



NSHE Foster Youth Fee Waiver and Program Report

June 2023

Prepared by the
Department of
Academic and
Student Affairs

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INTRODUCTION

education completion, to postsecondary education attainment, to a career path—

Recipients and Cost

Since the fee waiver policy was approved in Fall 2018, NSHE employees and community partners who are part of what is now known as the Nevada Fostering Higher Education Support Network have been working diligently to raise awareness of the fee waiver program throughout the state. There were 38 fee waivers awarded for the first entering cohort of qualifying NSHE students, for the 2018-19 academic year (Year 1), with a total cost of \$106,361 across the seven degree-granting institutions. In Year 2 (2019), when a greater number of students who have experienced foster care learned about the availability of the fee waiver, the number of fee waiver recipients doubled: 78 fee waivers were awarded, with the combined systemwide cost totaling \$237,443. In Year 3 (2020), the number of fee waivers awarded increased to 89, with the cost totaling \$331,099 across the system. Finally, in Year 4 (2021), the system increased the unduplicated number of fee waivers awarded to 116, with a total systemwide cost of \$478,478. The number of students awarded fee waivers, across the system, grew by 205.3 percent between Year 1 and Year 4; and the total fees waived increased by 301 percent (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Total Number of Fee Waiver Recipients Years 1-4

2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-Year % Change
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Recipient Demographics and Success Metrics

Knowing that academic success for fee waiver recipients is critical, NSHE’s Department of Academic and Student Affairs, which has overseen the Fostering Success Initiative since April 2021—created a plan to improve systemwide data collection on students utilizing the fee waiver. Beginning in Spring 2023, the system office began collecting fee waiver recipient data, which provides an opportunity to leverage other data already contained in the student data warehouse and report recipient race/ethnicity, gender and income data, as well as persistence and graduation data and the types of credentials earned. This expanded data collection effort enables the system level foster youth ambassador and institution faculty and staff directly serving NSHE students with foster care history to continuously improve services. It also positions NSHE and its institutions to pursue future internal and external funding opportunities to support the initiative work and reach the level of wraparound support needed to effectively assist these students with thriving in college.

The distribution of funds based on student race/ethnicity indicates that the percentage of historically minoritized students who received the fee waiver during Year 4 (2022) is higher than the overall historically minoritized student population at UNLV, UNR, NSC, and WNC. However, the opposite was true at CSN, GBC, and TMCC (Table 3)

Table 3: Foster Youth Fee Waiver Recipients by Race/Ethnicity Year 4 (2022)

	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black, Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	White, Non-Hispanic	Historically Minoritized FYFW	Historically Minoritized Institution †
UNLV	0%	3.7%	14.8%	37.0%	0%	18.5%	25.9%	74.1%	66.9%
UNR									

Table 4: Foster Youth Fee Waiver Recipients by Gender Year 4 (2022)

	Female FYFW	Female Institution †	Male FYFW	Male Institution †
UNLV	74.1%	57.3%	25.9%	42.7%
UNR	74.1%	54.4%	25.9%	45.6%
NSC		73.8%	12.5%	26.2%

Table 6: Fall to Fall Persistence by Foster Youth Fee Waiver Recipient Year

	201819	201920	202021	202122
UNLV	70.0%	64.3%	85.7%	77.8%
UNR	40.0%	75.0%	93.8%	81.5%
NSC	0.0%	50.0%	25.0%	50.0%
CSN	23.1%	32.3%	54.8%	55.0%
GBC	0.00%	--	--	50.0%
TMCC	16.7%	23.1%	58.3%	58.3%
WNC	0.0%	33.3%	20.0%	60.0%
NSHE	34.2%	43.6%	66.3%	69.0%

Note: students who received the fee waiver in fall semester and enrolled the following fall or earned a degree at any NSHE institution. Recipients are counted in each year a waiver was received.

Because 2018 was the first academic year of the Foster Youth Fee Waiver program and the latest available graduate data is as of June 2022, few fee waiver recipients have yet to graduate with a degree or certificate. Also of note, not enough time has elapsed since the program's inception to report the percentage of fee waiver recipients who graduate in common time increments, such as 150% of degree timeframe (Table 7 and 8).

