NRC-FAHE: National Research Collaborative for Foster Alumni and Higher Education

WELCOME!

The National Research Collaborative for Foster Alumni and Higher Education (NRC-FAHE) is a network of researchers and practitioners whose aim is to improve practice and influence policy related to foster care youth/alumni and higher education by creating and advancing a clear research agenda and facilitating communication and collaboration among interdisciplinary scholars and practitioners to promote postsecondary access and retention of youth in care and foster care alumni. The NRC-FAHE promotes innovative ways to use research and best practices to inform and influence policy making and values practice-informed research and the voice of youth in care and foster care alumni in improving access and outcomes in higher education.

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Thank you to those who contributed to the creation of this newsletter:
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Welcome and Introduction

I am pleased to share the 12th issue of the National Research Collaborative for Foster Alumni and Higher Education newsletter with you.

I want to take the time to express my heartfelt appreciation for **Dr. Kerri Kearney** for her standfast support over the years for supporting the NRC FAHE and being a wonderful conduit between the NRC and the researchers in our organization that work tirelessly in their roles as College of Education faculty to support foster care alumni enrolled in post-secondary institutions. Dr. Kearney's National Conference for Engaged Scholarship on Hidden Student Populations is growing, and she is stepping off our leadership team so that she has the time she needs to devote to that effort. More information about that conference is available in the announcement section of this newsletter. We are very excited to announce that **Dr. Royel Johnson** has agreed to step in to fill the vacancy on our leadership team.

On May 11, 2022, our colleagues at the Juvenile Law Center, SchoolHouse Connection, and John Burton Advocates for Youth sponsored a virtual congressional briefing in partnership with Senator Patty Murray to discuss four major federal bills that have been introduced this congress to support foster care alumni and homeless students that are interested in or currently pursuing their postsecondary education goals. These four bills are highlighted in the policy section of this newsletter, and we appreciate your continued advocacy to see these bills successfully move forward. In addition to these bills, we also highlight for you the major provisions of the President's Budget that if passed, would have huge implications for college going foster and homeless youth.

In this edition of the newsletter, we have a special treat for you. We have highlighted two Michigan-based campus support programs from the lens of foster care alumni who have participated in those programs (The Seita Scholars Program at Western Michigan University and the Magic program at Eastern Michigan University .

If you are working with a campus-based program, we are interested in hearing about your model and want other campus-based programs to learn from you. Please reach out and share your stories with us. Inquiries for practice highlights are being collected by Jerry Savage who can be reached at savagej@uw.edu

Finally, we absolutely thrilled to highlight a special report recently published by Wiley Press in partnership with College Promise that highlights research published by NRC FAHE members Drs. M Sebrena Jackson, Lauren Ford, and myself in partnership with CCAI Government Affairs Director and fellow foster care alumni Angelique Salizan and Catherine Lester of the Annie E Casey Foundation. This publication provides a description of the various components of campus support programs and what we know about the efficacy of each of them and provides guidance to universities who are interested in building targeted campus support programs.

We will not be holding any speaker's series events over the summer months but are excited to work with you to reconvene this series beginning in the fall quarter. As a reminder, our speakers' program is organized by Dr. Amy Salazar; and information about webinars that have occurred over this past academic year can be found on our website at https://www.nrc-fahe.org/archive-webinars. If you are interested in having your research featured in a future webinar, please reach out to Amy at amy.salazar@wsu.edu.

ANGELIQUE DAY, Ph.D., MSW

Angelique Day, PhD, MSW, is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Washington-Seattle. Much of her research focuses on foster care youth, including examining the differences in college retention rates between foster care youth and other low-income first-generation college students, and examining "youth voice" and its impact on child welfare, education and health policy reform. Dr. Day leads the Policy Review team for the NRC-FAHE. Questions about the policy section of this newsletter can be directed to her.

