

2013 National Convening on Foster Youth and Higher Education

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Great Expectations
FOSTERING POWERFUL CHANGE





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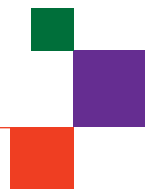


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Introduction

Young people who are involved with the foster care system are at risk for experiencing a range of negative outcomes in their lives, including homelessness, unemployment, incarceration, early parenthood and dependence on public assistance. From an educational standpoint, they are one of the most disadvantaged groups in our country.

To address the unique educational challenges facing foster youth, advocates in California have been hosting a state-wide conference entitled, Blueprint for Success for almost a decade. This annual event brings together California-based professionals from child welfare, higher education, the foundation community, as well as youth currently and formerly involved with the foster care system, to promote positive educational outcomes for this population.

With renewed national concern about the barriers facing foster youth who want to pursue postsecondary education, California's state-wide initiatives have garnered national attention from advocates engaged in child welfare policy and practice reform efforts. During the planning of the 2013 Blueprint for Success event, there was considerable interest among child welfare and higher education professionals from outside of the state California in a national convening. In response to this national interest, national funders Casey Family Programs, Annie E. Casey Foundation and Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative joined California funders Stuart Foundation and Walter S. Johnson Foundation to support the planning and coordination of the **2013 National Convening on Foster Youth and Higher Education** (Convening).

Facilitated by foundation partners, a steering committee was formed to create the goals and agenda for a one-day gathering. The agenda was further shaped by feedback from child welfare and higher education professionals. Invitations were extended to individuals and organizations identified by steering committee members. The goal was to be as inclusive as possible and the initial group of invitees was comprised of:

- Advocates and practitioners from child welfare working at the local, state, and national levels to promote positive outcomes for youth in foster care;
- Administrators and professionals from higher education working in admissions, financial aid, and campus-based support programs;
- Researchers and public policy staff;
- Members of the media; and
- Philanthropic foundation staff.





The Convening took place on October 22, 2013 with more than one-hundred professionals from 15 states assembling at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles, California.

Attendees participated in a day-long gathering designed to facilitate the sharing of information and discussion about how to improve higher education outcomes for foster youth.

The Convening addressed five overarching goals:

- **Goal 1:** Increase knowledge of effective policies and practices at both the state and institutional levels.
- **Goal 2:** Deliver tangible strategies for using data collection, assessment, and evaluation to improve student and program performance.
- **Goal 3:** Provide successful strategies for developing collaborative networks at both the state and community levels.
- **Goal 4:** Offer useful tools and implementation tactics for promoting campus programs and/or networks (this goal was addressed at the California College Pathways Conference on October 23, 2013).
- **Goal 5:** Discuss potential models for creating a national network that enables practitioners and child welfare advocates to share information and resources, provide peer support, and harness the power of collective experience and expertise to effect change at the national level.

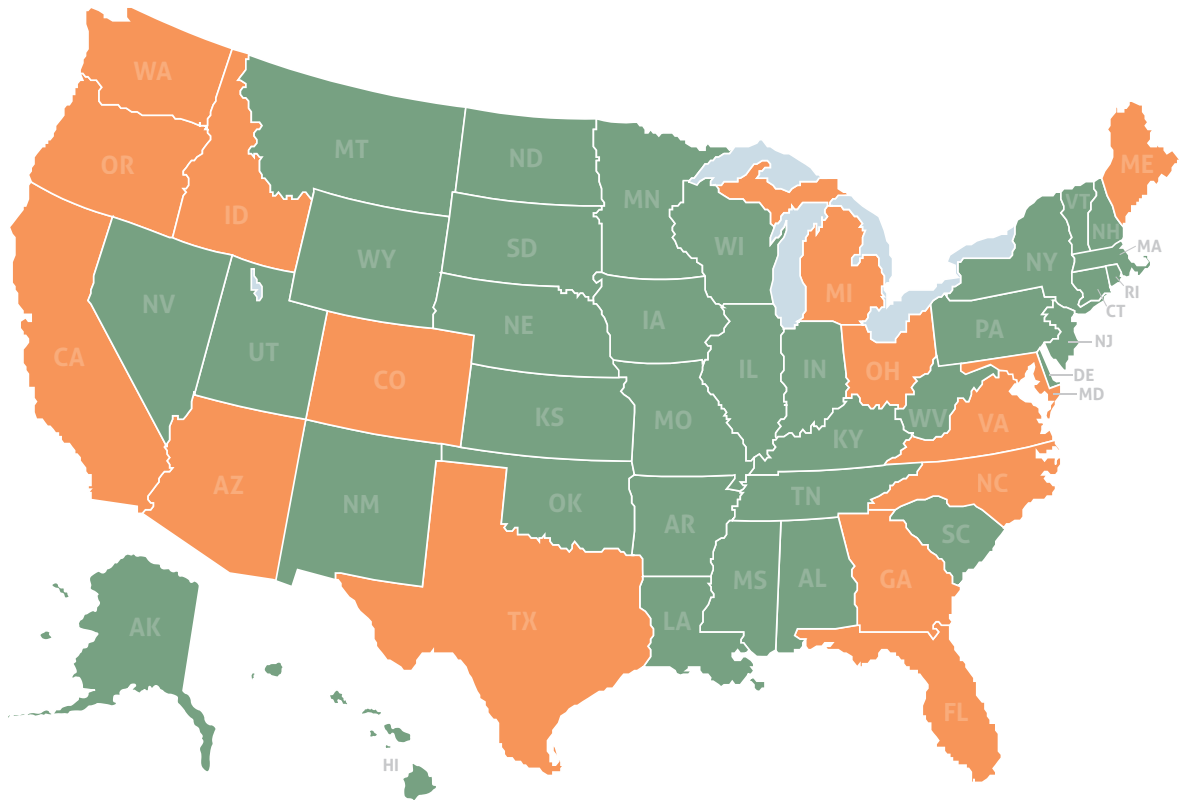
The purpose of the National Convening on Foster Youth and Higher Education was to provide an opportunity for key stakeholders to coalesce around policy and program initiatives that promote postsecondary success for foster youth. Additionally, the Convening was intended to stimulate discussion about data collection and research efforts, new and emerging state and federal policies, and nonacademic factors that impact educational achievement. The day-long event culminated in an interactive session that explored the development of a national movement to engage a broad array of professionals across multiple disciplines to prioritize postsecondary educational achievement for foster youth.

These **Conference Proceedings** present highlights from the National Convening on Foster Youth and Higher Education in the areas of research, federal and state policy, practice, and Collective Impact. They were compiled using written notes from the event that summarized the discussions, critical issues, and next steps expressed by attendees.

