specific to one school, but some operate statewide
- Some are state funded, but almost all rely on donors
- Programs vary by their selectivity
History of Programs in WI

- UW-Stout
- UW-Milwaukee
- New Programs Serving Students
  - UW-Eau Claire
  - UW-Green Bay
  - UW-Whitewater
  - Northeast Wisconsin Technical College

In Development
- UW-River Falls
- UW-La Crosse
- Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (Rice Lake and Richland Center)
Finding Students

- College surveys
- Summer Overnight Camp
- FAFSA
  
  Foster Youth: Question 52 “At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care, or were you a dependent or ward of the court”

  Homeless: Questions 55-57
- Referrals
  - Social workers
  - School counselors
  - College staff
- Current FS student staff connection
Fostering Success Program Highlights

- Summer overnight program
- Family dinners
- Welcome basket/bag
- Linen closet
- Emergency grants
- Gift cards for books or gas
Fostering Success Program Highlights

- Food pantry
- Help applying for FoodShare
- Scholarship assistance
- Birthday boxes
- Personal finance course
- A place to go to ask questions both academic and non-academic
Other Campus Resources

- Campus Contacts in Wisconsin
- Admission Representatives (for students not yet enrolled)
- The student’s Academic Advisor (for enrolled students)
- Tawney & Gail

https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youthservices/college

Persistence in advocating for what they need
What You Can Do

Refer
Students to those who can help guide them.

Encourage
Your local technical colleges and universities to create a Fostering Success program if they don’t have one already.

Strengthen
Your relationships with your local college foster student contact.

Motivate
Students, showing them options and letting them know it’s possible.

Connect
Students with College Goal Wisconsin to apply for FAFSA. https://collegegoalwi.org/

Advocate
For more Foster Program support at the state level. It is in the upcoming budget for WI. Click here or email: budget.comments@legis.wisconsin.gov