FOSTERING SUCCESS PROGRAM
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

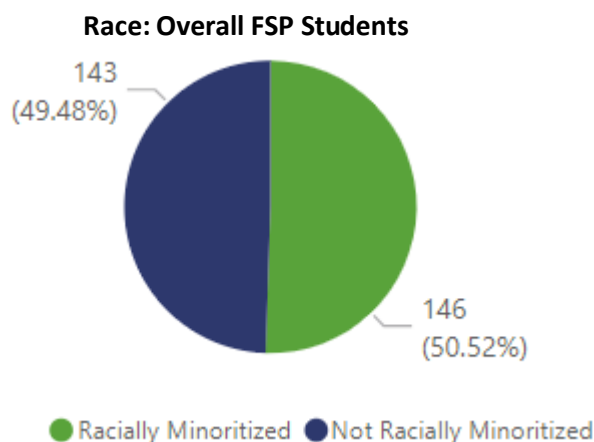## Annual Reflection 2022 - 2023

Department/Program Mission, Vision and Values:

The Fostering Success Leadership Council, comprised of Fostering Success Program(FSP) students and CSU staff composed the following diversity statement:

Grounded in CSU's Principles of Community, FSP is mindful of systems of oppression and trauma that independent students endure. We intentionally support the multiple intersecting identities within our community, including and not limited to: age, culture, different ideas and perspectives, disability, ethnicity, first generation status, familial status, gender identity and expression, geographic background, marital status, national origin, race, religious and spiritual beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, medical diagnosis, documentation status, and veteran status with special attention given to populations historically underrepresented or excluded from participation in higher education.
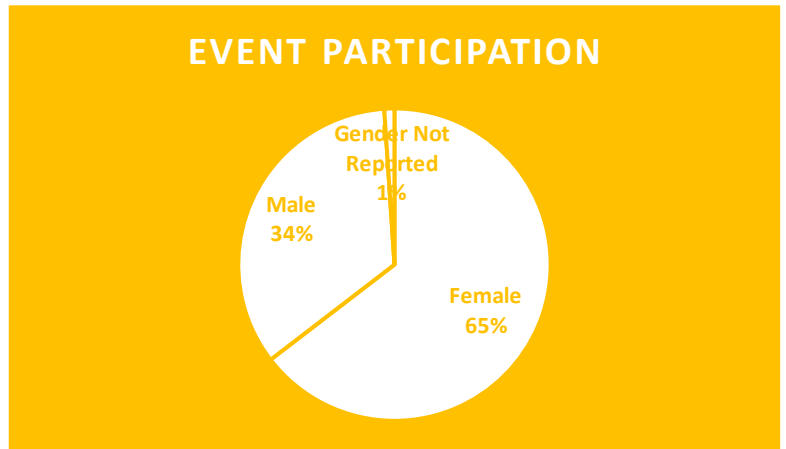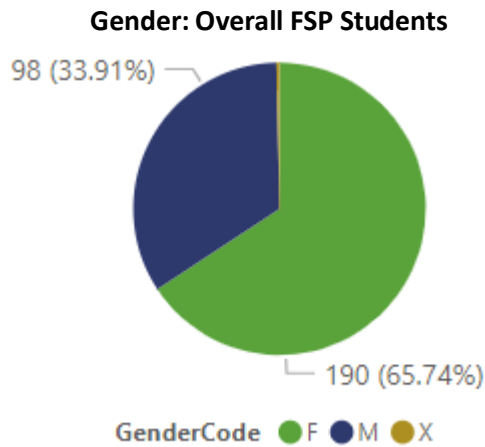
Departmental Strategic Plan Process:

For the 2022-23 academic year, we wanted to better understand our student participation through a data-informed lens. We set the following new diversity outcome for our unit strategic plan: *Independent students engaging in the Fostering Success Program services will reflect the demographics of the independent student population identified by FSP.* We wanted to investigate whether the students engaging in FSP services was reflective of the overall demographics of independent students invited to take part in FSP in the following identities: race, gender, Pell eligibility, and first generation.

Race: Overall FSP Students

143 (49.48%)

146 (50.52%)

● Racially Minoritized ● Not Racially Minoritized

CARE PACKAGE PARTICIPATION

Not Racially Minoritized 50%

Racially Minoritized 50%

Our data revealed that in the 2022-23 academic year, about half of FSP students identified as racially underrepresented. It was affirming to see nearly the same number, 50% of the FSP students, participated in receiving care packages. Similarly, when we looked at FSP students attending events, about the same number of male identifying students (34%) and female identifying students (66%) were

attending FSP events as the overall FSP population. We look forward to developing better data to measure the number of FSP students who identify as nonbinary.

