



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

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

Angelina Callis, MSWc
University of Washington

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Welcome and Introduction

I am proud to share the inaugural issue of the National Research Collaborative for Foster Alumni and Higher Education with you. Our plan is to offer this newsletter three times a year for our consortium members. I am hopeful this newsletter can keep you abreast of the newest research and training opportunities associated with the field of foster care and post-secondary education access and retention. In each issue we will plan to highlight one outstanding college success program and one researcher who has recently published an article. In this issue we highlight the Champions program at the University of Washington in Seattle and the recent publication of Lisa Schlebe and her research colleagues that was published earlier this year in *Children and Youth Services Review*. We will also be using the newsletter to keep you apprised of the latest policy developments occurring at the state and federal levels that impact our work. I hope that you can be an active participant in our policy call for actions, as it will take every member of the consortium to move our policy agenda; and all of you have unique expertise that makes you such an asset to your state, community and university. Whether you are a doctoral student, or a professor at a teaching or research school, I hope that this newsletter can provide you helpful resources that support your programs, your research, and promote valuable connections with other in the field that can partner with you on your important work.

Respectfully,
Angelique Day

ANGELIQUE DAY, Ph.D.



Angelique Day received her Ph.D. in interdisciplinary health science in 2011 from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. She earned an MSW from Michigan State University in 2005 and a BS summa cum laude in sociology/psychology from Central Michigan University.

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.

From 2011-2016, she was an assistant professor of social work at Wayne State University, where she taught both undergraduate and graduate classes. She’s been an evaluator, principal investigator or project coordinator on major studies funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and McGregor Fund, among others.

Day has received many awards and honors, including a year-long congressional fellowship awarded during the 2016-2017 academic year by the Society for Research on Child Development and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She was assigned to the office of Congressman Danny K. Davis where she helped develop the congressman’s child welfare and higher education legislative portfolios.

dayangel@uw.edu

The Champions Program – Interview

We spoke with Melissa Raap, the Counseling Services Coordinator for the Champions Program at the University of Washington.

MELISSA RAAP, MSW



Melissa Raap is the Counseling Services Coordinator for the University of Washington Champions Program. As the sole coordinator of the program, Melissa meets regularly with students, providing support through innovative programming and events. Prior to her work with the Champions Program, Melissa worked with Dr. Mark Courtney on the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth Outcomes at Age 23 and 24 and in Austin, Texas with young adults who “aged out” of foster care. Melissa currently sits on the Board of Directors of the Service Board and the International Foster Care Alliance and is an Adult Supporter of Passion to Action, a statewide youth-led advisory board to Washington State’s Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

mraap@uw.edu

What are the main components of the Champions program? Which do you feel are the most successful?

Melissa: Coaching – I completed the Michigan’s Fostering Success Coaching Program, Levels 1 and 2 trainings. I utilize those skills as a coach to help students navigate the size and bureaucracy that can be a part of the undergraduate experience on a campus like the UW. I work on coaching them around self-advocacy on campus and skill building. The coaching and navigating is important. I believe it

builds life skills that students will take with them.

Community Building and Student Engagement – This is a voluntary program, so I focus on building community, both between myself and the students, and peer-to-peer relationships between the students. The hope is that this community building helps students feel less isolated. With this same purpose, I hold multiple activities during the Fall quarter, and monthly “family dinners” to get students engaged and into community building at the beginning of the school year. One thing that sets the Champions program apart, is the seeds of trust that the community building and nurturing aspects of the program provide. This community building provides students the support systems that they may not know they need prior to entering the university and may be hesitant to ask for once they are here.

Academic advising – I, myself, am not an academic advisor. However, all of the students in the Champions program are involved in TRAILS or in the State of Washington Education Opportunity Program (EOP). The Champions program is actually housed within the EOP and TRIO offices, so I work to help ensure that students are checking in with their advisors and are working through academic planning when they need to.

Individualized Student Support – There’s really a gap in the literature around individualized student supports. The Champions program provides a certain level support and nurturance that isn’t really talked about. The type of individualized support to students that I provide includes such things as building care packages right before finals week, giving them cupcakes on their birthday, a “good luck” on an upcoming exam, or a card during the year that is specific to them.

Most successful components: It would be great to include a question like this in a program evaluation. But for now, as I interact with students, I’ve heard that

the individualized care packages are really appreciated those during the stressful time before/during finals. Usually these care packages lead to increased engagement with those students. The community building, providing food and space to spend time with peers, is also very important.

Which parts of your program do you feel could be replicable in other programs across the country?

