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.

Our Leadership:

Angelique Day, PhD
School of Social Work
University of Washington

Lisa Schelbe, PhD
College of Social Work
Florida State University

Amy M. Salazar, LMSW, Ph.D.
Department of Human Development
Washington State University Vancouver

Kerri Kearney, PhD, MBA
Higher Education & Student Affairs
Oklahoma State University

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

Sierra Wollen, MSW
University of Washington

Mukta Vaidya, BS
University of Minnesota

Amanda Saxton, BSW
University of Washington

Welcome and Introduction

I am proud to share the 7th issue of the National Research Collaborative for Foster Alumni and Higher Education newsletter with you. I want to thank all of you who were able to listen to our August 2020 webinar to hear about policy updates and to lend your voice in developing our policy advocacy agenda. To ensure we have a multidisciplinary platform to disseminate our policy agenda, we are excited to be joining forces with College Promise and ETS. This year, foster youth have been identified as one of five target segments of today's postsecondary student populations by College Promise with the goal of examining how to design sustainable funding models to support targeted college access and retention efforts. Other populations being targeted for sustainable policy efforts include first generation students, students with disabilities, student parents, and students with developmental learning needs. This opportunity will allow us to unite with scholars, policymakers, and other cross-sector stakeholders across education, social work, health and finance. On May 7, 2021 we will hold a spark talk presentation that will share the results of this multidisciplinary collaborative effort. We hope you will reserve that date in your calendar and join us for this exciting presentation. In June 2021 we plan to release a formal report through ETS via their Wiley online library.

In this newsletter issue Dr. Kearney shares an update on the planning efforts of this past annual cross-disciplinary foster care research conference that was held in February 2020 and what is being proposed for 2021. We are also highlighting the great work of the Wiley Network from both a programmatic and youth perspective, and the recent publication of Dr. John Paul Horn, a new faculty member at California State East Bay. Dr. Horn's qualitative article is entitled "That piece of paper is your golden ticket: How stigma and connection influence engagement". This article is currently in press with the Journal *Child Welfare*.

Also featured in this newsletter are the latest policy developments occurring at the state and federal levels that impact our work. At the end of December all legislation that is not signed into law will need to be reintroduced in the newly formed 117 congress. We will need your advocacy support to ensure we can breathe new life into these critical pieces of legislation.

As a reminder, our speakers program is organized by Dr. Amy Salazar; and information about past and future webinars can be found on our website at (https://www.nrc-fahe.org/archive-webinars).
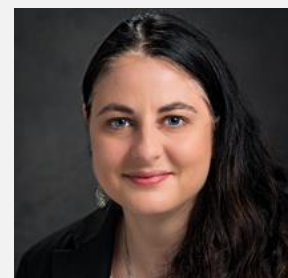
ANGELIQUE DAY, Ph.D.

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 yoouth 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.

dayangel@uw.edu

Higher Education Column

KERRI KEARNEY, PHD.

Kerri Kearney, M.B.A., Ed.D., is an associate professor in Higher Education & Student Affairs. Through her work, she prepares individuals to lead at institutions of higher education or function in related research or policy roles. She teaches and advises students almost exclusively at the doctoral level. Her research, teaching, and service agendas focus on the broad areas of other mothering issues (fostering and adoption) with an emphasis on college students who are alumni of foster care, the role of emotions in human transition, issues related to organizational behavior, and visual or arts-based methodologies in qualitative research.

In my last column, I shared my perspectives on the importance of research on former foster youth in college and, perhaps more importantly, the ways in which research can move things forward in higher education. This column is, in some ways, about how much has changed since that column . . . and yet stayed the same.

What has changed? Well, of course, COVID-19 entered the scene and turned many things upside down. What we thought we knew, we didn't. What we had figured out, we don't. What we thought we had to know, we can't –the current environment is simply too fluid. And so on. In any crisis situation, there is a tendency for both people and organizations to focus on the critical items that will sustain them. What does survival look like? This natural focus can have reverberating impacts on other critical issues.

