



# FIRST STAR IMPACT REPORT 2024



PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST



first  
star  
putting students first



# OUR 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.



# OUR VISION

We envision a world where youth in foster care have equitable opportunities to acquire education and skills to achieve fulfilling and productive adult lives.



# A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Dear Friends,

Since our inception in 2000, we've examined the systems that serve youth in care; pioneered university-based Academies, where First Star scholars live on campus, build life skills, and connect with mentors who believe in them; watched our alumni graduate high school and college at rates far exceeding their foster youth peers, and provided micro-grants for the very urgent needs of our alumni. As we enter our next 25 years, we are looking at new ways of expanding our programs and services. Your support makes that possible.

Across our network, your support is driving dynamic research, enhancing curriculum through innovative programs like micro-credentialing certifications to support workforce development, fostering connections with lawmakers, creating impactful advocacy opportunities, and building stronger pipelines to higher education and other post-secondary pathways. These initiatives showcase the incredible work being done to create lasting, meaningful change.

One bright recent highlight is Sam Perez, an Arizona State University alum and former First Star peer mentor, who is now pursuing his dream of becoming a doctor, a testament to the life-changing impact of First Star's work, empowering youth in foster care.

Over the past few years, we've supported thousands of scholars and peer mentors like Sam, helping to dispel myths of low academic potential and empowering young people to realize their fullest potential! With our Academies, Alumni Program, STEAM Curriculum and coalition-building initiatives, we are doubling down on our mission to create lasting change for individuals affected by the foster care system.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you. Your unwavering commitment to empowering teens in foster care has transformed over 3,000 lives and counting.

At First Star, we help youth in foster care thrive, not just survive.

I invite you to continue this journey with us to help us fuel more dreams like Sam's.

*Lyndsey C. Wilson*

Lyndsey C. Wilson MA  
CEO, First Star, Inc.



# WE MAKE LONG-TERM INVESTMENTS IN YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE



First Star highlights the power of community and connectedness in creating change. The First Star Academy program centers academics as a pathway into achievement, and achievement is impossible without the uplift and support of community.



**10**

**FIRST STAR  
ACADEMIES  
ACROSS THE NATION**

**SERVING OVER**

**3000**

**SCHOLARS SINCE  
INCEPTION**

**ACTIVELY  
SERVING**

**340+**

**ALUMNI**



# OUR ACADEMY PROGRAM

## WE INVEST IN EDUCATIONAL ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

First Star's Academies are long-term college-prep programs for high school students in foster care that includes immersive residential summers on a university campus and monthly sessions during each school year. We keep our scholars on track for high school graduation and prepare them for higher education and adulthood by providing specialized programming that addresses the academics, life skills, and adult support needed by students in foster care. Our innovation lies in our holistic model embedded within a university community that also supports self-determination, social and interpersonal skills, career preparation and advocacy.

First Star scholars maintained a high school graduation rate of 96% while increasing post-secondary enrollment.

### COMPARED TO LAST YEAR, THE CLASS OF 2024 HAD AN:



2% Increase in post-secondary education enrollment



3% Increase in vocational school enrollment



IN 2024,

96%

OF FIRST STAR SCHOLARS GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL

## KEY ELEMENTS OF A FIRST STAR ACADEMY

### ACADEMY PROGRAM

4 year college preparatory program for youth in foster care focused on academics and life skills

### VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

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

### CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

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

### SUMMER ACADEMY

Immersive residential enrichment program on a university campus focused on building academic, life skills, and healthy relationships

## Oh, the Places They'll Go

Some of the colleges and universities our recent alumni were accepted to:

Arizona State University  
Bowie State University  
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo  
CSU Los Angeles  
CSU Northridge  
CSU Sacramento State  
CSU San Bernardino  
CSU Humboldt  
Fairmont State University  
Florida State University

Howard University  
Illinois Central College  
Illinois State University  
Kent State University  
Loyola Marymount University  
Morehouse College  
Northern Arizona University  
Old Dominion University  
Rowan University  
San Francisco State

Southern Utah University  
UCLA  
University of California, Riverside  
University of California, Santa Cruz  
University of California, San Diego  
University of California, Santa Barbara  
University of Illinois, Chicago  
University of Miami  
University of Utah  
Utah State University

We are very excited to announce that 30% of our 2023-2024 chose to attend their host University!