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Higher Education Highlight

COLUMN AUTHOR

Dr. Royel M. Johnson is Associate Professor of Education and Social Work at the University of Southern California (USC), where he is also Director of Student Engagement at the USC Race and Equity Center. Dr. Johnson is a nationally recognized scholar, whose interdisciplinary research addresses issues of educational access, racial equity, and student success. His work has an unapologetic focus on racially/ethnically minoritized and other institutionally marginalized populations including young people with foster care experience and justice-involved youth. Dr. Johnson maintains a highly active program of research with over 40 academic publications, in addition to three forthcoming books/monographs. Moreover, he is principal investigator (PI), or Co-PI, on grants and contracts exceeding $5.1 million. He has delivered over 100 talks, lectures, and workshops for various stakeholders, instantiating his commitment to connecting research to policy and practice to improve the material conditions of underserved populations. For his early-career accomplishments, he received the 2020 Distinguished Young Alumni Award from the University of Illinois; ACPA—College Student Educators International's 2020 Emerging Scholar Award; and AERA Division G's 2022 Early Career Award. He holds a B.A. in Political Science and Ed.M. in Educational Policy Studies from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and Ph.D. in Higher Education and Student Affairs, with a cognate in Race and Social Policy from Ohio State.

Institutionalizing Support for College Students Impacted by Foster Care

Despite the growing national media attention, shedding light on the precarious experiences of college students impacted by the foster care system, they remain on the margins of higher education research, policy and discourse. The data are clear though. On any given day there are nearly half of million youth in the foster care system (of which Black and Native American students are disproportionately represented) who have been subject to some form of abuse, neglect, or concerns about safety and wellbeing. Of those in care, anywhere between 20-25,000 will "age-out," which refers to the process in which these youth are forced into adulthood (usually at age 18), often with few supports and resources. And despite maintaining high aspirations for college, the reality is that few realize this dream. Estimates from research have indicated that only about 7-13 percent of students impacted by foster care enroll in college and as little as 3 percent graduate with a bachelor's degrees.

The challenges facing young adults impacted by foster care are numerous and well-documented. They range from difficulty meeting their basic needs and mental and behavioral challenges to academic under-preparation and informational barriers about resources and support available to them, among many other challenges. To be clear, however, hundreds of students with histories in foster care overcome seemingly unsurmountable obstacles, persisting to degree completion—and there is a great deal we can learn from "the 3%." Instead, what I am suggesting is that colleges and universities have an institutional responsibility to meet the unique needs of this group by working to address barriers that stymie their full participation in the academic and social spheres of campus life—and institutions who do not, conspire in their educational failure.

I offer the following recommendations for educators and administrators working to institutionalize support for college students impacted by the foster care system:

- **Raise Institutional Awareness**: As I have pointed out elsewhere, one significant challenge in supporting college students impacted by foster care is the lack of general public awareness about the child welfare system and issues pertaining to it. Consider findings from a national poll several years back indicating that roughly 83% of adults know very little to nothing about the experiences of youth in foster care. Included in that poll are likely faculty, staff, and administrators who work in higher education, with very little understanding of how their students' foster care experience may impact their postsecondary education experiences and outcomes. Thus, educating institutional leaders and the broader higher education community about the lived realities of college students impacted by foster care is crucial for challenging stereotypical assumptions about what supports they may (or may not) need. One key thing all campuses should do, if they aren't already, is pull data from student's financial aid records to identify those who indicated "yes" to the FAFSA question asking students, "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 ward of the court?" While it's not the most precise measure, it does offer a starting point for identifying the group on campus and for better understanding their outcomes (e.g., retention, stop-out, time degree completion).

- **Address Basic Needs**: One finding from a recent systematic review of literature I conducted on undergraduates formerly in foster care emphasized the difficulty they experience meeting their basic needs (referring to access to adequate food, housing, and safety), which may undermine engagement, sense of belonging, and degree attainment. Basic needs insecurity impacts a growing number of students from a range of backgrounds, however, those with a history in foster care are especially vulnerable, given the lack of support they often have from their biological family. As campus educators and administrators work to address basic needs issues on their campus, they should (a) make sure that students are aware of funds available to them through the Chafee Foster Care Program, which provides up to 5,000 each year to pursue higher education; (b) familiarize themselves with whether or not their state provides tuition waivers for current or former foster youth (and their requirements for accessing them); (c) encourage students to take advantage of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly known as "food stamps") and energy assistance programs, which can help mitigate costly living expenses, if they qualify; (d) provide emergency aid to cover unanticipated expenses that might otherwise negatively impact student success; and (e) offer year-round housing options for students in the residence halls or offer affordable housing vouchers to subsidize their rent for those who live off campus.