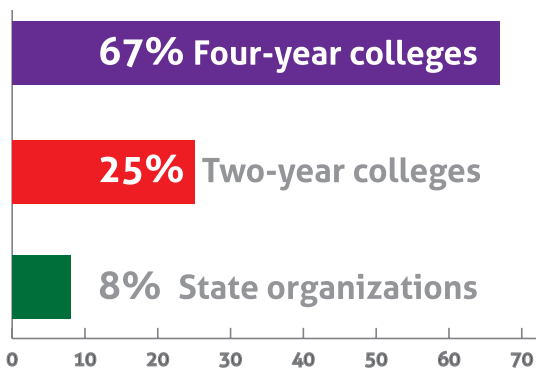


We must work together to shape the policies and practices that will help foster youth achieve healthy, stable adulthood that is built on postsecondary education and training, and entering the workforce as young professionals confident in their ability to succeed.” ~ John Emerson, *Casey Family Programs*

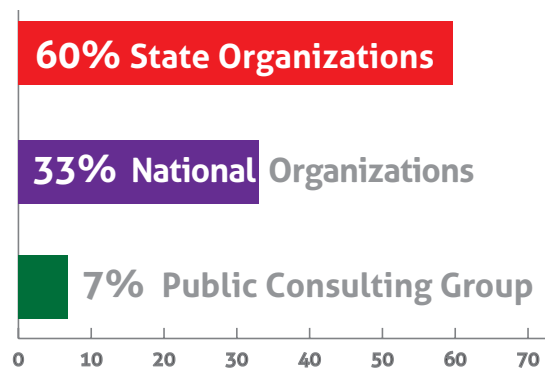
STATES REPRESENTED (in orange)



HIGHER ED PROFESSIONALS BREAKDOWN



CHILD WELFARE PROFESSIONALS BREAKDOWN





RESEARCH:

Results from Wave 5 of the Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth (the "Midwest Study") Presented by: Pajarita Charles, Postdoctoral Researcher, School of Social Service Administration, The University of Chicago.

The Midwest Study (principal investigator Dr. Courtney) is the largest prospective study of foster youth transitioning to adulthood since the passage of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. Through a collaboration between Dr. Courtney and state child welfare agencies in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois, data from in-person interviews (structured and in-depth qualitative) and government program administrative data were used to learn about the adult wellbeing of former foster youth.

In recent years, there has been increased attention given to the issue of foster youth and higher education at the federal, state, and local levels. Research suggests that foster youth experience low rates of college entrance and completion, as well as an elevated risk for dropping out of school.¹ However, there is little research that identifies the factors related to "college-going" and the educational outcomes experienced by older foster youth.²

Using data from Add Health³, the largest longitudinal study of adolescents in the U.S. with a nationally representative sample, the Midwest Study found wide gaps in educational attainment between alumni of foster care and their same-age peers⁴. As the level of education rises, the disparity in educational attainment widens.

- By age 26, one in five foster youth, compared to one in 20 youth in the general population, had not completed high school or obtained a GED.
- Foster youth were six times less likely to complete a two or four-year college degree compared to their non-foster care peers. (By age 26, of the students enrolled in a two- or four-year college, 55 percent reported ever having dropped out of school.)

When participants were asked to provide an explanation for leaving school, several themes emerged including the following:

- Needing to work;
- Being unable to afford college tuition and fees;
- Pregnancy (25 percent of female respondents);
- Challenges with child care;
- Coursework that was either too difficult or not useful; and
- Experiencing a family emergency.

Among the alumni who participated in the Midwest Study, remaining in care longer was strongly associated with higher educational attainment. In addition, young women, compared to young men were more likely to achieve higher levels of education. Also associated with achieving a higher level of education were expressing a desire or plan to go to college, reading at a high school level, and working 10 or more hours a week. Conversely, being retained one or more grades in school, living in a group home or treatment setting (compared to a traditional foster home), experiencing early parenthood, or having drug abuse issues decreased the odds of higher educational attainment. Interestingly, having alcohol

¹ Pecora et al., 2003; Courtney et al., 2007; Day et al., 2011; Wolanin, 2005; ² Day and Courtney, 2010; Salazar, 2011; Pecora, 2012;

³ <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth>; ⁴ Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26 [Courtney et al. (2011)]. See http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Midwest%20Evaluation_Report_4_10_12.pdf, p. 20.

issues, experiencing delinquency, receiving educationally-focused Independent Living Services (e.g., career counseling, study skills training, SAT preparation), and number of placements were not associated with educational attainment.

A number of important implications for policy and practice emerged from the Midwest Study.

- There are substantial gaps between foster youth and their same-age peers when looking at educational aspirations versus actual attainment. While 73 percent of foster youth in the study reported having plans to graduate from college, only 4.4 percent had obtained a two-year degree and 2.5 percent a four-year college degree by age 26 (measured at Wave 5).
- Academic preparation with a specific focus on improving reading levels could positively impact educational attainment. Students in need of academic remediation due to frequent moves, mental and physical health issues, learning disabilities, or extended non-attendance must be identified while in middle and high school, so that gaps and deficits can be addressed long before they reach college age.
- Young people who have aspirations to pursue higher education need support in making and carrying out plans to attend college. Enrolling in college is only the first step; services and supports must focus on increasing retention and rates of college completion.
- Drug abuse is associated with lower levels of educational attainment. Behavioral health issues, especially those related to substance abuse, must be addressed while youth are still in care.
- Youth cited pregnancy and child care responsibilities as factors that lead them to drop out of school. Pregnancy prevention efforts as well as support for parenting youth are essential to ensuring high school completion and post secondary attainment among young people in foster care.
- Extending foster care beyond age 18 is an important factor in promoting higher educational attainment among older foster youth.





FEDERAL POLICIES THAT SUPPORT POSTSECONDARY ACHIEVEMENT

Presented by John Emerson, Casey Family Programs and Eileen McCaffrey, Foster Care to Success

The following federal policies advance higher education access and success for students in foster care:

- Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program of 2001
- College Cost Reductions Act of 2007
- Higher Education Act (HEA) of 2008
- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008
- Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA/FERPA amendment) of 2013

The **Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program** was established in 2001 and makes financial resources available to meet the postsecondary education and training needs of youth aging out of foster care and enrolled in a qualified higher education program.⁵ Youth can receive up to \$5,000 per year towards their total “cost of attendance.” Cost of attendance includes:

- Tuition and fees;
- Room and board;
- Rental or purchase of required equipment, materials and supplies (including a computer);
- Funds for books, supplies, transportation, and child care; and
- Special study projects (including study abroad programs).

Although \$60 million was authorized by the legislation, that amount was not appropriated. In fiscal year 2003, \$45 million was appropriated and the amount grew to just under \$46 million in 2005. In fiscal year 2013, the funding received by states was reduced by 5% as a result of sequestration.


The **College Cost Reductions Act of 2007** states that, for the purposes of federal financial aid, the term *independent student* includes those who were in foster care or were a ward of the court at any time when the individual was 13 years of age or older. As a result, foster youth do not have to declare the income of their parent/caregiver/guardian on their FAFSA application.

The **College Opportunity and Affordability Act/Higher Education Act (HEA)** was reauthorized in 2008 and strengthens the educational resources of American colleges and universities and provides financial assistance for students in postsecondary and higher education. The Higher Education Act has been reauthorized on numerous occasions and expired at the end of 2013.