# 2024 FIRST STAR ACADEMIES



## First Star Arizona State University Academy

Phoenix, AZ



Rachel Kist,  
Academy Director



## First Star CSU San Bernardino Academy

San Bernardino, CA



Kurt Manio,  
Academy Director



ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

## First Star Illinois State University Academy

Normal, IL



Tameka Thompson,  
Academy Director



## First Star Kent State University Academy

Kent, OH



Danielle Green-Welch,  
Academy Director



## First Star KVC West Virginia Academy

Charleston, WV



Tiffany Dixon,  
Academy Director



## First Star Old Dominion University Academy

Norfolk, VA



Alexia Hargrove,  
Academy Director



SACRAMENTO STATE

## First Star Sacramento State Academy

Sacramento, CA



Latrice Madkins,  
Academy Director



## First Star UCLA Bruin Guardian Scholars Academy

Los Angeles, CA



Markeith Royster,  
Academy Director



## First Star University of Miami Academy

Miami, FL



Maria Pia De Castro,  
Academy Director



## First Star University of Utah Academy

Salt Lake City, UT



Jerry Stott,  
Academy Director

# FIRST STAR PEER MENTORS

## THE 2024 NATIONAL FIRST STAR PEER MENTOR AWARD

First Star recognizes not only the profound impact Peer Mentors have on our scholars, but also how our Academies empower these mentors through meaningful leadership and professional development opportunities. In October 2024, the First Star National Team proudly presented the inaugural **National First Star Peer Mentor Award** to **Feyipitan Sadiku**, in recognition of her extraordinary dedication, compassion, and leadership.



*“My goal is to create strength-based educational programs that help youth transform their lives and those of their communities. In the last five years, through client-centered roles, I have brought my personality, my training, and my skill set to help youth realize their potential, and the First Star scholars are no exception. As a two-time Peer Mentor there are three life lessons that I will be taking away; the first one is to never judge a book by its cover because it doesn't always reflect the true nature of its content, something that I have found to be true with the amazing first star scholars; the second is to always ask what else could be happening, and the third*

*one is to be fun, fair, safe and aware - a simple yet important truth that we often forget to live by as social workers and care providers. Because of the amazing work of the directors of First Star at ISU, I have learned the right skills and knowledge to create an effective educational program with an emphasis on equity student student-centeredness, and collective purpose.”*

### PEER MENTOR HIGHLIGHT

**Sam Perez**, an Arizona State University alum and former First Star peer mentor, is now pursuing his dream of becoming a doctor, a testament to the life-changing impact of First Star's work, empowering youth in foster care.

### TOTAL NUMBER OF PEER MENTORS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR AND SUMMER ACADEMY: 127

#### PEER MENTOR STATISTICS

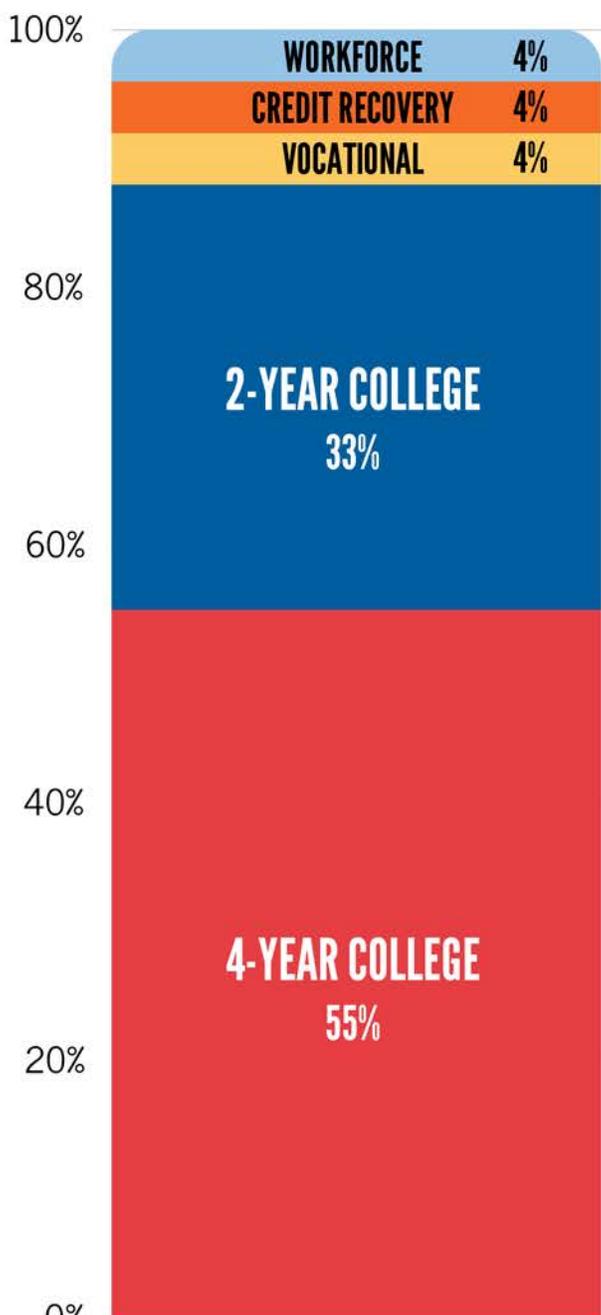
- 65% identify as first generation
- 13% are alumni of the host university
- 86% are currently enrolled in post-secondary education
- 42% are returning summer staff, and have committed at least 1 year of service
- 70% are current students of the host university
- 32% identify as current or former foster youth
- 18% are former high school scholars of the Academy/First Star Alumni

# 2024 FIRST STAR SCHOLAR GRADUATION REPORT

## 2024 SCHOLAR OUTCOMES

### POST-HIGH SCHOOL PATHWAYS

Of the scholars who graduated in June of 2024, 92% enrolled in post-secondary education. Post-secondary education includes universities and colleges, as well as trade and vocational schools. 4% of 2024 graduating First Star scholars did not enroll in higher education and instead joined the workforce.



2024 GRADUATING FIRST STAR SCHOLARS

### FIRST STAR VS. NATIONAL OUTCOMES

**96%**

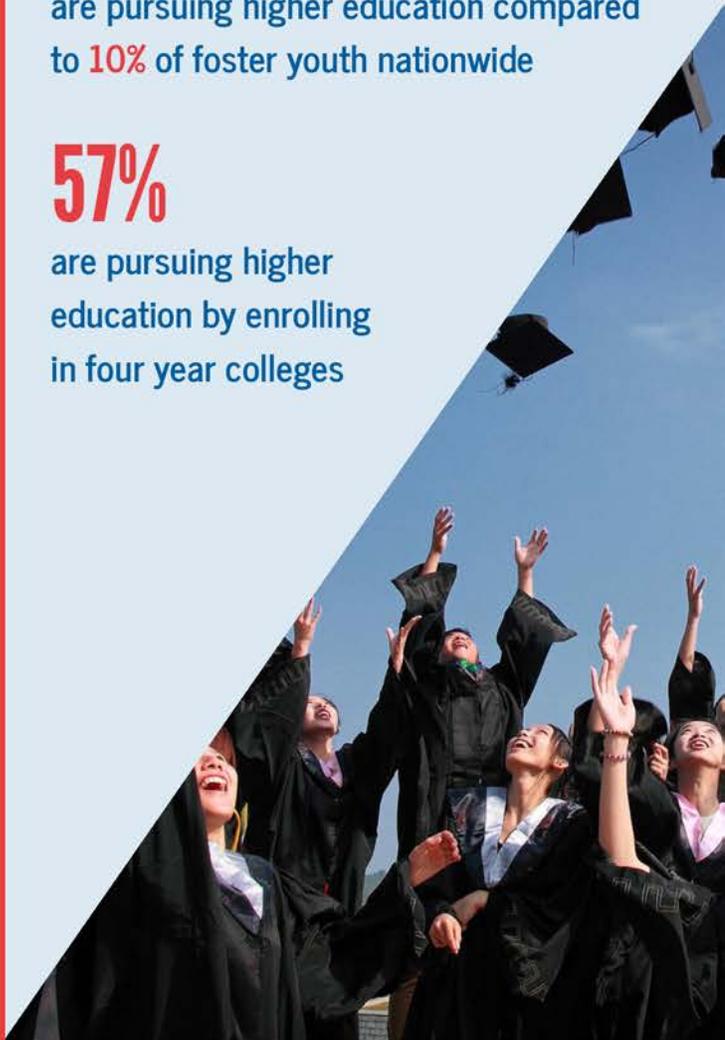
graduated from high school in June 2024 compared to **50%** of foster youth nationwide

**92%**

are pursuing higher education compared to **10%** of foster youth nationwide

**57%**

are pursuing higher education by enrolling in four year colleges



Source: National Foster Youth Institute, Higher Education for Foster Youth, <https://nfyi.org/issues/higher-education/>  
Source: Child Trends analysis of data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), made available through the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect.

