Resilient Scholars: 
Foster Youth & Students with Home Insecurity 

Building Community and Supporting Success on UC Campuses 

September, 2019
UC has many student communities and one such population of students is former foster youth and students with food and housing insecurities.

While we have had former foster youth enrolled on our campuses for many, many years, it wasn’t until the UC application added a question about foster care to the fall 2008 application that we had more reliable information about how many former foster youth were enrolling on our campuses.

Since that time, UC has dramatically increased services to support these resilient students.
Challenges with College Degree Attainment

Studies indicate that only 20% of foster youth attend college, compared to 60% of their peers. Of those who do attend, only 5% complete a degree, compared to 20% of their peers.

Reasons for lack of college success include:

- Low high school academic achievement
- Changes in placement requiring movement to new schools cause students to fall behind
- Lack of high expectations for attending & succeeding at college
- Not understanding available opportunities

Challenges with College Degree Attainment

Reasons for lack of college success include:

- Lack of skills and adult support necessary to navigate the complex college application process
- Lack of financial assistance for applying to college and paying for tuition and room and board
- Youth in care that are parenting young children experience additional hardship
- Some foster youth have a history with the juvenile justice system that severely impacts education
- Nearly half of all children in foster care have learning disabilities or delays

These students reflect every community in California, coming from every county, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and socio-economic background as the entire UC study body.

What sets them apart is their motivation, drive, and resilience to make their lives better and improve the future for students with similar struggles.
While many students have to face challenges in college, in this presentation we will focus on the most frequent categories of challenges we’ve seen in our work with former foster youth.

**The six categories include:**

- Financial issues
- Housing insecurity and special housing needs
- Struggles finding a sense of community
- Physical and mental health challenges
- Basic needs that students from more traditional households often take for granted
- Food insecurities
Some campuses offer emergency financial assistance for issues such as medical needs (dental emergencies are common), glasses, computer replacement, and necessary prescriptions.

Typically, students must have exhausted all other financial aid options.

Financial literacy is vital as some foster youth are inexperienced in handling large financial aid checks and administrative responsibilities.

Food banks on every campus useful not just for food but for expensive items like shampoo, soap, detergent etc. --- outreach staff at UCSB collect all the hotel shampoo/lotions etc and donate to the food bank!

Foster youth qualify for Cal Fresh, easy process to apply, outreach to inform students that they qualify.
Programs works closely with housing to ensure that scholars are housed during the gap periods (i.e. winter, spring, and summer break).

Sometimes a traditional residence hall isn’t the best for some foster youth----campus apartments that don’t close over breaks can sometimes be a better option.

Family housing is available and prospective students should contact campuses a year in advance to get on waitlists.
One of the most critical, immediate needs is to help students find a sense of community.

Move-In Day can literally be the first sense of isolation from the rest of the student community when former foster youth struggle with finding transportation to school and watching the student-parent ritual of moving into the residence halls and saying good-bye.

Foster Youth programs offer special gatherings during the first week of school so students can meet coordinators, other students, and campus advocates.

Programs have liaison colleagues in key campus units to refer students for expedited services and which helps to prevent students from having to explain their private background in public reception areas. Offices include Housing, Financial Aid, tutoring, Counseling, Student Health and advising units.

Students tell us they appreciate gatherings among students with similar backgrounds where they feel like they don’t have to “hide” or avoid sharing their experiences.
The program is intentional in offering workshops & events focusing on mental health well-being including:

- self-care workshops
- identity-based workshops
- Peer 2 Peer sessions

College is a time when many students come to terms with family issues and previous traumas. This can be especially true with former foster youth.
Estranged family members often re-enter their lives (frequently asking for financial assistance from the students’ financial aid). The strain can be overwhelming.

Foster youth Awareness Month – many programs use May, Foster Youth Awareness Month, as an opportunity to educate the rest of the campus community on issues faced by foster youth.
Some campuses can provide storage accommodations (process varies case by case) - this can be a big issue when students are in-between apartment leases!

President Napolitano introduced the UC Global Food Initiative in 2014 and the Systemwide Housing Initiative as well.

Some campuses have specific offices coordinating this effort and other campuses do this work by committees, but all campuses have multiple services to address food insecurity for students.

Food pantries available on all campuses as previously mentioned.

Dining commons provides emergency meal tickets and students can donate unused meal credits to other students.