The following six provisions of HEA specifically address students from foster care.

1. All students in foster care are eligible for TRIO and GEAR UP programs. These federal programs should be targeting and serving youth who are in or aging out of foster care. Foster and homeless youth are eligible for these programs, starting at age 13.
 - **TRIO** is a group of eight (originally three; hence the name) federal programs designed to identify and provide services for children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, helping them to succeed from middle school through college. Youth must be enrolled in a TRIO program before they start college.

⁵ The Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program: Six States’ Experiences, National Foster Care Coalition and Casey Family Programs, 2007.

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- **GEAR UP** (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) gives grants to states and partner agencies to provide services at the middle and high school levels to promote academic achievement among youth from disadvantaged environments.

2. Independent students include those who were in foster care at age 13 or older as well as students who were in legal guardianship as determined by the court.
3. Staff development activities at the secondary and post-secondary levels should include strategies for recruiting and serving youth in foster care.
4. FAFSA established a public awareness campaign specific to youth in foster care.
5. Student support services should encourage an institutional climate supportive of youth in or aging out of foster care with regards to housing, and programs should be specifically designed for this population.
6. The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) was established, which funds demonstration projects to provide support services to help students who were in foster care until age 18 with enrolling and succeeding in postsecondary education.

The **Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008** (Fostering Connections) allows states to obtain federal Title IV-E funds for the support of foster youth beyond age 18. The provisions of the Fostering Connections Act are far-reaching and will help children and youth in foster care obtain permanent families through relative guardianship and adoption as well as improve health care coordination and educational stability. The following provisions are specific to education:

- Allows states the option of extending foster care to age 21;
- Prioritizes educational stability by requiring states to keep children and youth in their same school when possible, or, if a move is necessary, to ensure a timely transfer and assistance with school-related transportation costs;
- Requires a more specific and stringent planning process for youth transitioning out of care, including the development of a personalized transition plan directed by the youth, 90 days prior to emancipation;
- Allows Title IV-E reimbursements to be used beyond age 18 to support education and employment pursuits;
- Makes youth who enter kinship guardianship from foster care at age 16 or older eligible for the ETV Program; and
- Provides college and postsecondary preparation supports for youth who are eligible for Independent Living Services.

The **Uninterrupted Scholars Act** (USA/FERPA amendment) of 2013 amends the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. FERPA was enacted to protect the privacy of a student's educational records, and gave certain rights to parents. However, this law often created difficulties for children and youth in foster care by prohibiting child welfare professionals from accessing their educational information which had implications for a youth's ability to access GEAR UP and TRIO programs.

The Uninterrupted Scholars Act created a new exception to FERPA that allows schools to release students' educational records to child welfare agencies without the prior written consent of the parents. Furthermore, USA/FERPA eliminates the previous requirement that parents must be notified before education records are released to any individual pursuant to a court order when the parent(s) is/are party to the case.

STATE POLICIES THAT IMPACT HIGHER EDUCATION FOR FOSTER YOUTH

Presented by Simone Tureck, John Burton Foundation and Alexia Everett, Stuart Foundation

AB 12: California Fostering Connections Act

The California Fostering Connections to Success Act (AB 12) was signed into law on September 30, 2010 to align California with the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. The law extends foster care funding to youth in California to age 21 and implementation began in January of 2012 and provides a much needed bridge to support young people in California as they enroll, attend, and graduate from postsecondary education programs. The law was intended to make remaining in foster care an appealing option to youth.

Key provisions of AB 12 include:

Eligibility requirements are broadly interpreted. To remain in care beyond age 18, youth must meet certain conditions for participation which include:

- Be enrolled in high school or pursuing a GED; or
- Be enrolled in college or a vocational school; or
- Participate in a program/activity that removes barriers to employment; or
- Work at least 80 hours per month; or
- Be unable to do one of the above because of a medical or mental health condition.

There are also a variety of new placement options available to youth, which include:


- Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILP), which include apartment living, shared roommate settings, renting a room (including with relatives or family friends) or dorms; and
- THP-Plus Foster Care which offers housing and supportive services in a semi-supervised setting.

California's system uses an "opt-out," not an opt-in approach. Re-entry is unlimited prior to turning 21 years of age. Young people can receive the foster care rate directly if they live in a SILP. Other placements are encouraged to direct a portion of the monthly rate to youth. AB 12 also allows certain youth in juvenile probation to participate and creates a new "transition" jurisdiction.

Youth remaining in foster care beyond age 18 are also afforded new legal rights including:

- Control over their cash and property;
- The right to own a car;
- The right to retain control of their health care decisions (includes no orders for psychotropic medications);
- Access to items needed for cooking and cleaning;
- Internet access if it is available in the home in which they are placed;
- The right to be left at home unsupervised overnight; and
- No warrants issued for AWOL.





The final provision of AB 12 is that youth are not financially penalized for participating in foster care. The funds authorized under Title IV-E are explicitly exempt from income reporting on the FAFSA.

HB 1131: Washington State's Passport to College Promise Program

The Passport to College Promise Program (Passport) is likely the most robust and well-thought out higher education and scholarship program for foster youth in the country. The Passport is state-funded and is administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). To be eligible for participation, youth must have been a dependent of the Washington state for at least one year after age 16 and have emancipated from care. Students must activate this award by attending college by age 22.

One of the most noteworthy provisions of HB 1131 was the enabling of a data exchange between state and postsecondary agencies. WSAC can obtain consent from students to share information with Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) for the purpose of identifying eligible youth for the scholarship. WSAC serves as the state's agency for awarding financial aid and can verify data received specific to foster care status. Once a student is deemed eligible, he/she must also provide consent to WSAC for outreach, retention and mentoring through College Success Foundation (CSF).

WSAC also hosts a portal that is used by financial aid staff and designated support staff to identify Passport eligible youth, enter student award information, and communicate using a secure messaging function that ensures student privacy.

Since Passport's inception, the number of students enrolling in college has gradually increased, with most students attending community colleges. Data shows that there are an increasing number of students who attended community college in the past transferring into four year colleges.

