THE PROMISE SCHOLARS PROGRAM: ADVOCACY AND

OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

A Project Presented to the Faculty
of
California State University, Stanislaus

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Social Work

By
Le Truong
May 2020

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

THE PROMISE SCHOLARS PROGRAM: ADVOCACY AND

OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

by
Le Truong

Signed Certification of Approval page
is on file with the University Library

———————————————————   ———————————————
Dr. John Garcia   Date
Professor of Social Work

———————————————————   ———————————————
Dr. Katie Galvin   Date
Assistant Professor of Social Work

DEDICATION

To the 99% of foster youth who society told us we wouldn't amount to anything more than stereotypes of homelessness, incarceration, substance abuse, etc. This here is evidence of how powerful our resiliency is as the one percent. When statistics state that less than one percent of foster youth will graduate with a masters or doctorate degree, this is to remind you that I, we, are the true strength in the numbers we represent.

To anyone who has ever been told you weren't good enough, strong enough, worthy enough… this is proof that you, I, we made it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all my friends, family, and loved ones who I met through this journey: Without each and every one of you I wouldn't be where I am today. Thank you for giving me the strength to push forward, empowering me in times of doubt, and unconditionally loving me for just me.

A thank you to Dr. John Garcia: It was an honor to have you as my project chair. Thank you for believing in me and my project even at times when I didn't. It is with your constant guidance, support, and motivation that every student succeeds. A true inspiration as a social worker.

And lastly, to Wanda: You are the reason I started this journey at Stanislaus State and the heart of this project. The Promise Scholars Program will forever be your living legacy, and I hope I made it and you proud. No matter the time or distance, I know your warrior spirit will always be alive and will continue rooting me on in my future successes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this graduate project was to help foster youth navigate through

campus support systems by educating potential students and campus constituents

about the support and services offered through the California State University,

Stanislaus Promise Scholars Program. An outreach plan in partnership with the

Promise Scholars Program was developed and implemented to heighten the campus

community's awareness of the program and establish connections with multiple

groups on campus. In partnership with Ms. Libby Pata, Promise Scholars Program

Coordinator, a short (educational) slideshow was created that provided information

on the Promise Scholars Program at CSU, Stanislaus. Various engagement sessions

were organized with key constituents, including academic groups, the University

Academic Senate, the MSW Program, and local community child welfare agencies, to

promote awareness of the Promise Scholars Program with the use of this educational

slideshow. Engaging with campus constituents helped the Program form relationships

and raise awareness to members who can advocate on the program's behalf for

former and current foster youth. Promoting the presence of the Promise Scholars

Program is a start in overcoming systemic barriers; however, additional program

planning efforts, including additional educational tools, promotional activities, and

growing collaborations with identified campus constituents, need to be continued in

order to provide more accessibility of services for college foster youth.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Purpose

The purpose of this Graduate Project was to elevate the presence of the California State University, Stanislaus Promise Scholars Program. This project involved attempting to heighten the campus community's awareness of the Promise Scholar Program. Ultimately, this project aimed to enhance recruitment of former foster youth to the program through outreach efforts on behalf of the Promise Scholars Program. This included educating and raising awareness of the program's resources and support available at the University. In successfully raising awareness of the Promise Scholars Program, I worked in partnership with California State University, Stanislaus Promise Scholars Program and their program coordinator.

Background

While the privilege of obtaining an education comes readily accessible to some in society, one population that is presented with more challenges in their pursuit of education is foster youth. Though the thought of college seems like an unattainable goal for some former foster youth, a 2013 study by Salazar reported that youth formerly or currently in the foster care system who did go on to pursue a higher education, "…benefit similarly in terms of individual income and rate of employment" (Salazar, 2013, p. 144).

Education has become a primary survival tool for youth of the foster care system to escape the stigmatic constraints of society and become successful members within their community.