- **Challenge Traditional Assumptions about Family Support**: Findings from research also indicate that some college students with histories in foster care experience social isolation and marginalization on campus, often as a result of their identity as a "former foster youth." These feelings can be exacerbated when campuses host programs like "Mom's Weekend" or hold "parent"-specific orientations. It's important that college and universities adopt new language that includes broader conceptions of family, recognizing that all students do not arrive on our campuses with the same types or levels of support. And that for some groups, that term may take on an entirely different meaning, including a broad network of friends, social workers, and other non-biological family members. Indeed, campuses should be mindful of messaging to students (e.g., "invite your parents and family") regarding other kinds of milestone celebrations on campus (e.g., graduation, induction into an honor's society), that assume support from family. A colleague of mine offers further guidance elsewhere.

By no means is this list meant to be exhaustive, as there are a wide-range of promising practices that institutions can (and should) adopt to better meet the needs of this important, yet often overlooked population such as developing campus-based support programs; collaborating and partnering with local child welfare agencies to triage support; and diversifying educational programing to reflect the diversity of students' identities and experiences, to name a few more examples. Instead, I hope this is a useful starting place for college educators and administrators who are ready to accept institutional responsibility and work to address needs of young adults on their campus who have been impacted by foster care.

Johnson, R.M. (2020, February). Institutionalizing Support for College Students Impacted by Foster Care. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* https://www.diverseeducation.com/opinion/article/15106293/institutionalizing-support-for-college-students-impacted-by-foster-care

Practice Highlight – Seita Scholars Program

COLUMN AUTHORS

Justin & Alexis Black are graduates of Western Michigan University and a part of Forbes Next 1000 Entrepreneurs for 2021. Both have served as National Youth and Transition Database Reviewers while also fundraising for programs that support foster youth such as Nsoro and Hope Pkgs. Together, they have published an award winning, bestselling book titled *Redefining Normal: How Two Foster Kids Beat The Odds and Discovered Healing, Happiness and Love* that has impacted over 15,000 individuals and families. With Redefining Normal, they hope to continue the conversation on healthy relationships, mental health, and community growth and healing through speaking engagements, trainings, and book clubs.

Overcoming the Odds: Our experience in the Seita Scholars Program

Tell us about the process of applying to and transitioning into the program.
Applying to the program was straightforward. Typically, someone within the program would guide you to an application and then walk you through the application process. Following the application, there is an interview process to ensure that each student is a good fit for the program. I came into my interview extremely nervous and sweating profusely. But the faculty reassured me with words of affirmation throughout the entire process. For me, I was a first-generation college student just looking to survive.

For Alexis, she needed stability after leaving her apartment off-campus. Transitioning onto Western Michigan's campus and into the Seita Scholars Program provided us with both mental security and confidence as first-generation college students. This is done through various support systems including alumni support, older students in the program, campus resources, Seita Scholar. Not to mention the small things the program offers such as bedding, washing detergent, and other dorm room necessities.

What were some of the challenges you experienced while in the program?
Challenges within the program that some students may encounter include the level of accountability required within the program. Some students aren't a fan of checking in with campus coaches, progress reports being sent to professors, or coaches having access to students' grades. I could see particular students viewing this aspect of the program as a personal boundary that was crossed.

For me, I understand why this approach is taken. A multitude of foster youth are dropping out of college and many aren't even graduating high school. I would prefer programs going above and beyond to interact with and support students as they navigate uncharted territory.

How did you find out about the program?
I heard about the program through a multitude of mentors who knew other successful foster care alumni who graduated from the program. Alexis heard about the program after doing research on scholarship opportunities in the state of Michigan. The Seita Scholars Program at Western Michigan University is one of its kind. It's a program that not only provides scholarships to foster care alumni but also numerous wrap-around resources to students. One of the main things that interested Alexis and me about this program was the component of having campus coaches. My wife, Alexis, and I first met Seita coaches during the Summer Early Transition (SET) week for the Seita Scholars Program in 2016.

Programs like Seita support students in receiving the necessary resources that college students need to thrive. As mentioned, SET week is an extremely important component of the program. This week allows students entering the program to arrive on campus during the summer to get adjusted to campus and meet their peers in the cohort. We also meet with our campus coach for the first time. This tremendously contributes to the success of students in the program as the graduation rate for students who participate in SET week is much higher than for those who don't.

