

The John Seita Scholars Program

Supporting Foster Youth In Higher Education

A presentation to
State Court Administrative Office, Child Welfare Services Division &
Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice

May 11, 2010

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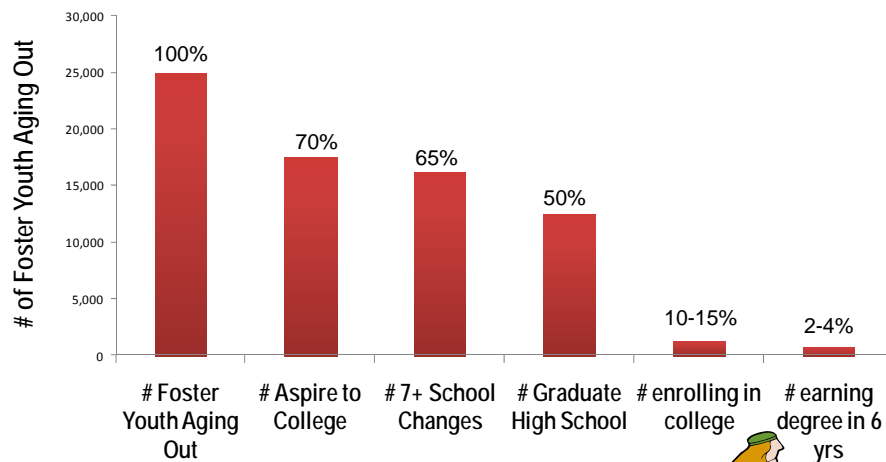
Brittany Z. WMU Sophomore, Seita Scholar

Sherelle B. WMU Freshman, Seita Scholar



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Odds of Higher Education without support



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History of Seita Scholars Program

- **Spring 2007:** Statewide Summit Meeting
- **Summer 2007:** Created John Seita Scholarship
- **Fall 2007 – Spring 2008:** Planning Committee and Student Advisory Group
- **Fall 2008:** Welcomed 1st Cohort of 51 Scholars
- **Fall 2007 – Spring 2009:** Program Budget & Plan
- **Fall 2009:** Welcomed 2nd Cohort of 47 Scholars
- **Spr 2009 – now:** Program Development
- **Fall 2010:** Expecting up to 50 new Scholars



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Student Advisory Group 2007-08



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Seita Scholars Program – Goals

- To increase number of youth from foster care earning baccalaureate degrees.
- To provide youth who age out of foster care and qualify for admission or transfer to WMU a transitional pathway to adulthood through the experience and achievement of undergraduate education.
- To create a community of scholars among WMU students who have aged out of foster care.



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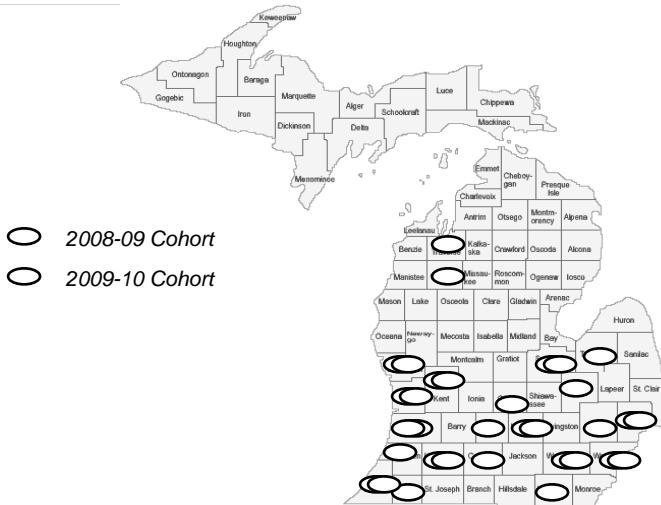
Seita Scholars – Demographics

	2008 – 2009 % (N=51)	2009 – 2010 % (N=47)
% Female	47 (n=24)	62 (n=29)
% African	25 (n=13)	13 (n=6)
% African-American	37 (n=19)	40 (n=19)
% White	28 (n=14)	38 (n=18)
% Other (Native Amer, Hispanic, Asian)	10 (n=5)	9 (n=4)
% Freshman	47 (n=24)	75 (n=35)
% Transfer	35 (n=18)	25 (n=12)
% Other (KVCC)	18 (n=9)	-



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Seita Scholars by Home County



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Seita Scholars by Academic Major

- Over 25 different majors
 - art, athletic training, aviation, biology, biochemistry, biomedical sciences, business, communication, criminal justice, education, engineering, exercise science, geography, history, music, nursing, occupational therapy, political science, sociology, psychology, social work, textile & applied studies, theatre, undeclared.

