

# THE BEXAR COUNTY FOSTERING EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS PROJECT

An initiative to increase the number of students with a history of foster care who enroll in and graduate from college, while simultaneously influencing practice and policy across Texas and the United States through groundbreaking research

**FUNDING REQUEST** | 1,750,000 per year; \$3,500,000 per biennium

## OVERVIEW

The Bexar County Fostering Educational Success (BCFES) Project works to improve college enrollment, retention and graduation rates for students with a history of foster care. The project also focuses on expanding awareness that college is achievable among those still in foster care, while ensuring they are academically and emotionally prepared for their educational journey.

The project provides comprehensive support services and innovative programming for students with a history of foster care who are enrolled at UTSA, Texas A&M San Antonio and the Alamo Colleges. In addition, the project provides innovative pre-college programming to youth still in foster care.

The model is based on a trauma-informed, strategic framework that incorporates evidence of best practices, coaching and holistic and emergency financial support to meet the unique needs of students. The project is conducting groundbreaking research on the educational support pipeline, from high school through college graduation. The scope and scale of this system is critical to understanding the project's impact and how our model may be replicated elsewhere.

This project brings together partners across child welfare, the Children's Court, independent school districts, Child Protective Services and colleges and universities in Bexar County. UTSA is serving as the fiduciary agent and administrator to ensure the program's success.

## THE CHALLENGE

While more than 70% of youth in foster care aspire to go to college, only 33% enroll in a two or four-year institution, and only 3% will graduate. A college degree impacts lifetime earnings and employment and leads to better physical health, more civic engagement and less reliance on public assistance. A degree also has the potential to break the intergenerational cycle of child abuse, neglect and involvement with the foster care system.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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## THE IMPACT: BY THE NUMBERS

At UTSA alone, enrollment of students with a history of foster care has increased by 69% (FY19-21). The persistence of students receiving program services from the fall to spring semester increased to 86% from 33% (FY21 versus FY20). Other key impact data points:

- 2,352 foster care youth and alumni received targeted outreach
- 828 youth and alumni (600 college students + 228 youth still in foster care) received comprehensive support
- Nearly \$500,000 provided in direct student financial assistance and emergency funds
- 65 young adults and 30 dependent children received housing and supportive services through the program's Housing First Project and Supervised Independent Living Programs
- 146 new and transfer students participated in a specialized college transition orientation
- 218 pre-college and college workshops delivered addressing physical and mental health, housing, life skills, educational success, finances and employment
- 100+ professional stakeholders participated in the Steering Committee and serve as institutional champions
- \$9.4 million in tuition and fees waived by partner institutions

## THE IMPACT: ON INVESTMENT

\$2,263,572	Additional funding leveraged thanks to state investment (as of October 2022)
\$1,864,572	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - Housing First Project
\$80,000	Department of Family and Protective Services – Supervised Independent Living
\$100,000	Impact San Antonio Foundation Grant - Early Start Experience
\$150,000	In-cash and in-kind donations from individual and corporate donors
\$169,000	City of San Antonio - Paid Internships and Indirect Support



## TAKEAWAY

UTSA appreciates this important project was exempted from reductions in 2020-2021 biennium and remains exempt from the 2022-2023 baseline request level reductions. We look forward to continued partnership to advance the project's impact on Texas students.