# OUR ALUMNI PROGRAM

## WE INVEST IN CONTINUED SUCCESS

The continued success mindset is why community, belonging, and long-term relationships are central to First Star programs.

**We hope to be a family our scholars rely on while in the program and after they graduate.**

The Alumni Program is an extended First Star family for our high-school graduates, a resource connecting our alumni throughout the country via social media, newsletters, reunions, and more. Our goal is to remain connected with alumni to ensure they have access to resources and the First Star network as they transition into adulthood, career, and advanced education.

A growing network of alumni from our Academies - we've seen a consistent increase in enrollment with new members enrolled from all First Star graduating classes since 2015.

The Program partners with over 10 organizations to provide direct service and resources including micro-grants, laptops, financial literacy courses, mentorship, internships, and more. 81% of the 2024 graduating class enrolled in the Alumni Program!

We connect youth with scholarship opportunities, jobs, internships and professional development. Our Alumni program assistant is herself a First Star Alumnus and alumni representation has been added to the board with two voting members and two ex-officio members who help represent and advocate for youth in care as we refine our programs and set our strategies. Our goal is not simply to keep foster youth in post-secondary education, but to equip them with the tools they need to succeed.

“

First Star has always been there for me. I'm extremely happy to wake up every day realizing that people are rooting for me and I'm rooting for myself.

”

**The First Star Alumni Program saw an 21% increase in enrollment this year for graduating First Star scholars!**





This Alumni grant will help me significantly at a difficult time when I need help. Because of First Star, I feel more hopeful about my situation. I am and will always be grateful for the program.

Anneth H. ISU Class of 2023



# ALUMNI PROGRAM MICRO-GRANTS



Alumni Program Micro-Grants support scholars and alumni who experience resource barriers as they pursue their post-secondary goals. Micro-grants are awarded for educational expenses, professional development, basic needs, and technology. Through the Alumni Program, our grantees receive free financial literacy courses from Mana Money School.

**IN 2024, ALUMNI REQUESTED AND RECEIVED ASSISTANCE FROM THE ALUMNI MICRO-GRANTS PROGRAM MEETING THESE NEEDS:**

**TOTAL AMOUNT AWARDED TO ALUMNI: \$60,702**



# 2024 ANNUAL EVENTS

The Alumni Program hosts an annual award ceremony and family reunion to celebrate the achievements of our alumni. The May 2024 Alumni Awards Show awarded our largest graduating senior class and almost 25 Alumni during our annual community celebration.



College hasn't been easy and knowing that I'm supported like this keeps me motivated. This micro-grant from the alumni program will help me get essential items that are difficult to pay for. Thank you!

-Zarreon Carter class of 2024



# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

## ANA MENDOZA-FLORES - CLASS OF 2024

As a scholar of the First Star UCLA Bruin Guardian Scholars Academy, I am honored to talk about how this program has reassured and nurtured me. In my years as scholar, I never imagined being where I am today. Like many of the youth here, my life has always consisted of moving from one place to another, a never-ending instability, a never-ending insecurity, but what remained was First Star. Their aid and consistency never-ending. Either through monthly Saturday Academies, the life skills workshops, the network and resources provided, and so forth.

It surprises me how these opportunities were unknown to me. Looking back, there has never been a moment in which I did not feel the support that this program was envisioned to have. Providing a safe, fun, educational environment, with plenty of room for self-exploration. There is no denying that this program is indeed a caring space for youth, and it is because of that, that I am forever grateful.

Even so, First Star BGSA is so much more. It is that chance, that opportunity that every youth needs, it is that extended hand when all seems lost, it's being asked whether I would be open to speak about my experience at the California Foster Youth Education Summit. It's preparing, exploring, addressing current issues, and discovering the many different types of resources; it is the greatest opportunity to be yourself and succeed. By that I mean, to try everything, try and try again.

First Star allows youth to be their true self,

- it's finally feeling understood by someone who has gone through similar circumstances
- it's finding a friend whom you can open up to and not be judged,
- it is feeling like you belong.