What aspects of the program were especially helpful?
One of the primary reasons why the Seita program has created such an impact in the lives of the students that have gone through the program is because of the amazing campus coaches. Campus coaches play the role of guiding students to resources on campus such as financial aid, tutoring, and other outlets. They also hold students accountable for their coursework and discuss options to help students improve. When I entered the program, I was extremely nervous as I had no idea what to expect. My campus coach emailed and contacted me regularly to ensure that I had everything I needed set and ready to go as I prepared for classes and college overall.

In addition to the support of a campus coach, the Seita Scholars Program has played a huge role in assisting me and Alexis in studying abroad. Combined, Alexis and I have studied abroad 13 times, with her holding the study abroad record at Western Michigan University. Seita has provided us with scholarships and

support for each of our study abroad programs. I was fortunate enough to study abroad for nearly one semester of each of my years in college. Seita also provided emergency funding for me to return home in 2020, during the pandemic, while I was studying abroad in South Africa during my senior year

Lastly, the prominent number that stands out with the Seita Scholars Program is their graduation rate for foster youth in higher education compared to the national average. Estimates indicate 3%-11% of foster youth will graduate from four-year college.

The Seita program has produced the most foster youth college graduates in the state of Michigan and is now training other programs across the country to do the same!

Tell us about how you met while in the program.
The Seita program played an important role in me meeting my wife, Alexis. As mentioned, we met on the first day of Seita SET week in July of 2016. I was an incoming freshman while Alexis was a junior after transferring from the University of Michigan Flint. Our time in the program allowed us to focus on being students and developing our networks and relationships. As we grew and matured as college students within the program, we were able to achieve more than we could've imagined. Alexis graduated in 2019 with a BA in Global International Studies and a BBA in Entrepreneurship with a minor in political science and a certificate in nonprofit leadership. I graduated with a BA in public relations and African studies in 2020. We've created two study abroad programs while in college and participated in 13 programs. Fortunately, I have been privileged enough to graduate debt-free largely due to the Seita program and other scholarships contributing to my success.

The Seita program has contributed not only to my success, but to who I am as a student, husband, and person overall. Because I met my now-wife in this program, it definitely holds a special

place in my life and has greatly contributed to our success in our career. In 2020, Alexis and I wrote and published our book Redefining Normal: How Two Foster Kids Beat The Odds and Discovered Healing, Happiness and Love. While writing our best-selling book, we acknowledged Seita as one of the biggest factors to our success as a support system, a community, and a guide in our success. Now, we operate our company full-time with the Redefining Normal company being selected as Forbes Next 1000 for 2021.

If you could change anything you wanted about the program, what would it be?
The Seita Scholars program is a shining example of what foster care alumni can accomplish with intentional time, funding, and energy invested. The impact that this program has had on my life will be mentioned to my children and many generations to come. Some may suggest that the program should allow students to live off-campus but I believe that living on campus has a tremendous impact on connecting with peers and staying involved with campus activities. There wouldn't be much about the program I would change at all.

If you're interested in learning more about identifying generational trauma in order to create generational success, grab a copy of our book *Redefining Normal: How Two Foster Kids Beat The Odds and Discovered Healing, Happiness and Love* at re-definingnormal.com or book a workshop or training with us!

Student Highlight – Statistic to Social Worker: A Foster Kid's Higher Ed Experience

COLUMN AUTHOR

Brittney Barros, BSW, passionately advocates in both the foster care and runaway/homeless youth community. Brittney has spent most of her free time being a foster youth advocate. She is past President of Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative (MYOI) and was a State Co-Director for the Parkwest Foundation, spreading awareness of resources available to those who have been in foster care. Brittney sits on the board of directors for the Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, that promotes access to education for at-risk students. She is also a past member of the National Foster Youth Alumni Policy Council, a national group that works with key stakeholders in child welfare to improve child welfare policy. Furthermore, Brittney completed the Foster Youth Internship through the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute where she wrote a policy brief to both Congress and the White House on sibling separation in foster care.

Brittney holds a Bachelor degree in Social Work and a minor in Music from Eastern Michigan University. Brittney is currently pursuing her Master's Degree in Social Work and Public Policy at the University of Michigan. She also works for the Michigan Supreme Court as a Youth Champion for young people in foster care to achieve quality court improvement in child welfare proceedings. Her long-term goals include bringing robust systematic change to the child welfare sector and becoming a foster parent.

