



NSHE Foster Youth Fee Waiver and Program Report



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**Prepared by the
Department of
Academic and
Student Affairs**

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INTRODUCTION

In September 2018, NSHE launched the [Fostering Success Initiative](#) when the Nevada Board of Regents unanimously approved the [Foster Youth Fee Waiver](#) (*Title 4, Chapter 17, Section 13*). The fee waiver policy permits qualifying NSHE undergraduate students to register for eligible courses without being charged registration or certain laboratory fees, increasing college access for specific students who have experienced foster care.

Shortly after the fee waiver approval, NSHE applied for and received the first of six years of private grant funding from the [Walter S. Johnson Foundation](#), which supports projects focused on improving wellbeing, economic stability, and educational opportunity for young people who have experienced foster care and other systems-involved youth. A large portion of the grant funding went toward hiring a full-time, system-level employee (the NSHE foster youth ambassador) to implement and coordinate the initiative and its fundamental fee waiver component across NSHE's seven degree-granting institutions.

This report provides an overview of the fee waiver and the Nevada foster care population, highlighting the need for dedicated postsecondary education planning, preparation, access, transition, and persistence support—in the form of both financial assistance and wraparound support services—for Nevada students who have experienced foster care. It also provides information on the NSHE Foster Youth Fee Waiver eligibility requirements, total number of recipients and total fees waived, recipient demographics and success metrics, as well as a high-level overview of the NSHE Fostering Success Initiative grant-funded activities and accomplishments. This includes key efforts to continuously learn from NSHE students with foster care history and milestones in the statewide initiative's progress.

NSHE FOSTER YOUTH FEE WAIVER

Background

In September 2018, NSHE launched its systemwide Foster Youth Success Initiative (renamed in 2022, as the Fostering Success Initiative) when the Nevada Board of Regents unanimously approved the Foster Youth Fee Waiver (*Title 4, Chapter 17, Section 13*)—making Nevada the 29th state to implement a statewide college financial assistance program for students who have experienced foster care. By 2021, the number of states that have some form of statewide postsecondary education financial assistance dedicated to this population had increased to 35: 24 states with a statewide course registration fee waiver (or “tuition” waiver, as the terminology varies between states), four states with state-funded grant programs, and seven states with state-funded scholarship programs (University of Washington, 2021). As of 2022, there are now an estimated 37 statewide college financial assistance programs dedicated to college students with foster care history ([Fostering Academic Achievement Nationwide Network](#), et al., 2022).

The NSHE Foster Youth Fee Waiver policy permits qualifying undergraduate students attending any NSHE institution to register for eligible courses without being charged registration or certain laboratory fees. In approving the Foster Youth Fee Waiver, the Board contributed in an impactful way to the initiative's ultimate vision, which is to build a comprehensive, sustainable, and permanent education support system for Nevada students who have experienced foster care—from secondary

education completion, to postsecondary education attainment, to a career path—which was collaboratively developed by NSHE and community partners throughout the state.

As originally approved by the Board of Regents, fee waiver eligibility required students to have been in the custody of a Nevada child welfare agency at or after age 14 and to have graduated from a Nevada high school. The Nevada high school requirement was removed in 2019, but the revision inadvertently created an eligibility disparity for graduates of non-Nevada high schools who exited the Nevada foster care system before age 18. At its June 2022 meeting, the Board remedied the disparity by standardizing the eligibility requirements for students who were in the care of a Nevada child welfare agency, regardless of the state in which they graduated high school. Additionally, the Board decreased the age at which a student must have been in the custody of a Nevada dependency court—from 14 to 13 years old—opening up eligibility for students who exited foster care at age 13 ([Board of Regents Handbook Revision, June 2022](#)).

Initial Eligibility Requirements

To initially qualify for the NSHE Foster Youth Fee Waiver, a student must meet all four program requirements provided in Board policy:

- In foster care in Nevada, at the age of 13 years or older (adjudicated “ward of the court” status, for any length of time);
- Graduated from high school or passed the TASC, HiSET, or GED;
- Completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); and
- Under the age of 26 years.

