UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
CAMPUS SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

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The number of former foster youth attending UC campuses has grown markedly in the past decade. According to a recent study published by the UC Office of the President, more than 1,800 former foster youth were enrolled in one of the 9 UC campuses in 2019 (Institutional Research & Academic Planning, 2020). Former foster youth typically face many challenges on their path to higher education (Okpych; 2021), but participation in a campus-based support program can offer critical assistance.

UC campus-based programs vary in structure, size and support. The purpose of this survey was to develop an understanding of this variability across campuses. As campus leaders design and re-design program efforts in support of student success, an understanding of the diversity of program approaches may be useful.

Program size

According to data gathered by the UC Office of the President, the number and proportion of former foster youth on each of the UC campuses varies significantly. Similarly, the number of students participating in the college-based support programs varies by campus. According to data provided by campus program coordinators, some campuses see only about one in five former foster youth participating in their campus-based support program (e.g., UCI), whereas others are structured such that all of the former foster youth on campus are engaged with the campus support program (e.g., UCSB or UCSC) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Program Size

UC Campus	# Former foster youth attending UC as of 2019[1]	Percent of all new undergraduate enrollees[2]	# Former foster youth participating in campus-based program[3]	Percent of total number of former foster youth on campus participating in a campus-based program
Berkeley	177	9.4%	70	39.5%
Davis	243	12.9%	150	61.7%
Irvine	186	9.9%	46	21.5%
Los Angeles	346	18.4%	235	67.9%
Merced	135	7.2%	90[4]	66.6%
Riverside	240	12.8%	150	62.5%
San Diego	219	11.6%	75	34.2%
Santa Barbara	179	9.5%	206	115%[5]
Santa Cruz	157	8.3%	150	95.5%

Program eligibility

The variability in program size may be based, in part, on eligibility criteria set by each program (See Table 2). Some programs offer services only to undergraduate students; others offer services to all members of the campus community. Some programs have age limits, others set GPA criteria, and some have specialized programming for students who were in foster care as adolescents. Some programs have wide eligibility criteria including students who may be orphans, current or formerly homeless students; and/or other system-involved youth.

Table 2. Eligibility criteria for participation

UC Campus	Eligibility criteria	Age limit?	Undergraduate and/or Graduate eligibility
Berkeley	Proof of time in care or orphan status	No	Undergraduate & Graduate students
Davis	At least one day in care prior to age 18; Ongoing eligibility depends on program participation	No	Undergraduates. Graduate students & alumni can attend events. A Guardian Professions Programs offers a point of contact for graduate students

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[1] These data are derived from the UCOP report: Institutional Research and Academic Planning, 2020.

[2] Percentages derived from the UCOP report: Institutional Research and Academic Planning, 2020.

[3] Figures based on data provided by Program Coordinators in this survey. Coordinators were asked to provide the current number of students enrolled in their program and the previous quarter/ semester's numbers. The average of these two figures is provided.

[4] UC Merced also includes homeless youth in their campus-based program

[5] Figure includes probation youth, homeless youth, etc.

Irvine	Proof of former foster youth status	No	Undergraduates
Los Angeles	Proof of time in care; ongoing eligibility depends on some program participation	No	Undergraduates & Graduate students
Merced	Prior or current foster care or homelessness; Ongoing eligibility depends on program participation	No	Undergraduates
Riverside	Proof of time in care (Ward of Court document. A foster care history on or after their 13 birthday)	Yes; 26	Undergraduates
San Diego	Former foster youth, former incarcerated youth, or formerly homeless; full-time undergraduate; California resident and US citizen or permanent resident; 2.0 GPA or above; FAFSA completed	No	Undergraduate & Graduate students
Santa Barbara	No requirements	No	Undergraduate and Graduate students
Santa Cruz	Former or current foster care, ward of court, emancipated minor, or orphan; formerly incarcerated, incarcerated family members, or unsafe home conditions.	No	Undergraduate and Graduate students

Services provided

The UC campus-based support programs offer an array of services to students. These vary, however, by campus (see Table 3). Some services are universal, as specified in state law. For example, all campuses offer priority registration (provided students participate in specified program activities), priority access to on-campus housing, and access to year-round housing (California College Pathways, 2021). We note that some program websites indicate the availability of these universal privileges and some do not.

