



ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

FIRST STAR ACADEMY

2024

IMPACT REPORT



**ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Illinois' first public university

ABOUT FIRST STAR ISU ACADEMY



FIRST STAR MISSION

First Star provides high school youth in foster care with the opportunity, tools, and support to successfully transition to self-sufficiency through higher education or other viable pathways

Illinois State University (ISU)

The Center for Child Welfare and Adoption Studies

First Star at Illinois State University serves college-bound foster youth in Central Illinois and includes monthly Saturday classes, year-round academic mentoring, life skills classes, and caregiver engagement. Program participants also reside on the campus at ISU for two weeks during the summer as part of a campus immersion program.

Academy Director: Tameka Thompson



Email: tfthom1@ilstu.edu



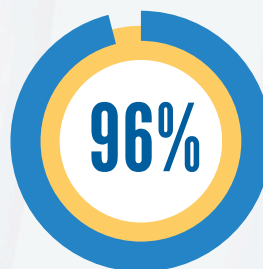
Phone Number: 309-438-5841



Website: www.childwelfare.illinoisstate.edu/first-star-academy/



Instagram: @firststarisu



**HIGH SCHOOL
GRADUATION
COMPLETION**

COMPARED TO 50% NATIONALLY



**ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY**
Illinois' first public university

FIRST STAR ODU ACADEMY IN THE SPOTLIGHT



FIRS STAR SUMMER SITE VISIT



NATIONAL PEER MENTOR AWARD RECIPIENT

The Academy Model

ACADEMY PROGRAMMING INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:



MONTHLY ACADEMIES

Monthly programming over four years for youth in foster care focused on academics and life skills while they are in high school.

CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

Seminars and workshops that provide tools to caregivers to become advocates for their youth.

SUMMER ACADEMY

Intensive 2-4 week residential enrichment program on a university campus.

VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

Weekly mentoring and tutoring sessions, as well as an open environment to connect and build community through virtual hangouts.



STEAM ACADEMY

Virtual Tech Talks and access to labs that focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math.



SCHOLAR ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC)

Leadership opportunity for scholars focused on becoming civically engaged and enacting change in their local communities.



ALUMNI PROGRAM

Offered to scholars who graduate the Academy as a resource during their transition to adulthood.



BRIGHT FUTURES AHEAD

CELEBRATING SCHOLAR SUCCESS



FIRST STAR ALUMNI PROGRAM

The First Star Alumni Program's goal is to remain connected and ensure Alumni have access to resources and the First Star network as they transition into adulthood, career, and advanced education.



81% of the 2024 graduating class enrolled in the Alumni Program

79% of enrolled Alumni engage with the program via resources, newsletters and events

18% of peer mentors are First Star Alumni

FIRST STAR STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC)

First Star encourages advocacy and engagement in social justice through the Scholar Advisory Committee (SAC). SAC is composed of current scholars from across the First Star Academy network and from the Alumni Program. SAC allows scholars to build community, freely share their ideas and opinions, and dialogue about important issues!



80% of SAC scholars were returners from last year

100% of SAC scholars stated they felt more confident taking on leadership roles.

100% of SAC scholars stated they felt more confident in advocating for themselves