The pathway for foster youth pursuing a college education is constructed by various personal, organizational, and systemic barriers. These youth not only find themselves having to practice resilience within the classroom structure, but within their social environment as well. A study conducted in 2005 found that emphasis on a foster child's psychosocial needs were placed higher in the hierarchy of needs (than education), as psychosocial needs played a more critical role in the functional outcomes of adolescence and adulthood (Racusin, Maerlender, Sengupta, Isquith & Straus, 2005). This often results in having access to a lower quality of education for foster youth as compared to children who were able to complete their education in consistent school settings. The outcome for several foster youth in response to this when dealing with these educational hardships include difficulty adapting to several school sites, behavioral issues displayed within the classroom setting, and discouraging graduation rates. Common themes that have been found to influence poor educational outcomes include inconsistency in placement settings, lack of social support, and a lack of resources for educational assistance.

As stated above, these constructs can be an impediment towards educational success; therefore it is critical that these factors be redefined to play a role in contributing to the success of foster youth achieving educational milestones. A 2000 study conducted by the Washington public school system found that, "Only 59

percent of foster youth enrolled in 11th grade complete high school by the end of grade 12" (Burley & Halpern, 2001, p.7). Graduation from high school is commonly perceived as the maximum accomplishment for foster youth after emancipation from the foster care system. With the process of emancipation occurring for many foster youth before completing high school, the fear of starting the process to continue onto postsecondary education is often fueled by a lack of guidance and support that is soon to follow after emancipation. A multiphase study focused on educational success factors for emancipated foster youth who went on to college presented statistical information that revealed that as few as 40% of foster youth were still attending college, paired with fewer than 5% of those who had completed college and earning a degree (Merdinger, Hines, Osterling & Wyatt, 2005). The data on foster youth who go on to pursue a higher education proves to be disheartening as displayed by the numbers of those who are able to complete and obtain a college degree.

With inadequate support in the classrooms and lack of guidance by educators, mentors, and their peers, many foster youth lack the support needed to related to their academics. The insufficient support experienced by many foster youth following emancipation and prior to pursuing a post-secondary education has hindered many of these individuals in the education system. However, a handful have found the strength to keep persevering. As a new sense of independence emerges as these emancipated foster youth begin to make their own education decisions, fear of an unknown society and its constructs drive the rationale of many foster youth alumni. A qualitative study conducted on 12 college support programs found concerns of, "…academic

preparation; housing; financial assistance; the need for emergency assistance; youth's personal challenges; and, the need for advocacy," to be of significance for foster youth alumni on college campuses (Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010, p. 761). The barriers posed for foster youth in college derive not only from the means of academic survival but basic survival in a society no longer protected by the foster care system.

The barriers in education for foster youth include few postsecondary support programs such as independent living programs (ILPs) and campus support programs that are available. This contributes to the lack of knowledge of emancipation services and support accessible to these youth who have now aged out of the system. A limited amount of resources is geared towards assisting foster youth during this transition period, including the very few college support programs that deal with both the educational and independent living challenges faced by foster youth in the shift from being in-care to being out of care. Courses such as ILP classes only focus on the preparation of independent skills to be utilized in one's social environment, such as securing housing and managing finances. College support programs including the Education Opportunity Program (EOP) primarily focus on helping guide first generation college students in their academics within the university setting. The deficiency that lies within these programs is the ability to provide service to the explicit needs and challenges faced by foster youth not only in the academic realm but also within their social environment.

There is a misconception of what support many of these existing college support programs offer in aiding the needs of foster youth pursuing a post-secondary

education aside from just academic counseling. Guardian/Promise Scholars is one of the few programs established at several universities geared specifically towards benefitting former or current foster youth in their academic experience. However, these programs are perceived to provide guidance solely with academics and they are not understood to provide the additional social support needed with additional challenges that go on outside of school. Many foster youth find themselves carrying a load of not only class schedules and assignments in the classroom, but added external stressors including the maintenance of their basic demands (housing, food) and psychological needs (mental and emotional support). The lack of representations of these campus support programs and their services lead foster youth to feel unsupported in areas where these programs can administer the resources and support needed.