Gender: Overall FSP Students

EVENT PARTICIPATION

Programs and Services Descriptions

B.1.a	Populations Served	Fostering Success Program serves students from foster care, unaccompanied houseless, kinship care, legal guardian, orphan, ward of court, emancipated, and other independent backgrounds.
		Some students who experienced foster care and kinship care are now eligible for funding that covers their full cost of attendance. FSP responded enthusiastically to exciting new legislation (SB 22-008), that created the FosterEd program. We are anticipating a significant increase in youth from foster care backgrounds in Colorado pursuing higher education, and we're excited to be at the forefront of this exciting trend.
		While historically the focus has been on serving current CSU independent students, FSP expanded this year to increase access to higher education to independent youth, an underrepresented population in higher education.
B.1.b	Programs, Services, and Initiatives	Independent Student Visit Day accomplished the goal of introducing the idea college is a possibility for youth from independent backgrounds. Many youth attending came with their high school child welfare education liaison or McKinney Vento counselor, who reported visible changes through the day, with youth coming to the revelation college is attainable. One aspect that worked very well was having current FSP students, who were recently in the high school youth's shoes, present information about higher education and informally connect with the youth during the visit day.

		One group from the Western Slope drove over five hours to attend the visit day event. Kaycee Maurer, Youth Services Counselor bringing the youth shared afterward, *"...It was such a wonderful visit! It truly was rewarding to see our youth participate. I wish you could have been there for the chats we had after the event, during dinner and on our drive home. You could see their minds opening up to the opportunities that they have that they never knew was possible for them or something that they even wanted."*
		We were pleased to have close to 40 youth from across the state join for a campus tour, connection with our current FSP students and sessions on FosterEd/funding and other opportunities. University Housing and Office of Admissions were both instrumental in making this a successful event. Due to strong interest, we plan to continue offering Independent Student Visit Day annually, and it's now designated as an official Admissions event.
B.1.c	**Collaborative Efforts with Other Units**	Raising awareness about FosterEd across the CSU campus was an important endeavor. One way we spread the word around campus was through a Source article: [FosterEd Program provides financial assistance for former Colorado foster youth]().
		Office of Financial Aid, who is administering FosterEd at CSU has been an incredible partner in enrolling students for this program. Adrina Pawlak, CSU's FosterEd Liaison in OFA, connected with students at a FosterEd FSP Family Dinner we hosted. Adrina, alongside Violeta Apadoca, FosterEd Navigator at Colorado Department of Higher Education co-presented with FSP in a couple [FosterEd Information Sessions]() (pw: ^K2henNO), equipping CSU staff and faculty with knowledge about this new program.
B.1.d	**Policy and Procedure Manuals, Handbooks, Program Guidelines**	While we connect students in their first academic year at CSU with a mentor, FSP offers limited mentoring opportunities for upper-class FSP students. In addition to serving new students well, FSP strives to create the best environment throughout college, propelling our students into successful alumni experiences. [Factors associated with post-college success for foster care alumni college graduates]() concludes experiences during college building life skills and supportive relationships & community connections contribute to more positive post-graduation outcomes.
		Based on our own assessment of gaps in the overall Fostering Success Program, as well as research from foster youth experts, we recognized the growth opportunity in developing life skill opportunities and supportive relationships and

community connections. A key component in our mission includes career support, moving us in the direction of providing more programming with networking opportunities.

This fueled the exciting development of FSP Community, which provides a network of support connecting FSP students to FSP alumni, CSU staff and community supporters. FSP Community supporters are in a position to positively impact FSP students through providing career guidance, life skills counsel, and emotional support. While all FSP students are invited to participate, the purpose of FSP Community is to expand FSP student networks as students continue beyond their first year at CSU.

Staff

B.2.a	**Organizational Structure and Management Processes**	A significant challenge this year was effectively supporting the rollout of FosterEd. Fortunately, FSP already had established a good partnership with the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS); this collaboration became especially critical to reduce barriers with eligibility paperwork for FosterEd, as we heavily utilized a last resort work around process for attaining eligibility paperwork on the students' behalf through CDHS. The Fostering Success Program was invited to share feedback with state leaders about FosterEd; three FSP students presented to the Commissioners of Higher Education on a learner's panel; this was an excellent opportunity to share challenges with FosterEd, including eligibility that is very limited and the difficulty for former foster youth to accomplish a degree in the 132-credit limit. The Commissioners were very interested and asked lots of good questions, as this was the first group of students receiving FosterEd they had interfaced with since SB 22-008 passed.
B.2.b	**Staff Training and/or Professional Development**	FSP developed a volunteer training program for FSP Alumni, community supporters and CSU staff who are invited to take part in FSP Community. All volunteers proceed through a vetting process which includes an application, background check, and panel interview. Applicants who are selected complete FSP Community trainings focused on educating volunteers on effectively connecting with independent students. Some training topics include DEI, trauma-informed care, identity reflection, and gender affirming language.