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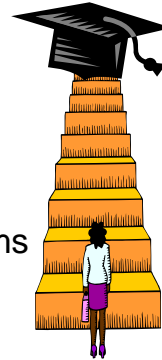
Seita Scholars – Retention

How many...	2008 – 2009	2009 - 2010
Applied to WMU	70	124
Enrolled Fall semester	51 (100%)	47
Persisted to end of Fall	48 (94%)	47 (100%)
Returned Spring semester	39 (76%)	44 (94%)
Persisted to end of Spring	36 (71%)	39 (83%)
Returning 3 rd semester	27 (53%)	--

NOTE: 2 out of 3 Seita Scholars who “stopped out” remain in contact with the program, and are actively seeking to return to school.

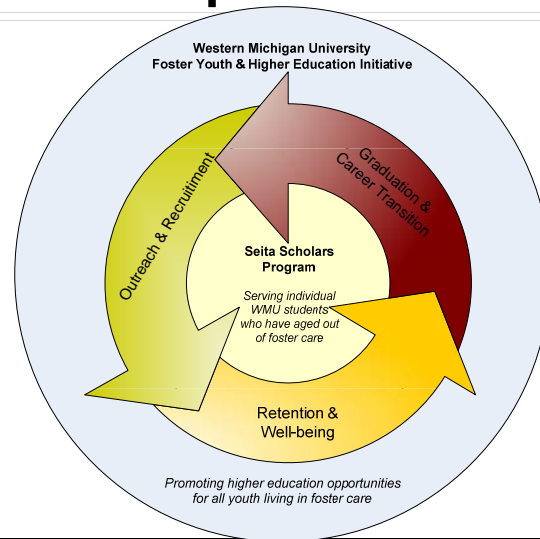
Obstacles to Academic Success

- Physical and mental health
- Finances, financial planning
- Poor academic preparation
- Wary of adults; asking for help
- Lack of accountability to adults/systems
- System demands (DHS, Medicaid, Court, Mental Health)
- Family obligations (e.g., siblings), death and violence, strong identity with home community.



Seita Program Components

“For every student-level intervention, there is an equal and opposite system-level Intervention.”



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Seita Program Components

Student Outreach and Recruitment: WMU provides information and resources about college to foster youth; admitted students are visited by Campus Coaches in the summer before moving to campus.

Student Retention and Well-being: WMU is developing various strategies to help former foster youth transition into adulthood through the experience of higher education and by developing a “community of scholars.”

Student Graduation and Career Transition: 100 percent of foster youth will have emancipated from DHS by the time they reach college graduation; need for career transition.



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At-Risk Youth: OUTREACH

No one to encourage me



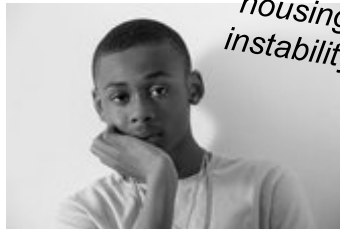
Lack of mentors

Interrupted schooling

no financial back up

Disappointment

Abuse & neglect



housing instability



No one to show me "how"

Weak help-seeking "muscles"



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Key Services: OUTREACH

- WMU Admissions form identifies applicants from foster care
- Work with caseworkers, foster parents and others to plan move to college
- Campus Coaches call/visit admitted students in home communities in summer
- Customized Campus Tours
- Provide information and resources about college to foster youth and assist with financial aid and application process
- Scholarship Package (3 main components to achieve minimal or no student loans)
 - Tuition Scholarship
 - State Aid (ETV)
 - Financial Aid Grants



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Welcome Packs



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Critical Retention Services



Academic Support



Social Engagement



*Physical
& Mental
Health*



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Key Services: RETENTION

- Campus Coaches
 - 24 hour on call support
- DHS Liaison
- Student care packages (e.g., welcome, exam, holiday)
- Campus housing (over semester breaks)
- Budgeting and financial planning
- Emergency funds
- Work study, employee skill development
- Trauma-informed Learning Assessments
- Volunteer Coordination
- Academic support & monitoring
- Foster Youth and Higher Education Student Organization
- Leadership development; career mentoring
- Support with other systems (e.g., courts, human services, Medicaid, public assistance)
- Specialized Classes
 - First year seminar
 - Learning Styles & Strategies



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Community & Identity: RETENTION

*A Community
of Scholars*



1st Cohort 2008-09 (n=51)



2nd Cohort 2009-10 (n=47)



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Key Services: GRADUATION

- Campus Coaches
 - 24 hour on call support
- Student Preparation
 - Driver License; rental deposits; savings
- Budgeting and financial planning
- Emergency funds
- Volunteer Coordination
- Leadership development
- Career mentoring and career transitioning



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FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Colleges have a role in serving students from foster care.
 - WMU is developing a program model.
- Lessons learned at WMU can inform policy and practice targeting foster youth populations.
 - Fields: child welfare, health care, education
- Human Service, Health and Educational institutions can partner to better serve foster youth who age out of foster care.



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cares about foster youth!

www.wmich.edu/fyit

Go Broncos!!!



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