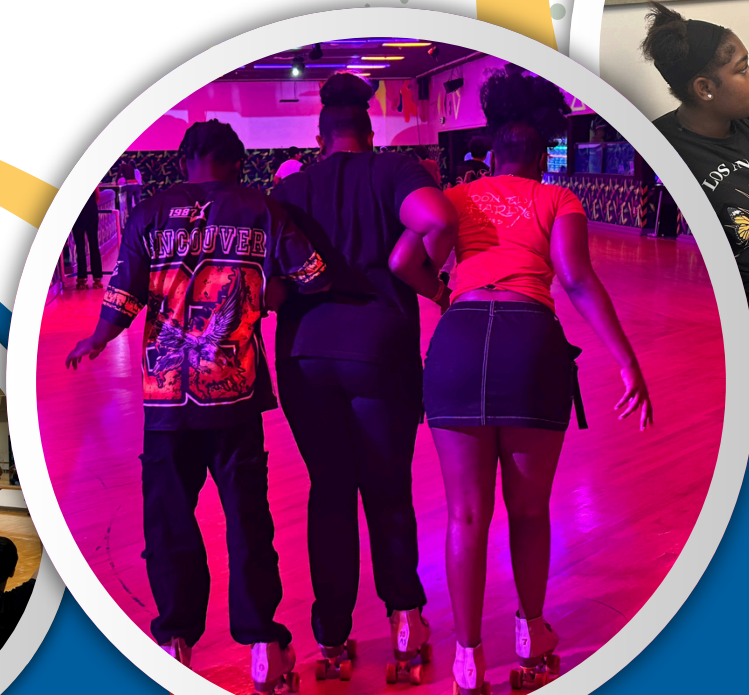




FIRST STAR UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI ACADEMY

2025 IMPACT REPORT




ABOUT FIRST STAR UM ACADEMY





UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI


The Children and Youth Law Clinic at the University of UM Law School is a key partner, along with UM's School of Education and Human Development, in implementing the First Star University of Miami Academy – a holistic college prep program for youth impacted by the child welfare system. Foster youth can get tuition waived at Florida state colleges, but lacking the skills, study habits and support, foster youth inevitably drop out. First Star's goal is to change that and lay a foundation for success.

Academy Director: Maria Pia De Castro

 **Email:** m.decastro3@miami.edu

 **Phone Number:** 305-284-9937

 **Website:** www.law.miami.edu/academics/experiential-learning/clinics/children-and-youth/first-star-academy

 **Instagram:** @firststarmiami



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



**HIGH SCHOOL
GRADUATION
COMPLETION**

COMPARED TO 50% NATIONALLY



FIRST STAR UM ACADEMY IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Give Miami Day!



First Star Academy Leadership at UM

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.

SUMMER ACADEMY

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

CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

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

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.



100% of the 2025 graduating class enrolled in the Alumni Program

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

22% 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

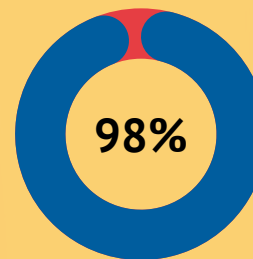
100% of SAC scholars stated they felt more confident taking on leadership roles

