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

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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)
  – In 2015-16, 3,024 using the DCF waiver in Florida

• 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
Admission Supports

• 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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuition &amp; Fees</th>
<th>Housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-State $6,516</td>
<td>Books &amp; Supplies $1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-State $21,683</td>
<td>Most Popular Meal Plan $3,998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total In-State
$18,134
Estimate

Total Out-of-State
$33,301
Estimate

Funding

Not included:
- Summer
- Health Insurance
- Transportation
- Clothing
- Extra-curricular activities

* 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.
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
Engagement

• Strengths-based Perspective
  – Overcome *Imposter* view
  – Focus on past successes
  – Re-authoring

• Dedicated staff
  – One-on-one meetings
  – Cohort groups

• Cohesion building activities
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