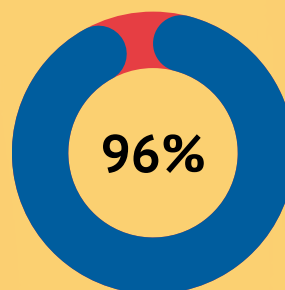
 **REFER A STUDENT**



NATIONAL FIRST STAR CLASS OF 2024

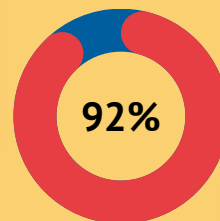


National Graduating Class



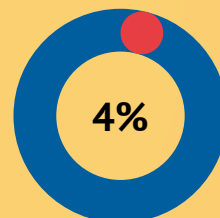
H.S Diploma: 96%
Credit Recovery: 4%

Post-Secondary Pathways



4-year: 55%
2-year CC: 33%
Vocation/Trade School: 4%

Workforce Pathways



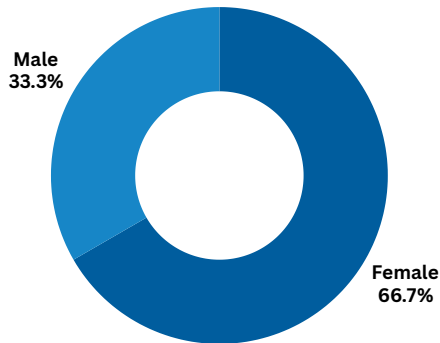
Apprenticeship/Union: 0%
Full-Time Employment: 4%
Military: 0%



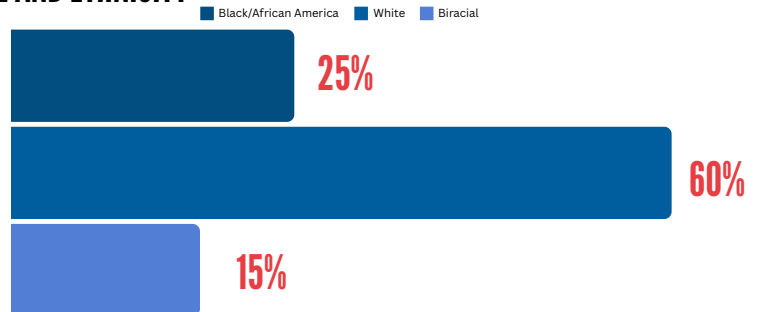
FIRST STAR ISU ACADEMY

SCHOLAR PROFILE

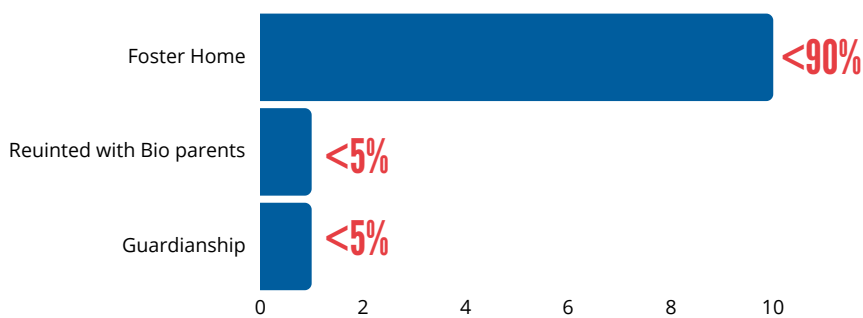
GENDER



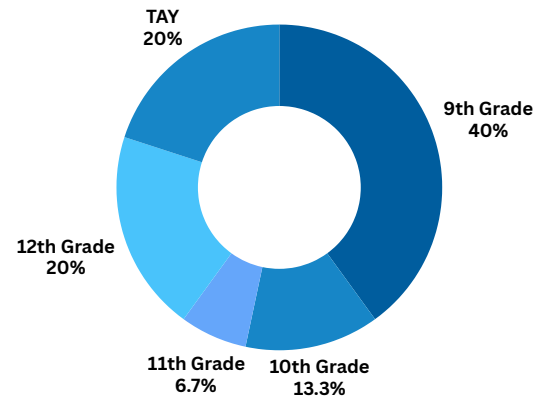
RACE AND ETHNICITY



PLACEMENT STATUS



GRADE LEVEL



Celebrating Class of 2024



100%

of First Star ISU seniors graduated High School on time!

100%

of First Star ISU graduates are pursuing post-secondary opportunities.

100%

of First Star ISU graduates will attend ISU in the fall!

FIRST STAR ISU IMPACT

2023-2024 ACADEMIC YEAR



LIFE SKILLS AND SELF DISCOVERY

- In the “Secure the Bag STRIVE session, scholars worked together to Identify different money management strategies that Included goal setting, saving for an emergency fund, and overall budgeting.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Scholars participated In two cooking classes at the Family and Consumer kitchen In Turner Hall.
- Scholars participated In a dance class In which they could move their bodies and stimulate their minds.
- Scholars enjoyed going to the ISU Recreation Center for a strengths class that focused on weight training.