Arguably, foster alumni in college may have less buffer for crisis times. So the focusing of institutions on core survival issues (e.g. how do we get masses of students out of our dorms to avoid a hot spot here on our campus?), in many cases, impacted the wellbeing of these students. Into that gap, stepped a number of practitioners and researchers, some of whom are on our national research teams, who sought ways to support this population during the COVID crisis. Much of their great work is now published and available even while their knowledge continues to evolve.

With the immediate crisis being addressed by numerous well-equipped professionals, my personal focus as a researcher has been to keep my eyes focused on the long-term. The COVID-19 virus may be around for a long time, but the crisis portion of it will end. We need to be ready to move forward immediately with the long-term, non-COVID issues that need to be addressed for foster alumni in college. I'd like to avoid any pauses. As I mentioned in my last column, in February 2020, we held the first national research conference focused on foster alumni college students. Some of those research teams have been able to continue forward on their work even amid COVID-19, although all are reporting slower timelines than expected as they attend to other critical items. Other teams, like mine, have fully approved research protocols and even research sites, but on-campus policies or practice prohibit us from collecting any data until the COVID crisis is over. We are stopped by issues beyond our control. This recently led us to reluctantly decide on a "COVID delay" for the next national research conference, which will now be in fall 2022. (Interim events will be announced soon.) That is frustrating. But, as with most pauses in life, it is giving us time to review our plans and identify and shore up any weaknesses. When the bell sounds for the end of the pandemic, researchers will have amassed new knowledge about foster alumni during crisis times that may be applied to the future, and we will also return to the long-term research objectives for foster alumni and other hidden populations on college campuses. Because most of us have a history of work in the area of foster alumni in college, we are not strangers to the bumps along the road. And current research barriers are but a bump. In the end, it is less about timing that reaching the goal.

For more information about the 2021 follow up conference, please follow our webpage or email risforthursday@okstate.edu. Requests for proposals for the conference will be released in Fall 2020.

Practice Highlight – The Wily Network

As a special for this issue, we are highlighting the **Wily Network**.

Judi Alperin King's career as a psychologist at Wediko Children's Services included roles as clinician, administrator, program director, and development officer. Her dedication to children never wavered. After 30 years' working with children who faced serious emotions and behavioral problems, she turned her attention to college students.

In 2014, Judi read an article in the New York Times entitled "Out of Foster Care into College" and began researching programs that provide a range of resources to college students who are navigating school on their own. By founding the Wily Network, Judi set out to build a community that would offer wrap-around services to students from matriculation to graduation.

Judi earned her B.A. and M.A. degrees in Psychology at Hamilton College and Boston College, respectively. She received her Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania. Judi has three adult daughters and lives in Needham, Massachusetts, with her husband.

Can you give us some background on your program and how it got started?

I was trained as a psychologist, and I worked for the same organization for most of my career, with children who were managing emotional, behavior and learning issues.

I have long been drawn to colleges and their campuses. I was lucky enough to study on four college campuses. People think that once you get to college, you're going to break the cycle. That's not always the case. There are many systemic barriers to success once in college.

To develop the Wily Network, I visited higher education support programs around the country to understand best practices. The programs I visited sat at one college. Greater Boston is home to more than 50 colleges, and I did not want young people to feel that they had to attend a particular college in order to benefit from Wily. We strive to figure out a way to help students at any **local** college. We also decided to work with four-year colleges that offered on-campus housing. We modeled Wily on the Blavin Scholars program at the University of Michigan.

We designed the program and we received our first round of funding in late 2015. Over time we have built a solid team of professionals. Unlike many of our peer programs, Wily includes students who have never been in foster care. We work with students who are experiencing life challenges such as homelessness or foster care, or whose parents may be deceased, dealing with addiction, mental health issues, or incarceration.

Our goal is to make sure talented young people feel that they belong in college. By working with students at several colleges, we have grown quickly, even through COVID, which has been really remarkable. We are currently working with 62 students at 10 colleges.

How is your program funded?

