



# FIRST STAR UNIVERSITY OF UTAH ACADEMY

## 2025 IMPACT REPORT



# ABOUT THE FIRST STAR UNIVERSITY OF UTAH ACADEMY



## UNIVERSITY OF UTAH OFFICE OF ENGAGEMENT | UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

The University of Utah First Star Academy is a four-year education program within the Office of Engagement that improves educational outcomes for youth in foster care in Utah. First Star scholars create community, explore passions, build on talents and overcome systemic barriers to achieve educational success.

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### 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 UNIVERSITY OF UTAH ACADEMY IN THE SPOTLIGHT



2024 Brilliance Award Recipient: Jerry Stott, