



CALIFORNIA ★
COLLEGE 
PATHWAYS 

*Supporting Opportunity and Success for
Foster Youth Scholars*

★ TURNING DREAMS INTO DEGREES

Past, Present, and Future of California College Pathways

OCTOBER 2012





There is a shocking disparity between the number of foster youth who aspire to a college-level education and those who achieve this goal. In one survey of California foster youth, 75 percent have a goal of attending and graduating from college.¹ However, nationwide statistics reveal that only an estimated 3–11 percent of foster youth actually go on to receive a bachelor's degree.² Most foster youth want a college education but need support and services to get there and succeed.

CALIFORNIA COLLEGE PATHWAYS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT IS A WAY THAT STUDENTS LIKE ME CAN GRADUATE AND BE POSITIVE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY. WE DO EXIST, WE ARE HERE, AND WE NEED THAT SUPPORT.

Emerald, Foster Youth Scholar, Graduate of UCLA

The good news is that California is on the right path to helping foster youth turn their dreams into degrees. Through support from California's three public post-secondary education systems, private sector leadership, and the determination and the perseverance of youth themselves, California College Pathways has helped thousands of foster youth succeed in college and move on to careers.

Through the historic extension of foster care to age 21 combined with the passage of supporting legislation in California, foster youth now have new incentives to attend college, including additional support for housing and living expenses. The option of enrolling and paying for college, attaining a vocational certificate, graduating with an associate's or bachelor's degree, and going on to graduate school are within reach for many more current and former foster youth in California.

This report provides some of the highlights of how California has become the nation's leader in higher education support for foster youth. But more importantly, it is a call to action to the leadership of our state to stay the course and continue to make the dream of college a reality for all foster youth.

¹ *First Look: Foster Youth Outcomes in Four California Counties*, Stuart Foundation, November 2011.

² *Insights: Understanding Foster Youth Educational Outcomes*, California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership, Fall 2011.

★ COLLEGE MATTERS

Education is the key to economic well-being and personal success for youth. Studies have repeatedly shown that attaining a bachelor's degree not only increases employment opportunities for individuals, but can also have a significant impact on lifetime earnings. By receiving

SOMETHING THAT STUCK WITH ME IS THE STATISTIC THAT ONLY THREE PERCENT OF US ACTUALLY GAIN A DEGREE. THAT WAS A MOTIVATING FACTOR TO KEEP ME IN SCHOOL. I KNEW I HAD TO SEE THIS THROUGH AND JUST GET THIS DONE.

Miranda, Foster Youth Scholar, CSU Los Angeles

a bachelor's degree, the average Californian will go on to earn \$2.2 million over his or her lifetime—\$1.3 million more than those with only a high school diploma. Californians without a degree that have some college education can still expect to earn nearly \$340,000 more in their lifetime than if they had not attended college at all. Graduating from a four-year college or university reduces the time the average Californian will spend in poverty by four years and decreases the number of expected years that an individual will receive cash aid by more than two years.³

College completion not only means better individual economic outcomes, but also increases in state tax revenues and decreases in costs spent on social welfare programs and incarceration. A recent study found that a \$1 investment in California higher education yields a return of \$4.50.⁴ In short, higher education is an opportunity for individuals to escape economic instability and poverty, which benefits all Californians.

For California's 56,000 foster youth, a pathway to higher education is particularly important. Removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect, foster youth are often bounced around, moving from placement to placement and changing schools constantly. Frequently disconnected from their families, communities, and schools, foster youth are much more likely than their peers to fall behind academically.⁵ Of California's foster youth, 80 percent have repeated a grade by the third grade and only one in twenty is proficient in math by their junior year in high school.⁶ As a result, foster youth are less likely to graduate from high school, go on to college, and complete post-secondary education than their peers. In turn, foster youth, particularly those emancipating out of the system, are more likely to experience poverty, suffer from mental health issues, become homeless or incarcerated, and rely on public assistance.

Like all young people, foster youth deserve the opportunity to pursue their dreams of attending college and have a successful career. By increasing access to higher education and supporting foster youth scholars, California College Pathways offers an alternative to the negative outcomes that far too many foster youth experience in life.