Table 7: Foster Youth Fee Waiver Recipient Graduation by Institution

	Received Fee Waiver in 201819 & Graduated by 6/2022	Received Fee Waiver in 201920 & Graduated by 6/2022	Received Fee Waiver in 202021 & Graduated by 6/2022	Received Fee Waiver in 202122 & Graduated by 6/2022
UNLV	40.0%	28.6%	38.1%	33.3%
UNR				

THE NEED FOR DEDICATED SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED FOSTER CARE

Nevada Foster Care Population

Nationwide, children enter foster care due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment by their families. During any given year, in Nevada, there are nearly 5,000 children and youth in foster care. In Fiscal Year 2020, the Nevada Division of Child and Family Services reported an average of 4,500 children and youth in out-of-home care, the vast majority (an average of 3,331) being Clark County dependents. Washoe County had an average of 758 dependents; and the rural region (which comprises the remaining 15 counties) had an average of 414 dependents (State of Nevada Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Child and Family Services, 2021).

Education Opportunity Gap

Students who have experienced foster care are more likely than their non-involved peers to struggle academically due to trauma, basic needs deficiencies, foster care placement and/or school changes, school transportation issues, biased disciplinary practices, and other factors (American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law: Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, 2014; Casey Family Programs, 2018; National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, 2008). In addition to the challenges associated with navigating their trauma, basic needs deficiencies, and initial move upon entering foster care, young people with foster care history face additional placement changes that negatively impact school stability and academic progress. Approximately 64.3 percent of all children who are in foster care for at least 24 months will have three or more placements (Casey Family Programs, 2018). Placement instability causes school instability, both of which negatively impact education attainment (Casey Family Programs, 2018; National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, 2008). School suspension and expulsion rates are also significantly higher for students with foster care history (American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law: Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, 2014).

As young adults, transitioning youth with foster care history are at a high risk of experiencing homelessness (Dworsky et al., 2013; U.S. Children's Bureau, 2020), due to low education attainment and the ongoing impact of trauma. Moreover, Nevada's housing stability outcomes for youth aging out of foster care are particularly low in comparison to most other states (U.S. Children's Bureau, 2020). Postsecondary education is a key factor in addressing this issue, as it is one of the greatest determinants of securing and maintaining a living wage (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022) to help ensure financial security and housing stability.

As a consequence of the challenges described, Nevada's education system faces academic achievement and graduation rate disparities for students who have experienced foster care. According to [Nevada Report Card](#) data, the overall statewide high school graduation rates were 83.2 percent in 2018, 84.1 percent in 2019, 82.6 percent in 2020, 81.3 percent in 2021, and 81.7 percent in 2022. In contrast, the graduation rates for students who have experienced foster care were 46.5 percent, 44.2 percent, 43.3 percent, and 46.9 percent respectively, well below those of the general student population (Nevada Department of Education, 2022).

Furthermore, national college enrollment and graduation rates for students who have experienced foster care are very low due to the lack of financial and wraparound assistance that students with stronger support systems can more readily access. Within the general population, 61.8 percent of 2021 American high school graduates, ages 16 to 24, were enrolled in colleges/universities in October 2021—down from 62.7 percent in the prior year, likely due to COVIDS. Bureau of

the initiative's student-centered approach. After June 2025, both positions will be funded as part of the System Administration budget.

The Foundation has also directly awarded grants totaling \$55,000, to three of the NSHE institutions. The institutional level grants that NSHE has received are as follows:

1. Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) – Reno
 - a. \$30,000 (Awarded November 2019) – For housing stability and peer mentor support
 - b. \$225,000 (Awarded December 2021) – To help launch the TMCC Fostering College Success Program
2. University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) – Las Vegas
 - a. \$200,000 (Awarded February 2020) – To help launch the [UNLV Fostering Scholars Program](#)
 - b. \$300,000 (Awarded May 2023) – To assist the UNLV Fostering Scholars Program with its growth efforts
3. University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) – Reno
 - a. \$200,000 (Awarded November 2021) – To help launch [UNR Fostering the Pack](#)

Mission and Vision

- b. The financial and wraparound support already available to help support students who have experienced foster care to reach their college goals
 - c. The financial and wraparound support added to more effectively assist current and prospective college students who have experienced foster care
2. Networking (building social capital) – Facilitating consistent opportunities for the statewide network to connect with each other and other professionals throughout the country—in order to learn from each other, share ideas, and collaborate on projects designed to better support students with experience in foster care
 3. Supporting (building skills) – Identifying and providing opportunities for perpetual, culturally humble engagement in best practices learning/training pertaining to effective methods for supporting students who have experienced foster care

These core strategies, informed by national best practices in supporting students who have experienced foster care with reaching their college goals, better equip the statewide network to achieve the initiative’s mission and ultimate vision.