We are funded primarily by individual donors. Most nonprofits fail in the first three to five years, so we had to figure out a way to make the program sustainable. We designed a fundraising paradigm that enables us to commit to a Scholar for their full college career.

Our Fund a Scholar program sets the annual cost of working with a student at $12,500. We ask donors to make a four-year pledge for a total of $50,000. Currently, 52 Scholars are fully funded through this program.

We also receive funding through relatively small grants. We hope to go to some large funders in the near future.

So far, people readily understand the challenge of being on your own in college without the things you need. That understanding has made for successful fundraising, even during the crisis we're in right now.

How many students does your program serve?

This fall, we plan to work with 63 students. Twelve students graduated in May, and five of them don't have jobs yet. We'll work with them until December. Our plan is to have 115 Wily Scholars in five years, and 210 at the 10-year mark. We're hoping that will capture everybody in the greater Boston area, but there isn't good data available on how many students would be eligible for a program like this.

What is your role within the program?

I founded the program, and my title is Executive Director, but I wear many hats. I'm in charge of the finances, human resources, operations, and all the major fundraising. Right now, I'm also working directly with six students. Going forward I'm going to try and work with just one or two students. I don't think

this will be the year I move into a strictly executive director role, because we're still developing different components of the program, including anti-racism practices.

What are the main components of your program?

One component of our program is coaching. Coaches go to students' campuses and meet with them every week. There's a lot of genuine caring interactions, and I think Scholars leave the program feeling that this is a lifetime relationship. We don't do any therapy, but we're using our clinical lenses with every interaction, and we refer students to therapy if needed.

Students can text us if they get an A on a paper or if they forget to write a paper. We have somebody on call for emergencies. We were very careful not to replicate anything that the college or university already does.

The second component involves supplemental Financial Assistance. We give students a stipend every month that they can use as they choose. We also provide them with a computer and a phone. We help set up their dorm rooms and make sure they have the clothes and food they need. Anything they need they can talk to us about. We approach funding their needs by asking, "What are your resources? What is your budget? What have you been saving?" We want to make sure that they're aware of what they're spending money on, and how to budget, but we also don't want them working 40 hours a week in addition to school. The goal is always to enable them to focus on being a student.

The third component is our community-building and networking program, which focuses on developing relationships both internally and externally. The program helps Scholars build a community of peers who understand their story and share their career aspirations. Many of the Scholars who have been in foster care have said that they had never met other young

people like them, and to be part of a group where everybody just understands is an amazing feeling.

The networking program focuses on developing social capital. Typically, when you walk into the Career Center and say, "I want to be a lawyer," a career counselor might say, "Oh, do your parents have any friends who are lawyers?" Such situations are obviously unwelcoming to Wily scholars. While we work with career counselors to be sensitive to the needs of our Scholars, we also introduce them to people in the community so they can develop the connections they will need.

What impact has the program had on its participants?

The community-building program has the greatest impact on students. I can't think of anyone who hasn't said something along the lines of, "You mean there are other people like me on this campus?" Some students cry when they hear there are students on their campus who have had similar experiences.

What advice would you give to policy makers?

In general, we don't bump into many laws or policies. It's much more about the systemic biases at colleges, especially the assumption that all students have family support.

That said, I would love for long-term mental health services to be covered by everybody's health insurance. Students come to college and they believe 1. They have four years of guaranteed housing, and 2. It's going to be a place where they can begin to heal their scars. But the intensity and stress of college life makes it a tough place to heal. The mental health issues are overwhelming. It's hard to find qualified therapists who have worked with people who have experienced trauma. If they don't take insurance, we pay for the therapy appointments.

What changes has the program seen due to the pandemic?

Wily Scholars, like most students, were bombarded with communication from their schools about leaving campus. Even though they were ultimately allowed to stay for the spring, a lot of them made the choice to leave and go somewhere that was unsafe or unstable. We helped those students come back to Boston and get an apartment. It was a relief that we could help them by providing a safety net during this really unpredictable and awful time.