Melissa: Identifying students is one of the most basic but difficult tasks that programs face, the burden is often on the students to prove that they are/were in foster care. The Champions program allows students to self-identify. There is also no age limit for access to the program. I have had student participants who are in their 40s. This is important because a foster alum’s journey does not end at 26, or 21, or 23... The Champions program also offers support to anyone who has been in foster care for a self-defined significant period of time. I serve students who were in foster care when they were infants than were adopted, students who were adopted as adolescents but then experienced a failed adoption, and students who became homeless due to their failed adoptions. There is a wide range of students who are eligible to participate.

I think something that could be done nationally, which is currently being done in WA State and at the UW now, is asking on the university application whether a potential student has been in foster care. This helps my program identify potential participants prior to enrollment. This is not a perfect system. I definitely get accidental referrals to students who didn’t mean to check that box on the application, or students whose parents were in foster care, but who themselves have never been in care. There is also the opposite side of the spectrum, where there are students who have been in foster care, but don’t want to be identified so they don’t check the box on the application. Even still, this has been a successful first step for the program in identifying potential eligible students.

Secondly, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) who oversee different scholarships across the State have an agreement with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). This agreement allows WSAC the ability to verify which scholarship applicants have been in foster care and their eligibility for the Passports scholarship (see more about this legislation in the Policy Updates section of this newsletter). There is a portal that the Champions program has access to which allows me to put a student's name in and determine if they are eligible for that Passports scholarship. As far as I know, this level of transparency does not happen in other places. Keep in mind, this does not help with students who were in foster care in other states outside of WA, but it's a place to start.

I would love to see other states implement a system such as this (or even nationwide!). I have heard from other states, and students in other states, that it's been really challenging to get the documentation required by universities to prove that a student has been in foster care. Because of the two systems we have set up to identify eligible students, the Champions program does not have this issue to the same level that other universities may.

Following up with your previous response, a recent First Star Institute report identified that the confidentiality restrictions around FAFSA make it difficult to identify potential eligible students for programs such as yours. How does your program attempt to address this issue specifically?

The Financial Aid office at the UW has offered to send generated emails from their office to students that have identified themselves as being in foster care on the FAFSA. These emails would include information about the Champions program and my contact information. This way a student's confidentiality is maintained, but they are notified that the Champions program exists and how to reach out if they want to know more. This outreach effort is planned to go live in the 2018-19 school year.

Also, FAFSA sends a list of potential students' names who would be eligible for the Passport scholarship to WASC. They then send those student's names to the Champions program if that student has indicated that their FAFSA information should go to the UW, AND if they are eligible for the Passports scholarship. I then outreach to those students to determine if they are currently enrolled at the UW, or if they are in the process of applying. If they are still in the process of applying, I offer application support services.

Is there specific legislation that we should be looking out for that could support the Champions program or programs like yours?

In WA, the Passports legislation was expanded to include anyone who has been in foster care a day past their 14th birthday, as well as anyone that's considered an unaccompanied homeless student, and any students who were in tribal, international, or interstate compact foster care. This will triple or quadruple the size of the Champions program, but it doesn't give any funding for staff. The concern is that it will dilute the services that are currently being provided and offered by the Champions program.

In doing fundraising for the Champions program, I have found that there are a lot of people that want to support foster youth in attending higher education institutions in a concrete way. "Do they need a scholarship, food, furniture, etc.?" Yes! They need all of those things! But they also need a dedicated person who will engage with them and support them. This type of support is more difficult to fundraise for. So, I would love to see more support for staff. I feel that programs like Champions don't normally consider things like caseload, in a way that child welfare agencies may look at it. These are time intensive services and processes. I would like for researchers to do more to support the workforce that provides services to youth in programs like Champions.

Are there any specific programs or support services that you would like to see the

Champions Program focus on or build in the future?

I would like to focus more on the emotional and internal lives of students, versus their academic pursuits. A lot of students who attend the UW suffer from imposter syndrome. Being able to do a bridge program or a retreat to really work with students on ways to deal with stress, building coping mechanisms, mindfulness exercises, learning about their own stress response and how to deal with that, and building hope and a plan for the future. For the students involved in the Champions program that have not completed their post-secondary education, they have been told that college is the path but once they get there they don't know what they want to do or how to get there.

I would also like to build better relationships with departments on campus to get students access to experiential learning opportunities. Whether that's research, or volunteering in the community. Some students have a hard time with transitioning into a school like the UW and that can impact their grades, which then keep them from accessing internships, or placements, due to their GPA or school standing. But these types of experiential opportunities may be better learning environments for our students. I want to get them access to spaces they can successfully learn.