Only 2%?, 5%? Or maybe as high as 10.8%? What does the data tell us about the minimal success rates of foster care alumni (FCA) completing a post-secondary education? Will I graduate if I go to college? Is it worth enrolling? What does FAFSA even stand for? Why is there an application fee to apply for college? How do I even get into a dorm?

I was a foster kid. I was separated from my parents due to poverty, and the state took custody of me and my siblings. The fact that so few people like me graduate from college was discouraging and made me wonder whether I should even apply.

You see, it's not our fault. Many foster youth, especially those that age out of foster care, are cycled into endless cycles of poverty, overcriminalization, lack of support, homelessness, unemployment, and many other nuanced barriers that lead to tragic endings such as incarceration, illiteracy, mental health problems, physical impairments, early pregnancy, and even death. I shed tears as I write this because every foster youth in this world deserves a happy ending. Years later, as a two-time master's student at the University of Michigan, I reflect and ponder, why was I one of the lucky ones?

A systematic review of 22 peer-reviewed publications on foster care and higher education led Geiger and Beltran (2017) to estimate that up to 10% of FCA enroll in a four-year college and approximately 3% to 5% graduate with a bachelor's degree. Using a sample of 602 youth with a history of foster care in Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin, Courtney et al. (2009) found that, by the age of 23-24, 6% of FCA had earned a college degree compared with 33% of the general population. Utilizing a sample of 1,087

FCA from 23 communities that were in care between 1966 and 1998, Pecora et al. (2006) estimate that 10.8% of FCA aged 25 or older earned a bachelor's degree.

These statistics scared me, but they did not prevent me from moving forward with my education. In fact, they motivated me to change my trajectory from being another statistic to becoming a social worker for children in foster care so that they can go from surviving to thriving just like I was able to. In high school I worked five part-time jobs to keep myself from starving to death, especially during my time of youth homelessness. I worked to take care of my younger siblings so they would at least have a tent or a motel room over their head. I worked to end the cycle of poverty for my family and me. But there had to be more to the story than just working 5 part time jobs during high school.

I must be a part of the few FCA that graduate so that I can inspire other youth from foster care, to go to college, so that the 3%-10.8% can transform to 99.9%. We must defeat the odds. Change the statistics. Abolish the tragic endings.

The EMU MAGIC program provided the support I needed to overcome the odds

"Please, go to college so you can provide yourself and the family you build the life I could never give you," my dad sobbed as I read him my acceptance letter into my undergraduate institution Eastern Michigan University (EMU). While humbled and honored to be given a full ride scholarship to a four-year university, I still questioned. How was I going to survive higher education as a first

generation, LGBTQ+, foster care, homeless survivor Latina?

When I enrolled into EMU, I was connected to a resource, more than just a resource, a lifesaving opportunity that was going to propel me to excel at my degree. The EMU MAGIC program is a campus-based support program that helps students who have experienced foster care graduate from college, by removing barriers that interfere with academic success and the process of becoming an interdependent adult. This program includes funding for books and tuition, therapeutic and clinical services, basic needs pantry with food and hygiene supplies, donated birthday and Christmas gifts every year, fun social activities to create a sense of community, and more. The staff members who ran the program were culturally sensitive, trauma informed, and most importantly, compassionate, and willing to help us with our needs. From filling out FAFSA, to fighting an eviction notice, the EMU MAGIC program has set the financial, social, and academic foundation for me to obtain my bachelor's degree in social work with a minor in music. Without the support they have provided me, I would not be the thriving former foster kid I am today.

For example, I will never forget the times when I was going through a bad break up, my stepdad passed away, and my best friend committed suicide, I desperately needed mental health services. Before I knew it, I was in therapy with the director, working and healing my trauma so that I could continue to survive.

Another example that comes to mind is when I failed out of my second to last semester, and while I needed that time for my collective healing, I took strides to finish my education. And the EMU MAGIC Program picked me up right where I left off. They helped me get re-

enrolled, held me accountable to passing grades through meeting with me weekly as well as helped me schedule my homework time, and made sure I was okay. I ended my last three semesters of undergrad with a 4.0 GPA.