Quality of the Work Environment

B.3.a	**Physical (where applicable)**	Our wonderful FSP Coordinator, Melissa Henke had the idea of Care Storage that has made our mentor office space even

		more resourceful and welcoming. Now students have the opportunity to access hygiene products and other useful items when they visit Care Storage. Our mentors are able to offer practical items when they have a meeting with a student and many students are stopping by when they are in need of something, without having to wait in between care packages for toothpaste, a shaver or other necessary product. We thank University Development and the generous donors that helped Care Storage start strong!
B.3.b	Morale	Fostering Success Program hires student staff with independent backgrounds who are part of the program. In recent years, FSP has posted student mentor positions as work study only opportunities. However, students receiving FosterEd and/or other scholarships may not be work study eligible or it may not be advantageous to the student to opt in for work study aid.

For the 2022-23 student staff roles, FSP posted the mentor positions as student hourly opportunities. Our hope is to still continue hiring student staff who have work study awards while using an equity lens to also offer mentor positions to students who do not have a work study award. |
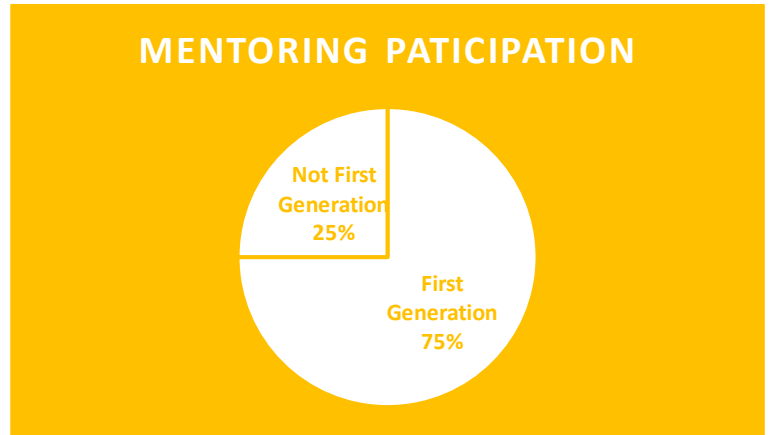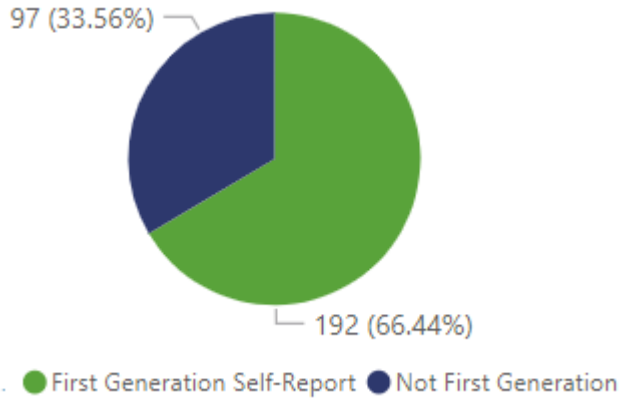
Financial Analysis

| B.4.a.i | Funding Resources and Expenditures | In order to offset increased costs in other important areas, including expanding hiring student hourly workers, FSP looked at other avenues for decreasing spending in our general fund. We encouraged our care package volunteers to donate tangible items through a new care package assembly sign up process and they generously delivered with so many wonderful snacks and useful products for students.

Additionally, we developed closer relationships with community partners like Timberline Church. Timberline provided $5000 in move-in care packages supplies, as well as volunteers to assembly the items, eliminating a huge annual FSP expense. Additionally, they collected over 30 backpacks filled with school items, which allowed FSP to have a fully funded school supply pick up. We are thankful for generous local organizations who support our great work! |
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Assessment: Feedback Resources & Discovery:
In evaluating our diversity outcome, not all student identities reflected in program participation were identical with the identities of the overall FSP population identities. For example, students identifying as first generation were more likely to participate in mentoring services; this may be beneficial if first generation students have a greater benefit by engaging in mentoring services. However, it may be detrimental if students who do not identify as first generation could benefit from mentoring but are not utilizing this service. We understand that first generation status can be confusing for some independent

students who may not know the college graduation status of their biological parents or who may question if the attainment (or lack thereof) of a college degree for their foster parents determines their first-generation status.