Do you have any closing comments?

I believe that there is great work coming out of WA State and across the nation. I hope that researchers and policymakers are not only talking to youth who are receiving services, but to the staff people as well. The scope of work for programs like these looks different for each person and each program. Being able to capture that is important. We focus on youth voice, which is really important, but so is hearing from the staff that support those youth. I would like to see more of a balance of voice in future research.

Policy Updates

As we approach the 2018 campaign season and look towards the close of the 115th session of Congress, we want to continue to keep all of our members and readers informed on legislation that affects foster youth/alumni and higher education. We encourage you to reach out to your representatives in the House and the Senate to urge them to support the passage of these critical pieces of legislation. Once campaign season is over and elections have been completed, we want to continue contacting representatives in the House and Senate in order to get the bills that didn't pass reintroduced! If you're not sure who your elected officials are, visit <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials/>

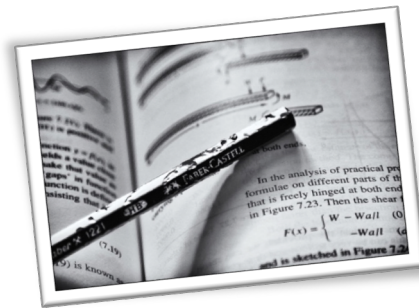
FEDERAL BILL HIGHLIGHTS

S. 1795 (Sen. Murray, Patty [D-WA])/H.R. 3740 (Rep. Clark, Katherine M. [D-MA-5]) - Higher Education Access and Success for Homeless and Foster Youth Act

This bill was introduced in the House and Senate on September 12th, 2017. It currently sits in the House Education and the Workforce Committee for review, and the Senate referred it to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. The bill currently has a combined eleven bi-partisan co-sponsors.

This bill clarifies the eligibility guidelines for determinations of homeless students who qualify for independent status, prioritizes foster and homeless youth for work study awards, forbids the inclusion of education training vouchers and independent living stipends in student cost of attendance formulas, and requires that foster and homeless students not pay more than in-state tuition and fees. It goes further to support homeless and foster youth in higher education institutions by requiring the creation of a staff position that is a "single point of contact" who will be responsible for connecting eligible students with support services, resources, and programs, as well as

ensuring housing priority for these students "during school breaks or year-round" and developing plans to support access to housing "during and between academic years".



Included in this bill are updates to the TRIO and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate programs. Changes to the TRIO program would require revisions and updates to policy and practice in order to remove barriers to homeless and foster youth participation in Talent Search, Upward Bound, Student Support Services and Educational Opportunity Center programs. The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness program requires that individual programs detail how they plan to facilitate participation of homeless and foster youth, remove barriers to participation and collaborate with outside agencies to identify eligible participants.

To learn more and track this bill, go to: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/3740?q=%7B%22search%3A%5B%22HR3740%5D%7D&r=1>

S. 1792 (Sen. Franken, Al [D-MN])/H.R. 3742 (Rep. Davis, Danny [D-IL-7]) - Fostering Success in Higher Education Act of 2017

This bill was introduced in the House and Senate on September 12th, 2017. It currently sits in the House Education and the Workforce Committee for review, and the Senate referred it to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. The bill currently has 26 bi-partisan co-sponsors in the House.

This bill will amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide grants to states to improve higher education opportunities to homeless and foster youth. Under the measure, funding can be provided for programs that seem to recruit foster

and homeless youth to pursue higher education and provide supportive services for student who are enrolled.

To learn more and track this bill, go to: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/3742?q=%7B%22search%3A%5B%22HR3742%5D%7D&r=1>

H.R. 2236 (Rep. Davis, Danny K. [D-IL-7]) - Foster and Homeless Youth Food Security Act of 2017

This bill was introduced in the House on April 28th, 2017. It was referred to the House Committee on Agriculture, then to the Subcommittee on Nutrition in May 2017, where it remains. The bill currently has five Democratic co-sponsors.

This short but important bill amends the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 by adding a new definition of "foster care individual" to the Act, and a redefinition of "food" to include meals prepared and served by higher education institutions. It also allows a foster care or homeless youth SNAP benefits if they are enrolled at least half-time by granting a household and work requirement exception.