Due to the lack of presence of the Promise Scholar Program at California State University, Stanislaus, many current and emancipated foster youth are not served by the various types of supports the program offers. Per meeting with the Promise Scholar coordinator at California State University Stanislaus, of the potential 50 students that were found eligible to receive services through the Promise Scholars Program during the 2019-2020 academic school year, only nine students were currently utilizing the support and resources of the program. A common misconception about Promise Scholars is that it is just another campus support program primarily focused on assisting with academics. Ultimately, the largest contributing factor to this underutilization stems from "people" (faculty, staff,

administrators, and students) not knowing the program exists. The lack of knowledge causes a disservice to former or current foster care students who may have needs with which the Promise Scholars program could assist. The opportunities for potential recruitment from campus constituents can help bridge the gap between the program itself and the university. What fails to be advertised along with Promise Scholars being an academic support program are the relationships and connections Promise Scholars recipients receive. These interpersonal relationships help current and former foster youth build skills and accumulate resources in preparation to handle challenges on and off campus. More crucially, this program aims to provide a safe space for all foster youth to share their experiences to help uplift one another in their journey pursuing a post-secondary education.

OBJECTIVES

This graduate project was organized around four objectives that were critical to its completion. The first objective to promote the Promise Scholars program was to collaborate with the Promise Scholars Program Coordinator and staff in all decision making and in the development and advertisement of this campus educational campaign. The purpose of this objective was to learn more about the Program's current standing and be informed of any changes the Program has undergone. In doing so, this helped identify areas of need that the Program displayed. Working alongside the program coordinator and staff, we discussed and came to an agreement on ideas that would emphasize the benefits and services the program has to offer on campus.

The next step after building rapport with the Promise Scholar program's staff was to develop an outreach plan in partnership with the Promise Scholars Program. This would provide information about the program in relation to the description and the benefits and services that are offered. In addition to providing the knowledge of the program itself, a description of the various events and activities were given to promote further outreach. The goal was to identify strategies that would be the most effective for outreach efforts for the program within the university setting.

Following the development of an outreach plan was the implementation of the plan itself. We initiated conversations with groups of individuals that we believed were aware or should be aware of the Promise Scholars Program, thus allowing us to

identify the target population of groups of individuals that would benefit greatly from learning of the program and its services. This was done in hopes of establishing connections through multiple groups on campus (faculty, students, staff, administrators) that could advocate on the program's behalf and become a point of reference to former and current foster youth.

Lastly, we planned to receive feedback from the Promise Scholars program coordinator and staff of this campaign in promoting outreach on campus. This feedback entailed evaluating the successes of the campaign as well as the barriers that the program still faced. Ultimately, modifications were made by the program that worked toward providing more accessibility of services for foster youth following the campaign.

SIGNIFICANCE OF PROJECT

This project was designed to educate others about the Promise Scholars Program with the purpose of evaluating the presence of the Program on the CSU Stanislaus campus. Various outreach activities were performed to help support the knowledge base of the campus community about the Program and heighten the utilization of the Program and its services on campus. The goal of these events was to create opportunities of engagement not only for individuals at the university level but for prospective students who were eligible to receive services. The outcome of this campaign to promote the Promise Scholars Program would demonstrate how institutions can aid foster youth to overcome educational barriers for those pursuing a postsecondary education.

This project was anchored by a social justice framework that promoted social action through the act of elevating the presence of the Promise Scholars Program. Spade (2015) offers a framework for non-profit organizations to guide actions and activities in promoting social justice. This framework has been applicable to universities that are interested in addressing the needs of underserved students. Spade's Four Pillar Model of Social Justice Infrastructure, including the Pillar of Consciousness and the Pillar of Power, helped to guide and plan the direction in which the campaign would run to successfully educate others of the Program's presence on campus. The Pillar of Consciousness speaks to raise consciousness of the people, who in this case were the University community (faculty, students, staff, and

administrators) as well as the broader community in regards to educating those about the types of support and resources that are available for foster youth. However, in order to do so, an evaluation of the Program overall had to be assessed to identify these areas of need. This role also reflected the other factor in Spade's Model, the Pillar of Power. Conducted through the action of bringing people together to distinguish what support is needed for the program, this included determining the disconnect students had with accepting the services, along with how staff, faculty, and administrators applied these educational resources into their profession. Although the Pillar of Consciousness contributed to the efforts to formulate opportunities of outreach and collaboration, the Pillar of Power represented the real driving force behind this campaign.