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

NATIONAL FIRST STAR CLASS OF 2025

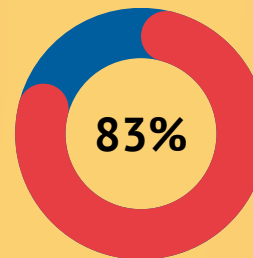


National Graduating Class



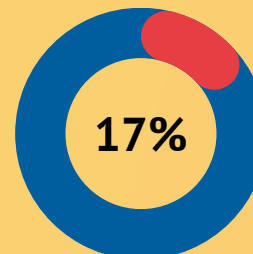
H.S Diploma: 98%
Credit Recovery: 2%

Post-Secondary Pathways



4-year: 46%
2-year CC: 29%
Vocation/Trade School: 8%

Workforce Pathways



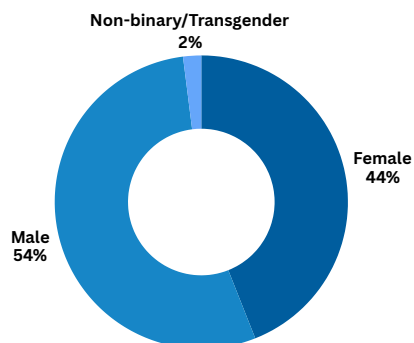
Apprenticeship/ Union: 0%
Full-Time Employment: 17%
Military: 0%



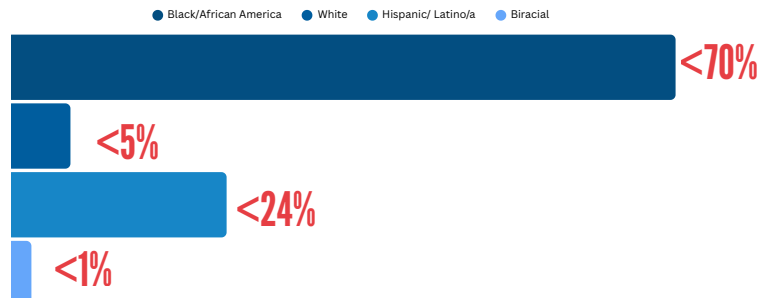
FIRST STAR UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI ACADEMY

SCHOLAR PROFILE

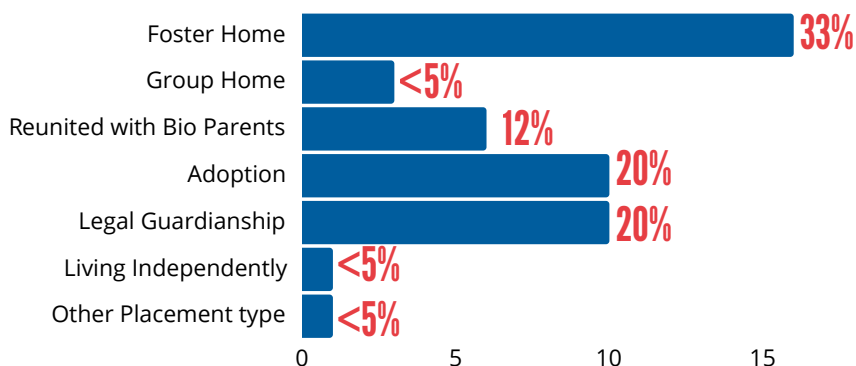
GENDER



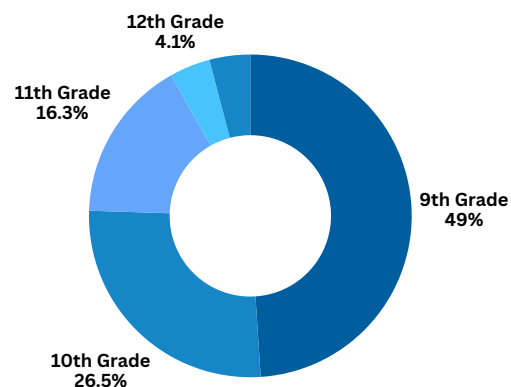
RACE AND ETHNICITY



PLACEMENT STATUS



GRADE LEVEL



Celebrating Class of 2025

100%

100% of First Star UM scholars graduated High School on time!

100%

100% of First Star UM graduates submitted the FAFSA and are pursuing post-secondary opportunities.

FIRST STAR UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI IMPACT

2024-2025 ACADEMIC YEAR



LIFE SKILLS AND SELF DISCOVERY

Scholars participated in life skills programming emphasizing communication and healthy coping strategies, strengthening their interpersonal skills and overall well-being. Throughout the school year, 100% of scholars received individualized life skills assessments and ongoing case management support to ensure their growth and success.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Scholars explored the field of athletic training through hands-on learning with FIU athletic training staff. They also participated in health and well-being workshops focused on building healthy relationships and maintaining a balanced lifestyle.