Requiring fee waiver-eligible students who have experienced foster care to complete the FAFSA means that those students will be able to access federal financial aid and other need-based institutional aid, in addition to receiving the fee waiver. This ensures that these students have the funding to not only support their college education, but also to alleviate other living costs associated with attending college (books, room and board, transportation, etc.).

Continuing Eligibility Requirements

A student need only complete the fee waiver form and submit it to the institution’s Admissions/Registrar’s Office once. If the institution determines that the student qualifies for the fee waiver, the student must meet the following three requirements for continuing eligibility:

- **Annual FAFSA Submission** – Complete the FAFSA each year;
- **Satisfactory Academic Progress** – Meet Title IV financial aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements at their NSHE institution, starting with their second semester as a fee waiver recipient; and
- **Age** – Be under the age of 26 years, on the first day of any semester for which they are seeking the fee waiver.

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) is a term typically associated with the Federal Student Aid (FSA) programs such as the Pell Grant and indicates the successful completion of coursework toward a degree or certificate. Requiring that students meet SAP requirements ensures that students are on track to achieve their educational goals.

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 (2019-20), 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 more than doubled: 78 fee waivers were awarded, with the combined systemwide cost totaling \$237,443. In Year 3 (2020-21), the number of fee waivers awarded increased to 89, with the cost totaling \$331,099 across the system. Finally, in Year 4 (2021-22), the system increased the unduplicated number of fee waivers awarded to 116, with a total systemwide cost of \$426,478. 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 301.0 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
UNLV	10	14	21	27	170.0%
UNR	5	12	16	27	440.0%
NSC	2	2	4	8	300.0%
CSN	13	31	31	40	207.7%
GBC	1	0	0	2	100.0%
TMCC	6	13	12	12	100.0%
WNC	1	6	5	5	400.0%
Total	38	78	89	121*	205.3%

*In Year 4 (2021-22), there were 5 students who received the fee waiver at more than one NSHE institution, resulting in an unduplicated student count of 116.

Table 2: Total Fees Waived – Years 1 - 4

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-Year % Change
UNLV	\$45,024	\$75,026	\$120,023	\$140,934	213.0%
UNR	\$26,866	\$82,140	\$116,974	\$170,288	533.8%
NSC	\$5,565	\$6,916	\$13,495	\$17,625	216.7%
CSN	\$19,449	\$46,644	\$51,184	\$66,179	240.3%
GBC	\$1,151	\$0	\$0	\$4,680	306.6%
TMCC	\$6,764	\$16,954	\$23,058	\$19,700	191.2%
WNC	\$1,541	\$9,763	\$6,365	\$7,072	358.9%
Total	\$106,361	\$237,443	\$331,099	\$426,478	301.0%

Note: dollar totals are based on actual—not rounded—figures, and therefore may differ if using the rounded figure only.

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 who are utilizing the fee waiver. Beginning in Spring 2023, the system office began collecting student-level 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-level 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 (2021-22) was 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 (2021-22)

	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	3.7%	7.4%	11.1%	18.5%	0%	7.4%	48.2%	48.2%	42.9%
NSC	0%	0%	25.0%	50.0%	0%	12.5%	0%	87.5%	66.1%
CSN	2.5%	2.5%	17.5%	32.5%	2.5%	7.5%	32.5%	65.0%	67.1%
GBC	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100.0%	0%	39.3%
TMCC	0%	0%	8.3%	25.0%	0%	0%	66.7%	33.3%	48.0%
WNC	0%	0%	0%	20.0%	0%	20.0%	60.0%	40.0%	35.7%

Note: percentages exclude unknown race/ethnicity categories. Historically minoritized categories include all ethnicities included in the table except White, Non-Hispanic.

†IPEDS, Fall 2020.

The distribution of funds based on gender indicates that the percentage of female students who received the fee waiver during Year 4 (2021-22) was higher than the overall female student population across all institutions, whereas the percentage of male students who received the fee waiver during the same year was lower than the overall male student population across all institutions (Table 4).

Table 4: Foster Youth Fee Waiver Recipients by Gender – Year 4 (2021-22)

	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	87.5%	73.8%	12.5%	26.2%
CSN	72.5%	58.1%	27.5%	41.9%
GBC	100.0%	66.2%	0%	33.8%
TMCC	75.0%	55.3%	25.0%	44.7%
WNC	100.0%	54.3%	0%	45.7%

†IPEDS, Fall 2020.

