

FIRST STAR UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI ACADEMY

Foster Youth in Miami

There are over 400,000 foster youth in the United States, and over 3,000 in Miami- Dade County. Once removed from their parents because of abuse or neglect, our society assumes legal responsibility to ensure that all foster youth have the supports needed to successfully transition to adulthood. Unfortunately, these youth experience an average of 8 home and school changes while in foster care. Only half graduate high school and less than three percent earn a college degree. Foster youth age out of care each year unprepared for independence. Instead, within two years of aging out of foster care, more than half are homeless, incarcerated, or on welfare. Each teen who drops out of high school, and becomes involved with drugs or crime, costs society an estimated \$2 million.

First Star Academies

First Star partners with universities throughout the country to make a long-term investment in foster youth and change the course of their lives, from trauma and instability to academic achievement and self-sufficiency. The Academies include four immersive residential summers on a university campus and monthly sessions during each school year. During the residential sessions, the youth are supported by highly qualified professionals, as well peer mentors attending the host university. Throughout all four years, Academy staff provide holistic case management to the youth and their families to sustain the progress youth make during the university-immersion sessions. First Star, the country's only long-term college prep program for foster youth, shows youth that they belong on a college campus and helps them get there. The University becomes a second home that inspires and supports them.

The First Star Academies currently serve approximately 300 youth across seven campuses: UCLA, University of Connecticut, University of Rhode Island, City University of New York, George Washington University (DC), Rowan University (New Jersey), University of Central Florida, and Loyola University (Chicago). The First Star Academies have significantly improved the outcomes of participating youth across the country. 100% of Academy youth graduate high school, and more than 90% enroll in higher education.

University of Miami Academy

First Star is now partnering with the University of Miami and Our Kids of Miami-Dade/Monroe to open the First Star University of Miami Academy. The Academy will select 30 rising 9th grade foster youth to participate in four years of Academy programming. Ideally, the program will add a new cohort of rising 9th graders each year. The School of Education and Human Development and the Law School's Children & Youth Law Clinic are the key UM partners involved in all aspects of design and implementation, however the Academy will leverage resources from multiple disciplines and programs across campus. The Academy's full-time Director will oversee programming and establish and maintain partnerships with key community agencies to ensure all of the youths' needs are met.

Program Components

The University of Miami Academy will keep youth on track for high school graduation, and prepare them for higher education and adulthood, by providing specialized programming that address: (1) academics; (2) life skills; and (3) adult supports.

Academic Supports

Foster youth have the poorest education outcomes in the country because of school instability and unaddressed special education needs. By third grade, more than 80% are retained, and some studies estimate that by eleventh grade, less than 20 percent are proficient in Reading Comprehension, Language Arts or Math. Only half of foster youth ever graduate high school, and only three percent earn a college degree.

The University of Miami Academy will reverse these trends through targeted academic instruction and education advocacy. During the Summer Academies and monthly sessions, English and Math instructors will teach the youth grade-specific content and provide remedial supports as needed. These instructors will also provide SAT/ACT prep to ensure the youth are competitive during the college admissions process. All youth participating in the program will also be assigned an education advocate who will review their school records, track their progress towards high school graduation, and identify and secure any

supports needed to succeed in school. The education advocates will work with the youths' caregivers, social workers, attorneys, and schools to develop an academic plan for high school graduation and admissions to higher education.

Life Skills

Foster youth often lack the skills needed to successfully transition into adulthood. At age 18, they are often expected to independently manage their education, employment, housing, healthcare, and finances without the support of other adults. The Academy will develop a life skills workshop curriculum to ensure the youth are prepared for adulthood. Workshops will focus on psycho-social and self-efficacy skills, and also include topics such as higher education, budgeting, nutrition, healthy relationships, and substance abuse.

In addition, participating youth will be trained on their rights as foster youth and given self-advocacy skills. The Academy will work with the local courts to secure necessary permissions to allow participating youth to identify themselves as foster youth and share their experiences. Youth will be given opportunities to create videos and blogs that will inform policymakers of the needs of foster youth.

Adult Supports

Too often foster youth repeatedly move placements and exit foster care without any family or permanent adult supports. The University of Miami Academy will work with attorneys and social workers to advocate for youth to be in appropriate foster homes, and then engage caregivers to ensure they have the supports needed to keep youth in their homes and support youth academically. Where appropriate, biological parents are engaged and supported to help with the reunification process. In addition, by working with local partners, the Academy will identify and train adult mentors who will provide additional support to the youth as they transition into higher education. The goal of these efforts is to ensure that youth transition into adulthood with strong relationships with adults who can provide ongoing and continued support.



The First Star University of Miami Academy

A foster youth college preparation program by:



OurKids
of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc.

UNIVERSITY
OF MIAMI





The First Star University of Miami Academy

We are delighted to invite you to recommend a talented 8th grade foster youth to participate in the First Star University of Miami Academy.