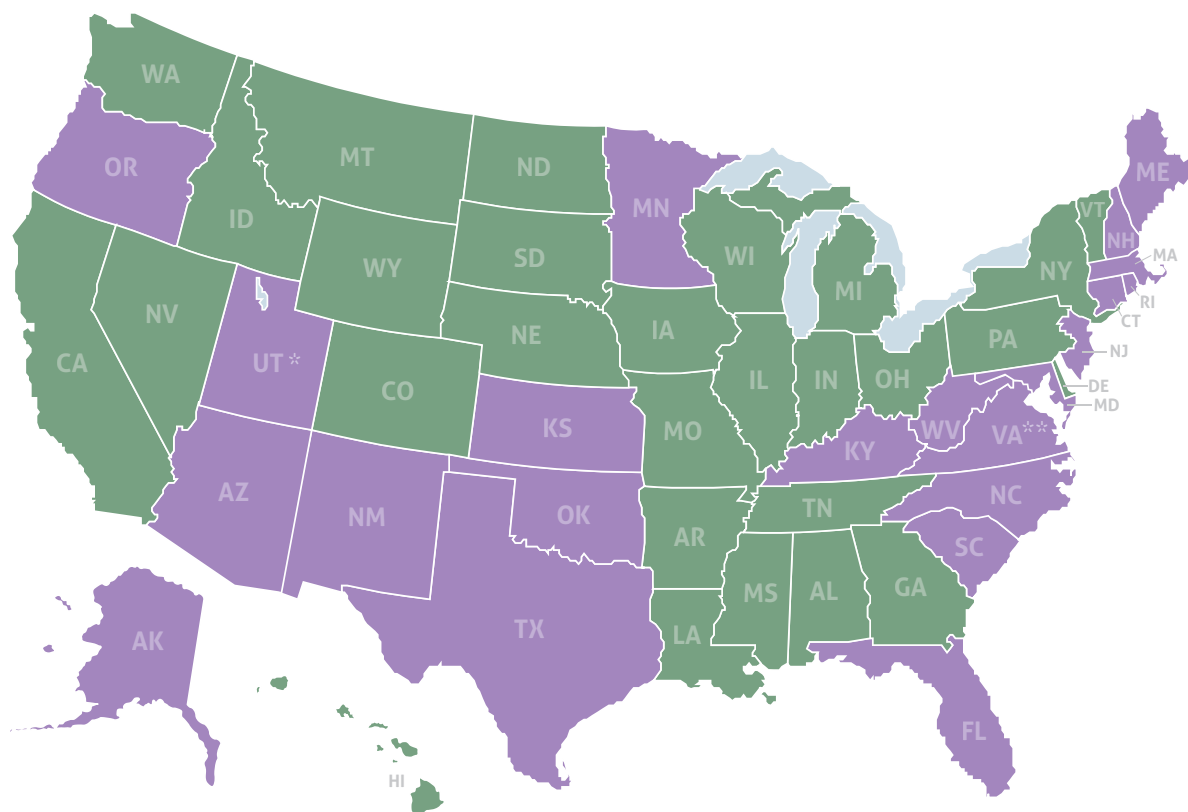
An additional provision of HB 1131 includes the incentive grants that are available to Institutions providing additional support services to foster youth. To be eligible for such grants, these campuses must:

- Designate a knowledgeable "home-base" support person who can direct youth;
- Strive to create a lasting institutional commitment to serve current and former foster youth;
- Include a question asking students to self-disclose whether they were in foster care in Washington State on their application for admission or registration;
- Connect with social service providers and independent living providers; and
- Review each Passport student's individual budget to recognize the actual living expenses and tailor the financial aid package that utilizes all available resources to meet the student's full need.

In addition to Passport, foster youth in the State of Washington also receive financial aid through the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program and the Governors' Scholarship. These scholarship programs work together to improve outreach to foster youth, encourage their aspirations for college, and assist them with college completion.



States Providing Tuition Waivers to Foster Youth (in purple)



**Virginia's tuition waiver program provides grants for tuition and fees at Virginia community colleges only.



PRACTICE: ADDRESSING NONACADEMIC FACTORS

The following campus-based programs presented information about the support services they provide to students:

Arizona

- Blavin Scholars Program, Northern Arizona University
- Mesa Community College
- Nina Mason Pulliam Legacy Scholars, Arizona State University

California

- Citrus College
- Bruin Resource Center, University of California, Los Angeles
- California State University, Dominguez Hills
- California State University, Long Beach
- California State University, Monterey Bay
- California State University, San Bernadino
- Cal Independent Scholars Network, University of California, Berkeley
- EOP Resilient Scholars, California State University, Northridge
- Guardian Professions Program, University of California, Davis
- Guardian Scholars Programs
 - California State University, Fullerton
 - City College of San Francisco
 - Los Angeles City College
 - San Diego State University
 - San Francisco State University
 - San Jose State University
 - Santa Barbara City College
 - Santa Monica College
 - University of California, Davis
 - University of California, Riverside

- ELITE Scholars Program, Humboldt State University
- LINC Program, Cerritos College
- Los Angeles Mission College
- Mission College
- Office of the Chancellor, California State University
- Olson Scholars Program, California State University, San Bernadino
- Promise Scholars Program, California State University, Stanislaus
- Rio Hondo College
- Santa Ana College
- Scholars Transitioning and Realizing Success, Pasadena City College
- Solano Community College
- Upward Bound, Long Beach City College

Colorado

- Fostering Success Program, Colorado State University
- Guardian Scholars Program, University of Colorado, Boulder

Florida

- Florida Atlantic University
- Florida Reach

Georgia

- EMBARK, University of Georgia

Idaho

- Impact Scholars, Boise State University

Michigan

- Blavin Scholars Program, University of Michigan
- Seita Scholars Program, Center for Fostering Success at Western Michigan University

North Carolina

- North Carolina Reach, Foster Care to Success

Ohio

- CARES Program, Columbus State Community College
- Miami University Hamilton
- Ohio Reach
- Wright State University

Texas

- Education Reach for Texans
- Foster Care Alumni Program, Austin Community College
- Texas Women's University

Virginia

- Great Expectations, The Virginia Foundation for Community College Education

Washington

- Champions Program, University of Washington
- Fostering Scholars, Seattle University

*Presented by: Melissa Rapp, Program Manager of the University of Washington's Champions Program
Michael McPartlin, Guardian Scholars Program Manager, City College of San Francisco
Sarah Gamez, Guardian Scholars Program Director, California State University, Fullerton
Valerie Embry, Guardian Scholars Program Director, University of Colorado*

Nonacademic factors can significantly impact the ability of foster youth to be successful in higher education. Challenges related to finances, housing, transportation, or insufficient childcare for parenting students can often derail a student's academic pursuits. To address these factors, many colleges offer nonacademic support programs that are designed to promote academic success.



For young people who have been involved with the foster care system, these types of interventions can help them overcome obstacles that they may encounter in pursuing postsecondary education. Foster youth often lack confidence in their ability to be successful and may not have any prior family experience with or context for postsecondary education. Nonacademic supports for these students include concrete, tangible information to help them navigate campus resources, help them make the connection between college and career pathways, and understand the behaviors needed for college success. Students from foster care can and do successfully attend postsecondary programs if they are aware of available resources and support services, including initial guidance to help them prepare and plan for the transition from high school to college. The following support services help youth and alumni from foster care with addressing many of the barriers they encounter in postsecondary programs:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| ■ Outreach and recruitment | ■ Life skills workshops |
| ■ Admissions assistance | ■ Employment opportunities |
| ■ Financial assistance | ■ Social and end of term celebrations |
| ■ Housing assistance | ■ Post-graduation career planning and assistance |
| ■ Orientation to college life | ■ Student drop-in centers, and |
| ■ Counseling and support | ■ Scholarships |
| ■ Mentorship opportunities | |

Convening attendees had the opportunity to share information about their own programs in small groups. The following summary is not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the programs represented but rather, to offer context for each non-academic factor and examples of programs and interventions available to students.