Since the Foster Youth Fee Waiver is a need-based financial aid program and recipients are required to file a FAFSA, income information is available for all recipients. Data collected from the campuses for reporting to the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP) demonstrates that, as intended, the program is reaching students with high financial need (Table 5).

Table 5: Foster Youth Fee Waiver Recipients by Income – Year 4 (2021-22)

Median Income: \$4,511

Income Range	Students	Fees Waived
\$2,999 or less	58	\$229,400
\$3,000-5,999	13	\$57,194
\$6,000-9,999	17	\$68,777
\$10,000-14,999	7	\$24,703
\$15,000-19,999	8	\$20,151
\$20,000-29,999	9	\$18,147
\$30,000-39,999	3	\$5,202
\$40,000-49,000	0	\$0
\$50,000 or more	1	\$2,905
Total	116	\$426,479

NOTE: from data reported by recipients on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Rounded to the nearest dollar.

Fall-to-fall persistence data on Foster Youth Fee Waiver recipients illustrates that there was a general upward trend at the system level in the persistence rates across the four years in which the fee waiver has been available thus far (Table 6).

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

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
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 a 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 2018-19 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 (Tables 7 and 8).

Table 7: Foster Youth Fee Waiver Recipient Graduation by Institution

	Received Fee Waiver in 2018-19 & Graduated by 6/2022	Received Fee Waiver in 2019-20 & Graduated by 6/2022	Received Fee Waiver in 2020-21 & Graduated by 6/2022	Received Fee Waiver in 2021-22 & Graduated by 6/2022
UNLV	40.0%	28.6%	38.1%	33.3%
UNR	40.0%	25.0%	25.0%	18.5%
NSC	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
CSN	7.7%	9.7%	16.1%	15.0%
GBC	0.0%	--	--	0.0%
TMCC	16.7%	23.1%	16.7%	25.0%
WNC	100.0%	16.7%	20.0%	40.0%
NSHE	23.7%	18.0%	22.5%	22.4%

Table 8: Foster Youth Fee Waiver Recipient Credentials Earned by Institution

	Skills Certificate	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree
UNLV	0	0	9
UNR	0	0	4
NSC	0	0	1
CSN	1	6	0
GBC	0	0	0
TMCC	0	3	0
WNC	0	2	0
Total	1	11	14

Note: highest credential earned by granting institution, regardless of institution(s) at which fee waiver was received.

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, p. 6).

Education Opportunity Gap

Students who have experienced foster care are more likely than their non-foster care-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 experience in foster care, causing further trauma and academic challenges (American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law: Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, 2014).

As young adults, transition-age 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 job (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022) to help ensure financial security and housing stability.

As a consequence of the challenges described above, 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, 50 percent, 43.3 percent, and 46.9 percent respectively—far below those of the general student population (Nevada Department of Education, 2023).

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 COVID-19 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). As of 2021, 37.9 percent of U.S. adults, age 25 and over, ultimately earn a bachelor’s degree (National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2021). In contrast, the most recent factsheet released by the National Working Group on Foster Care and Education indicates that, depending upon U.S. region, 70 to 84 percent of 17- and 18-year-old American youth in foster care express a desire to go to college, but only 31.8 to 45.3 percent of youth in foster care who graduated from high school successfully enroll in some type of postsecondary education program. And, depending upon U.S. region, only three to 10.8 percent of students with foster care history attain a bachelor’s degree (National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2018).

Students with foster care history who successfully enroll in college are more likely than their peers without foster care history to delay their postsecondary education enrollment and to enroll part time, because of financial concerns and the competing pressure to earn money to support themselves. They are also more likely than their peers without foster care history to need developmental (remedial) or corequisite support courses, due to the education gaps and challenges they experienced because of the unstable and unpredictable nature of foster care (Gross, 2016). These setbacks in their postsecondary education path are correlated with the limited opportunities and support that students who have experienced foster care face; and these obstacles make it challenging for them to thrive and persist in college. Moreover, even though the vast majority of students with lived experience in foster care report a very low income on the FAFSA and qualify for the maximum Pell Grant award, it is still a struggle to afford the full cost of attendance (COA), which includes books and basic living expenses not covered by the fee waiver.