So where am I currently?
Currently, I am a double Master's student at the University of Michigan. I graduate with my Master of Social Work in August 2022 and my Master of Public Policy in August 2023. I currently work for the Michigan Supreme Court under the Child Welfare Services Division as a Foster Youth Champion and have dreams of making it to the White House. Finally, I wish to pursue my PhD in social welfare.

References
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Geiger, J. M., & Beltran, S. J. (2017). Readiness, access, preparation, and support for foster care alumni in higher education: A review of the literature. *Journal of Public Child Welfare, 11*(4–5), 487–515.

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Policy Updates

We know that there may be legislation in your state that we have not listed here. If you know of a specific effort in your state that you would like us to mention in the next newsletter, please email Angelique Day at dayangel@uw.edu.

On May 11th, 2022, four Foster Care Alumni (FCA) delivered a legislative briefing entitled Supporting Higher Education Success for Youth with Experience in Foster Care and Homelessness: A Briefing on Four Legislative Proposals that Can Make a Difference. The event was hosted by Schoolhouse Connection, John Burton Advocates for Youth and the Youth Law Center, in collaboration with the offices of Representative Danny Davis and Senator Bob Casey, with Senator Patty Murray.

Four bills that provide critical support for FCA were discussed in the unique and insightful presentation by youth.

• The Higher Education Access and Success for Homeless and Foster Youth Act (HEASHFY) (S.789)(Murray, Portman, Clark, Young): This bill revises provisions related to financial aid and higher education programs for youth who are homeless or in foster care. It requires institutions of higher education (IHEs) participating in financial aid programs to, among other things, simplify the financial aid determinations process for these students. It also requires IHEs to designate a staff liaison to assist these students with support services, programs, and community resources in a variety of areas, including financial aid and housing. The bill also requires these students to receive in-state tuition rates at public IHEs.

• The Fostering Success in Higher Education Act (FSHE) (S.3605) (Davis, Krishnamoorthi, Casey, Brown, Smith): This act would improve college access, retention, and completion rates for foster and homeless youth by substantially improving state capacity to support these students as they transition to and attend college. Specifically, this bill would: Invest $150 million a year in States, tribes, & territories to establish or expand statewide initiatives to assist foster and homeless youth in enrolling in and graduating from institutions of higher education; Establish formula grants to states based on a state's share of foster youth and homeless youth among all 50 states and the District of Columbia, with a $500,000 minimum grant; Dedicate 70 percent of state grants to develop Institutions of Excellence committed to serving foster and homeless youth via robust support services, in collaboration with organizations skilled at helping these populations while providing substantial financial assistance, ensuring robust student health and mental services.

• Helping Foster and Homeless Youth Achieve Act (S 3350)(Portman, Rosen): A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to condition an institution of higher education's receipt of Federal assistance on waiving the application for enrollment fee for homeless children and youths and students who were in foster care at any time when the students were 13 years of age or older.

• The Fostering Postsecondary Success for Foster and Homeless Youth Act (HR 2028) (Kildee, Bacon): This act will create a recognition program through the U.S. Department of Education that allows institutions to be deemed "Foster and Homeless Youth Friendly" on the Department of Education's website. Additionally, the act will create a national center for fostering postsecondary success for foster and homeless youth to provide technical assistance to higher education institutions to create and maintain campus-based supports and develop best practices. This bill incentivizes post-secondary

educational institutes to provide programs that are tailored to the unique needs of former foster youth and to work towards a more successful and positive experience for former foster youth in higher education.

The President's 2023 Budget includes proposals that could direct benefit FCA who are in college or are considering enrollment.

According to the Congressional Research Service, the 2023 Budget requests $48 million for Chafee Education and Training Vouchers, an increase of 11.6% over the current $43 million level of funding.

The President's 2023 proposed Budget also includes historic increases in Pell grant funding that will provide direct assistance to FCA seeking a degree as well as other disadvantages youth. Specifically, "the Budget proposes to double the maximum Pell Grant by 2029. This begins with a historic $2,175 increase for the 2023-2024 school year, compared to the 2021-2022 school year, thereby expanding access and reaching nearly 6.7 million students" (p 30).

