

# STATE OF CALIFORNIA AWARDS \$740,000 TO FIRST STAR, SAC STATE

## TO STRENGTHEN PATH TO ADULTHOOD FOR STATE'S FOSTER YOUTH

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### Funding Will Support New Sacramento-Based Site for First Star Academies, Groundbreaking Program Guiding Foster Youth to College, Careers

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**SACRAMENTO and LOS ANGELES, CA (June 28, 2019)** — A groundbreaking educational program that is providing California's foster youth the critical preparation they need to transition successfully to college and careers will receive unprecedented financial support from the State of California under the [2019 budget](http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/) <http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/> just signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom. This extraordinary action in support of foster youth in Sacramento County is a legislative demonstration that underscores the Newsom Administration's, Senate's and Assembly's sincere desire to reverse the dismal outcomes often associated with these most vulnerable of California's youth.

The budget provides \$740,000 to establish a First Star Academy for Foster Youth at California State University, Sacramento (Sacramento State). The Academy will significantly extend the California presence of First Star, which works with universities and other partners nationwide to make a long-term investment in foster youth and provide essential direction on the path to adult life. Currently hosted on 12 university campuses across the country, the four-year First Star academies offer instruction in critical academic areas and life skills to high-school-age foster youth via residential summers, monthly school-year sessions and dedicated mentoring.

### Overcoming Barriers to Reaching College

Nationally, just 50% of foster youth complete high school by age 18 and, of these, only 10% enter college. However, 98% of First Star scholars graduate from high school and 89% transition to college. The First Star Academy at Sacramento State will be the third First Star site in California, joining similar programs at UCLA and Cal State University, San Bernardino.

“All too often, the lives of foster youth have been blighted by neglect and abuse, but they remain hopeful for their future and eager for the right guidance,” said Peter Samuelson, First Star President. “Education is the pivot and caring, committed university communities are the leverage enabling First Star to help foster youth successfully make their way to happy, productive, and engaged adulthoods.”

“I am appreciative and grateful that Governor Newsom and our state legislators have included funding in the budget for a First Star Program at Sacramento State. Far too few foster youth earn a college degree, and this First Star-Sacramento State partnership aims to reverse that trend,” said Robert S. Nelsen, Sacramento State University President. “We are committed to implementing the program and helping to prepare Sacramento County foster youth to attend college and to graduate. We also remain committed to continuing to support emancipated foster youth through our highly successful Guardian Scholars Program.”

“Foster youth legally are our children, parented through our judges,” said Dr. Robert Fellmeth, Executive Director of the Children’s Advocacy Institute at the University of San Diego. “They deserve our best help, a real chance, and a leg up to a productive life. First Star’s educational immersion in college life over the four years of high school strongly influences foster youth to qualify for and apply to university, and greatly facilitates their success as undergraduates.”

## **A Community Effort**

The funding is intended by First Star to serve as the catalyst to expand First Star Academies to 12 CSU and UC-based Academies over five years, significantly increasing the number of California foster youth graduating from high school and attending college. The First Star Academy at Sacramento State is a collaborative effort by CA State University Sacramento; First Star; the Sacramento County Child, Family, and Adult Services Department, and other local stakeholders.

“Working with local partners is vital to the success of our work. By incorporating public and private partnerships into our model, First Star seeks to demonstrate the remarkable impact of community connections when it comes to strengthening our programs and continuing to deliver remarkable outcomes,” said Lyndsey Collins, First Star’s National Director of Academies.

“As one of our students said, ‘Our lives are shaped by our connections.’ At First Star, we believe she had it right, which is why we work so hard to create partnerships in each community to provide foster youth across the nation equitable access to educational opportunities,” Ms. Collins said.

The First Star Academy for Foster Youth at Sacramento State is slated to launch in Fall 2019.