We didn't fully anticipate the impact on our Scholars of social isolation. We now have weekly Wily virtual dinners. We send a gift card to anybody who wants to come so they can order in, and then we all eat together.

Typically, we would go and help students on moving day, and we can't do that right now. That's been tough. Not only is it not going to be their family moving them in, it's not going to be their Wily coach either.

What do you want the program to achieve in the future?

My dream is for somebody to donate a home with lots of bedrooms, so that in emergencies Wily Scholars have a place to live. We could have our offices on the first floor and rooms for students to live in case of a gap in housing.

In terms of initiatives, it would be ideal to have an association of the peer programs around the country to establish best practices. The vision is that everybody collects the same data, and we can make inferences from successes or refinements of other programs and have a yearly conference to share these. This would help ensure that all students who fit the criteria for higher ed support programs are given the same opportunities around the country so that they can graduate and have successful careers, families and lives.

Student Highlight – Wily Network

Chantel Riendeau and Mathieu Medina share their experiences with the **Wily Network.**
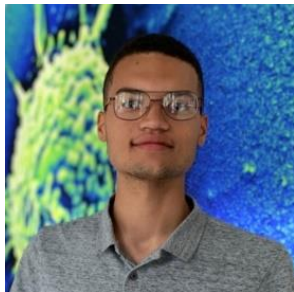
Mat is a senior at MIT studying Chemical Engineering with a concentration in Biology and the Environment. Outside of class, he is involved with Camp Kesem, the Pegis Club, and PLEASURE, a peer education group dedicated to sexual and relationship health. Mat works with the MIT Admissions office on the Multicultural Recruitment team, and is a project assistant in the Hamel Lab @ ChemEMIT focusing on yeast fermentation analytics. The common threads are a passion for social justice, community health and using engineering principles to understand + manipulate complex biological and environmental systems.

Chantel graduated Summa Cum Laude from Northeastern University in May 2020. During her time at Northeastern Chantel served as a peer mentor to students searching for their first co-op, which Chantel remembers as a highlight of her time in college. She was also a research assistant and served as president of a sketch comedy writing group. She worked as an analyst at Goldman Sachs in Seattle, WA for her first job. After graduation, she moved to NYC to work as an investment analyst at The D.E. Shaw Group.

How did you get connected to the program?

Chantel: I got connected with the Wily network my freshman year of college through my roommate. I remember I was going through a few personal things, and I felt like she was really the only one who understood, because she had gone through very similar situations. She said, "I know exactly what you need. I need to connect you with the Wily Network," and she mentioned her coach. I connected with her coach a few days later to see if I was a fit for the Wily Network. And I was.

Mat: I joined right before the summer between sophomore and junior year. I had some personal crises going on, and I was working with a support staff member at MIT. And they said, "Oh, why don't you try the Wily Network?" I didn't know anything about them, but they were having lunch one day when I could show up and introduce myself. So I just showed up, and they welcomed me with open arms.

What has your experience with the Wily Network been like?

Chantel: It's been an amazing experience. It has had the biggest impact on the trajectory of my college experience and on the rest of my life. Having that support group was key for me at so many turning points throughout college, whether it was when I was deciding about internships or dealing with family struggles that, without the Wily Network, I would have approached a lot differently.

Mat: Wily has done so much for me, even though I've only been a member for just over a year. They have been there at my lowest and highest moments. It's really nice to have people that you can rely on for anything, not just school, not just food or housing, just anything.

What program elements would you like to see expanded or replicated at other universities?

I honestly think the biggest barrier is finding the students. A lot of people who come from these situations aren't very forthcoming. I would love to see the program expanded upon, particularly how they recruit students. I feel like Wily has set the example of what true student care and outreach looks like. Going to college is so much more than going to class. You can't be a good student when life is weighing you down.

What aspects of the program have been most impactful for you?

Chantel: Having a community during times that otherwise would have been extremely isolating, like family weekends and holiday breaks. These are things that even I, as a first-generation college student without family support, didn't think of. So, of course, these institutions didn't think of it. There are no formal policies for what to do with students who don't have families or don't have places to go back to during these times. That's where Wily really bridged the gap and created a community, so that we could have connections and be together during those times. Knowing that I had my own Wily pack to go to was really, really important.