METHODOLOGY

There were four specific objectives that set the foundation for the completion of this graduate project. This section describes the process by which each objective was completed or accomplished. The first objective towards promoting the Promise Scholars program was to collaborate with the Promise Scholars Program Coordinator and staff in all decision making and in developing the advertising and campus educational campaign. This entailed monthly meetings and check-ins with the Promise Scholars Program Coordinator. These were conducted by various communication means including phone conversations, emails, and face-to-face meetings that helped establish a working relationship with the Program. This partnership was critical to the successful completion of this project. As such, an efficient working relationship between the project coordinator and the Promise Scholars Program coordinator was critical to the success of the graduate project.

The next step (after building rapport with the Promise Scholar program's staff) was to develop an outreach plan in partnership with the Promise Scholars program. This included brainstorming ideas and being made aware of any upcoming events that would intermittently bring awareness to the Program. Next, there was a discussion to propose opportunities of outreach to configure the deficits advocated by the Program. Once that was done, preparation towards planning of outreach events and informational presentations occurred. Finally, we coordinated with multiple

groups on campus to ensure the needs of the Program as well as the University would be met.

Following the development of an outreach plan was the implementation of the plan itself. Various forms of outreach were performed by both the Promise Scholar staff and myself that included attending socialization events in representation of the Program and hosting seminars to educate staff, faculty, administrators, and students of the Program's services and support.

Lastly, we received feedback from the Promise Scholars program coordinator and staff of the campaign's success in promoting outreach on campus. At the completion of the campaign, we followed up with the Promise Scholars Program coordinator for input on the campaign's outreach effects and success it had in elevating the presence of the Program. Questions were in regard to the successes of events and presentations, areas of outreach that were still in need of support, and meeting the goal of raising awareness of the Promise Scholars Program with the use of this educational campaign.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is organized around three critical issues that helped to structure and support this graduate project. As this graduate project involved the creation of a campaign strategy to increase campus awareness about the Promise Scholars program at CSU, Stanislaus, this review of the existing knowledge base focuses on: a) challenges that campus support programs faced in raising awareness about existing resources and supports; b) an overview of strategies that have been utilized by other model campus support programs to promote their services and programming; and c) an articulation of needs of campus support programs to effectively promote and raise awareness about their services. Holistically, the ideas covered in this literature review set a context for this graduate project and help to guide the outreach efforts for the Promise Scholars Program.

Challenges Raising Awareness of Campus Support Programs

The mission behind any college support program is to benefit the greater good of the university and the community it serves. Various fundamental factors play a crucial role in the success of a campus support program, with success being measured by the utilization of the services and support offered by these programs. While the overall goal driving these campus support programs was typically what was emphasized, the objectives leading to the successful outreach of campus support programs were easily overshadowed. The findings among different college support programs highlighted that one of the most crucial outreach efforts yet largest barriers

13

programs face was raising awareness of the presence of these campus support programs (Dworksy & Perez, 2010). Several components factor into this outcome, including the lack of knowledge of these campus support programs and limited funding for the program itself.

For college students deciding if and where to pursue a postsecondary education, one key element that was often taken into consideration was the resources that would be available through the college itself. A study conducted in 2010 found that being unaware of campus resources was one of six barriers for students achieving post-secondary educational goals (Dworksy & Perez, 2010). The accessibility of specific services and support when needed by students was vital, as many of these students came from backgrounds in which these resources were deficient, therefore posing as a barrier for them even before entering college. Unfortunately, campus support programs have the tendency to primarily focus only on "eligible" students versus educating the entire campus community of these types of resources and services programs are offering on their own campus (Dworksy & Perez, 2010). The lack of knowledge of various campus support programs prevented opportunities to raise awareness with providers and to potential recipients from all levels at the university.