³ *California's Economic Payoff: Investing in College Access and Completion*, Institute for the Study of Societal Issues, University of California, Berkeley for The Campaign for College Opportunity, April 2012.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *First Look: Foster Youth Outcomes in Four California Counties*, Stuart Foundation, November 2011.

⁶ *Insights: Understanding Foster Youth Educational Outcomes*, California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership, Fall 2011.



★ THE STORY

It started in Orange County in 1998 with one young woman's dream of going to college. At 17, Erin was ready to emancipate from foster care and was living in a group home.⁷ Despite the challenges she had faced in life, she was committed to her education. She had been



accepted into California State University, Fullerton (CSU Fullerton) and was enrolled for the fall semester, ready to pursue her higher education goals.

But when Erin turned 18 that summer, she emancipated from foster care and became homeless. Without adequate financial aid assistance and housing, her dream of going to college was slipping away.

"This young lady had the intellectual capacity to attend college, but didn't have the financial capacity," recalled Gene Howard, former director of Orangewood Children's

Foundation, a local foster youth provider that ran a summer camp that Erin had participated in. "She was struggling. She had no support and no family, but we were following her. She wasn't going to make it, so we approached the school and they provided support."

Determined to help Erin stay on course, Orangewood Children's Foundation joined forces with Ron Davis, a CSU Fullerton alumnus and donor, to create Guardian Scholars, which became California's first campus support program for former foster youth. In the beginning, the program focused on connecting foster youth on campus with financial aid assistance. Soon after its launch, Stuart Foundation and several private investors provided funding for the program's expansion. With support from the college administration and CSU system, it quickly grew into a full-fledged, comprehensive program for former foster youth, providing a variety of resources to support their academic and personal success. Erin stayed in the program and went on to graduate with a bachelor's degree and receive a master's in social work.

THE CONTINUAL FOCUS FROM CALIFORNIA COLLEGE PATHWAYS AND DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS BROUGHT TO LIGHT THE CHALLENGES THAT FOSTER YOUTH FACE. OVERALL THERE HAS BEEN A POSITIVE IMPACT AND GREATER AWARENESS. COLLEGES NEVER USED TO THINK THIS WAS A POSSIBLE POPULATION TO SERVE AND NOW THEY ACTUALLY FOCUS ON IT.

Jack Scott, Chancellor, California Community Colleges (retired)

⁷ This graduate's name has been changed to protect her privacy.



A MOVEMENT LAUNCHED

In the following years, Stuart Foundation funded numerous campus support programs based on the Guardian Scholars model. In 2004 the Walter S. Johnson Foundation joined Stuart Foundation, and the two foundations partnered with California Community Colleges and the CSU and UC systems to create campus support programs for foster youth across the state. With their combined investment of more than \$4.7 million, the two foundations provided direct funding to 13 campuses, supported technical assistance for both emerging and established programs, and established a community of support to help the programs grow and succeed.

In 2006, the California Community College Chancellor's Office launched the Foster Youth Success Initiative, which established a "foster youth liaison" at each of California's community college campuses. With community college as the main higher education entry point for foster youth, it was important to designate an individual within each campus to help foster youth scholars get information and counseling.

By 2008, a decade after the first Guardian Scholars program was launched, 30 more campus support programs were established throughout California. Building upon the growing interest from higher education, the Walter S. Johnson and Stuart foundations then initiated a second phase in their strategy. With the CSU Chancellor's Office leading the program management with support from John Burton Foundation and Career Ladders Project, California College Pathways offered technical assistance and trainings,

WE CAN'T LEAVE THESE STUDENTS HANGING. WE, THE PUBLIC, ARE THESE KIDS' PARENTS. WHAT PARENT WALKS AWAY FROM THEIR CHILD AT 18? WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO SHORE UP OUR SUPPORT BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO. AND THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT IS THERE.

Alex Smith, Quarterback, San Francisco 49ers & Founder, Alex Smith Foundation to Forward Progress for Foster Teens in Transition

as well as a policy advocacy agenda to increase program replication and public investment. They also began to collect data to measure the effectiveness of the programs.

LANDMARK LEGISLATION FOR FOSTER YOUTH

As the movement to improve education outcomes for foster youth spread across California's higher education systems, policymakers were also taking steps to change the trajectory for foster youth. Significantly, landmark federal and state legislation was passed allowing transition-age foster youth to receive additional support to pursue their education and career goals.