Progress September 2021 – May 2023 Initiative Outcomes

In order to ensure that NSHE is working effectively with young people with experience in foster care, the foster youth ambassador frequently consults with student leaders with foster care history and other members of the statewide network who have expertise in the unique circumstances, challenges, and needs of this underserved student population and/or expertise in various higher education topics. The ambassador serves as the primary point of contact for, and liaison between, all of the NSHE institutions and community partners. The ambassador also responds to inquiries from both prospective and current NSHE students who have experienced foster care, providing them with resources and directing them to campus staff/faculty and community based partners who can further assist them with various needs.

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In adopting best practices and strengthening resources and support services that are tailored to

discussed/developed collective priorities for the subsequent year. The Nevada Fostering Higher Education Committee's data subcommittee also finalized a joint data collection and information sharing letter, signed by the Nevada Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and the Nevada

Institution-Level Capacity Building

In addition to sustaining the various initiative efforts begun in prior years, the NSHE campuses have continued to expand their institutional efforts since the September 2021 fee waiver report presentation. UNLV launched NSHE's first full-time position and campus-based support program (the [UNLV Fostering Scholars Program](#)) serving students who have experienced foster care in Fall 2021, combining internal funds with private grant funding support from the Walter S. Johnson Foundation. Likewise, UNR was invited to apply for a year \$200,000 grant through the Johnson Foundation, based on their targeted internal efforts to formalize and expand support for students with experience in foster care, which was approved in November 2021. The same month TMCC was invited to apply for a three-year \$225,000 grant, which was approved in December 2021.

UNR began their two-year Foundation grant cycle on January 2022; and TMCC began their three-year grant cycle on March 2022. Both institutions are utilizing their funds to build more formal programming and create staff positions dedicated to serving students with experience in foster care. UNR's new program, launched in Spring 2022, is known as [Fostering the Pack](#) and serves fee waiver-eligible students enrolled at UNR, as well as supporting prospective UNR students who have experienced foster care with their college transition. TMCC's new program, launched in Spring 2022 after the part-time fostering college success advocate was hired in August 2022—is known as the Fostering College Success Program (website coming soon!); it serves current and prospective TMCC students who have experienced foster care, regardless of fee waiver eligibility. The establishment of the graduate assistant role and the launch of Fostering the Pack marked NSHE's second campus-based position and support program dedicated to students with foster care history; subsequently, TMCC advocate hire and program establishment marked NSHE's third campus-based position and support program dedicated to this student population.

Beginning in Spring 2022, UNLV ramped up their funding sustainability efforts for their campus-based support program. The program coordinator is engaged in ongoing efforts to expand UNLV's internal financial investment in the program in addition to her numerous other job duties focused on directly supporting students. The coordinator successfully established a graduate assistant (GA) position in the program's second year (2022-23), by strongly advocating for and acquiring that funding from CSUN. The coordinator has also been working very hard to identify and secure potential external funding opportunities—to expand upon the year \$200,000 private grant. A notable example of this is the partnership that the coordinator created with private donors Lynda and Blake Maxfield in 2022. The Maxfields have donated to the program themselves; and they have brought in other private donors to assist with funding direct student support, such as textbooks, as well as establishing another GA position to serve undergraduate students who have experienced foster care. Moreover, the UNLV Department of Service Learning and Leadership secured a \$900,000 federal basic needs grant in April 2022 to provide critical support to their students who have experienced foster care and/or homelessness, as well as other UNLV students who face basic needs challenges.

CONCLUSION

As conveyed throughout this report, the NSHE Foster Youth Fee Waiver changed the landscape of postsecondary education opportunities for current and prospective NSHE students who have experienced foster care. Without it, many students have continually conveyed that they would not have been in a position to pursue a college degree. Fee waiver utilization increased by 205.3

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APPENDIX : NSHE FOSTER YOUTH FEE WAIVER POLICY