Financial constraints also influenced the outreach efforts to raise awareness of campus support programs. In 2001 the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (FCIA) added the Education and Training voucher (ETV) which set aside $60 million to support postsecondary education and training (Okpych, 2012). While the additional

financial assistance was intended to motivate youth to pursue a college degree, many of these students found themselves continuing to encounter various psychosocial barriers while pursuing a postsecondary education. The dispensing of this financial aid for various educational uses overshadowed areas in which students were dependent for support while pursuing a postsecondary education, including campus support programs (Okpych, 2012). The limited funding for campus support programs disables the opportunity of outreach for students, faculty, administration, and staff to be made aware of the services and support of these existing programs and what they can offer during one's academic experience.

Strategies by Campus Support Programs to Raise Awareness

Different approaches have been utilized amongst college campuses in relation to outreach efforts to raise awareness of their campus' support programs. The strategies have ranged from micro interactions to macro level interventions, and campus support programs have made efforts to emphasize the importance of educating others about the resources and support offered by their program to those in need of services.

A common strategy found between numerous campus support programs to increase awareness of their program focused on the recruitment process. The results of a web-based survey reported how program participants of one campus support program learned of the program itself:

> Just over half of our respondents learned about their campus support program from a source connected with the child welfare system (i.e.,

their social worker, case worker or independent living services

provider). Just over 40% were contacted by someone from the

program, and nearly one third learned about the program from a

current or former participant. (Dworksy & Perez, 2010, p. 260)

The changeable interactions with various outside agencies, program staff, and

participants of the program allows several opportunities to raise awareness of the

resources campus support programs have to offer throughout one's journey to

pursuing a post-secondary education.

At Texas State University (TSU) a campus support program increased

awareness with the utilization of a strengths perspective that focused on the three

criteria of, "redefining identities, respecting autonomy, and utilizing assets" (Watt,

Norton, et. al, 2013, p. 1413). Foster Care Alumni Creating Educational Success

(FACES) is a campus support program developed in 2011 at TSU that centered on

increasing awareness by strengthening the voices of the participants of the program in

order to advocate on the program's behalf. This included three areas of focus where

attention was brought to the program. The first strategy involved redefining identities,

including participants promoting the program by celebrating the program and its

events to provide a more positive perception of the program. Second, respecting

autonomy, which allowed participants the opportunity to interact with other existing

campus systems and programs, as well as designing some of the program activities.

Lastly, utilizing assets, where participants received formal acknowledgement and

recognition from the program. Whereas several campus support program's outreach

efforts are conducted by their own program staff, FACES empowered its recipients to increase the awareness of the program by integrating others in need of the support and resources just as they themselves were.

Needs to Help Promote Awareness of Campus Support Programs

The first pressing need to assist programs to complete outreach included funding. One challenge faced by several campus support programs that prevented further outreach measures to be taken was a limited budget. According to Okpych's policy analysis of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, one recommendation to be considered to the current ETV policy states "establishing campus support-based programs funded by FCIA" (Okpych, 2012, p. 1393). Campaigning efforts for campus support programs, especially for stand-alone programs, need to be able to spend funds to not only establish programs but to continue to grow the program and expand services to tend to the needs of the individuals served.

The second pressing need for raising awareness for campus support programs was collaboration. While these approaches all vary from one campus to another, a common resource that contributed to promoting outreach of campus support programs included collaboration through both formal organizations and informal partnerships. Although external collaborations with established programs, departments, and other divisions was pivotal (especially for programs that are not stand alone), internal relationships also created opportunities for individuals who were most affected by the issue to speak of the benefits the programs had provided for them.

Lastly, the pressing need for advocacy among participants as well as the campus community heavily influenced the participatory action behind campus support programs such as the Promise Scholars Program. Success for any campus support program began with raising awareness to the presence of the program itself. Campus constituents and service providers would contribute by spreading knowledge of these undervalued services that would benefit those in need of the support and resources within the campus community. Participants on the other hand would provide insight through sharing their experiences and recommendations of program services and speak of how campus support programs such as Promise Scholars play a role in achieving academic success. Not only did this instill a sense of pride for the providers and recipients but celebrated the identity of these campus support programs.