K-12 Outreach

Foster youth often report having limited information about postsecondary educational opportunities. Outreach and college preparation for this population needs to be a priority for both child welfare and college systems. Local colleges and public child welfare agencies should work in partnership to identify and educate foster teens as well as their caregivers about college readiness.

- Great Expectations, a major initiative of the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education, helps students navigate higher education systems while they are still in high school. The program provides coaches and mentors who help students reach their goals.

Transfer Pathways

Many foster youth face difficulties in transferring from two year community colleges to four year campuses. For example, in California, new requirements at the community college level restrict access to certain courses unless a student has a clearly articulated educational goal. Furthermore, additional pressures include time limits on financial aid and fee waivers that can be rescinded if academic progress and completions are not maintained.

- California has a new policy within their community college and California State University systems that allows foster youth to register for certain community college courses prior to general enrollment. However, students are often not aware of this valuable benefit.

Identity

Foster youth often struggle with self esteem issues as well as the perceived stigma of having been involved with the child welfare system. Programs that are strengths-based as well as those that give young people the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with caring adults, such as mentors, are effective in helping youth to develop a positive sense of identity.

- At California State University (CSU), Dominguez Hills, students can participate in a 13-week academic coaching program to build positive self esteem and apply what they have learned to the world of work and building a successful career.
- The CSU, Monterey Bay Mentor Program matches former foster youth with faculty or staff who serve as mentors for one year.

Work and Career Readiness

Young people need support with making the connection between education and career pathways so that they graduate with the skills that will enable them to obtain employment. Effective job readiness programs engage students in career planning and provide career development opportunities.

- Career Focus at San Francisco State University helps students obtain paid internships and job shadowing opportunities, practice for job interviews, build resumes and prepare for graduate studies.
- UCLA has a part-time career counselor who works specifically with Guardian Scholars participants.
- The Guardian Scholars Program at the City College of San Francisco, in partnership with MatchBridge/ United Way of the Bay Area, supports foster youth scholars with career counseling, employment training and referrals to employers.

Housing

Students involved with the foster care system often experience a multitude of challenges related to housing. Foster youth need a place to stay year-round, and should receive priority for on-campus housing. Additionally, effective partnerships between colleges, the community and child welfare can lead to creative strategies to address the housing needs of these students.

- San Francisco State University provides guaranteed year-round housing to foster youth. Tuition waivers are applied first to “free up” other grants and resources for other expenses such as housing. Additionally, private dollars are used to support off campus housing opportunities for students not residing in dormitories.
- At CSU, San Bernadino, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is in place to ensure that emancipated youth can remain in the dormitories at no charge during the summer months and the winter gap period.
- Seattle University offers year-round housing scholarships, totaling \$28,000 each year per student. Funds are raised by the University and the program serves 4-6 students annually.

Finance

Young people who have been in foster care have had limited opportunities to manage their own financial resources. As a result, they lack experience with money management and budgeting, and may not understand their financial aid package or the resources available to them. Programs that are effective in teaching students about financial literacy provide a financial safety net, help them analyze and learn from mistakes they may make, and work with them to plan for their long-term financial well-being.

- The Financier Program at Western Michigan University (WMU) helps youth manage financial difficulties that they may encounter. Staff reviews financial aid packages and discuss the realities of student loans. The program also provides campus-wide education about the needs of at-risk students, with a specific emphasis on supporting students who have been in foster care.
- NC Reach (NCR) is a state program that provides funding and supportive case management to students at public institutions in North Carolina. The program’s goal is to have NC youth graduate and be ready to enter the workforce without incurring student debt. NCR students are required to develop a comprehensive budget each semester and are taught to align their funding with achieving their goals.





Disproportionality/Demographics

While ethnic/gender disproportionality is not in itself a barrier to foster youth more than to other youth, it is important that programs reflect the demographics of the young people they serve.

- The Guardian Scholars Program at Los Angeles City College (LACC) serves young people who must be between the age of 16 and 24 years when they start the program. Campus demographics are similar to those of the Guardian Scholars, and staff diversity mirrors that of the student population served.

Mental Health

Students with mental health issues need on-going access to care that is affordable and appropriate to their diagnosis. Programs that are effective in helping students to manage their mental health may offer peer mentoring support to new students, promote a culture of healing, or offer campus-based mental health services.

- The Guardian Scholars Program at CSU Fullerton helps students recognize and deal with the stressors associated with college and helps normalize their feelings and experiences.
- Healthy Transitions, a publicly available resource guide, curriculum and toolkit focused on mental health and wellness education for transition age foster youth was developed through a partnership between California Mental Health Services Administration (CalMHSA), the Foundation for California Community Colleges (FCCC) and the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO). The project provides funding to college staff at 23 community college campuses to offer mental health and wellness training and support services to the foster youth on campus and in the local community.

Relationships

Youth in foster care need a sense of connection to others. Support programs can help students develop meaningful relationships with others through a variety of approaches including mentoring, web-based programs, and community partnerships.

- The Higher Education Mentoring Initiative (HEMI) at the University of Cincinnati recruits, trains and supports mentors to establish long term, positive relationships with foster care youth, encourage academic achievement in high school, and help students embark on a direct pathway to higher education. HEMI is a partnership between Hamilton County Commissioner Greg Hartmann, Hamilton County Job and Family Services, the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, and the Great Oaks Career and Technical Education District.

Connecting to the Campus Community

Today, colleges have a mandate to reach out to and engage at-risk students, including foster youth, in campus life and support them in achieving their postsecondary goals. A growing number of colleges have a designated foster care liaison who may work in a TRIO or other student support program assisting youth who identify as first generation, academically vulnerable or socially marginalized. A strategy for increasing the scope of support foster youth receive includes training campus personnel on relevant issues and reducing or eliminating barriers to success through policy changes or enhanced services. Additionally, effective bi-directional communication between child welfare and the higher education community will increase the utilization of existing state and county resources.

- Wright State University in Ohio convenes an annual summit to bring professionals from universities, children's services and high schools together to address the supports needed by youth to graduate and be successful in college.
- First Star has partnered with the University of California Los Angeles to bring educational opportunities and support to high school-aged foster youth on university campuses. Guardian Scholars serve as peer counselors and work with youth in high school.

Support during the Holidays

The holidays can be a very difficult time of year for young people who have been in foster care. With tenuous or nonexistent connections to family, they may feel disconnected from loved ones and many have nowhere to go during extended winter breaks. Colleges and universities need to be aware of the challenges facing these students so they can address the need for housing as well as socio-emotional supports.

- The Leaders Involved in Creating Change (LINC) program at Cerritos College in California links foster youth with services on and off campus. During the holiday season, they host a banquet for their students during which they can connect with others and get to know staff from supportive campus partners.
- The Blavin Scholars Program at the University of Michigan provides Thanksgiving dinner. Students in the program receive birthday cards and gifts as well as care packages.
- The Guardian Scholars Program at Santa Barbara City College hosts Thanksgiving dinner for its scholars and young people from the local Independent Living Program to provide an opportunity for high school youth to connect with college students who have had similar experiences.
- Some campuses have partnerships with their international student programs whereby foster youth, along with international students, are invited to stay with local host families during the holidays.





COLLECTIVE IMPACT: THE DIVERSITY AND POWER OF NETWORKS

Presented by Alexia Everett, Senior Program Officer, Stuart Foundation, Anne Holton, Director, Great Expectations, Virginia Foundation for Community College Education, and Maddy Day, Director of Outreach and Training, Center for Fostering Success, Western Michigan University

Collective Impact can lead to transformational, systemic change. This session highlighted the elements of effective networks by showcasing a diverse array of local and statewide efforts focused on improving the postsecondary outcomes of foster youth. Collective Impact provides professionals with an adaptive framework for solving complex, social problems for which there are no pre-determined or simple solutions. Because no one organization or entity is capable of providing the solution on its own, achieving long-term systemic change is extremely complicated and predetermined solutions rarely succeed.

This framework also has direct application for youth in foster care who are the most important partners in this work. Effective partnering with students from foster care creates an opportunity for change that responds to their real-time needs. Additionally, working with young people to identify their own supportive networks is critically important because it takes partnership and collaboration to succeed in one's personal and professional life. The perspective of interdependence, rather than independence, is reinforced through

the framework of collective impact and the development of partnerships with students.

According to the Collective Impact framework, the five conditions necessary for success are: a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support. If these five conditions are met, they serve as “rules for interaction” and lead to synchronized efforts and results.

A common agenda is essential to improving the postsecondary outcomes of foster youth because it establishes a mutual understanding of the issue, common language, and a shared vision for success among all responsible partners. It enables partners to “see” solutions through similar eyes, as well as examine how their decisions and actions influence progress toward those solutions.





Shared measurement is a critical yet challenging next step after a common agenda has been established. Partners must determine how they will monitor progress toward their common agenda and shared goals. Creating a shared measurement system is arguably one of the most difficult conditions to achieve. Sharing information requires trust among all of the partners and should involve an iterative process. Partners may start out by establishing shared definitions for progress and success and over time, determine how to collect and monitor relevant data and use it to inform their decisions.

Mutually reinforcing activities enhance each partner's efforts through alignment with the common agenda. When this condition is successful, resources are highly leveraged and there are very few missed opportunities because partners coordinate their individual efforts to maximize results. Conducting mutually reinforcing activities helps partners to quickly see the value of a common agenda and builds the case for a shared measurement system.

Continuous communication is essential. Convening regular meetings provides much-needed opportunities to discuss shared work as well as monitor progress. By creating communication systems that both "trickle down" and "perk up," this enables direct service providers to consistently share important information with everyone from peers to policymakers, and vice versa.

Backbone Support provides the infrastructure required to facilitate collective action. This includes developing relationships among members, offering training and technical assistance, and coordinating evaluation and policy efforts. Backbone organizations promote fidelity among the various cross-sector members to the common agenda and rules for interaction.

Using the Collective Impact framework, each of the three panelists addressed the ways in which their states currently promote postsecondary success for students.

Alexia Everett, Stuart Foundation, California College Pathways

The common agenda for California College Pathways is supporting foster youth to help them achieve four important student milestones: (1) EQUIP with essential resources to successfully pursue higher education, (2) ENROLL in a college and or training program, (3) EARN a college degree or certificate, and (4) EMBARK on a career path. California College Pathways is supported by an implementation team comprised of key partners responsible for various areas of the Initiative such as technical assistance, data, and communications.

California College Pathways is also supported by a collective of eight philanthropic partners working together to ensure that their investments align with the Initiative's common agenda. Working in partnership with campuses and data experts, the philanthropic collective established a common set of student milestone and momentum metrics to be consistently collected and monitored by institutional, agency and organizational partners that receive financial support. Together, the philanthropic collective and its partners will use the information to inform their decisions regarding investments, programming, and policy.



The process of collective impact is powerful; it can generate emergent solutions for intended outcomes in the midst of continually changing circumstances. In essence, the process becomes the solution. In an authentic collective impact effort, members experience a heightened level of understanding thereby allowing them to see and rapidly respond to both challenges and opportunities. In summary, the journey becomes as important as the destination.”

~ Alexia Everett, Stuart Foundation

Anne Holton, Great Expectations, Virginia Foundation for Community College Education

The common agenda of Great Expectations is to support Virginia's foster youth as they complete high school, gain access to a community college education, and transition successfully from the foster care system to living independently. Their coaches work with students to overcome obstacles in a high-touch, wraparound model, with the goal of improving college access and educational success for Virginia's foster youth. Great Expectations programs are currently available at 17 of the 23 Virginia community colleges.

Community colleges have many advantages for foster youth and alumni of the foster care system, including open access and experience working with students with a wide range of strengths and challenges. They also provide many opportunities, including the ability to transfer to four-year colleges, obtain two-year technical degrees that lead to employment, and offer workforce training options. Not surprisingly, 70% of foster youth who seek a postsecondary degree do so through community colleges. However, community colleges also present special challenges including a lack of housing options, transportation issues, and historically low rates of completion. Community colleges throughout the country are recognizing that foster youth are a unique subset of students and efforts to help them succeed have increased exponentially during the last few years.

Great Expectations is actively working on shared measurement goals and their definition of success for foster youth attending Virginia's community colleges. Ms. Holton brings to the work her successful experience using shared measurement as part of a system-wide reform of foster care during her husband's tenure as Governor of Virginia, which reduced by half the number of foster children placed in non-family settings.





Maddy Day, Fostering Success Michigan, Western Michigan University

The mission of Fostering Success Michigan (FSM) is to increase access to and success in postsecondary education and professional careers for Michigan's students from foster care, ages 12-25. The partners involved in Michigan's initiative have adopted the Lumina Foundation's Big Goal as their common agenda. This goal focuses on increasing the number of students from foster care who obtain high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by the year 2025.

Fostering Success Michigan is currently working with the FSM Higher Education Consortium to establish a shared measurement strategy that will allow them to better understand how students from foster care move to and through postsecondary education. The data gathered through these efforts will inform policy and practice and help to improve the outcomes experienced by youth in foster care.

FSM references the Ready By 21 education to career pipeline as their model for the alignment of mutually reinforcing activities.¹ Partners work together to minimize the "leaks" or dropouts that often occur at key transition points. FSM encourages individuals and organizations that are involved in the pipeline to build collaborations within their community that meet the unique needs of each student.

To support continuous communication, Fostering Success Michigan hosts a statewide resource website, (www.FosteringSuccessMichigan.com), uses web-based networking and facilitates in-person communication through the convening of FSM Regional Network Meetings and the FSM Annual Statewide Summit.

Fostering Success Michigan provides backbone support to increase access to and success in postsecondary education and professional careers for students from foster care. As the backbone organization, FSM supports Michigan's network of experts with resources, networking, and a range of technical assistance opportunities. With extensive information about what each partner brings to the collective table, they are also able to identify areas where resources are lacking and effectively collaborate to fill these gaps.