**First Star BGSA,**  
**My God gifted safe haven**  
**My home,**  
**My people,**  
**My family.**  
**Thank YOU**



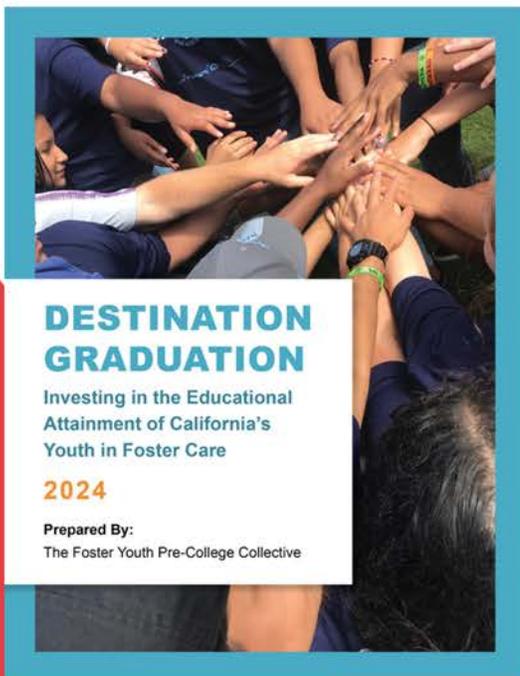


# OUR COALITION BUILDING

## WE INVEST IN COLLABORATION



First Star leads a coalition of six California nonprofits called the Foster Youth Pre-College Collective (tFYPC). tFYPC's mission is to ensure youth in care have access to meaningful and engaging educational support programming grounded in best practices and focused on achieving high school graduation and post-secondary matriculation rates that match or exceed those of their peers in the general population. Visit the website to learn more: [tFYPC.org](https://tFYPC.org)



The Destination Graduation Report (authored by tFYPC) outlines the persistent challenges facing youth in foster care, shares reflections about their educational journeys, reviews prior attempts to address the issue, and proposes collaborative solutions to close the opportunity gap for this high-needs student population.

In the fall of 2024, the Collective presented Destination Graduation at Teach For America's Community Fall Convening and the Child Welfare Policy Roundtable. Highlighting how teachers can effectively assist their students through consistent, one-on-one support and strong engagement. These approaches have been shown to improve academic outcomes, increase high school graduation rates, and encourage the pursuit of college and other post-secondary opportunities.

# FIRST STAR STEAM PROGRAMMING

## WE INVEST IN INNOVATION AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

To extend our reach outside of our traditional academy program, we created The First Star National STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) Academy, an enrichment program for youth in foster care led by technology and grounded in social justice. This curated approach includes culturally responsive content and workshops from professionals who have similar life experiences and/or backgrounds and validates and affirms each participant's experiences. Following the integration of STEAM programming into our core curriculum, 2024 saw 43% of First Star scholars go on to pursue majors in STEAM fields, highlighting the growing impact of this initiative.

FIRST STAR NATIONAL



ACADEMY

LED BY TECHNOLOGY,  
GROUNDED IN SOCIAL JUSTICE

## THE BRIGHT FUTURES SURVEY

The Bright Futures Survey, developed by First Star Board Member, Dr. Philip Hong, Dean of the University of Georgia School of Social Work, was implemented in Spring 2024 to better understand our scholars' hopes, aspirations, and overall well-being, including physical, psychological, social, academic, and future-oriented goals.

At the 2024 First Star National Conference, Dr. Hong was joined by PhD students from Loyola University Chicago's CROSS (Community Research on Self-Sufficiency) Center to present a powerful session on the survey findings. Their presentation offered valuable insights into quantifying the role of hope in data, enriching our directors' and staff's understanding of how to measure and support long-term success for youth in foster care.

\*Students who participated in the Academy program for a longer duration showed greater comfort in advocating for themselves, more confidence in acquiring skills for college success, and a stronger sense of belonging.



# 2024 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

## BUILDING BRIGHT FUTURES THROUGH DATA

The First Star National Conference serves as our annual convening, bringing together National and Academy staff for networking, professional development, connections, and learning. For this year's National Conference, the theme **"We are First Star, Building Bright Futures Through Data"** was chosen to acknowledge our network's collective impact in supporting the educational paths of young people in foster care. Our conference sessions were centered on learning best practices for data collection and strengthening program assessment in order to enhance program quality and overall scholar experience.



## MEASURING SUCCESS BEYOND NUMBERS

First Star created the **National Data Dashboard** to track the progress Academies are making towards the objective of our participating youth remaining on track for high school graduation. Each semester, the data input tracks overall academic progress of scholars and the characteristics of participating youth as a cohort. Nationally, this data helps First Star identify and disseminate best practices and modifications to the Academy model.