NSHE FOSTERING SUCCESS INITIATIVE

Grant Support

As a result of the Board’s approval of the Foster Youth Fee Waiver and the subsequent establishment of the Fostering Success Initiative, NSHE applied for and received an initial one-year \$200,000 grant from the [Walter S. Johnson Foundation](#) to establish the system-level foster youth ambassador position tasked with implementing and coordinating the initiative and its critical fee waiver component across the seven degree-granting institutions. The grant also funds other initiative needs—such as specialized trainings and other professional development opportunities for NSHE employees and community partners who are supporting the unique, under-supported foster care population with college planning, preparation, access, transition, and persistence processes/needs. Given NSHE budget constraints that made it challenging to internally fund the ambassador position immediately after the first year of grant funding was exhausted, the Foundation invited NSHE to apply for two additional private grants (a two-year grant and then a final three-year grant). In total, NSHE has been awarded six years of private grant funding at the system level, amounting to \$1.2 million (\$200,000 per year), which will last through June 2025. These seed funding grants have supported NSHE with maintaining and expanding the system-level initiative work. Beginning with the second year of grant funding, a student worker position was added. This position provides an opportunity each year for one NSHE student with foster care experience to do work that enhances

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 \$955,000, 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

The initiative's mission is to more effectively recruit, support, and retain students who have experienced foster care; and, its ultimate vision is to build a comprehensive, sustainable, and permanent education support system for Nevada students who have experienced foster care—from secondary education completion, to postsecondary education attainment, to a career path.

The system-level foster youth ambassador is dedicated to achieving the initiative's mission and ultimate vision, in collaboration with the Nevada Fostering Higher Education Support Network—a coordinated statewide network of NSHE student leaders with foster care history, child welfare professionals, K-12 educators and administrators, legal services providers, court representatives, workforce professionals, NSHE institution employees, and other stakeholders (including some community partners in other states and national partners who are dedicated to supporting Nevada with its efforts to better serve students with experience in foster care in the higher education space).

As a system-level employee, the ambassador employs three core strategies in facilitating the statewide network and supporting its members with achieving success, each of which includes several key focus areas designed to increase postsecondary education attainment for young people who have experienced foster care:

1. **Resourcing (building knowledge)** – Creating and/or disseminating specialized resources—in collaboration with student leaders and experts in the field of higher education support for students with experience in foster care—that assist educators, community-based professionals, and elected officials with better understanding the following:
 - a. The unique circumstances, challenges, and needs of students who have experienced foster care;

- b. The financial and wraparound support already available to help support students who have experienced foster care to reach their college goals; and
 - c. The financial and wraparound support still needed 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 practice-focused 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-based staff/faculty and community-based partners who can further assist them with various needs.

Additionally, the ambassador leads the Nevada Fostering Higher Education Support Network—particularly the core members who make up the Nevada Fostering Higher Education Committee—in the development and implementation of effective postsecondary education planning, preparation, access, transition, and persistence practices, as well as the development and implementation of complementary programming. These best practices and programs are formulated to assist young people who have experienced trauma, educational instability, inadequate financial resources, and limited support systems; and the approach employed is twofold:

1. Increasing financial aid access and utilization for all prospective and current NSHE students with experience in foster care—particularly in the form of the NSHE Foster Youth Fee Waiver (for eligible current and former dependents of the Nevada foster care system); federal, state, and institution-specific grants; and scholarships; and
2. Improving and expanding postsecondary education-specific wraparound support for Nevada students who have experienced foster care—including students in the college preparation and transition stages, as well as continuing college students.

In adopting best practices and strengthening resources and support services that are tailored to students with foster care history, NSHE seeks to: 1) improve its own ability to effectively support young people who have experienced foster care with college planning, preparation, access, transition, and persistence activities; 2) expand the capacity of other systems serving this population to assist with college-focused activities; and 3) build stronger career pathways for students with experience in foster care.