The First Star University of Miami Academy is a free, comprehensive four-year college access program for youth in foster care. The Academy offers a 4 week residential summer academy where youth receive academic support, enrichment, and encouragement needed to assist them in becoming competitive college applicants. The program engages a cohort of 30 students in a variety of fun and active learning opportunities that include academic courses for college credit, independent studies, social and cultural activities, field trips, service learning and recreational activities. In addition to the summer immersion program, students and their families will receive individual support throughout the academic year through monthly Saturday Academies, education advocacy, and caregiver workshops.

To recommend a student, please follow these steps:

- 1. Ensure your student meets the following eligibility requirements:**
 - a. Currently has an open dependency case;
 - b. Lives in Miami-Dade or Monroe County
 - c. Able and willing to participate in the 4-week residential component at the university, and monthly Saturday sessions;
 - d. At least a 2.0 GPA and satisfactory attendance in current and previous school year, unless there is a reasonable explanation for participation;
 - e. Demonstrates maturity and potential to thrive in a college-prep setting
- 2. Ask your student to complete and return to you the background form and student responses of the application.**
- 3. Complete the Adult Recommendation portion of the application.**
- 4. Obtain student's most recent transcript, attendance record, and discipline log from current school.**
- 5. Mail, fax, or email the entire application packet (student application, adult recommendation, school records) by May 15, 2017 to:**

Kele Stewart
1311 Miller Drive
Coral Gables, FL 33146
Fax: (305) 284-4384
Email: kstewart@law.miami.edu

Selection process: Once all applications are received, students selected for the program will be contacted for an interview and final selections will be made by .



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of Miami-Dade/Monroe, Inc.





The First Star University of Miami Academy

Background Form

CONTACT INFORMATION			
Student Name:		Current Grade Level:	
Caregiver Name:		Phone #:	
		E-mail:	
Mailing Address:		Apartment #:	
Street Address:		Zip Code:	
City:		State:	

BACKGROUND INFORMATION			
Gender:		Date of Birth: / /	
<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender			
Ethnicity:			
<input type="checkbox"/> African-American/Black		<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian	
<input type="checkbox"/> Latino/a		<input type="checkbox"/> White/Caucasian	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Pacific Islander	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Name of Social Worker:		Phone #.:	
		Email:	
Name of Attorney:		Phone #.:	
		Email:	
Placement:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Relative Foster Home		<input type="checkbox"/> Non-relative Foster Home	
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal Guardian		<input type="checkbox"/> Adoptive Parents	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Group Home	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Reunited with Parent	
EDUCATION INFORMATION			
Middle School Name/District:		High School Name/District:	
/		/	
Cumulative Middle School GPA:		Most Recent GPA:	
Is Student Receiving Special Education Services?		Most Recent Attendance Rate:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know			
(If yes, submit most recent IEP or 504 Plan)		# of Suspensions/Expulsions in Last 2 School Years:	
Does the student have a condition not documented in an IEP or 504 Plan?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know			



The First Star University of Miami Academy

STUDENT'S RESPONSES

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES		
Name of Club or Organization	Number of Years of Participation	Required Summer Participation?

ESSAY RESPONSES (1-2 Paragraphs)

Imagine you are turning 100 years of age and your friends and family want to throw you a birthday celebration! You have accomplished everything you wanted in life and everything you tried was **AWESOME!** As a tribute to you on this special day, several of your admirers want to say a few words about your accomplishments. What is it that they are going to say in celebration of you? (Feel free to have fun with your answer!)





The First Star University of Miami Academy

Share what will be the biggest challenge (if any) that you will face in trying to get into college?
Provide one suggestion on how you might overcome that challenge.

Empty box for student response.

Signature

The information I have presented in my application is accurate, honest, and has been solely written by me.

Student's Signature

Date



The First Star University of Miami Academy

Adult Recommendation Form

Student's Name	Date of Birth:
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This section should be completed in confidence by any adult involved in the student's life (e.g., teacher, counselor, social worker, mentor, pastor, attorney).

To the Recommender:

Thank you for taking the time to provide your confidential insight and thoughts regarding this student who is applying for the First Star University of Miami Academy. The Academy is an intense, highly supportive and personalized college access program designed to provide youth in foster care with the academic support, encouragement and enrichment needed to assist them in becoming competitive college applicants. Your insight will help us ensure the program is the right fit for your student.

RECOMMENDER'S INFORMATION

Name:	Phone #: E-mail:
School/Organization:	Title:
Relationship to student:	How long have you known the student?

I recommend this student for the First Star Academy:

	Do not recommend	Recommend with reservations	Enthusiastically recommend
Academic potential			
Character and maturity			
Ability to work well with others			
Overall recommendation			

Once you have completed the recommendation please email or fax your recommendation directly to [NAME OF DIRECTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION].



The First Star University of Miami Academy

Please answer the following questions (attach extra pages if necessary):

Why do you believe this student is a good candidate for the First Star Academy? What behavior has this student demonstrated to you that show he/she will benefit from this opportunity?



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