Proposals that would benefit foster youth include:

- An increase in funding to raise institutional capacity at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs), Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), and low-resourced institutions, including community colleges, by providing an increase of $752 million from the 2021 enacted level. This funding includes $450 million for four-year HBCUs, (TCCU), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSI) to expand research and development infrastructure at these institutions.

- "The Budget provides $2.7 billion to the Department of Education's Office of Federal

Student Aid (FSA), an $800 million, or 43-percent, increase compared to the 2021 enacted level. This additional funding is needed to provide better support to student loan borrowers. Specifically, the increase allows FSA to implement customer service improvements to student loan servicing and to ensure the successful transition from the current short-term loan servicing contracts into a more stable long-term contract and servicing environment."

At the time of this writing, the Budget does not include a commitment to Student Loan Forgiveness. However, it is important to note that the student loan payment pause will continue through August 31st 2022. Moreover, a May 27th 2022 article in the Washington Post President Biden is considering a proposal to cancel $10 in student loan debt per borrower. The loan forgiveness would be extended to single Americans who earned less than $150K in the preceding year or $300K for married couples filing jointly.

CONFERENCE
September 14th, 2022
National Conference for Engaged Scholarship on Hidden Student Populations
Location: Oklahoma State University, Stillwater. The conference seeks to bring together diverse researchers and practitioners, particularly in higher education and social work (but inclusive of other fields), to consider current research and to form interdisciplinary research teams for empirical research studies to be conducted in the 14-16 months after the conference.

STUDENT WRITING CONTEST
The editorial board of the Journal of Postsecondary Student Success (JPSS) invites current college students to submit a manuscript (essay) for the Excellence in Amplifying Student Voices Award competition.
https://journals.flvc.org/jpss/about/submissions

EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS FOR YOUTH IN FOSTER OR KINSHIP CARE AND THOSE WITH A HISTORY OF CARE
Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network recently provided us with a list of websites that provide information on scholarships for youth with a history of foster care

- http://www.collegescholarships.org/scholarships/foster.htm

- https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/independent/support/education/

- https://www.scholarships.com/financial-aid/college-scholarships/scholarship-directory/special-attributes/adopted-foster-child-orphan

- https://www.top10onlinecolleges.org/scholarships-for/adopted-students/

- http://foster-care-newsletter.com/private-scholarships-for-foster-youth/#.Yp_CXKjMKUk

- https://www.fastweb.com/directory/scholarships-for-students-who-received-foster-care

ARTICLE HIGHLIGHT AUTHORS

Dr. M. Sebrena Jackson, LICSW is an Assistant Professor and Director of the MSW Program at The University of Alabama School of Social Work. Her research, scholarship, and practice focuses on two lines of education research: post-secondary education access for youth transitioning from foster care via precollege programs and online social work education.

She has published and presented on these topics at the national and international levels. The pre-college program she founded, the National Social Work Enrichment Program (NSEP), provides a six week campus experience for foster youth and has received consistent funding for over 10 years. Dr. Jackson has received numerous awards for her work, including NASW Social Worker of the Year in Georgia and Alabama and the University of Alabama's Innovation Scholar Award.

Dr. Jackson is a trailblazer in the social work profession, and through her leadership, practice, and research, a college education has become a viable option for hundreds of youth transitioning from foster care.

Angelique Day, PhD, MSW, is an associate professor in the school of social work at the University of Washington Seattle and co-founder of the National Research Consortium on Foster Alumni in Higher Education (NRC-FAHE).

She is a product of the Michigan child welfare system. Angelique was removed at age 11 because of her mother's mental illness and reunified at age 13 with her father. Dr. Day is a first-generation college graduate who was supported by Pell grants and other need-based aid demonstrating that college can be a meaningful way out of poverty. Dr. Day's lived expertise, research, and legislative experience undergird her national leadership on education access and support for youth who experience foster care.

Lauren currently serves as the Interim Director of Strategic Initiatives and Planning in the San Mateo County Community College District. Prior to this role, Lauren was responsible for new student recruitment at Skyline College where she created invaluable relationships with PK-12 partners to aid in students' successful transition to higher education.

Throughout her 10 years in higher education, Lauren has held positions in both public and private universities in California and Texas where she focused on college access and helped students achieve employment success while in college and postgraduation. In 2018, Lauren was selected to become a Biden Foundation Higher Education Fellow supporting Community College research on best practices surrounding access, affordability, and student success and completion.

