

Empowering Former Foster Youth Through Higher Education

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Achieving Success



Renaissance Scholars was launched in January of 2002 at Cal Poly Pomona to honor the achievements and aspirations of motivated former foster youth. Renaissance Scholars is a comprehensive program to provide critical support services to disadvantaged youth and their unique needs. Support services include tutoring, academic advising, year-round housing, financial assistance, counseling and activities to ensure student success.

Mission: We empower former foster youth through higher education. We provide a broad range of services and experiences that support their university transition and success, enabling them to be educated and engaged citizens who go on to lead productive and meaningful lives.

Values: We strive for excellence in everything we do. We emphasize learning, demonstrate resiliency, encourage and model wellness, act with integrity, exemplify personal and social responsibility, cherish relationships with others.

Student Learning

Goal:

- Create learning experiences that build skills for college success.
- Provide opportunities for community involvement and belonging.

Learning Outcome: Students will be able to identify five skills/resources through their participation in opportunities that supported their learning.

Intervention strategies:

- Participation in academic advising and monitoring.
- Participation in Summer Bridge.
- Attendance at weekly seminar classes during summer and fall quarter.
- Participation in community building activities.



Method

A cohort of freshmen were provided transition services and assessed throughout their first year of college.

- Mean age: 18 years old
- Mean GPA: 2.85

Three assessments were administered to measure academic and personal success.

- Non-Cognitive Questionnaire: February 2007
- Mid-year Survey: November 2007
- Final Survey: February 2008

Non-cognitive Questionnaire (NCQ) and the Mid-year Survey measured the following variables:

- Positive self concept or confidence
- Realistic self-appraisal
- Understands and deals with racism
- Long-range goals vs. short term needs
- Have strong support system
- Successful leadership experience
- Demonstrates community service
- Knowledge in a field of interest
- Realistic and attainable goals

Final Survey

- Asked students to identify five skills/resources they have learned that supported their transition to college.
- Asked students to identify three accomplishments they are most proud of.

Analysis

- Collected, analyzed, and reported data designed to answer question over a one year period.
- Applied and interpreted descriptive and inferential statistics.



DID YOU KNOW?

80% of the 20,000 youth leaving foster care each year aspire to enter college yet only **50%** graduate from high school.

Results



Students reported that they learned to:

- Ask for help
- Not give up on myself
- Live independently
- Take responsibility for my life
- Adapt/adjust to college life
- Make new friends
- Manage my time wisely
- Study the right materials
- Budget my money
- Read and write at a college level

Students attribute the following resources that assisted in their learning:

- Summer Bridge
- Counselors and advisors
- Faculty
- Renaissance Scholars
- Student Health Center
- University library
- University Writing Center
- Tutorial Services

→ 100% of students surveyed were able to identify five skills/resources they utilized that have contributed to their success.

→ 57% of students attributed their success to faculty and advisor support.

→ 43% of students attributed their success to study skills and time management strategies.

→ Analysis indicated that friendships, sense of belonging, and study skills helped students stay on track academically.

→ Students showed an increase in their positive self-concept, developing a strong support system and an increase in knowledge in a field of interest.

→ Students did not show a significant increase in their realistic self-appraisal.

Future Plans

Strengthen collaborations with on-campus resources (faculty, advisors and departments) to improve services that supports academic and personal development.

Develop a learning community model that supports foster youth transition into college.

Promote great learning opportunities in higher education for youth exiting the foster care system.