To learn more and track this bill, go to: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2236?q=%7B%22search%3A%5B%22HR2236%5D%7D&r=1>

H.R. 6157 (Passed) (Rep. Granger, Kay [R-TX-12]) - Department of Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act, 2019 and Continuing Appropriations Act, 2019

This bill was introduced in the House on June 20th, 2018. April 28th, 2017. This bill passed the House on June, 28th, 2018 and the Senate on August 23rd, 2018. It was presented to the President for signature on September 27th, 2018

This bill provides an 11.6% increase in funds committed to TRIO programs, from FY2017. There are increases in funding to support career and technical education programs (13%), as well as Pell Grants (5.7%).

This information was provided by School House Connection. For further details on the educational aspects of the bill, please go to:

<https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/fy2019-funding-bill-passes-expected-to-be-signed-into-law/>

To learn more and track this bill, go to:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/6157?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22H.R.+6157%22%5D%7D&r=1>

STATE EFFORT HIGHLIGHTS

Illinois - HB5122 (Passed) - Public Act 100-1045 - DCFS-Tuition & Fee Waiver

Qualifying youth shall receive a tuition and fee waiver to assist them in attending and completing their post-secondary education. Qualified youth are defined as those for whom DCFS has court-ordered legal responsibility, youth who aged out of care at age 18 or older, or youth who had an adoption assistance agreement or subsidized guardianship agreement. Potential students must meet academic and age requirements as well as complete the FAFSA to apply for federal and State grant assistance. Community colleges and public universities must waive any tuition and fees that exceed the grant amounts paid to the potential student.

To learn more about this public act, go to:

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=100-1045>

Pennsylvania - HB1745 (Referred to Committee) - Fostering Independence Through Education Act

The proposed bill provides a tuition and fee waiver for undergraduate courses to eligible individuals who reside in the commonwealth. Eligible individuals must be between 14 and 26, have been in substitute care for at least six months, at any time, while 14 years of age or older. An individual who was adopted or placed with a permanent guardian at or after the age of 14 is also considered eligible. The individual must have completed high school (or its equivalent), have been accepted to or

currently attending a State postsecondary educational institution, and have applied for all available Federal and State grants. The waiver can last up to five-years, consecutive or not, or until the individual reaches 26 years of age.

To learn more and track this bill, go to:

<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billinfo.cfm?sYear=2017&sInd=o&body=H&type=B&bn=1745>

Washington - 6274-S2.SL (Passed) - Chapter 28B.117 RCW - Passport to Careers Program

This program is unique in that it offers two programmatic pathways for eligible students. The first is known as a passport to college promise, the second a passport to apprenticeship opportunities. Both programs offer scholarship and student assistance for students who were under the care of the state, tribal, or federal foster care system, and also includes verified unaccompanied youth or young adults who have experienced homelessness.

The eligible student must have been in the care of the state, tribal, or federal foster care system while also meeting the age requirements, or be verified as an unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness, be a resident of the state, be enrolled or will enroll in an institution of higher education or recognized apprenticeship/preapprenticeship program and must not have previously earned a bachelor's or professional degree.

The apprenticeship opportunities program will be tasked with identifying eligible students/applicants, providing financial assistance to eligible applicants for up to six years after initial enrollment in a recognized program, or until they turn 26. Recipients may utilize both passport programs at different times, but not concurrently. Their total award may not exceed the amount that they would have received if attending a public university for five years with the highest annual tuition and fees in the state.

To learn more about these programs, go to:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.117&full=true-28B.117.040>

We recognize that this list is, by no means, all inclusive. 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 Highlights

We are always excited to share the amazing work of our collaborative members. In this issue we are highlighting a recent article by one of our members. We have also included some citation information on recent articles members have published that are related to foster care youth / alumni and higher education programs. For a complete list, 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 and we will work on including it in the future.

LISA SCHELBE, Ph.D., MSW



Dr. Lisa Schelbe is an Assistant Professor at Florida State University College of Social Work and Faculty Affiliate at the Florida Institute for Child Welfare. She serves as co-Editor-in-Chief of Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal. Lisa received a Doris Duke Fellowship for the Promotion of Child Well-Being (2011-2013). Her primary research interest focuses broadly on foster care and child maltreatments prevention. Her research examines aging out and the experiences of the transition of young people from the system to life on their own as adults. Specifically, Lisa is interested in outcomes of post-secondary education and parenting and how services can best serve foster care alumni.

lschelbe@fsu.edu

Geiger, J. M., Piel, M. H., Day, A., & Schelbe, L. (2018). A descriptive analysis of programs serving foster care alumni

in higher education: Challenges and opportunities. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 85, 287-294.