Mat: Coaching for me has been the most impactful component. I'm on full financial aid at MIT, and I've had to navigate having a job and balancing school. I've done all that forever, so it wasn't that I didn't know how to navigate the system. I knew I could survive. But there's a difference between thriving and surviving, and that's where like the coaching comes in. There is a shoulder to cry on and a high five when you do something great. And when you just don't know who to ask or what to ask, they're there. My coach, Susan, she challenges me a lot, which is something that I really appreciate, and so she's like a sister. It is about bridging the gap

because you can throw money at someone, but that's not always what's needed.

I feel better about Wily being separate from my institution because I know they actually care about me as a person and not just my ability to perform and produce and graduate.

What elements of the program would you like to see more resources dedicated to?

Chantel: Having a formal office space for our one-on-one weekly coaching meetings. My coach and I would have conversations where I was in tears crying about very personal aspects of my life in the most crowded Starbucks on campus. Yes, Wily should stay separate, of course, from the institutions, but at least give them a space to meet with the students.

Mat: Yeah, giving Wily space on campus can help to create a sense of community. It would be nice if on our campuses, we had a Wily meeting spot.

What recommendations do you have for researchers, practitioners, and policy makers?

Chantel: It's not enough for institutions to just get these students into your programs and then have zero follow up after the Wily Network is there. It's just ingrained in a lot of the very traditional college experiences like parents weekend. Colleges should have a plan for students who don't have parents visiting. And with COVID, they had us leaving our dorms within a week. If the Wily Network wasn't calling our institutions and speaking with people pretty high up every single day for that week, we would have been kicked out and had nowhere to go. They really advocated on our behalf and helped us secure housing. It's not enough to accept students into your college, you have to understand that these backgrounds that you accepted and wanted to promote come with multiple facets and layers of unique situations.

Mat: In my work on MIT's multicultural recruitment team, this is a conversation we have all the time. We can't just accept these students and expect them to be fine when the institution isn't actively pursuing structures to support these underrepresented minority students--whether that's a race, ethnicity, gender, socio economic background, immigration status. It's a disservice to accept people and then not support them, because you're catering to the highest common denominator.

For example, when COVID hit it really felt like I was left in the dust. Everyone was like, "Oh, I got my flight back home. This and that.". I was like, "I don't know what I'm doing." I feel like students should be in the room while all these decisions are being made. Policy should be student-centered and should be bottom-up rather than top-down. That's where Wily comes in--they're always listening to us, taking our feedback, seeing what we think works and what doesn't.

Policy Updates

Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act (H.R.7947)

If passed, H.R.7947 will expand upon and replace The Pandemic Protection for Transition-Age Foster Youth Act. In August 2020, it was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means, in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce. H.R. 7947 is part of a larger coronavirus relief package, The Heroes Act (H.R.8406).

There are several provisions in H.R. 7947 that will support former foster youth in higher education programs. It provides for an additional $50 million dollars for Education and Training Voucher (ETV) programs to raise the yearly award amount from $5,000 to $12,000 per student. There will be more flexibility in what ETV can be used for, and youth will no longer have to maintain satisfactory academic progress to continue receiving the award. The age limit will also be raised to 27. This would continue through fiscal year 2021.

In addition, if a foster youth ages out of care during the pandemic, H.R.7947 stipulates they cannot be required to leave foster care simply due to their age, nor can they be denied voluntary re-entry into care. Youth must be notified of the option to return to care if they aged out during 2020-2021. Unfortunately, this only applies to youth who have not yet reached age 22, potentially leaving many young adults vulnerable during the pandemic.

Other parts of this act include: increasing federal reimbursement for Title IV-E prevention programs, giving additional funds to the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program, allowing virtual visits to count as home visits, and ensuring states get adequate funds from the Family First Transition Act.

