



Fostering Scholars Program

Seattle University

Program Description

The Fostering Scholars Program is a campus support program and scholarship for Washington State foster youth. This program provides foster youth with full tuition, health insurance, job opportunities, mentoring, and year-round-on-campus room and board. Students also receive guidance from the Fostering Scholar Director in accessing student development programs, academic support services, and community service opportunities. While enrolled at Seattle University, Fostering Scholars are expected to make progress toward a degree and the attainment of life and leadership skills needed for independent and fulfilled living.

Studies estimate that about four percent of foster youth obtain some type of a college degree or certificate, and only two percent earn a bachelor's degree or higher. Seattle University aims to address this with the Fostering Scholars Program. The outlook is to encourage and provide opportunities for foster youth to attend college so that they may fulfill education aspirations.

History

The Fostering Scholars Program was started in 2006 by Marta and Lucio Dalla Gasperina –foster youth advocates and parents of two Seattle University students. In the program's first year, in partnership with Treehouse, a nonprofit agency that serves foster youth in King County, Seattle University awarded the first seven Fostering Scholars recipients with scholarship for up to five years with full-time academic enrollment. Since then, an additional 13 students have been enrolled in the program bringing the total to 20 students. Seattle University anticipates awarding eight more scholarships in 2009. The Stuart Foundation, a national leader in foster care issues, funded a three-year grant to further develop the program and provide one full time staff dedicated to this program.

Scholarship recipients are selected based on an application process developed in partnership with Treehouse and in adherence with the University's standard admission requirements. Student involvement in the Treehouse's Coaching-to-College program and demonstrated academic success, involvement in extracurricular activities and community service are key characteristics of awarded scholars.

Goals

The goal of this program is to welcome opportunities for children who age out of the foster care system. In the spirit of Seattle University's mission statement, the Fostering Scholars Program provides opportunities to Washington State foster youth and educates them as leaders for a just and humane world. By developing an integrated program of support for former foster youth at Seattle University, the Fostering Scholars Program works to improve the prospects of foster youth, and to transform the poor outcomes often witnessed from children emancipating from our nation's foster care system.