



**FOSTERING
SUCCESS PROGRAM
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY**

ANNUAL REPORT 2021 – 2022

Department/Program Mission, Vision and Values:

The Fostering Success Program mission and vision center on creating a sense of belonging and support for students underrepresented in higher education. FSP supports the intersecting identities of students from independent backgrounds, and as such, we collaborate across campus and in the community to provide the most encouraging environment for students to succeed.

Departmental Strategic Plan Process:

FSP continued to develop mentee competencies. Mentees were all new to CSU first-year or transfer independent students who met with a near peer mentor (upperclass FSP student staff). During the 2021-22 year, FSP surpassed the mentee competency goals with 93% of mentees having the ability to identify five or more resources on campus and 80% utilizing at least three academic success strategies.

Programs and Services Descriptions

B.1.a	Populations Served	<p>Fostering Success Program serves students from foster care, unaccompanied homeless, kinship care, orphan, ward of court, emancipated, and other independent backgrounds. While FSP has student-led programming, regularly attains informal input from students, and makes program decisions based on student survey data, FSP has lacked a student voice forum.</p> <p>The FSP Student Leadership Council, a formal group of students helping to guide the direction of the Fostering Success Program, launched this year. The FSP Student Leadership Council was instrumental in the formation of new FSP initiatives, as well as an avenue for student leaders to provide feedback for program improvement.</p>
B.1.b	Programs, Services, and Initiatives	<p>FSP made improvements to our recruiting process. We acknowledge we support an underserved population that has the desire and talent to pursue higher education but does not always have equal opportunity. Understanding that students from independent backgrounds may not have the same support systems to successfully navigate the admissions process, we teamed up with CSU Office of Admissions to revamp our early messaging and increase access.</p> <p>In the past, we only communicated with students once they were admitted to CSU, and the early messaging was general information about FSP. Now, we offer a welcome email from CSU Admissions 5 days after the student starts an application that invites them to take</p>

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		a short survey to confirm they qualify with FSP. Additionally, once students are admitted, they receive a welcome email from FSP, inviting them to respond directly to confirm they qualify. Once they've self-identified, FSP is able to begin supporting them in their journey at CSU.
B.1.c	Collaborative Efforts with Other Units	<p>Going into the 2021-22 academic year, the Fostering Success Program transitioned from the Outreach and Support Unit within the Collaborative for Student Achievement and joined a new department with Orientation and Transition Programs, which would also include Parent and Family Programs.</p> <p>The Orientation and Transition Programs staff were phenomenal at welcoming FSP to the department. One of the first ways our units connected on a regular basis was through monthly DEI trainings. Fostering Success Program was honored to be invited to co-present on intersecting identities for one of the DEI trainings. FSP highlighted independent identities, increasing the awareness with a campus group that touches all areas of CSU.</p>
B.1.d	Policy and Procedure Manuals, Handbooks, Program Guidelines	<p>An exciting development in FSP was the opportunity to hire Melissa Henke, a second full-time staff member during the summer of 2022. We were fortunate to hire a talented coordinator with lived experience; having a full-time staff member who had recently graduated as an FSP student is invaluable. Equipping our new staff member is a high priority.</p> <p>With this growth in the Fostering Success Program, creating an FSP Coordinator manual was a priority in the 2021-22 academic year. This manual offers program overview and services links. It provides step by step procedures for our various process, such as administering our emergency fund. It provides guidelines for the entire life cycle of an FSP student, from recruitment to graduation.</p>

Staff

B.2.a	Organizational Structure and Management Processes	<p>With the realignment at the beginning of the Fall 2021 semester, Kerry Naksone Wenzler, the Associate Executive Director for Orientation, Transition, and Family Programs began to oversee the Fostering Success Program. Kerry's higher education expertise and equity lens contributes immense value for the Fostering Success Program.</p> <p>Additionally, FSP flourished in the transition from a small program within a unit. Now functioning as its own unit is in the best interest for the longer term success of the growing Fostering Success Program.</p>
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B.2.b	Staff Training and/or Professional Development	<p>All staff in the Fostering Success Program attended the University of New Mexico’s Mentoring Institute in October 2021. Educate Tomorrow, FSP’s partner who co-sponsors the mentoring program funded four mentors to attend, and FSP covered the remaining cost for two mentors and professional staff.</p> <p>The conference highlighted concepts critical for peer mentors, such as asking for consent, power imbalance and building trust. Given our student population, with 49% racially minoritized students, building a through understanding of cultural knowledge is key. Additionally, given some of the trauma backgrounds of an independent student population who may be reluctant to trust, gaining tools for building strong rapport is critical.</p>
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Quality of the Work Environment

B.3.a	Physical (where applicable)	<p>FSP students continue to experience a high number of financial emergencies, primarily in the physical space they live. FSP students without a safe place to stay during the fall, winter and spring breaks have the option to stay in the residence halls and can apply for financial assistance to cover the cost. The majority of our Galena Emergency Fund covered break housing and rental assistance expenses.</p> <p>FSP distributed a total of \$83,198.96 from the Galena Emergency Fund from 2014-present, but a very high allocation of those funds went to students in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic years. In the 2021-22 academic year, \$20,263.99 was provided for FSP students in emergency situations. Given there will likely continue to be a high demand for emergency funding as the repercussions of the pandemic are long lasting, FSP has secured the necessary funding to assist students in need.</p>
B.3.b	Morale	<p>Fostering Success Program hires student staff with independent backgrounds who are part of the program. Pay equity is an important factor for lower income students especially, considering 82% of our FSP students are Pell eligible. FSP sought to raise wages and was successful in raising the hourly salary by \$2 an hour going into the next academic year.</p> <p>Providing an enriching work environment is central to FSP’s vision and mission. An FSP Lead Mentor about to graduate reflected the following about working with FSP: <i>“This has been the best, most rewarding position I’ve ever had. It has had such an impact on me, and I will be forever grateful to the program. It’s bittersweet parting ways, but I know I’ll always want to be involved with this community in some capacity. I can’t thank the program enough for the opportunity to serve one of the best communities at CSU.”</i></p>