The Issue: Unfortunately, agreement on a coronavirus relief package seems unlikely to happen soon, with continued debate in Congress and from the White House.

It is very unlikely it will happen before the upcoming election. Many youth and families are already struggling financially, emotionally, and physically due to the ongoing pandemic, and action needs to be taken to move towards getting relief packages passed. We have already seen the devastating impacts of the pandemic on children and families. If issues are not addressed, it will impact housing for foster youth, as well as their ability to continue attending higher education and pay for basic daily living expenses. This will further impede their opportunities for education, careers, and networking later in life.

American Workers, Families, and Employers Assistance Act (S.4318)

S.4318 was introduced in the Senate in July 2020, and currently sits in the Committee on Finance.

The bill will allow states to waive certain requirements for Education and Training Vouchers, including the requirement that students utilizing the award must be making satisfactory academic process towards their program. This allows greater flexibility in acknowledging the difficulties the pandemic may be causing students.

The bill will also waive limitations on the amount of funds allowed for housing assistance. S.4318 will allow states to use more than 30% of Federal allotment for room and board payments. It will also expand eligibility for room and board payments to all former foster youth aged 18 and older who have experienced foster care after age 14, even if they did not age out of care.

The Issue: Homelessness among former foster youth is far too high. Thirty-six percent of former foster youth reported experiencing homelessness at least once in their lives.

Increasing financial support for education-related costs will greatly assist former foster youth in higher education. Housing should not be an additional barrier that youth face while attending higher education during a pandemic.

Removing Barriers to Foster Youth Success in College Act (H.R.2270)

H.R. 2270 was introduced in the House in April 2019, and currently sits in the House Committee on Education and Labor.

The bill is intended to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to ensure there are efforts to recruit foster youth and homeless children in programs such as Talent Search and Upward Bound. Recipients of funding under the Higher Education Act must submit reports on how they are removing barriers to participating in these programs and the number of foster and homeless youth engaging in the programs.

The Talent Search program identifies youth with potential for postsecondary education and provides services such as academic tutoring, advising, financial literacy programs, career counseling, and other vital services for youth. Upward Bound provides similar activities but is specifically designed to promote skills and motivation for success beyond high school or a GED program. There are also provisions that allow stipends to be provided to students in the program.

The Issue: Considering only about half of foster youth graduate high school, and only 3% will graduate from college, these efforts could have a large impact.

Research has shown that Upward Bound more than doubles the likelihood certain students will enroll in a four-year college. In addition, participants in the Talent Search program are primarily People of Color from low-income households. Considering these populations are overrepresented in foster care, H.R. 2270 will require recruitment programs to acknowledge these intersections and provide more effort towards engaging them.

Recommendation: Please continue to reach out to your members of Congress and urge them to act. The 117th Congress will be sworn in early January 2021, meaning that if any current bills are not passed before January 1st, they will expire and need to be reintroduced.

HUD to expand the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative

The Foster Youth to Independence initiative was launched in 2019 and has provided nearly $7 million in funding towards housing for youth who have been involved in foster care. It is currently being used in 31 states.

Changes occurring to the initiative include providing the opportunity for more public housing agencies to request vouchers from the program, raising the maximum award amount, encouraging community partnerships, and allowing funds to be requested on a rolling basis.

The program contributes to the goal of ending youth homelessness and hopes to help set youth up for more self-sufficiency.

More opportunities for housing assistance and stability can allow youth in higher education to focus more energy on school, rather than being in crisis concerning their basic needs.

Considerations for the upcoming Supreme Court hearing on the Affordable Care Act (ACA)

The Supreme Court is set to begin arguments on the constitutionality of the ACA on November 10th, 2020.

Currently, the ACA mandates Medicaid coverage until age 26 for young adults who have aged out of the foster care system. Repealing the ACA could do away with this mandate, especially if there is not replacement policy in place.

The Issue: Foster youth alumni have significantly higher rates of mental health disorders, more economic instability, and higher levels of negative physical health conditions than the general population. Studies have shown that poor physical health leads to lower GPA scores and mental health disorders make educational attainment even more difficult when considering effects on things such attention and energy level.