Conclusion

This literature review touched on three areas that contributed to outreach efforts amongst college support programs to raise the level of knowledge of programs (such as the Promise Scholar Program) to campus constituents and potential program users. These efforts included: 1) identifying barriers encountered by campus support programs including lack of knowledge and proper funding for existing resources and supports; 2) discussion of strategies/activities as modeled by other campus support programs such as TSU's outreach model (FACES) practicing empowerment through integration and collaboration with recipients and providers; and 3) the pressing needs to effectively promote campus support program's services in conjunction with funding, collaboration, and advocacy. Ultimately, the components discussed in this

literature review provide an overview of the program planning behind campus

support programs, including the success of advertisement in promoting resources

available within one's own campus community.

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter is organized into five major sections. Specifically, there is a discussion of the experience developing and implementing the project. This information is followed by lessons learned throughout the process of the project, including benefits that came as a result and limitations that posed as challenges. Lastly, there is a discussion of the outcomes of the project and the implications towards both campus support programs and practice towards aiding foster youth succeed in social systems such as the educational system.

Overview of Project Experience

When the decision of what I wanted to create for my culminating graduate project was asked, I thought back to the passion that initially geared me towards pursuing a degree in the field of social work: to be an advocate for underrepresented populations. Reflecting on my own academic journey that brought me to where I am now, it became apparent that the focus of my graduate project would be to make a difference to foster youths' experience in college.

For my culminating graduate project, I chose to raise awareness of the Stanislaus State Promise Scholars Program, which is intended to support current and former foster youth students as they pursue a postsecondary education. Stanislaus State's Promised Scholars Program changed my undergraduate experience as it not only provided me with academic resources, but it also provided me emotional/social

support as a first-time college student emancipating out of the foster care system. I was connected to this resource by people who were knowledgeable about the Program. My hope in implementing this educational campaign about the Program was to create pathways for others to share this valuable asset. The benefit of sharing information with key constituents might help faculty, staff, and administrators connect other students to this wonderful Program.

In partnership with Ms. Libby Pata, Promise Scholars Program Coordinator, a short (educational) slideshow was created that provided information on the Promise Scholars Program at CSU, Stanislaus. The intention of this information was to ensure that campus constituents (faculty, staff, administration, and students) were informed about this valuable program that our campus has to offer. With the slideshow created, various engagement sessions were organized to promote awareness of the Promise Scholars program, including in-class presentations of this product as well as sharing electronically via email to campus personnel.

To understand how this project came to fruition, it is important to review the objectives that were accomplished. The first step was building a relationship with the Promise Scholars Program Coordinator, Libby Pata. This allowed us to collaboratively work together to identify areas of need that the Program displayed. One presenting need that was apparent was the outreach efforts including educating and raising awareness about the existence of the Promise Scholars Program on campus.

After building rapport with the Promise Scholar program's staff, the next step was to develop an outreach plan in partnership with the Promise Scholars Program. This tactic was used to discuss the development and outreach strategies of the campus educational campaign to emphasize the benefits and services the program has to offer on campus. This working relationship included monthly in-person meetings to discuss the creation of this advertisement plan followed up with updates of the campaign via email or phone.

Once coming to an agreement of creating a slideshow presentation to implement this advertisement plan for the Promise Scholars Program, the proceeding step was to identify current groups on campus and in the community that should be aware of the Promise Scholars Program. Through conversations with the Program coordinator, Ms. Libby Pata, my project chair, Dr. John Garcia, and fellow MSW classmates, we were able to identify and connect with key constituents that would benefit greatly in learning of the program and its services. This included presenting to undergraduate courses, at the University Academic Senate, the MSW Program, and service agencies within the local community.