In 2008, Congress enacted the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, which permitted states to extend support for education, housing, and living expenses to eligible youth in the child welfare system up to age 21, and continues to provide federal funding for those services. To take advantage of the new federal support for foster youth, the California legislature enacted the California Fostering Connections to Success Act in 2010. Also known as AB 12, the legislation extends state foster care assistance up to the age of 21, and will be put into effect in a sequenced manner between 2012 and 2014.

For the first time, California's foster youth will have the support and incentive to pursue their higher education goals. Under the new law, college attendance is one of the eligibility requirements to continue to receive support after 18 and youth in extended foster care will receive continued support and oversight to ensure that they meet eligibility requirements.⁸

By choosing to stay in foster care, youth attending college will have additional funding to cover housing costs. Funding can be used for living in a college dorm or, if appropriate, youth can receive the money themselves and rent an apartment or room. Extended foster care can potentially free up institutions and campus support programs' limited resources for foster youth, making it easier to serve more youth more effectively.

In addition, many of the core principles of California College Pathways have been codified into law. Legislation allowing current and former foster youth to receive

priority access to year-round housing (AB 1393, Skinner) at California State University and California Community College campuses was enacted in 2009. In 2011, AB 194 (Beall) was passed, which gives current and former foster youth priority community college and CSU registration.

★ CALIFORNIA COLLEGE PATHWAYS TODAY

The movement has grown to include 80 comprehensive campus support programs for former foster youth statewide and foster youth liaisons in financial aid departments at every community college through the Foster Youth Services Initiative (FYSI). These programs have connected thousands of former foster youth to financial aid, housing, tutoring, counseling, and other support services. Even in this time of crippling budget cuts to California's public higher education institutions and higher tuition fees, California College Pathways partners have remained focused. The strategy is to continue to engage more institutions to work together, share best practices, and advocate for policies so that more youth from foster care can achieve their dreams.

BY THE NUMBERS

- ★ **2,500** foster youth scholars have enrolled in college and participated in a campus support programs since 1998.
- ★ **112** community college campuses have foster youth liaisons in financial aid offices to provide support and guidance.
- ★ **80** comprehensive campus support programs currently serve foster youth scholars statewide.
- ★ Foster youth scholars in California campus support programs are **three times** more likely to persist in college than foster youth nationwide.

8 California Fostering Connections to Success Act – Assembly 12 Primer, Alliance for Children's Rights, John Burton Foundation.