CAREER EXPLORATION

- Scholars participating in a career fair during Saturday Academy. The met with employers and had to ask a list of questions about their company. They were encouraged to learn about new careers and the educational requirements for the job. The afternoon session was focused on career assessments researching their chosen career.

LEADERSHIP AND SELF ADVOCACY

- Reach for the stars was a session focused on building scholars' confidence in the leadership and the power of their voice. They started out by looking at why we call celebrities stars. Scholars talked about entertainers and athletes that influence them and why they admire them. Next, they looked at some videos of youth who are doing impactful work. Finally they discussed Issues they are seeing in their schools and community.



COLLEGE READINESS

- Scholars were split up in groups this year for their college tours. Seniors who are enrolling in ISU this Fall went on a campus tour that included meeting with key staff who will work with them on housing financial aid and other resources specific for youth in care. The rest of the group took a tour of the local community college and learned about career training programs.

FIRST STAR ISU ACADEMY

BRIGHT FUTURES AHEAD

The National Bright Futures Survey was developed in partnership with Dr. Philip Hong from the University of Georgia to better understand our scholars' hopes and aspirations as it relates to their academic and future goals. In creating this survey and collecting feedback from scholars, we are embracing the challenge young people face and how we can be better stewards of their emotions and feelings as we support their growth in our Academies!

80%

of First Star scholars are feeling hopeful about the future and expect to complete further education after high school!



70%

of scholars feel a sense of belonging and connection since joining First Star!



70%

of scholars are confident that they have the necessary skills to succeed in college since joining First Star!

SUMMER ACADEMY

Summer Residential Program Dates: June 1st to June 15th 2024

Summer Academy Showcase: Saturday June 15th



FIRST STAR ISU ACADEMY

COMMUNITY IMPACT



Peer Mentor Recognition

First Star recognizes the positive impact peer mentos have on our scholars. The First Star ISU Academy awarded peer mentors for their years of service and unwavering support of the academy.



are current students or alumni of host university



identify as first generation



identify has current or former foster youth



identify has former First Star scholars



National Peer Mentor Award Recipient

Feyipitan Sadiku was chosen as this year's National Peer Mentor Award recipient in recognition of her service as a College Coach with the First Star Academy at ISU!

Caregiver Engagement

First Star ISU Academy hosted Caregiver Orientations and other engagement events on campus during the year.

100% of families at ISU Academy receive monthly check-in's on their scholar's participation in the program and are involved in their student's academic case management meetings.



Foster Care Awareness Month Advocacy

ISU hosted a community stakeholder open house in Spring of 2024 to bring awareness to the on and off campus community.



FIRST STAR ISU ACADEMY

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



**ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY**
Illinois' first public university

**ISU Center for
Adoption Studies**

Illinois Department of
DCFS
Children & Family Services



Special Olympics
Illinois

Community Stakeholder Acknowledgments

Academy Programming Partners


STRIVE Life Skills
City of Bloomington
Special Olympics
ISU Center for Child Welfare and Adoption Studies

Scholar Recruitment Partners

Illinois Department of Children and Family
Services (DCFS)

Funding Acknowledgements

Illinois Department of Children and Family
Services (DCFS)



SCHOLAR TESTIMONIALS

It means that I can be successful. I am not a statistic. What First Star means is a better opportunity for me to achieve my goals, advocacy for youth in care success in and out of college. First Star means hope for the children in care to be able to become something other than a statistic and learn from the setbacks. I am interested in going to an HBCU and majoring in law or nursing."

"First Star means family, a place you can trust one another and love each other. Before First Star I wasn't sure if I wanted to come, now I am glad I did."

HOW TO GET INVOLVED



REFER A STUDENT.



VOLUNTEER.



DONATE.