If the Affordable Care Act is repealed, former foster youth are at risk of losing all insurance coverage. Considering their economic instability, they are unlikely to be able to pay for insurance premiums out of pocket. Especially during the pandemic, guaranteed access to Medicaid until age 26 is critical to well-being and success in higher education

The State of Tuition Waivers

Currently, 22 states have implemented statewide tuition waivers, and 8 other states have grant programs for students affected by foster care.

All states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico utilize the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) funding provided through Chafee. Currently, states are eligible to award students up to $5,000 per year through the ETV

program, and students may receive funds for up to five years if they under the age of 26.

More details about each state's tuition waiver policy can be found at http://depts.washington.edu/fostered/tuition-waivers-state.

Family Support Services for Addiction Act of 2020 (H.R.5572)

H.R.5572 was highlighted in a previous newsletter and has now passed the House as of 10/1/2020.

This bill directs SAMHSA (the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) to award grant to nonprofits to develop services for individuals impacted by substance abuse, as well as their families. H.R.5572 seeks to develop evidence-based programs, create awareness, reduce stigma, build connections between family support networks, and provide families impacted by addiction with supports and education.

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.

Article Highlight

In this issue we highlight an article entitled **That piece of paper is your golden ticket: How stigma and connection influence college persistence among students who are care leavers**. For a complete list of resources, please see the Library tab on our website.

If you would like to have your recent article highlighted, please send us an article summary in this same format to **nrc.fahe@gmail.com**.

About the Authors

JOHN PAUL HORN , PHD.

John Paul Horn is an assistant professor of youth development in the Department of Social Work at California State University, East Bay. His research focus is on the impact of systems as they relate to care leavers (former foster youth). He has looked at care leavers who have completed 4-year degree programs and care leavers who are transitioning to middle adulthood. His present interest is on the long-term effects of foster care on the educational, vocational, and relational well-being of care leavers.

Horn (2019) conducted semi-structured interviews with nine care leavers from around the United States who had successfully completed their undergraduate education. The goals of the study were to determine what types of resources students used to complete their education and what barriers prevented students from accessing supports. Using the narrative approach, the participants were asked a series of questions about their experiences preparing for college, their experiences access resources during college, and experiences in life after college. Participants' responses to the questions were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

During analysis, two forms of data analysis were used. First, story components forms were used to place the responses to questions in a chronology. Then, eco-maps were developed to examine connections each student had to various sources of support in their social environments. The eco-map used a three-tiered structure for determining support: good, mixed, and bad. Finally, a comparison of the eco-maps helped the researcher examine the data for richer description as to why participants either engaged or chose not to engaged with various sources of support.

Participants reported a variety of reasons for not seeking support during their times in college, but the common reasons for not seeking support were related to issues of stigma and stereotypes about foster care and poverty. Participants had to contend with the fact that colleges were designed with family support in mind; participants talked about difficulty relating to peers and others on campus because of their foster care experiences. This difficulty forming and maintaining relationships caused participants to feel isolated. Participants described difficulty with overcoming their own internalized stigma and stereotypes about what it meant to be a care leaver and in college.

From a systemic perspective, participants described situations where they feared disclosing their foster care histories would cause faculty and staff to think differently about the participant. Many participants had a negative self-perception that was exacerbated when things were going poorly in their lives. Participants also described structural issues with seeking help. Some participants worked multiple jobs to meet their financial obligations during college and described not having access to campus services outside of the typical business day.

However, some participants received support from identity-based campus services that catered to an aspect of their identity (other than care leaver). Participants who engaged in these programs described useful services: summer bridge programs, peer support, scholarships, and on-going support from staff. These types of services were positively received and appreciated by the participants.

Findings from this study support the need for identity-based campus services. Importantly, findings from this study suggest that services need to be provided at non-traditional times and should attend to the issues of stigma and stereotypes that care leavers might experience while on campus. Further research should examine best practices for addressing both external and internal stigma among care leaver students. Research should also determine which aspects of an identity-based support program serve this population best.