Study Summary

Campus based support programs for foster care alumni work promote access and success at colleges and universities. This study was designed to create an understanding of the characteristics of campus-based support programs and the challenges as reported by program directors and staff, faculty, and researchers. A list of 296 professionals associated with programs or publications related to foster care alumni and higher education was compiled through online searches. Eight-one program directors, staff, and researchers (30% response rate) from 22 states completed an online survey about challenges related to programs supporting foster care alumni in college and challenges students experienced. The survey also captured information about characteristics of programs and students.

Key Findings

Program characteristics: 68% of participants were at 4-year public universities and 28% were at 2-year community colleges. 39% were at institutions with more than 25,001 students enrolled; 20% at institutions with 15,001-25,000 students; and 11% had fewer than 5,001 students. Approximately 40% of institutions were in urban or suburban communities with 15% in rural settings. 37% of the institutions were in states where there were tuition or fee waivers.

Supports provided by campus-based support program: 77% of programs offered supports related to resources, information and referrals; 72% included career planning; 68% provided financial assistance; 59% offered coaching; 57% had tutoring; and 49% offered psychosocial counseling.

Programmatic and student challenges: The biggest challenges reported were financial support of the program

followed by student engagement and student recruitment. The largest challenge students faced were family and personal issues, student housing, informal support, and financial support.

Implications

There is a need for campus-based support programs to address the needs of foster care alumni and promote their success in post-secondary education. Support needs to be beyond financial support and include the social, emotional, and educational needs of students. Funding for programs is inadequate and there is a need for a better understanding of best practices of programs. Federal and state legislation can assist with the support and growth of campus-based support programs. There is a need for more research about campus-based support programs and collecting data across programs to determine effective strategies to serve foster care alumni is important.

Lisa Schelbe, Karen A Randolph, Anna Yelick, Leah P Cheatham & Danielle B Groton (2018) Systems theory as a framework for examining a college campus-based support program for the former foster youth, *Journal of Evidence-Informed Social Work*, 15:3, 277-295.

Sylvia Sensiper, Carlos Andrés Barragán, (2017). The Guardian Professions Program: Developing an advanced degree mentoring program for California's foster care alumni. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 82, 329-336.

Watt, Norton, & Jones. (2013). Designing a campus support program for foster care alumni: Preliminary evidence for a strengths framework. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(9), 1408-1417.

Geiger, Hanrahan, Cheung, & Lietz. (2016). Developing an on-campus recruitment and retention program for foster care alumni. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 61(C), 271-280.

Highlighted Opportunities



Keep an eye out here for upcoming webinars, training sessions, or conferences that our collaborative members are hosting or participating in. 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!

CONFERENCES

October 27th - 30th Anaheim, CA

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) Annual Conference

NAEHCY connects educators, parents, advocates, researchers, and service providers to ensure school enrollment and attendance and overall success for children and youth whose lives have been disrupted by the lack of safe, permanent, and adequate housing. NAEHCY achieves these goals through advocacy, partnerships, and education. There are multiple conference sessions that focus on child welfare / foster youth in higher education, early childhood education, foster care and homelessness, human trafficking and homelessness, effects of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on youth in foster care, and many more. For more information please go to <https://naehcy.org/2018-conference/education/>

November 8th - 11th Orlando, FL

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Annual Conference

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

We will be convening at the convention hotel, during the CSWE conference this year. We have reserved space in Dolphin, Walk Disney World Resort, Egret Conference Room, Walt Disney World Swan Lobby Level. The meeting will be held Saturday, November 10th, from 6:00pm – 7:00pm. Please reach out to us (Angelique Day or Lisa Schelbe) if you are attending the conference, or are in the area, and are interested in attending our gathering. We look forward to seeing you there!

FUNDING

No current opportunities highlighted as of this publishing.

EMPLOYMENT

October 16th, 2018 - Washington State University Vancouver

Educational Advocate/Mentor Coordinator for Fostering Higher Education Study

Dr. Amy Salazar, Assistant Professor in the Department of Human Development, is hiring an Educational Advocate/Mentor Coordinator for the Fostering Higher Education Study, which is a postsecondary access and retention intervention for youth in foster care, in SW Washington. The person will have two primary responsibilities, which include (1) recruiting mentors for the youth and supervising those relationships, and (2) being an education advocate for the youth. This is an 80% FTE position (32 hours per week) for approximately 26 months. It will start January 1, 2019, and end in February or March of 2021. Find out more here: <https://admin.vancouver.wsu.edu/human-resources/employment/jobs/educational-advocate-and-mentor-coordinator>