Conference participants engaged in an outcomes mapping exercise to brainstorm and identify the various data metrics that best represent the Academy's impact over the four-year program model. The Academy Engagement Team shared a **Scholar Engagement and Retention Tracker** to serve as a tool for monitoring scholar's year's of participation in the program.



### USING DATA TO TELL THE ACADEMY STORY



# NATIONAL CONFERENCE RECAP

During the National Conference, the Alumni Program shared its early outreach initiative to strengthen our scholar's transition to the alumni program for continued support post high school graduation. The Alumni team also shared their data story showing the program's growth in supporting graduating scholars since its inception.



Dr. Philip Hong and University of Georgia (UGA) School of Social Work's **Community Research on Self-Sufficiency (CROSS)** developed a scholar survey to identify key markers of First Star scholar's psychological well-being, their feelings about the future and the world around them, and the impact of the First Star Academy. Key findings were shared at the National Conference followed by a network discussion on next steps for developing an annual scholar survey that will shed light to scholar overall experience within a First Star Academy. Those findings will be shared with university and community partners to support development and fundraising. Workshops and materials from the Transforming Impossible into Possible (TIP) for Educational Empowerment Curriculum will be identified to use during Saturday and Summer Academy programs.

Our Sr. Director of Academic Partnerships led a session on Cultivating your pitch for stakeholder engagement. By developing **a stakeholder engagement plan**, Academy staff can identify allies at each university, engage allies and stakeholders to build community, and call to action for supporting foster youth.



The 2023 Brilliance Award Winner, Maria Pia de Castro closed the conference with a powerful speech on her journey leading the UM Academy with the support of her family and community.

## 2024 BRILLIANCE AWARD

We are proud to present First Star University of Utah Academy Director, Jerry Stott with our annual First Star Brilliance Award honoring those who have gone above and beyond to serve our scholars. Jerry has served in many roles since first joining the Academy in 2017 as a summer peer mentor and later program coordinator. By 2024 Jerry had advanced to Academy Director, and most recently has been promoted to Associate Director of Foster Youth Initiatives at the University of Utah.



# FIRST STAR 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

2024 brought First Star in-person programming, full of hugs and laughter. We are so excited to continue to foster excellence and joy in scholars across the United States and are thrilled to have you on this journey with us!



**First Star ASU** provided scholars with a comprehensive slate of programming designed to support their personal and academic development. Life Skills sessions equipped students with essential tools for daily living through interactive, hands-on learning. The Health and Well-Being component emphasized physical and mental wellness through engaging fitness workshops. Career Exploration introduced students to a range of career paths and professional opportunities. Scholars also participated in activities that built critical thinking, communication, strategic planning, and advocacy skills. Finally, College Readiness workshops such as College 101 offered an immersive introduction to the college experience.



**First Star CSU San Bernardino Academy** scholars participated in a financial literacy workshop led by David Friedman, co-founder of Realicore Real Estate and Viva La Boba. They also took part in a storytelling and writing workshop with the Plus Me Project, designed to help students craft compelling personal statements. Scholars engaged in a "Bite of Reality" simulation with Thinkwise Credit Union, where they practiced real-world decision-making around money, budgeting, and time management. The theme of Summer Academy 2024 was business and entrepreneurship, and scholars attended workshops on building a vision, setting SMART goals, conveying values, teamwork, and leadership development.





**First Star Illinois State University Academy** scholars had the opportunity to take cooking, dance, and fitness classes, They also went to a career fair and took college tours. ISU hosted a community stakeholder open house in Spring of 2024 to bring foster care awareness to the on and off campus community.



**ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY**



**First Star Kent State Academy** scholars participated in workshops for financial planning and wellness, cooking, physical wellness, art expression sessions with the Refresh Collective, film and video creation, self-advocacy with "Da GoalGetta" Jamar Blackmon, and collaborations with the College of the Arts .

**KENT STATE UNIVERSITY**



**KVC West Virginia** scholars had experiences in meditation, reflection, and exploration thanks to a program Libera piloted with First Star. Scholars also built connections with senior citizens by participating in BINGO at a local senior center. Together, the seniors and scholars spent time creating origami stars to be displayed around the senior center. KVC WV scholars took a hands-on workshop on vehicle maintenance and learned how to prepare for purchasing, insuring, and taking care of a car. Scholars volunteered as race day cheerleaders and helped distribute medals to winners at the The CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) Programs of Harrison & Marion County fundraising event.