The majority of programs offer a variety of community activities and workshops; some offer professional development activities; and most offer staff or peer advising to students.

Some programs also offer specialized or emergency funding to cover unexpected expenses, and some programs offer funding to support textbook purchases and/or computer purchases, repairs, or loans.

Program coordinators indicate that their students could benefit from additional supports. Three of the nine program coordinators indicate that additional mental health supports would be especially helpful. Two program coordinators indicate that additional housing supports (including uninterrupted housing so that students are not asked to move, a streamlined process for accessing housing supports, and additional financial aid to subsidize housing costs), and additional student funding would better meet students' needs. Other services that would help support students include a physical space and community lounge for students, and additional academic counseling.

<u>Measuring student satisfaction and success</u>

According to the UC Office of the President, the four-year and six-year graduation rates for entering freshmen is 46% vs. 66% and 68% vs. 84% for former foster youth compared to non-foster youth respectively (Institutional Research & Academic Planning, 2020)[6].

The majority of programs (7 of 9) regularly collect data on student satisfaction. Some programs also collect annual information about student needs (e.g., food insecurity, housing, and financial need); some collect intake information about student requests; and several collect data on student satisfaction with workshops and other programming. Three UCs have engaged in larger-scale program evaluations or data collection on student outcomes following graduation.

<u>Additional Supports</u>

Program Coordinators indicate that some aspects of their campus-based support programs are especially critical to students' success. Because of the many challenges former foster youth typically experience on their path to college, the list of vital services Program Coordinators suggest is long. They include financial supports, housing supports, advising, mental health services, helping scholars meet basic needs, connection with a community of peers, priority registration, and access to a critical individual during emergencies. One Program Coordinator summed up the central purpose of their campus support program: "[This program] provides a community where… scholars experience belonging. Their non-traditional identities are represented by others who came from similar circumstances and by the … staff."

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[6] For transfer students, the two-year and four-year graduation rates for former foster youth and non-former foster youth are 43% vs 56% and 80% vs 88%.

Table 3. Services offered[7]

	Berkeley	Davis	Irvine	Merced	Los Angeles	Riverside[8]	San Diego	Santa Barbara[9]	Santa Cruz
Priority registration	x	x	x	x		x	x[10]		
Priority access to on-campus housing			x	x		x	x		
Access to year-round housing	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Community activities	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Advising			x	x		x	x		
Peer mentoring/ advising	x	x	x	x			x	x	x
Professional development	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Textbook assistance	x	x	x	x		x			
Specialized financial assistance		x	x	x		x	x[11]		
Computer loans/ purchase	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
"Care packages"	x	x[12]	x	x			x	x	

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[7] Data are derived from a combination of program websites and survey responses.

[8] UC Riverside offers additional services to students who aged-out of foster care; these services are not available to students who experienced foster care but who did not emancipate or age-out. These additional services are noted with an *

[9] Data are limited and can only be determined by the public website.

[10] Priority registration beginning the second semester of attendance.

[11] $1,000 Hope Scholars award if student was in foster care after age 13

[12] Available some years.

Summary

Campus-based programs for former foster youth appear to offer a critical support to non-traditional students who may not have the benefits of family or other supports. This brief highlights the variability in program design across the UC campuses. Given the wide variety of needs former foster youth may present to each UC campus, attention to supporting their needs similarly across each campus may be warranted.

Methods

In the 2019-20 academic year, a Qualtrics survey was developed and distributed to Program Coordinators at each of the nine UC campuses following IRB approval (CPHS 2020-03-13101). The survey included 18 questions about program size, structure, and supports. Responses were received from all nine campuses and are summarized in this brief.

References

California College Pathways. (2021). Existing laws and regulations. www.cacollegepathways.org.

Institutional Research and Academic Planning. (2020). *Undergraduate foster youth at the University of California.* Oakland, CA: University of California Office of the President. https://ucop.edu/institutional-research-academic-planning/_files/uc-foster-youth.pdf

Okpych, N. (2021). *Climbing a broken ladder: Contributors of college success for youth in foster care.* Newark, NJ: Rutgers University Press.