Conclusion:

To build on the momentum of the Convening and further shape a national movement to support foster youth in postsecondary programs, a **Call to Action** report will be released in the spring of 2014. This report will be developed in collaboration with the working group formed at the Convening and will incorporate the recommendations made by Convening attendees. Furthermore, **Call to Action** will:

- Provide a comprehensive overview of the issue of post-secondary education and foster youth, including noteworthy programs, practices and policies;
- Include resource listings and organizational profiles for child welfare and higher education and campus-based support programs that promote postsecondary success;
- Articulate an approach and series of recommendations that, if enacted, will significantly improve the postsecondary outcomes of young people in and from foster care; and
- Spur practitioners, educators, advocates and policy makers to action, resulting in the advancement of a shared vision and collaboration between the fields of child welfare and higher education.

¹ Ready By 21 Insulated Education Pipeline: <http://www.readyby21.org/lcresources>

About Foster Care to Success

Foster Care to Success (FC2S) was founded in 1981 to help foster youth attain stability and success as adults by earning credentials that enable them to enter the workforce and embark on solid careers. With over 30 years' experience, FC2S has always been a leader in developing the supports foster youth need to productively persist and complete their programs. Today, FC2S serves over 5,000 young people annually nationwide.

Programs include:



- **Data Management:** FC2S has a robust proprietary data management system that collects, stores, and analyzes pertinent student data, collating it with progress, retention and graduation outcomes. This secure system is the backbone of ETV management and direct services for college students, and is a tool to inform public policy on needed postsecondary supports for foster youth.
- **Scholarships:** Since 1991, FC2S has awarded more than \$16 million in scholarships funded by individuals, foundations and corporations, with a 65% graduation rate.
- **Education and Training Vouchers (ETV):** FC2S administers \$12 million annually in Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Maryland, Missouri, New York, North Carolina and Ohio. State ETV grants help pay for tuition, books and school-related expenses.
- **Reach:** North Carolina, Missouri and Arizona offer tuition waivers to foster youth enrolled in public community colleges and universities. FC2S administers these programs and facilitates the awarding of more than \$1 million a year to students.
- **Academic Success Coaching:** FC2S trains adult volunteer mentors who provide advice, support, and encouragement to FC2S students through phone conversations, text messaging and email.
- **Care Packages:** Three times a year, FC2S sends thousands of care packages to its students across the country filled with necessities and small gifts.
- **Aim Higher Program:** A peer-to-peer mentor program to improve college readiness and success for foster youth. FC2S students share their experiences and unique perspectives with younger foster youth, social workers and foster parents through videos and conference presentations.



Appendix A: CONVENING AGENDA

2013 National Convening on Foster Youth and Higher Education

Millennium Biltmore Hotel, Gold Room 506, South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90071

October 22, 2013

8:00 am - 8:15 am **Welcome and Goals**

8:15 am - 8:45 am **What Do We Know About Foster Youth in College?**

Pajarita Charles, Postdoctoral Researcher, *School of Social Service Administration, The University of Chicago*. Analyses of data and trends on college-aged foster youth from the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth

8:45 am - 9:45 am **Federal Policies That Impact Higher Education for Foster Youth**

John Emerson, *Postsecondary Education & Training Advisor, Casey Family Programs*
Eileen McCaffrey, *Executive Director, Foster Care to Success*
Overview of federal policies that effect higher education.

9:45 am – 10:00 am **Break**

10:00 am – 12:00 pm **Agency Support Professionals: State Policies that Impact Higher Education for Foster Youth**

AB 12: California Fostering Connections to Success Act;
Simone Tureck, *Policy Associate, the John Burton Foundation*.

California's experience extending foster care to 21, including some of the benefits and challenges that the state has experienced during implementation.

HB 1131: Washington Passport to College Promise Program;
Alexia Everett, *Senior Program Officer, Stuart Foundation*.

Learn about Washington State's Passport to College Promise legislation, including the state's ground-breaking data exchange between child welfare and education agencies.

Campus-based Support Professionals: Nonacademic Factors

In this session, participants will examine a variety of nonacademic factors and engage in a facilitated discussion that elevates effective strategies for addressing these influences.

Melissa Rap, *Program Manager, Champions Program, University of Washington*

Michael McPartlin, *Program Manager, Guardian Scholars, City College of San Francisco*

Sarah Gamez, *Program Director, Guardian Scholars, CSU, Fullerton*.

Valerie Embry, *Program Director, Guardian Scholars, University of Colorado*

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm **Networking Lunch**

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm **The Diversity and Power of Networks**

This session will highlight the essential elements of an effective network by showcasing a diverse variety of local and statewide networks focused on improving the postsecondary outcomes of foster youth.

Alexia Everett, *Senior Program Officer, Stuart Foundation*

Anne Holton, *Director, Great Expectations, Virginia*

Maddy Day, *Director of Outreach and Training, Center for Fostering Success, Western Michigan University*

2:30 pm – 4:00 pm **Scaling and Sustaining the Movement**

In this closing session, participants will explore options for a professional network at the national level focused on the postsecondary success of foster youth.

John Emerson, *Postsecondary Education & Training, Advisor, Casey Family Programs*

Eileen McCaffrey, *Executive Director, Foster Care to Success*

Appendix B: 2013 National Convening on Foster Youth and Higher Education Steering Committee Members*

Co-Chairs

John Emerson
Casey Family Programs

Alexia Everett
Stuart Foundation

Yali Lincroft
Walter S. Johnson Foundation



Meghan Arrigo
Arizona Youth Opportunity Initiative
Children's Action Alliance

Colleen Montoya Barbano
Fostering Scholars
Seattle University

Timothy Bell
FosterClub

Ryann Blackshere
Fostering Media Connections

Celeste Bodner
FosterClub

Sheila Bustillos-Reynolds
Texas Woman's University

Adrienne Colgrove-Raymond
ELITE Scholars Program
Humboldt State University

Carol Davies
Career Ladders Project

Maddy Day
Fostering Success Michigan,
Western Michigan University

Valerie E. Embry
Guardian Scholars
University of Colorado, Boulder

Paige Fern
Alliance for Children's Rights

Katy Fitzgerald
Mission College

Anne Holton
Great Expectations
Virginia Foundation for
Community College Education

Chris Klefeker
Miami University, Hamilton

Amy Lemley
John Burton Foundation

Wendy MacGregor
Guardian Scholars
Santa Barbara City College

Kamber Sta. Maria
Solano Community College

Eileen McCaffrey
Foster Care to Success

David Meyers
Embark Program
University of Georgia

Anna Moreshead
Impact Scholars Program
Boise State University

Melissa Raap
Champions Program
University of Washington

Debbie Raucher
John Burton Foundation

Melissa Rock
Advocates for Children
and Youth

Clint Rodenfels
Education Reach for Texans

Theresa Rowland
Career Ladders Project

Dr. Sabrina Sanders
Office of the Chancellor
California State University

Paolo Velasco
Bruin Resource Center
University of California,
Los Angeles

Dianna Walters
Jim Casey Youth
Opportunities Initiative

Winnie Wechsler
Anthony & Jeanne Pritzker
Family Foundation

Devon Werble
John Burton Foundation

*The titles of all Steering Committee members reflect the positions they held at the time of the Convening in October 2013.