Student Voice/Leadership

A student-led/informed approach is woven through all of the initiative work, meaning that authentic student input and participation is always welcome and highly encouraged. For instance, student voices were the catalyst for the systemwide initiative's name change when, in September 2022, the name was officially changed from NSHE Foster Youth Success Initiative to NSHE Fostering Success Initiative. This change removed the label of "foster youth" and reflects a person-centered, age-inclusive approach to supporting students who have experienced foster care. The 2021-22 and 2022-23 systemwide peer and community educators then created a logo concept that evolved into the new logo. The initiative has increasingly used person-centered language as it has evolved, so the name change aligns with the initiative's efforts to remain student-centered and stay abreast of cutting-edge best practices in the field.

The NSHE Department of Academic and Student Affairs also created the systemwide peer and community educator position, beginning with the 2020-21 academic year, which is on a one-year cycle to give multiple students the opportunity to hold the leadership role. Throughout Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, the system-level foster youth ambassador worked with all three peer and community educators, to date (2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23), to create a statewide peer-to-peer promotional video. The video is designed to effectively inform students in foster care, and their personal and professional support people, about the initiative—including the vital fee waiver component and the developing campus-based wraparound support services—in order to improve the secondary-to-higher-education pipeline for those students. The 2022-23 peer and community educator is currently working on video post-production tasks.

Finally, the initiative's partnership with the [iFoster Jobs Program](#), launched in March 2023, has provided additional student leadership opportunities. The program is a collaboration between [iFoster](#), NSHE System Administration, the Southern Nevada NSHE institutions, and several key Southern Nevada community partners. In February, the chancellor's office established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with iFoster to serve as a host site for the program's inaugural year—for one part-time AmeriCorps member who is an NSHE student.

Statewide Collaboration/Professional Development

Effectively serving and supporting students with experience in foster care requires building and maintaining a cohesive statewide network that collaborates and is committed to learning about the population. Notable recent examples in this area include the third and fourth annual NSHE Fostering Success Initiative retreats, held in November 2021 and December 2022 respectively. During the retreats, members of the Nevada Fostering Higher Education Committee worked collaboratively to build a more cohesive statewide learning community focused on supporting students who have experienced foster care with accessing and thriving in college, learned from student leaders with lived expertise in foster care and the professionals who serve them, and

discussed/co-developed collective priorities for the subsequent year. The Nevada Fostering Higher Education Committee's data subcommittee also finalized the joint data collection and information sharing letter, signed by the Nevada Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and the Nevada Department of Education (NDE), which was disseminated to the local child welfare and education agencies in February 2022.

In August 2022, the system-level foster youth ambassador joined the [Nevada Children's Commission](#) Education Committee, to contribute expertise on topics related to the educational best interests of Nevada students with foster care history. Additionally, in October 2022, a delegation of NSHE student leaders, NSHE employees, and community partners participated in the California College Pathways Blueprint for Success Conference, which is a nationally-renowned, biennial event focused on supporting students who have experienced foster care with postsecondary education success. Furthermore, in November 2022, 11 NSHE employees and community partners completed the specialized [Level II Fostering Success Coach Training](#) that is tailored to supporting students who have experienced foster care with reaching their higher education goals; upon completion of the training, the participants became Level 2 Certified Fostering Success Coaches. The NSHE Fostering Success Champions Quarterly Roundtables also launched in February 2023, to provide a new quarterly professional development group space for the campus-based staff/faculty at the NSHE institutions.

System-Level Outreach & Resource Development/Provision

Knowing that NSHE students who have experienced foster care, their support people, the institutions, and the initiative's community partners need reliable information about the postsecondary education processes, resources, and support specific to this student population, the NSHE Department of Academic and Student Affairs has worked to create, improve, and expand electronic reference materials and an online/social media presence that will better serve the educational best interests of students with experience in foster care. For example, in May 2023, the NSHE Department of Academic and Student Affairs launched its first issue of the [systemwide initiative e-newsletter](#), in honor of [National Foster Care Month](#), to improve and expand upon existing efforts to ensure that students with foster care history, NSHE employees, and community partners are well-informed about key resources and developments.

