

Fostering Success

“Upon entering college from foster care, one of the biggest challenges I faced was understanding the financial part of things. I did not fully understand all the things that go into financial aid such as loans, grants, scholarships, etc. Another challenge I faced was having somewhere to go during long breaks. When I first enrolled at UWW I did not know the dorms closed, and when I received a notice in December I was surprised. I didn’t know where to go or how to go about requesting help. Having someone to explain the housing and any options during breaks would have helped decrease a large amount of stress and fear during that time.”

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— Tiffany Lozoya '12, who recently completed her MSW degree at UC Berkeley —



UW-Whitewater estimates 30-40 students have aged out of the Foster Care program. Social communities, such as those that develop in the dorms, can provide a much-valued support structure for students navigating college on their own.

Imagine being an 18 year old like Tiffany, navigating the process of finding a college, filling out crucial financial aid and admissions forms correctly, and on time, without any assistance. Each year in Wisconsin, 300 youth age out of the foster care system when they reach the age of 18. We estimate that 30 to 40 of them enroll at UW-Whitewater and face the challenges of applying for college and navigating daily life completely on their own. Most students have a family network to draw upon and a warm, welcoming room for them at home over winter break. However, for students who come to us from foster care, there is no room waiting. There is no backup plan. But we can help.

Youth who have aged out of foster care are eligible for an annual \$5,000 educational grant from the

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Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and Pell grants up to \$5,775. Regardless, on average they incur \$7,000 in student loans each year for their basic educational expenses. Lacking both social support and financial structures, foster youth are perhaps one of the most vulnerable student populations on campus. But we can help.

The goal of the new Fostering Success program is to support the educational aspirations of foster students and reduce some of the many obstacles they face by providing the kind of structured support that will make UW-Whitewater a model in the state. Fostering Success ensures that foster youth achieve their personal and educational goals through comprehensive programs to help their transition to college. Holistic advising will be offered prior to enrollment and throughout their college career, and students will receive the material support and encouragement that families typically provide. We will offer pre-college boot camps to prepare foster youth for the college environment, access to year-round campus housing, and basic supply packages at the beginning of the school year. Personal networks will be created in dedicated advisor and peer mentorship programs and an “adopt a student” program will extend this welcome into the Whitewater community. This personalized support will help foster youth successfully navigate our campus and secure the resources they need to thrive.

Establishing a \$250,000 endowed fund will produce \$10,000 annually to fund direct services for foster youth students offered in the Fostering Success program. The Fostering Success program will address these vulnerabilities to increase access to the life-changing opportunities higher education provides.



Programs like the Summer Business Institute (above) bring students to campus early to explore potential majors, advising and campus services to prepare students for college life. UW-Whitewater seeks to develop a similar program for Foster Care students.



In 2018 the UWW Fostering Success committee delivered the first gift bags to former Foster Care students to welcome them back for spring semester.