Emergency housing assistance available. UC has added 3,000 more beds since the housing initiative began, and will add more each year towards our goal of 14,000 news beds.
## Foster Youth Programs: Campus Contacts

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<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>Program Name</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
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| Berkeley   | Berkeley Hope Scholars                           | [https://www.hope.berkeley.edu/](https://www.hope.berkeley.edu/) | Ron Williams  
  ronwilliams@berkeley.edu |
| Davis      | Guardian Scholars                                | [https://opportunity.ucdavis.edu/programs/guardian-scholars](https://opportunity.ucdavis.edu/programs/guardian-scholars) | Valeria Garcia  
  vgarcia@ucdavis.edu |
  jvperezmi@uci.edu |
| UCLA       | Bruin Guardian Scholars                          | [https://www.guardianscholars.ucla.edu/](https://www.guardianscholars.ucla.edu/) | Brianna Harvey  
  bharvey@saonet.ucla.edu |
| Merced     | Guardian Scholars                                | [http://guardianscholars.ucmerced.edu/](http://guardianscholars.ucmerced.edu/) | Edith Ramirez  
  guardianscholars@ucmerced.edu |
| Riverside  | Guardian Scholars                                | [https://fosteryouth.ucr.edu/](https://fosteryouth.ucr.edu/) | Kenyon Whitman  
  kenyon.whitman@ucr.edu |
| San Diego  | Hope Scholars                                    | [https://oasis.ucsd.edu/programs/hope-scholars/index.html](https://oasis.ucsd.edu/programs/hope-scholars/index.html) | Javier Arredondo  
  jaarredondo@ucsd.edu |
| Santa Barbara | Guardian Scholars                           | [http://www.sa.ucsb.edu/guardianscholars/home](http://www.sa.ucsb.edu/guardianscholars/home) | Stephany Rubio  
  stephany.rubio@sa.ucsb.edu |
| Santa Cruz | Renaissance Scholars                             | [https://stars.ucsc.edu/](https://stars.ucsc.edu/) | Elizabeth Moya  
  emoya@ucsc.edu |

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<td>Berkeley</td>
<td>The Basic Needs Center</td>
<td><a href="http://basicneeds.berkeley.edu">http://basicneeds.berkeley.edu</a></td>
<td>510-859-7507</td>
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<tr>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>Aggie Compass</td>
<td><a href="https://aggiecompass.ucdavis.edu">https://aggiecompass.ucdavis.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:compass@ucdavis.edu">compass@ucdavis.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basic Needs Center</td>
<td></td>
<td>530-752-9254</td>
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<td>Irvine</td>
<td>Fresh Basic Needs Hub</td>
<td><a href="https://basicneeds.uci.edu">https://basicneeds.uci.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:fresh@uci.edu">fresh@uci.edu</a></td>
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<td>949-824-0607</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCLA</td>
<td>Community Programs Office</td>
<td><a href="https://www.basicneeds.ucla.edu">https://www.basicneeds.ucla.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:support@cpo.ucla.edu">support@cpo.ucla.edu</a></td>
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<td>310-825-5969</td>
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<td>Merced</td>
<td>Basic Needs Security, Office of Leadership, Service and Career</td>
<td><a href="https://basicneeds.ucmerced.edu">https://basicneeds.ucmerced.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:basicneeds@ucmerced.edu">basicneeds@ucmerced.edu</a></td>
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<td>Riverside</td>
<td>UC Riverside Basic Needs</td>
<td><a href="https://basicneeds.ucr.edu">https://basicneeds.ucr.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:basicneeds@ucr.edu">basicneeds@ucr.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>The Hub Basic Needs Center</td>
<td><a href="https://basicneeds.ucsd.edu">https://basicneeds.ucsd.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:thehub@ucsd.edu">thehub@ucsd.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Santa Barbara</td>
<td>Basic Needs Committee</td>
<td><a href="http://food.ucsb.edu/home2">http://food.ucsb.edu/home2</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:melissafontaine@ucsb.edu">melissafontaine@ucsb.edu</a></td>
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<td>805-893-2798</td>
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<td>Santa Cruz</td>
<td>Basic Needs Committee</td>
<td><a href="https://basicneeds.ucsc.edu">https://basicneeds.ucsc.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:tgalarme@ucsc.edu">tgalarme@ucsc.edu</a></td>
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<td>831-459-3248</td>
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How Do Campuses Identify Students for Inclusion In UC Foster Youth Programs?

Students should check the “Foster Care” box on the application

AND...

Students can email the campus contact at any point with questions and to self-identify for program participation
“How should I indicate my foster care student on the UC application for admissions?”

Advise your students to check the “Foster Youth” box on the UC application to indicate they have been part of the foster care system!

For students who have lived in a foster home, group home or been placed with a relative by the court in the United States
UC Merced Guardian Scholars Orientation
Thank you and please don’t hesitate to refer students to the support programs presented on the previous slides.