Horn, J. P. (2020). 'That piece of paper is your golden ticket': How stigma and connection influence college persistence among students who are care leavers. *Child Welfare, 97(6)*, 101-120.

Announcements

Keep an eye out here for upcoming webinars, training sessions, or conferences that our collaborative members are hosting or attending. We will share any potential funding or employment opportunities that we think may be of interest. Please let us know if you would like a specific opportunity to be promoted in our next newsletter!

OPPORTUNITIES

The election is almost here! If you're looking to help get involved with foster care reform at the ballot box, check out Foster Action Force, a movement of former foster youth who seek to support political candidates prioritizing reform for the foster care system. You can also contact them directly at: theforce@fosteractionforce.org

CONFERENCES

September 15th and 16th, 2021
National Conference for Engaged Scholarship on Hidden Populations
Virtual Conference Goals (fall 2021):

- To stimulate research-to-practice-to-research knowledge about foster alumni and other traditionally hidden populations who are college-bound, in college, or college graduates,
- To create bridges among diverse areas of knowledge, researchers, and practitioners conducting research with or supporting foster alumni or other hidden populations, and
- To share updates and ways for higher education researchers, practitioners, and others to get involved with the 2022 face-to-face National Conference on Hidden Student Populations.
  More information here

WEBINARS

Wednesday, October 21st, 10am PT/1pm ET
Committee on Population: Understanding the Well-Being of LGBTQI Populations Report Release
This report will review the available data and future research needs relevant to persons of diverse sexualities and genders, and persons with differences in sex development, across multiple dimensions over the course of their lives. The webinar will include an overview of the study process and discussion of the report's findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
Register here

Thursday, October 22nd, 9am PT/12pm ET
Children's Trust Fund Alliance: Race Talk--It's deeper than bias, privilege and discrimination
This is designed to be interactive conversation with BPNN members. During your time, Corey will reveal several tips and "must haves" to begin facilitating effective conversations with friends, family and colleagues about racial justice and the system of inequities.
Register here

Thursday, October 22nd, 11am PT/2pm ET
The National Foster Care Youth & Alumni Policy Council: A Historic Opportunity to Reform the Child Welfare System: Youth & Alumni Priorities on Special Populations
The purpose of the Special Populations Priorities is to discuss the specifics outlined under the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 and to provide ideas driven by lived experience on how to support these groups and other young people the Council recognizes as needing special attention.
Register here

Tuesday, October 27nd, 10am PT/1pm ET
Strategies for Supporting Young People Transitioning out of Foster Care Webinar Series: College Success, Evaluating the Seita Scholars Program
Join the Urban Institute, in collaboration with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, to discuss the results of a formative evaluation of the Seita Scholars Program at Western Michigan University. Programs like Seita provide additional supports for former foster youth enrolled in college. Our conversation will focus on how the Seita Scholars Program supports college students with a history of foster care and what we learned about the program from our evaluation.

Thursday, November 12th, 11am PT/2pm ET
NRC-FAHE: David Halpern - Supervised Independent Living Finds a New Home, Texas A&M University System
Presenters will discuss how "The Texas A&M System is blazing a trail for peer institutions across the state and nation. It's a partnership with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to provide food, shelter, and an education to Texas' foster alumni at no cost to the students. Supervised Independent Living has taken root in the Lone Star State."
Register here

Wednesday, November 18th, 11am PT/2pm ET
Voice for Adoption: 16th Annual Adoptive Family Portrait Project 2020
VFA's annual National Adoption Month Briefing with guest speakers Senator Grassley (R-IA) and Senator Wyden (D-OR). Attend and hear from families who have adopted from foster care, child welfare workers and agencies, and more.
Register here and *here*

Save the date: May 7, 2021
NRC-FAHE will hold a spark talk presentation that will share the results of a multidisciplinary collaborative effort between NRC-FAHE, College Promise, and ETS.

Check out the NRC-FAHE Webinar Archive to see past webinar presentations.