The system-level foster youth ambassador also serves on a monthly Eighth Judicial District Court OPPLA Review Panel started in early 2022, designed to improve the high school-to-college pipeline for Clark County youth in foster care, along with the UNLV Fostering Scholars Program coordinator. Additionally, throughout 2022, the NSHE Department of Academic and Student Affairs partnered with [Foster Love \(formerly named Together We Rise\)](#), for a second time, to provide supplemental funding support to Nevada students who have experienced foster care through their Rapid Response program. The program reserved \$15,000 for the 2022 calendar year, funded by the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, for Nevada students with experience in foster care who are transitioning to or already enrolled in college. The funds were flexible and available to cover expenses that could not be covered by financial aid or other funding sources for which students were eligible. NSHE employees and community partners did an excellent job with executing referrals, and we successfully spent all dedicated Nevada funding by October 2022. As a result, NSHE is now partnering with Foster Love for a 3rd time, with another \$15,000 in Rapid Response funds allocated to our students for the 2023 calendar year, as well as \$10,000 in additional dedicated textbook funding support.

Institution-Level Capacity-Building

In addition to sustaining the various initiative efforts begun in prior years, the NSHE campuses have continued to expand their institution-level 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 two-year \$200,000 grant through the 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 1st, 2022; and TMCC began their three-year grant cycle on March 1st, 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](#); it 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—officially launched in Spring 2023, 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, the 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, pursue, and secure potential external funding opportunities—to expand upon their two-year \$200,000 private grant. A notable example of this is the partnership that the coordinator created with private donors Lynda and Blake Maxwell, in 2022. The Maxwells 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 UNLV 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 2023, 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 at all. Fee waiver utilization increased by 205.3

percent in the four years since its adoption. Tracking the needs and academic success of fee waiver recipients is vital, which is why the demographic and persistence/graduation data added to this second biennial report is so critical to the long-term vitality of the program. The data enables the systemwide network to continuously improve services for NSHE students who have experienced foster care. While there is no doubt that the Board's approval of the fee waiver contributed in an impactful way to the initiative's mission, nor is there any doubt that the NSHE institutions are invested in serving this population, there is still work to do. This report underscores the need for building more robust, tailored campus-based wraparound support resources and services for these students. It also illustrates the need for more dedicated one-on-one postsecondary education planning, preparation, access, transition, and persistence support—outside of the higher education system itself—because it takes the collaborative efforts of all key stakeholders to effectively provide the level of support needed for students to thrive.

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APPENDIX: NSHE FOSTER YOUTH FEE WAIVER POLICY

Board of Regents *Handbook*

Title 4, Chapter 17, Section 13

1. A student who was in the custody of an agency which provides child welfare services in Nevada after the student reached the age of 13 years may be permitted to register for credit without a registration fee or, except as otherwise provided, laboratory fee(s) if the student:
 - a. Has graduated from high school or obtained a general equivalency diploma or equivalent document;
 - b. Completes the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); and
 - c. Is under the age of 26 years.

A student placed out of state by a Nevada child welfare agency for the purpose of treatment or who was placed out of state through an Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) is eligible for the waiver.

2. This policy is applicable during Fall and Spring terms only.
3. State-supported academic credit-bearing courses that lead to a degree or certificate, including distance education courses, independent learning, and continuing education courses are eligible for the fee waiver. Self-supporting courses, including independent study and correspondence courses, are not eligible for waiver under this policy.
4. Laboratory fees associated with all courses numbered below the 300 level are eligible for waiver under this policy. Exceptions to the waiver of laboratory fees include:
 - a. Per semester fees, such as the Health Service fee;
 - b. Special course fees for purposes other than class supplies – including individual instruction, third-party charges, and special transportation requirements;
 - c. Fees for actual class cost in excess of \$100; and
 - d. Technology fees.
5. A person to whom the fee waiver is awarded shall be deemed a bona fide resident of Nevada for tuition purposes.
6. To remain eligible for the fee waiver, the student must meet institutional Title IV financial aid satisfactory academic progress requirements.
7. Registration fees associated with graduate level courses and with the William S. Boyd School of Law; the University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine; the University of Nevada, Las Vegas School of Medicine; and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas School of Dental Medicine are not eligible for waiver under this policy.
8. Each institution shall designate a primary point of contact for questions concerning and administration of the fee waiver.
9. For purposes of this Section, “an agency which provides child welfare services” means such an agency as defined under NRS 432B.030.