Engagement sessions with these key constituents varied depending on the timing of events on campus. Initially, outreach efforts to educate others about the Promise Scholars program through our slideshow presentation planned to involve face-to-face presentations. On March 16, 2020, I provided a brief 10 minute in-class presentation to Dr. Vincent Laus's Victimology course. The class was composed of 20 undergraduate students. I started off asking the main question, "How many of you

know or have heard of the Promise Scholars program?" To my surprise, neither students nor the professor raised their hands. Following up after my question, I presented the educational tool (information) I had created with the purpose of my graduate project in mind: to raise awareness of the Promise Scholars program. After finishing my last slide, I allowed questions to be asked for clarification or for more information if it was needed. Concluding my presentation, Dr. Laus and his class thanked me for my time. I reciprocated my gratitude for the opportunity to share about the Promise Scholars program to his class and emphasized spreading the word of this undervalued Program.

Unfortunately, with the rise of the global pandemic of Covid-19, the suspension of on-campus activities went into effect shortly after my initial presentation. Needing to create a contingency plan due to the inability to do face-to-face presentations, I consulted with my project chair, Dr. Garcia, who informed me that I would still be able to deliver my project by emailing my presentation of the Promise Scholars Program to other key constituents. In sharing my slideshow presentation electronically to campus constituents via email, I also requested the information to be shared to additional groups to promote further outreach. The first email was sent to Dr. Steven Filling (Speaker of the Faculty), who shared the slideshow at the Academic Senate on April 21, 2020, where there were 80 attendees from various departments present. This meeting includes a wide range of campus constituents, including faculty members from every department, administration, staff, and students. The next email was sent to Jenell Thompson, a faculty member within

the MSW program and coordinator for the Title IV-E Child Welfare program. The Title IV-E program is specifically designed to prepare professional social workers who will be working in the foster care system. As such, they are the perfect constituent group to be knowledgeable about this program, as they will be working directly with youth in the foster care system. Lastly, an email was sent to Nancy Zamora, field coordinator for the MSW program, as an effort to connect to field agencies including local community service agencies to share information about this undervalued program at Stanislaus State with former and current foster youth. Connecting with key constituents was crucial in establishing connections through multiple groups on and off campus (faculty, students, staff, administrators, community members) that can advocate on the program's behalf and be a point of reference to former and current foster youth.

In closing out this project, the final phase was to receive feedback from the Promise Scholars program coordinator to discuss the successes of the campaign with the purpose of educating and raising awareness for the Promise Scholars Program. The feedback received by Ms. Libby Pata entailed gratitude for my efforts in promoting her program and an optimistic statement that next year more foster youth would come forward to utilize the support and resources provided through the Promise Scholars program.

Lessons Learned

When I first entered the MSW program I was shocked to learn how many of my fellow classmates as well as professors were unaware of the existence of the

Promise Scholars Program at CSU Stanislaus. Being that our field of work is based around working with vulnerable populations (a large focus being on foster youth), the need to advocate and educate about this program that serves potential clients we work with was critical. The lack of knowledge of the Promise Scholars Program was evident in almost every campus constituent group that I encountered during my process of creating this advertisement plan. For students, they were unaware of the presence that such a program existed on campus. Faculty, staff, and administrators on the other hand had little to no knowledge of the program and how to connect students with these resources.

The creation of an educational campaign for Promise Scholars at times proved to be a daunting task. While fostering this working relationship with the Promise Scholars staff, I constantly needed to remind myself of the sole purpose of my project, which was raising awareness of the Promise Scholars program. At times I became overwhelmed trying to take on all forms of outreach, overlooking that my task was to spread knowledge of the program. Initial outreach strategies used by various campus support programs focused solely on raising awareness of their program's presence on campus. Education is the foundational building block to any program planning towards outreach.

Additionally, educating key constituents of the presence of programs such as Promise Scholars, works in preventing further disconnect between students to services. Working to identify and connect with campus groups to share knowledge of the Promise Scholars Program allowed for more opportunity to raise awareness of the

program's resources. The role of changeable interactions with various outside agencies, program staff, and participants at various college communities has proven to increase the presence of campus support programs. Collaboration between campus constituents and campus support programs aims to raise awareness simply through passing on the education of the benefits and services a program has to offer.