**KVC**  
West Virginia



**First Star Old Dominion University** scholars participated in a food drive with Buffalow Family & Friends during the holiday season that was featured on local cable news! In partnership with Tidewater Friends of Foster Care, First Star ODU Academy hosted a recruitment and community event for foster youth in the community. In the summer, scholars worked together in the Courage Miller Partners Challenge Course, engaged in an entrepreneurship class, took College courses like Math 101, and beautified the campus on Campus Community Service Day.



**First Star University of Miami Academy** scholars learned about the field of athletic training from FIU athletic training staff and participated in an Introductory Video Production course. First Star UM Academy scholars are members of the Citrus Youth Advisory Council to support and develop their leadership skills. In partnership with community partners such as Educate Tomorrow, the University of Miami Academy hosted a state-wide college tour during Spring of 2024.



In the Spring of 2024, **First Star University of Utah Academy** was asked to present the keynote address for the Utah Attorney General's Office Conference for Child Protection and participate in a panel discussion facilitated by the 1999 Collective to share their lived experience. In the summer, our youth worked with the Utah Museum of Fine Arts as a collaboration for their upcoming art exhibition "Interwoven: Social Transformation Through Art and Community." Other summer workshops included Utah Planned Parenthood, OG Therapy (Social Health), and the University of Utah Career Services.





The **First Star Sac State Academy** scholars took a cooking class/lab and nutrition class where they obtained their food handlers' license. At the Gateway Mountain Retreat Center, scholars participated in sound bath meditations, fitness- hikes, swimming, and mindfulness walks in nature. The Acting for Stage & Screen class allowed the scholars to work on their public speaking skills. Scholars also had the opportunity to network with a Foster Youth Rights and Resource Fair. First Star CSUS scholars participated in a Health Awareness Day.



This spring, First Star scholars and peer mentors from the UCLA and Sacramento State Academies came together to attend the California Foster Youth Education Summit in Sacramento during Foster Care Awareness Month. Uniting the two academies created a powerful and meaningful experience for all involved.



Our **First Star UCLA Bruin Guardian** scholars and peer mentors participated in a food drive during the Summer Academy in partnership with FoodCycle LA! Our program established a workshop series entitled "Possibility Talks" over the summer where guest speakers shared their narrative and journey to their career path. One "Possibility Talk" presenter was a social justice activist who spoke to the scholars about the power in their voice and demonstrated how to safely and intentionally participate in art activism.



# FINANCIAL SPOTLIGHT

## WE APPRECIATE OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS

Expenses

Fiscal Year 2024

For the sixth consecutive year, First Star has received a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator and a Platinum Seal of Transparency from Candid (previously GuideStar). Thank you for trusting us with your donations, your time, and your goodwill.

Management &  
Fundraising  
12.5%

Program Services  
87.5%

## THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS 2023 & 2024 INDIVIDUAL DONORS, FOUNDATIONS & COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

**\$250,000 +**

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation  
Walter S. Johnson Foundation  
CG Charitable

**\$100,000- \$249,999**

Angell Foundation  
Children's Trust\*  
Citrus Health Network\*

Rob Horwitz and Catherine Redlich  
Julian Grace Foundation  
Resonance Philanthropies  
Los Angeles County Office of Education  
Steve Sarowitz

**\$50,000-\$99,999**

Annenberg Foundation  
Bill & Deirdre Catuzzi  
Educate Tomorrow\*  
Hilda and Preston Davis Foundation  
Illinois DCFS\*  
Los Angeles County DCFS\*  
Manitou Fund  
Sam Simon Charitable Giving Foundation  
Norfolk Department of Human Services\*  
Our Kids of Miami-Dade County\*  
S. Mark Taper Foundation  
San Bernardino Unified Schools\*  
May & Stanley Smith Charitable Trust\*  
Steward Family Foundation  
Taco Bell Foundation  
Wurwand Foundation

**\$25,000-\$49,999**

All Within My Hands Foundation  
American Honda Motor Company  
Akron Community Foundation\*  
The Audrey Irmis Fnd For Social Justice  
Batchelor Foundation  
Braitmayer Foundation\*  
Chao Family Foundation  
The Dave Thomas Foundation  
Jay Paul Deratany  
Dwight Stuart Youth Fund  
Gene & Maxine Rosenfeld Family Fnd  
Green Foundation  
In-N-Out Burger Foundation  
Leeds Family Foundation\*  
Our Little Light Foundation  
Ralph M. Parsons Foundation \*