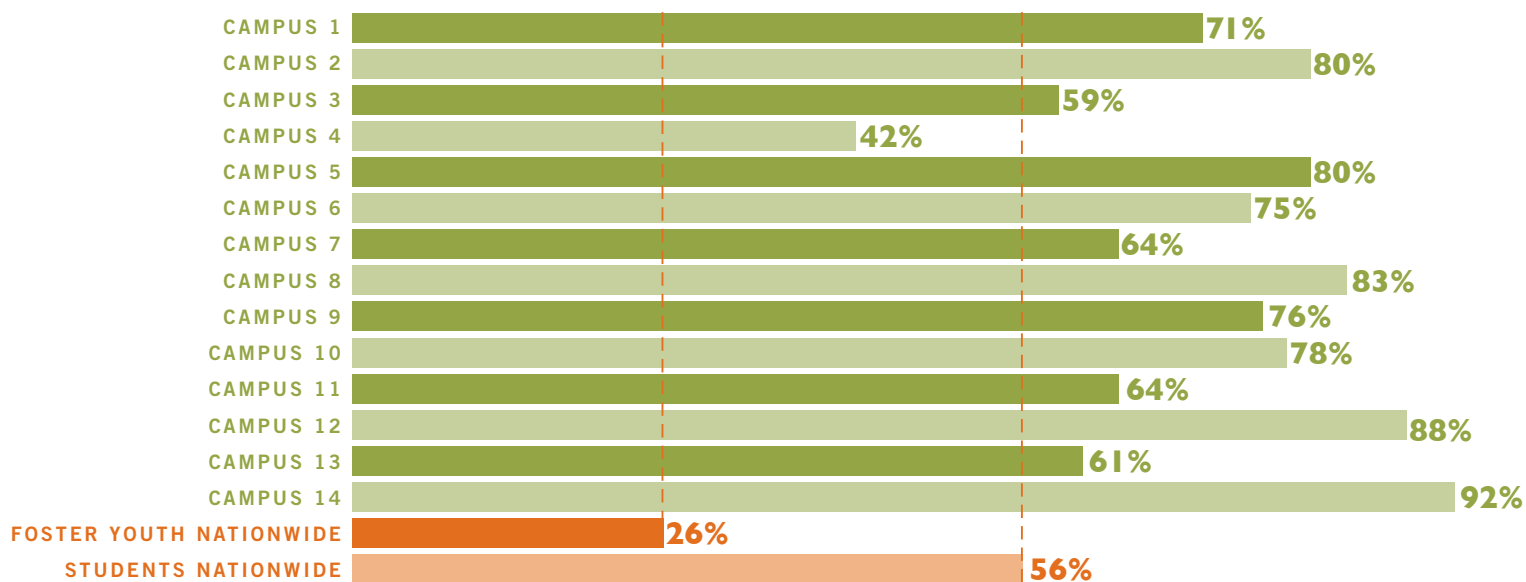
★ CAMPUS SUPPORT PROGRAMS RECEIVING FOUNDATION SUPPORT

PROFILE OF FOUNDATION SUPPORTED CA CAMPUS SUPPORT PROGRAMS

	Year Program Started	# of Students Served	Average Attrition Rate	Average Completion Rate	Average Retention Rate	Average Persistence Rate
Campus 1	1998	167	29%	44%	27%	71%
Campus 2	1999	111	20%	51%	29%	80%
Campus 3	2002	123	41%	26%	33%	59%
Campus 4	2002	83	58%	13%	29%	42%
Campus 5	2005	79	20%	35%	44%	80%
Campus 6	2005	110	25%	28%	46%	75%
Campus 7	2006	107	36%	17%	47%	64%
Campus 8	2006	115	17%	12%	71%	83%
Campus 9	2007	159	24%	23%	53%	76%
Campus 10	2007	23	22%	57%	22%	78%
Campus 11	2008	335	36%	10%	55%	64%
Campus 12	2008	56	13%	20%	68%	88%
Campus 13	2008	152	39%	9%	52%	61%
Campus 14	2009	149	8%	6%	86%	92%
Total		1769	28%	25%	47%	72%

Note on the Data in Charts: Data highlighted were collected from 14 California campuses receiving financial support from the Stuart and Walter S. Johnson foundations. Data highlighted show results for cohorts of foster youth scholars by the year they entered college. A total of 1,769 youth were served from 1998–2012, representing 93 cohorts of foster youth scholars. Data for Campuses # 4, 10, and 11 are through spring 2010.

AVERAGE PERSISTENCE RATES: FOSTER YOUTH SCHOLARS SERVED FROM 1998-2012



Nearly all of the comprehensive campus support programs funded by the Stuart and Walter S. Johnson foundations have persistence rates higher than the nationwide general college population. Combined, the foster youth scholars served by these programs outperformed their foster youth peers nationwide. Persistence means that the students either remained in school at the end of the school year (retention) or completed school by attaining a vocational certificate, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree, or transferring to a four-year college (completion). National data highlighted are cited in the report *Helping Former Foster Youth Graduate from College: Campus Support Programs in California and Washington State*, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2009.

★ CAMPUS SUPPORT PROGRAMS

The majority of campus support programs offer three core components—financial aid, housing, and academic support—while also providing a broader array of support services, including counseling, peer mentoring, and engagement activities. Programs also offer individualized attention based on students' unique needs to help them realize their academic, personal, and career goals.

Comprehensive campus support programs are generally considered to be “high touch.” Program staff establish a process to identify current and former foster youth on campus, conduct outreach to engage students to participate in the program, establish close relationships with foster youth scholars, and provide intensive case management and support services.

To engage students and meet them where they are, programs have developed a number of successful strategies. For example, the CSU Fresno Renaissance Scholars Program requires incoming students to participate in a summer residential orientation and freshman foster youth

WE ARE THEIR CHAMPIONS, MENTORS, AND SAFETY NET, A FAMILY ON CAMPUS. KNOWING THIS HELPS THEM GET THROUGH AND PERSIST THROUGH GRADUATION AND BEYOND.