Limitations

In meeting with the program coordinator, I learned of the Program's various transitions in leadership within the past year. This inconsistency in and lack of staffing led to few previous outreach efforts being made from the program, as well as created additional barriers for the standing of the program itself. Ms. Libby Pata, the current Promise Scholars program coordinator, had just recently stepped into the position at the beginning of the school year. She is the main and only connection for the program. Retrospectively speaking, I would have further encouraged my collaborative relationship with Ms. Pata to empower and emphasize her role during the slideshow presentations about the Promise Scholars program, as she stands as the only contact person for the program.

The most significant challenge that was posed during the implementation of my graduate project was the occurrence of the Covid-19 global pandemic. Due to the rising health concern within our nation, all in-person campus activities were suspended as of Mid-March, including my upcoming presentations to campus constituents I had planned to have face-to-face outreach meetings. In recognizing that unforeseen circumstances such as a global pandemic are rare but realistic scenarios, I

learned the significance of preparing a contingency plan that uses alternative communication methods to disseminate information when face-to-face interactions are not possible. This includes electronically sharing the information via email or online platforms such as Zoom/Skype/Facetime.

Implications for Campus Support Programs

Remembering that knowledge is the key building block, continuing to educate others about the Promise Scholars Program not only increases awareness of the Program but also of the resources and support it has to offer. Following this campaign, there are two steps that are crucial in continuing to establish the presence of the Promise Scholars Program. First, creating additional education tools and promotional activities to further help spread the knowledge of the Program is critical. Secondly, it is very important to the long-term success of the Program to form collaboration with identified campus constituents to further promote outreach for the program and educate populations that could not be reached during the previous campaign. While this project's purpose to promote the presence of the Promise Scholars Program is a start in overcoming outreach barriers, program planning efforts for these types of programs need to be continued in order to provide more accessibility of services for college foster youth.

Implications for College Foster Youth

The lack of knowledge of educational resources for foster youth in college settings provides a brief glimpse of the absence of support foster youth receive after emancipation. Research tends to focus more towards the challenging experiences of

foster youth currently in care versus the barriers faced once a foster youth becomes emancipated and exits the child welfare system. As a result, emphasis is placed on providing resources and support only to current foster youth in need, disregarding the challenges faced by foster youth after emancipation.

The need for additional support for emancipated foster youth was demonstrated through the passing of AB 12 in 2012. AB 12 is a bill that extended foster care from age eighteen to age twenty-one, should the youth choose to stay in care. With the exception of AB 12 extending the length of stay for foster youth in the system, many emancipated foster youth still find themselves unprepared with little to no connection to resources or support outside of the Child Welfare system. The dependence on one system leaves them vulnerable to others.

The practice approach towards supporting foster youth should be of both equal and equitable opportunity regardless of the system they reside within. Despite whether a foster youth is currently in the system or emancipated, any foster youth in need of support should be educated and connected to resources to succeed in the social system(s) of which they are a part.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Burley, M., & Halpern, M. (2001). Educational Attainment of Foster Youth: Achievement and Graduation Outcomes for Children in State Care

Dworsky, A., & Pérez, A. (2010). Helping former foster youth graduate from college through campus support programs. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32*(2), 255-263

Hernandez, L., & Naccarato, T. (2010). Scholarships and supports available to foster care alumni: A study of 12 programs across the US. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *32*(5), 758-766

Merdinger, J. M., Hines, A. M., Osterling, K. L., & Wyatt, P. (2005). Pathways to college for former foster youth: Understanding factors that contribute to educational success. *Child welfare*, *84*(6), 867

Okpych, N. (2012). Policy framework supporting youth aging-out of foster care through college: Review and recommendations. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*(7), 1390-1396

Racusin, R., Maerlender, A. C., Sengupta, A., Isquith, P. K., & Straus, M. B. (2005). Psychosocial treatment of children in foster care: A review. *Community Mental Health Journal*, *41*(2), 199-221

Salazar, A. M. (2013). The value of a college degree for foster care alumni: Comparisons with general population samples. *Social work, 58*(2), 139-150

Spade, D. (2015). *Normal life: Administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limits of law*. Duke University Press.

Watt, T. T., Norton, C. L., & Jones, C. (2013). Designing a campus support program for foster care alumni: Preliminary evidence for a strengths framework. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *35*(9), 1408-1417