First Generation: Overall FSP Students

97 (33.56%)
192 (66.44%)

● First Generation Self-Report ● Not First Generation

MENTORING PATICIPATION

Not First Generation 25%

First Generation 75%

When evaluating the Pell eligibility of FSP students, less students who are not limited income are accessing emergency funds than the overall FSP student population of students not eligible for Pell. Additionally, 100% of our FSP Scholarship recipients were limited income. This sheds light on areas of our services where we may not want our numbers to be reflective of the overall FSP student demographics. With regard to income demographics, we want to ensure our students with the greatest needs are accessing emergency and scholarship funds.

Pell Eligibility: Overall FSP Students

26 (9%)
263 (91%)

● Limited Income ● Not Limited Income

EMERGENCY FUNDED

Not Limited Income 4%

Limited Income 96%
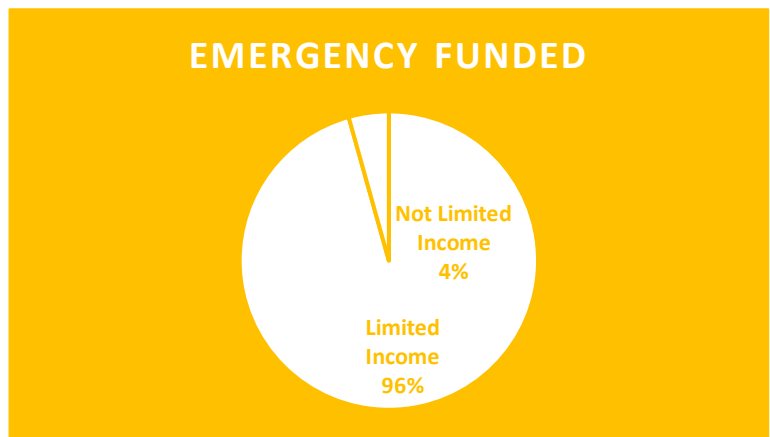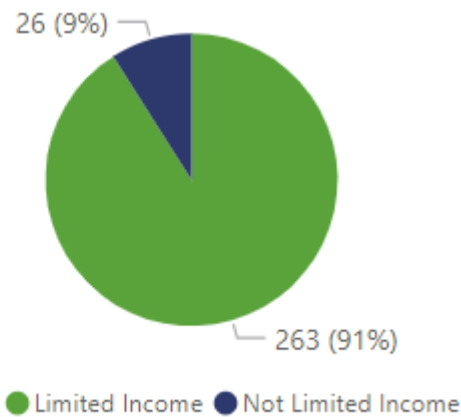
In conclusion, digging into numbers that provide information about who is participating from the perspective of various identities was enlightening. We acknowledge we are limited in looking at one year of data (2022-2023), so a goal for next year is to look at all services throughout time and examine the overall demographics (race/ethnicity, gender, Pell eligibility, and first generation) of independent students invited to take part in FSP. We look forward to expanding how we approach evaluating this diversity outcome.

Connecting to the Division and University Goals:
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 and was delayed due to funding in 2022. The first launch will be in 2023 and the curriculum is being developed around the 7 Life Domains model, with a focus on supporting life skills. Adaptions to the recruitment efforts with a plan to start week 2 of Fall 2023 was planned to increase enrollment in the course.

Executive Summary:
One of the most impactful aspects of FSP is the sense of belonging that is accomplished through pairing our upper-class independent student mentors with new to CSU first-year or new transfer independent students. We expanded our coaching model this year to include pairing all of our upper-class FSP scholars with full-time staff coaches. A student scholar shared what worked well for them with their coach was "*Being able to trust someone knowledgeable as well as compassionate to make me a better student.*" In addition to gaining a sense of belonging at CSU, this student shared that their coach, "*Helped me find an internship in the field that I am studying.*"

Compensating program staff adequately was well supported by our department, campus life cluster and university leadership. All full-time staff positions in FSP were raised to a salary of at least $55,000 per year. Ensuring program staff are earning a living wage continues to be a priority and benefits FSP greatly. We are proud to continue maintaining a low staff turnover, which better supports independent students to succeed.

FSP has gained a positive reputation across the state as a leader in educating students from independent backgrounds. We were asked to sit on several panels in the 2022-23 academic year, which also created a unique leadership opportunity for our students. Seven FSP student panelists educated secondary education school professionals at two different "Highly Mobile Student Summits" across the state. Educators learned about best practices for supporting youth from foster care, unaccompanied houseless, and other highly mobile backgrounds.

Fostering Success Program is committed to increasing our impact in rural communities. Our goal was to strengthen connections with rural partners. The Colorado Rural Collaborative Runaway and Homeless Youth funded transportation and overnight lodging for youth across the state in rural communities to attend Independent Student Visit Day. We were fortunate to host youth from Holyoke, Yuma, Pueblo, and Montrose, Colorado. Our goal is to continue to increase the pipeline of rural students from underrepresented independent backgrounds accessing and succeeding at CSU.