Joy Salvetti, Director, Sacramento State Guardian Scholars Program

scholars to live on campus. When the semester starts, two full-time counselors work with 30 to 40 students at all times. Accommodating students' schedules is fundamental to meeting their needs. Foster youth scholars can drop in or make appointments at the program office, group meetings are held once a week, and staff are available by cell phone 24 hours a day.

“We work with really amazing students, who are very talented in a variety of ways, especially when you consider the obstacles they have overcome,” said Paolo Velasco, interim director of the Bruin Resource Center at University



of California, Los Angeles. “The need in our program is to help students navigate through the system and create a sense of belonging on campus.”

Pauline, a foster youth scholar and recent UCLA graduate, explained that the experience of being in foster care leaves many youth “feeling bad for taking things.” But foster youth should take advantage of the monetary and emotional support, she said. “We have to realize that this is for us.”

“I am a former foster youth, and I remember how difficult

it was in college,” explained Dameion Renault, foster youth specialist at Orange Coast Community College. “I know how important it is to have a place students can go and ask all the questions in the world.”

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND SERVICES

In addition to academic support, many comprehensive campus programs focus on students’ emotional needs, providing critical mental health services and counseling. Foster youth often suffer from trauma due to the abuse and neglect they experienced when they were younger. Many have also had difficult and traumatic experiences while in foster care. And while the challenges that foster youth have overcome may make them more resilient, simply having someone to talk to who understands where they are coming from helps keep them anchored in their personal lives and focused in school.

“These students need advice on helping family members in crisis and processing the abuse they have experienced now that they are finally out of the system,” explained Sonja Lenz-Rashid, social work professor and program research evaluator at San Francisco State University. “Our staff deals with a lot of clinical issues, like anxiety and depression, which would affect any person going to college. If you’re not meeting those needs, they will drop out, won’t study, or won’t pass exams. You can’t get that GPA if you don’t address the mental health and family issues.”

THROUGH CONTINUED INVESTMENT, THE FOUNDATIONS VALIDATED THE IDEA THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO UNLEASH THE LATENT POTENTIAL IN THESE YOUTH. THEY CREATED A SEA CHANGE AND NOW CALIFORNIA IS LEADING THE NATION IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR FOSTER YOUTH.

Daniel Heimpel, Director, Fostering Media Connections



CALIFORNIA COLLEGE PATHWAYS GIVES FOSTER YOUTH A CHANCE TO SHINE WHILE THEY ARE IN COLLEGE. IT GIVES US AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE SOMETHING OF OURSELVES AND BECOME SUCCESSFUL MEMBERS OF SOCIETY.

Marquis, Foster Youth Scholar, San Diego State University

A FAMILY ON CAMPUS

Perhaps most importantly, campus support programs also provide students with a circle of support that they can fall back on when times are tough. While assistance with housing and tuition is critical, the emotional support they receive from program staff and their peers is equally indispensable.

Marcellia, a former foster youth and active California Youth Connection member, described the Guardian Scholars program at Los Angeles Community College as “something bigger than me.”

“It is like a family, a group of people that knows your exact situation,” Marcellia explained. “They don’t judge you and they definitely accept you for who you are, no ifs, ands, or buts. You are always welcomed with open arms and there is nothing but love.”

Marquis, a foster youth scholar at San Diego State University, agreed. “First and foremost, the program is a family... regardless of the funds they provide,” he said. “It’s a comfortable and safe environment.”

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Partnerships are an essential component of campus support programs. The programs maintain relationships with other departments and programs on campus to ensure that students are able to access support in a timely manner. Key partners on campus include, but are not limited to, the registrar’s office, student affairs, financial aid, housing, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), and health services.

Kizzy Lopez, director of the CSU Fresno program, explained why California College Pathways programs differ from other campus supports available for disadvantaged students.

“We provide enhanced services to meet the unique needs of the foster youth we serve, youth without the support of parents,” said Lopez. “Other programs don’t have relationships with the county department of social services and they don’t do advocacy work around the needs of foster youth.”

Equally important, programs aim to reduce barriers to higher education for high school students transitioning out of foster care. Programs actively recruit foster youth scholars through connections with local education agencies and county child welfare stakeholders and providers, working collaboratively to create a seamless education pipeline for transition-age foster youth.

