



2014 HAWAII UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES  
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, MATH & EDUCATION  
JUNE 16, 17, & 18 2014  
ALA MOANA HOTEL, HONOLULU, HAWAII

# ENSURING SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR FOSTER YOUTH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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## **Ensuring Successful Educational Outcomes for Foster Youth in Higher Education**

### Synopsis

Foster youth are among the most underrepresented student populations on college campuses. Nationwide, it is estimated only 1-3% of foster youth graduate from college. Why is this so? In this panel presentation, attendees will learn causes of this abysmal statistic and how their campuses can best serve foster youth to ensure better educational outcomes. Best practices for advising and counseling foster youth, impact of college support programs, importance of collaboration in delivering services, and strategies for positive student development and engagement will be discussed.



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**2014 Hawaii Education & Stem**  
(Science, Technology, Education & Math Conference)  
Date: June 16, 17 & 18

**Title:** “Ensuring Successful Educational Outcomes for Foster Youth in Higher Education”

**Topic:** Academic Advising & Counseling and Higher Education

**Presentation:** Panel

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## Abstract Page

Each year, nationwide over 25,000 youth age out of the foster care system. Many transitioning youth face seemingly insurmountable challenges in attaining a college education. The reality for many youth is that few social and educational resources are made available to them as they exit the child welfare system.

Among at-risk populations, foster youth are the least likely to obtain a college education and graduate. Studies indicate that aging out foster youth are at greater risk for poverty, homelessness, mental and chronic physical health issues, suicide, pregnancy and incarceration. Foster youth drop out from high school at the rate of 50%, compared to the national drop out rate of 4.1%. Nationally, although 70% of foster youth want to attend college, only 20% actually attend college classes. Of the foster youth who attend college, only 1-3% of them actually graduate from a 4-year college or university.

In this panel discussion, participants will learn of the historical challenges foster youth have encountered in seeking higher education, why these obstacles exist, educational outcomes of foster youth, and best practices for advising and counseling foster youth in higher education, and what campuses can do to support foster youth on their campuses to ensure successful educational outcomes.

The presenters for this panel presentation are Deborah Lowe Martinez, J.D., Director of the Cal Independent Scholars Network, UC Berkeley, Julian Ledesma, Interim Director of the Educational Opportunity Program and Academic Counselor, UC Berkeley and Jenny Vinopal, Director of Programs, California Youth Connection. The presenters will discuss strategies to improve academic outcomes for foster youth, student engagement and development, building and implementing a campus support program, and importance of collaboration with on campus and external partners to deliver direct services to foster youth on campuses. Campus support program sustainability will also be a topic of discussion.

The Cal Independent Scholars Network (CISN) is the academic focused retention program at UC Berkeley offering comprehensive direct services to current and former foster youth. A nationally recognized campus support program for foster youth, CISN is model for other campuses. Founded in 2005 with one student, CISN has served over 100 students, and boasts a 97% graduation rate which is higher than the graduation rate for the University of California, Berkeley and national graduation rate. CISN students have an average GPA of over 3.0. Many CISN students have continued on to graduate studies and can be found at Harvard Medical School, Stanford University, University of Chicago, New York University and Smith College, to name a few.

Respectfully submitted this 30<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2014

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