Appendix C: 2013 National Convening on Foster Youth and Higher Education Attendees

Agency and Organization Support Professionals

Colleen Ammerman
Youth Empowerment Strategies
for Success, Foundation for California
Community Colleges

Nick Arevalo
Tipping Point

Meghan Arrigo
Arizona Youth Opportunity Initiative
Children's Action Alliance

Jennifer Baillargeon
Office of Child and Family
Services, Maine Department
of Health and Human Services

Timothy Bell
FosterClub

Ryann Blackshere
Fostering Media Connections

Martha Calhoon
Children First for Oregon

Elisabeth Cutler
May & Stanley Smith Charitable Trust

Angel Roberson Daniels
The Angell Foundation

Maddy Day
Fostering Success Michigan,
Western Michigan University

John Emerson
Casey Family Programs

Alexia Everett
Stuart Foundation

Daniel Heimpel
Fostering Media Connections

Susanna Kniffen
Children Now

Karina Lewis
Annie E. Casey Foundation

Yali Lincroft
Walter S. Johnson Foundation

Megan Lucy
Advocates for Children and Youth

Eileen McCaffrey
Foster Care to Success

William Murray, IV
Ohio Reach
Public Children Services
Association of Ohio

Leigh Newman
Human Services Public
Consulting Group

Lee Ann Phillips
Regional Research Institute
Portland State University

Justin Pye
Fostering Media Connections

Joseph Quintana
Foundation for California
Community Colleges

Debbie Raucher
John Burton Foundation

Melissa Rock
Advocates for Children and Youth

Beth Rosenberg
Children's Action Alliance

Kenneth Sorey
Educational Results Partnership

Lori Lange Tiller
J.W. Fanning Institute for
Leadership Development
University of Georgia

Simone Tureck
John Burton Foundation

Dianna Walters
Jim Casey Youth Opportunities
Initiative

Winnie Wechsler
Anthony & Jeanne Pritzker
Family Foundation

Jackie Wong
California State Senate

Marty Zanghi
Maine Youth Transition Collaborative
University of Southern Maine

Higher Education and Campus-based Support Professionals

Lena Alexander
Guardian Scholars Program
California State University, Fullerton

Margaret Antonio-Palomares
Upward Bound
Long Beach City College

Colleen Montoya Barbano
Fostering Scholars
Seattle University

Dominic Barragan
Guardian Scholars
San Diego State University

Wanda Bonnell
Promise Scholars Program
California State University, Stanislaus

Sheila Bustillos-Reynolds
Texas Woman's University

Dr. Joy Brittain
California State University,
Monterey Bay

Kathleen Christensen
Austin Community College

Martha Clavelle
California State University,
Dominguez Hills

Adrienne Colgrove-Raymond
Excelling and Living Independently
through Education (ELITE) Scholars
Humboldt State University

Jamie Crandell
Center for Fostering Success
Western Michigan University

Carol Smith Davies
Career Ladders Project

Loretta Edelen
Austin Community College

Michael Edwards
California State University,
San Bernadino

Valerie E. Embry
Guardian Scholars Program
University of Colorado, Boulder

Sonia Falcon
Fostering Scholars Program
Seattle University

Katy Fitzgerald
Mission College

Sara Gamez
Guardian Scholars Program
California State University, Fullerton

Veronica Garcia
Guardian Scholars Program
Santa Monica College

Jina Gonzalez
EOP Resilient Scholars
California State University, Northridge

Maria Granados
Los Angeles Mission College

John Hamilton
California State University, Long Beach

Sean R. Hogan
California State University, Fullerton

Anne Holton
Great Expectations
Virginia Foundation for
Community College Education

Shannon Ingram
Great Expectations
Northern Virginia Community College

Robin Johnson
Texas Women's University

Wendy Kiser
North Carolina Reach
Foster Care to Success

Chris Klefeker
Miami University, Hamilton

Julian Ledesma
Cal Independent Scholars
Network (CISN)
University of California, Berkeley

Rhonda Leiva
Guardian Scholars Program
San Jose State University

Sonja Lenz-Rashid
Guardian Scholars Program
San Francisco State University

Wendy MacGregor
Guardian Scholars Program
Santa Barbara City College

Courtney Maher
Center for Fostering Success
Western Michigan University

Kamber Sta. Maria
Solano Community College

Deborah Lowe Martinez
Cal Independent Scholars Network
University of California, Berkeley

Jo Ann L. Martinez
Nina Mason Pulliam
Legacy Scholars
Arizona State University

Michael McPartlin
Guardian Scholars
City College of San Francisco

David Meyers
Embark Program
University of Georgia

Anna Moreshead
Impact Scholars Program
Boise State University

Joe Murray
Florida Atlantic University

Rachel Naasko
Blavin Scholars Program
University of Michigan

Julie Orozco
California State University,
San Bernadino

Cindy Payne
Blavin Scholars Program
and Olson Scholars,
Northern Arizona University

Becky Pengelley
State of Florida, Department of
Children and Family Services

Kathleen M. Perales
Mesa Community College

Erin Pitts
Fostering Success Program
Colorado State University

Melissa Raap
Champions Program
University of Washington

Theresa Reed
Scholars Transitioning and
Realizing Success
Pasadena City College

Kimberly Rhyan
Caring Advocates Responding
to Extraordinary Situations (CARES)
Columbus State Community College

Dr. Steve J. Rios
Florida Atlantic University

Allyson F. Roberts
Great Expectations
Virginia Community College System

Clint Rodenfels
Education Reach for Texans

Marisela Saenz
Rio Hondo College

Sylvia Sanchez
Santa Ana College

Xochitl Sanchez-Zarama
Guardian Scholars Program
San Francisco State University

Dr. Sabrina Sanders
Office of the Chancellor
California State University

Lil Sass
Citrus College

Gail Scanlan
Guardian Scholars Program
Los Angeles City College

Sylvia Sensiper
Guardian Professions Program
University of California, Davis

Yajayra Tovar
Leaders Involved in Creating
Change (LINC) Cerritos College

Paolo Velasco
Bruin Resource Center
University of California, Los Angeles

Belinda Williams
California State University,
Dominguez Hills

Debra Schilling Wolfe
Field Center for Children's
Policy, Practice and Research
University of Pennsylvania

Tuppett M. Yates
Guardian Scholars Program
University of California, Riverside



“People here are advocates and leaders. We have a clear understanding of the issues facing youth and alumni from foster care. This challenge is NOT insurmountable. Foster youth are survivors and they are resilient. We owe it to them to work together and make sure that they have what they need to be successful in their pursuit of higher education.”

~ Yali Lincroft, *Walter S. Johnson Foundation*