In addition, to maintain adequate resources and staffing, it is critical that campus support programs secure financial support from multiple sources. In order to ensure that programs remain sustainable and continue to serve foster youth scholars, staff will work closely with campus development and communications departments, alumni, and community organizations to share the success of their students and promote their program in the community.

“Most institutions have to be entrepreneurial, to the extent possible,” said Michael McPartlin, special services manager at City College of San Francisco. “For this population, it is truly above and beyond what institutions can provide.”



★ THE FUTURE OF CALIFORNIA COLLEGE PATHWAYS

INVESTING IN CALIFORNIA'S FOSTER YOUTH

Building on the momentum of this movement and lessons learned, Stuart Foundation and Walter S. Johnson Foundation are continuing their partnership and have initiated an exciting new phase of investment in California College Pathways that will continue through at least 2015. Their mission is to continue to support efforts to provide foster youth with opportunities to achieve their educational and career goals and help campus support programs remain sustainable in the long-term.

Recognizing that California's public campuses are struggling in tough budget times, the foundations have developed a multifaceted strategy to support all campus support programs for foster youth throughout the state, encourage collaboration between campuses, and lift up the creative solutions that make a difference in the lives of foster youth.

THE FOUNDATIONS' RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE ARE COMMITTED TO:

Campus Networks

Under the new funding strategy, grants will be provided to multi-campus networks to create programs that support current and former foster youth both within the individual campuses and between campuses. These campus networks will create a more seamless pipeline for foster youth from community college to four-year colleges and universities. They will also include supports, services, and practices

AFTER BEING HOMELESS, THE GUARDIAN SCHOLARS PROGRAM TOOK ME IN. THEY GUIDED ME TO THE RIGHT RESOURCES AND THE RIGHT PEOPLE. I DON'T THINK I WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE IT ON MY OWN WITHOUT THEIR HELP.

Michael, Foster Youth Scholar and Peer Mentor, Los Angeles Trade Tech

that have proven to be important to foster youth scholar success, including year-round housing, priority registration, counseling, support services, and data collection and analysis. This strategy will encourage collaboration across campuses, leverage the work campuses are already doing in other departments that can help foster youth, and increase partnerships with community agencies.

Training and Technical Assistance

In addition, the foundations will provide resources that all campuses can draw upon, including support for convenings, webinars on key topics, and technical assistance on how to fundraise and maximize campus resources. Peer coaching and individualized trainings will be available for campus professionals. This support will help build a thriving community that will encourage the development of new campus support programs and provide professionals with opportunities and venues to learn and share best practices.

Policy Advocacy

The foundations will continue to invest in policy advocacy to educate the public and lift up lessons learned on the ground to policymakers and regulators. This includes a new California College Pathways website (www.cacollegepathways.org) to provide assistance and resources for foster youth, caring adults, and campus professionals, as well as materials to support campus programs' outreach efforts. A key element in this strategy is youth engagement, to ensure that new policies and regulations are informed by the perspectives and experiences of foster youth scholars.

Pipeline to College

In order to strengthen the readiness of foster youth to enter and succeed in college, the foundations are increasing their investment in programs working with child welfare agencies and the K-12 system. The goal is to build strong alliances and support strategies that encourage academic planning and preparation, and will include developing partnerships with County Offices of Education as well as Independent Living Skills programs.

★ A CALL TO ACTION

The stories and data collected by California College Pathways demonstrate that campus support programs for foster youth do make a difference. We urge policymakers, funders, higher education stakeholders, and the child welfare community to join this effort and help make a lifelong impact for California's foster youth. Visit www.cacollegepathways.org to learn how you can help foster youth turn their dreams into degrees.

DESPITE THE ENORMOUS ODDS FOSTER YOUTH FACE, WITH RELATIVELY LIMITED FUNDING AND SUPPORT, A TREMENDOUS DIFFERENCE CAN BE MADE. BUT IT TAKES A VILLAGE.