Lauren also serves as a consultant with the Skyline College Equity Institute, Hotep Consultants, and Career Ladders Project, where she supports colleges and organizations seeking to evolve into more equity advancing institutions through strategic thought partnership.

Angelique Salizan is the Policy Director at the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI).

Angelique has a wealth of policy experience and has a personal passion for advancing equity. Her career includes roles with the offices of U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Ron Wyden (D-OR). Most recently, Angelique served as a fellow with the City of Cleveland Department of Public Utilities.

Prior to joining CCAI, Angelique was a Legislative Correspondent for Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) where she managed constituent engagement and policy priorities in the areas of education, child welfare, transportation, and infrastructure.

Angelique has earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Binghamton University in New York as well as a Project Management Certificate from the Kent State Center for Corporate & Professional Development in Ohio. Angelique graduated in 2020 obtaining a Masters in Policy Management from Georgetown University.

Article Highlight

Research has consistently shown that Foster Care Alumni (FCA) who earn a college degree report higher employment rates and earnings than those who do not graduate from college. While over 80% foster youth indicate that they have a desire to attend college only about 20% enroll and estimates of graduation rates range from 3%-10.8%, far below the graduation rates of youth who do not have a history of foster care.

While the focus of America's College Promise initiative has focused on removing financial barriers by making

tuition free, such initiatives alone are not sufficient. Housing concerns and a need to for funds to cover basic expenses such as food and clothing remain a barrier even for those that able to get a tuition waiver.

Difficulties navigating the college application process can also be a significant barrier that prevent youth from even applying to a university. A lack of independent living skills, mental health issues, and inadequate emotional support to cope with the academic demands and social stresses related to college life are also powerful barriers that FCA typically face. Such barriers help explain why many FCA "stop out" while pursuing a college degree. Foster youth take on average 13.5 semesters to graduate with a bachelor's degree.

Campus Support Programs

Precollege programs and campus support programs can help increase college enrollment and retention among foster youth. While there is a dearth of literature on precollege programs designed specifically for foster youth, programs such as First Star, Fostering Academics and Better Futures all show promise. A study of Better Future's participants, for instance, found program participants achieved twice the level of

postsecondary participation when compared with a control group and they also appear to have higher rates of high school completion and mental health recovery as well as a better quality of life.

As discussed in articles written by FCA in the Practice Highlight and Student Highlight section of this issue, campus support programs such as Seita Scholars and MAGIC in Michigan offer a mentoring program designed specifically for FCA as well as range of services that students need to survive financially while overcoming childhood trauma and excelling as scholars. Basic needs support, healthcare support, mental health support, housing support and childcare may all be needed in order for a student to achieve their dream of a college degree.

Federal and State Policies

The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) is part of the 1999 Foster Care Independence Act. The CFCIP was amended in 2001 to include education and training vouchers to foster youth and this was the first program in the nation designed specifically to address the postsecondary education needs of youth with a history of foster care. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 has expanded eligibility for the ETV program to youth. The College Cost Reduction Act of 2009 also allows financial aid applicants who were in foster care when they were at least 13 years old to claim independent status, even if they subsequently achieved permanency through adoption or legal guardianship. Thus, the income of their adoptive parent(s) or legal guardian(s) is not counted against them when determining their eligibility for federal financial aid. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 temporarily expanded the ETV program by $50 million while eliminating state match requirements between 2020 and 2022. Federal Pell Grants are also a critical resources as virtually all foster youth are eligible for at least some levels of Pell Grant Assistance.

College Promise programs were first initiated in 2015 as a national effort to

lower student debt by making the first 2 years of college free. As of November 2016, 23 states had enacted legislation to support free community colleges. By 2020, the number of college promise programs had grown to 360.

Meeting the Needs of FCA Students to Drive Success

Our research indicates there are a variety of steps that colleges can take to help FCA enroll in college, adjust to college life and, ultimately, graduate.

Access and enrollment support, physical space where FCA can congregate, dedicated academic advising designed specifically for FCA, academic support, transfer support and financial support are all needed in order to FCA to succeed. Campus-based support programs can also collaborate with local community partners and agencies such as those that provide mental health and county services to ensure their institutions are meeting the unique needs of FCA.

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