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Financial Analysis

B.4.a.i	Funding Resources and Expenditures	<p>Our largest scholarship, the FSP Scholarship, awarded 9 students an overall total of \$38,500 in 2021-22. Prior to this year, every student received \$2500 for the year, but we wanted to take a more equitable approach moving forward. FSP looked at financial need to make determinations starting in 21-22 and offered variable amounts ranging from \$2500-\$5000.</p> <p>Additionally, in prior years, all scholarship applicants applied for the FSP Scholarship through the CSUSA by March 1. However, FSP recognizes our student population sometimes experience academic financial emergencies during the academic year, and so we offered an off cycle FSP Scholarship to a student in 2019-20 and to another student in 2020-21. We plan to maintain a \$5000 balance on the expendable side of our FSP Scholarship account annually, providing the option for an FSP student to apply off cycle.</p>
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Assessment: Feedback Resources & Discovery:

Fostering Success Program utilizes the Seven Life Domains, an approach developed through Casey Family Programs that takes a holistic approach for successfully transitioning youth from foster care backgrounds into adulthood. FSP practices the adapted framework that Western Michigan University's Fostering Success Program teaches, placing education as the central focus. In addition to the Education domain, Physical & Mental Well-being, Housing & Transportation, Supportive Relationships & Community Connections, Finances & Employment, Life Skills, and Cultural & Personal Identity are all viewed as critical domains to identify strengths and provide support.

Fall 2021-Spring 2022 was the first year FSP evaluated our effectiveness in utilizing the Seven Life Domains. While in the past all mentors in the program were evaluated on their knowledge and referrals to campus resources, as well as their knowledge and coaching of academic success strategies, we changed our Lead Mentor (mentors with at least one year of experience) learning outcomes to coaching mentees and referring to resources in all the domain areas. While our Lead Mentors were successful in all domain areas, life skills and supportive relationships & community connections were identified as areas we could enhance.

Our FSP Educate Tomorrow Mentoring Program helped us to achieve our vision and mission of creating a sense of belonging and community of support. When our mentees were asked "How has the FSP Educate Tomorrow mentoring program helped you in your first year at CSU?" they stated the following:

- "I feel like I have a welcoming and supportive family"
- "It has helped me to feel less alone and more capable to deal with my life on campus."
- "It helped me find resources and made me feel like I had a community of people who were like me."
- "It has helped me feel supported and welcomed at CSU. I feel less alone."

In addition to serving our students well, FSP strives to create the best environment in college, propelling our students into successful alumni experiences. *Factors associated with post-college success for foster care alumni college graduates*

(<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59d69f1132601ec7e6e8e4da/t/6182d2b42b3c217c1e896bb4/1>)

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[635963572719/Factors+Associated+with+Post-college+Success+for+Foster+Care+Alumni+College+Graduates.pdf](#)) concludes experiences during college in the life skills and supportive relationships & community connections domains contributed to more positive post-graduation outcomes.

Based on our own assessment, as well as research from foster youth experts, we recognized the growth opportunity in the life skills and supportive relationships & community connections domains. This fueled an exciting development for next year, FSP Community. We will launch the program in fall 2022, which offers a vetting process and training for interested volunteers to connect with FSP students. FSP alumni, CSU staff and community supporter volunteers will offer networking opportunities, connection to the community, and development of life skills. FSP Community will offer group events, in addition to one-on-one connections, with the focus of skill building and supportive relationships.

Connecting to the Division and University Goals with the Student Success Action Planning Template for 2021-2022:

Goal 1: Develop intentional, asset-based, equity-focused programming that provides support to marginalized students navigating transitions at CSU – pilot New Student Seminar section for students eligible for the Fostering Success Program.

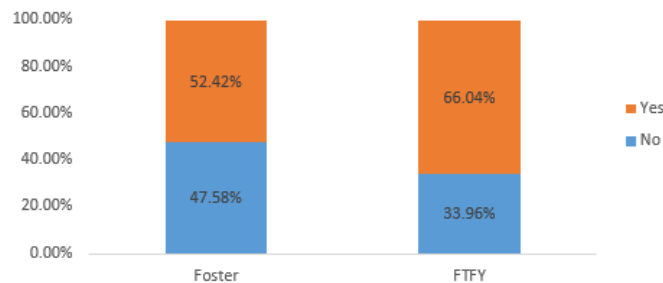
- Due to low enrollment, this section was not piloted in 2021. An initial consideration was to start in Week 2 or 3 to assist with recruitment through FSP First Connections and other programming; however, FSP brought the seminar idea to the FSP Student Leadership Council and may re- envision the seminar for any FSP student (not limited to new students) to support ongoing life skills and ongoing transition.

Executive Summary:

According to the [National Foster Youth Institute](#), only 3% of youth who were in the foster care system obtain a college degree. CSU can celebrate over 50% of former foster youth who start at Colorado State University will finish their CSU bachelor’s degree within 6 years. The below image highlights data from former foster youth who started their journey at CSU between 2010-2017.

This image also highlights the overall First-Time First-Year student population in the same 2010-17 timeframe. As you will note, there is a large equity gap between our former foster youth and the average student at CSU. As a program and campus community, this is a reminder of our need to continue to work diligently to close this gap.

6 Year Graduation Rate for CSU Foster Youth



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