Michael McPartlin, Special Services Manager, City College of San Francisco



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California College Pathways provides resources and leadership to campuses and community organizations to help foster youth succeed at community colleges, vocational schools, and public four-year universities through a statewide partnership, which includes:

- ★ Current and former foster youth scholars
- ★ California Community Colleges
- ★ California State University system (CSU)
- ★ University of California system (UC)
- ★ CSU Chancellor's Office
- ★ Campus foster youth support programs
- ★ Northern California Higher Education Foster Youth Consortium
- ★ Southern California Higher Education Foster Youth Consortium
- ★ California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office- Foster Youth Success Initiative
- ★ California Foster Youth Education Taskforce
- ★ California Department of Social Services
- ★ California Department of Education
- ★ Career Ladders Project
- ★ John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes
- ★ Stuart Foundation
- ★ Walter S. Johnson Foundation

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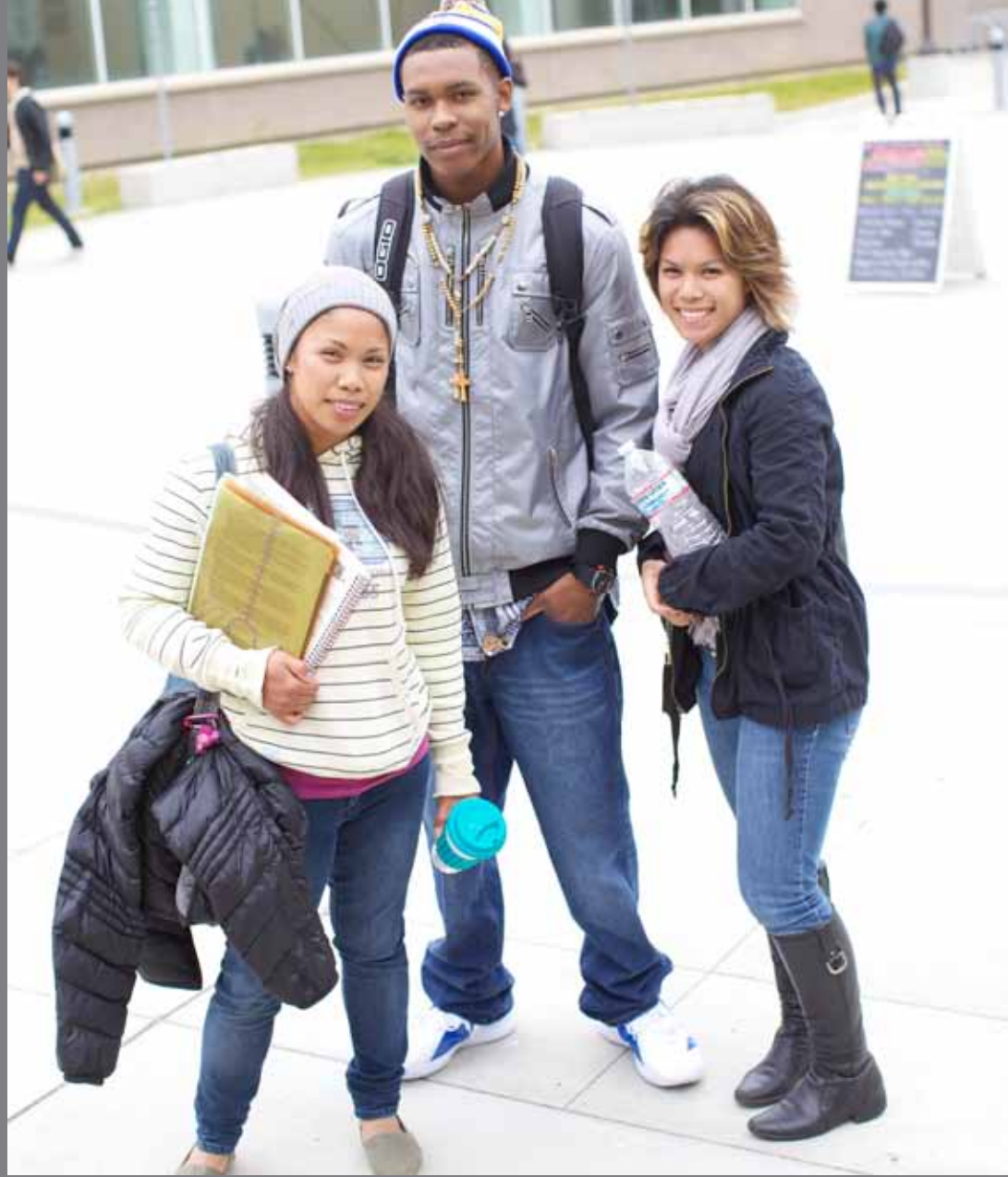
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