

**Profile of
Fostering Success
University of Wisconsin–Stout
2020 Regents Diversity Award Program Recipient**

Highlights from nomination materials:

- The Fostering Success program is an initiative at UW-Stout that supports college students who were former foster youth, a population that is often underserved and faces additional barriers to college education. The program consists of two initiatives: 1) a summer precollege camp for current foster youth focused on acclimating students to a campus environment and imparting knowledge on post-secondary options, and 2) a program of support for current UW-Stout students who have experienced the foster care system, in which a high percentage are also low-income and first-generation college students.
- The program supports students by providing an advisor with specialized training in trauma-informed care and foster coach certification, access to academic support and tutoring, peer mentoring, work study and internship opportunities, bi-weekly family dinners with program participants, access to a supply closet with basic items, and a scholarship and emergency need fund. Student Support Services also provides academic support such as career planning, financial literacy, math/writing support, and workshops on various topics.
- For Fostering Success students who qualify for TRIO services, the Fostering Success program works in collaboration with the TRIO Student Support Services grant, which supports students from first-generation and limited-income backgrounds as well as students with a disability.
- The Fostering Success program is the first of its kind in the UW System and has been upheld as a best practice model for UW-River Falls, which is developing its own program.
- Program goals are ambitious for former foster youth. National statistics report that although 80% of foster youth have goals of attending college, only 20% enroll and only 3% graduate from a four-year institution.
- The program is making great strides in enrollment and retention. In 2017, the program served 15 students. In 2019, 69 new freshmen indicated they were eligible for the program and from spring 2018 to spring 2019, 80% of students in the Fostering Success program were retained. This is in comparison to the 69% retention rate of the general student population.
- Fostering Success has been honored with various awards and grants. For example, advisor Gail Mentzel earned the PATHS Outstanding Teacher Award presented by Governor Tony Evers.
- The program is accountable with strong evaluation measures including an Advisory Board composed of individuals from youth service organizations, local financial institutions, community members at large, UW-Stout staff, technical college staff, UW-Eau Claire staff, student leaders, and community philanthropic organizations.

In the words of colleagues:

- “UW-Stout continues to be a strong advocate for fostered youth and the numbers show we are succeeding. We look forward to what the future holds for this program in terms of growth, retention, and successfully adding to Wisconsin’s workforce. We are truly Stout Proud to give a home and a sense of belonging to our state’s fostered youth.” —*Patrick Guilfoile, Interim Chancellor, UW-Stout*
- “The UW-Stout Fostering Success program is inviting foster youth, some of the youth least likely to attend college and least likely to finish, and helping them to become the unique individual they are, helping them to find a place in which they fit, and creating successful lives for themselves. We are helping the foster youth and then they are contributing to their communities with great knowledge and strength.” —*Dominique Vargas, Associate Dean of Students for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, UW-Stout*