**\$5,000-\$24,999**

Anonymous  
David Beugen  
Change Reaction  
Edison International  
Glen & Elizabeth Freidman  
Glenda G. Morgan Charitable Fnd\*  
Brian Gray  
Judith & Bruce Hackett  
The Herman Foundation  
Jack & Jill  
Johnny Carson Foundation  
Leeds Family Foundation\*  
Major Taylor Cycling Club Los Angeles  
Marilyn S. Broad Foundation  
McDonough Foundation\*  
McDowell Levin Charitable Giving Fund  
Morton H. Meyerson Family Fnd  
Michael and Lori Milken Family Fnd  
Diane and Ron Miller Fund  
Our Little Light Foundation  
The Philip and Janice Levin Foundation  
Joseph H. & Florence A. Roblee Fnd  
Jen Sargent  
Society for Science  
Stephanie Sperber  
Vince & Jacqueline Thompson  
Thursday Nights

# LEVERAGED FUNDING FOR FIRST STAR ACADEMY PROGRAMS

In addition to the financial support First Star has received directly over the past three years, our University partners have received millions of dollars in direct public funding to support their First Star Academy programs. These gifts include:

**\$3M**

in ESSER funds to the First Star ASU Academy.

**\$1.5M**

in the California State budget to support First Star Academies within the California State University System

**\$1M**

in annual investments from regional departments of child protective services partners, such as the City of Norfolk, Department of Child, Family and Adult Services, Sacramento and The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade County

**\$1M**

from the US Department of Education to support the First Star University of Utah Academy and the Impact Scholars program



# OUR CORE VALUES



## EMPOWERMENT

We believe in providing the freedom and tools that support successful progression towards individual and collective goals.



## COLLABORATION

We build relationships to collectively work as a community to support our scholars. We know we cannot do this work alone, and therefore we depend on our partners.



## COMMITMENT

We are committed to achieving educational and early-adulthood success for youth in foster care. This is critical to inspire transformational change for our Network and scholars.



## FAMILY

It takes a village to raise a child, and to that end we embrace the backgrounds and perspectives of all the individuals within the First Star Family. We foster a welcoming environment that honors and appreciates their individual experiences, beliefs, and values.



## DIVERSITY

We strive to examine our own biases and privileges and the different voices from our community to focus on diversity, inclusivity, and equity. Every decision made with our stakeholders bears this in mind.



## ACCOUNTABILITY

We embrace and integrate accountability into everything we do, individually and collectively, to honor our commitments to all stakeholders serving youth across the country who have experienced the foster care system.



# FIRST STAR BOARD MEMBERS



**Peter Samuelson**

First Star President  
& Co-Founder



**Isael Andrade**

First Star Alumnus



**Alex Ballantyne**

First Star Alumnus



**Michael H. Cook**

Liles Parker PLLC



**Delida Costin**

General Counsel Growth  
Advisor and Speaker



**Brian Gray, CPA**

Gursey | Schneider LLP



**Judy Hackett**

Bryant Stibel



**Philip Hong, PhD.**

University of Georgia



**Adrien P. Sebro, PhD.**

University of Texas, Austin



**Stephanie Sperber**

Lion Forge Entertainment



**Vince Thompson**

Middleshift

**Lyndsey C. Wilson**

First Star CEO

**Robin Winston León**

First Star COO

# FIRST STAR TEAM MEMBERS



**Lyndsey C. Wilson**

Chief Executive Officer



**Robin Winston León**

Chief Operating Officer



**Brian Ritchey**

Sr. Director of Academy Partnerships



**Ismael Soto**

Sr. Director of  
Development



**Jennyann Gallo**

Alumni Program  
Manager



**Karina García-López**

Director of Academy  
Engagement



**Joshua Jones**

Grants Manager  
/Communications



**Marquel Reid**

Academy Engagement  
Coordinator



**Jessica Va**

Development and Special  
Projects Coordinator

**Janice Frew**

Executive Assistant

**Desiree Isola**

Alumni Program Assistant

First Star, Inc. 2049 Century Park East, Suite #4320, Los Angeles, CA 90067

 [www.firststar.org](http://www.firststar.org)

 [info@firststar.org](mailto:info@firststar.org)

 310-882-5810



# 2024

2049 CENTURY PARK EAST  
SUITE 4320  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90067  
FIRSTSTAR.ORG



PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST



first  
star  
putting students first