CAREER EXPLORATION

Scholars took part in worksite shadow days across a variety of occupations, gaining firsthand exposure to different careers. Through the Summer Youth Internship Program, students also engaged in hands-on work experience, building practical skills and professional confidence.

LEADERSHIP AND SELF ADVOCACY

Scholars participated in a variety of public speaking workshops to strengthen their communication skills. Additionally, First Star UM Academy scholars serve on the Citrus Youth Advisory Council, further developing their leadership abilities.



COLLEGE READINESS

Through our comprehensive college readiness programming, scholars gained the knowledge, skills, and experiences to confidently pursue higher education. Participants joined a five-day, four-night college tour across eight Florida colleges and universities, explored the state capitol and local housing options, and engaged in enriching activities like Busch Gardens. Scholars strengthened academic foundations in math, language arts, and science, received targeted SAT prep, and received hands-on guidance with college applications, FAFSA completion, and navigating tuition waivers—equipping them with the tools to successfully enroll in and thrive in college.



FIRST STAR UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI 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 HIGHLIGHTS

The Summer Residential Program, held from June 10 to June 28 for the Transitional-Age Youth Academy and June 30 to July 26 for the High School Student Academy, gave scholars a transformative experience filled with growth, connection, and skill-building to support their future success.



Wellness



Life Skills



Community

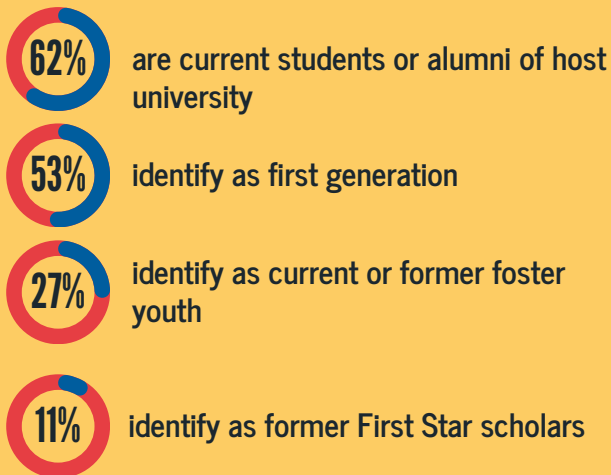
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COMMUNITY IMPACT



PEER MENTOR RECOGNITION

First Star recognizes the positive impact peer mentos have on our scholars. UM peer mentors play a critical role in supporting our scholar's progression in the academy.



CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

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

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

CREATION CONFERENCE



First Star Hosted the first-ever nationally broadcast creation conference. This Conference was a student-centered opportunity for students to engage with speakers and feel connected to the entire First Star network. During the conference, scholars experienced:

- A nationally recognized keynote speaker sharing insights on resilience and leadership
- An interactive storytelling workshop led by the showrunner and cast of Marvel's Runaways
- Education sessions, team games, and networking opportunities
- Access to valuable resources and ongoing support from First Star's national network

FIRST STAR UM ACADEMY

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



Community Stakeholder Acknowledgments

Academy Programming Partners

School of Law's Children and Youth Law Clinic

School of Education and Human Development

Educate Tomorrow

UM Community and Educational Well-being Research Center (CEWRC)

REA Hub

Scholar Recruitment Partners

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Florida Department of Children & Families

Funding Acknowledgements

Citrus Family Care Network

UM Children & Youth Law Clinic

Children's Trust

Batchelor Foundation

Thanks to the University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine, Atmospheric and Earth Science, University of Miami - School of Nursing and Health Studies, and the University of Miami Health System for opening their doors to our students this summer and showing them what's possible



HOW TO GET INVOLVED



REFER A STUDENT.



VOLUNTEER.



DONATE.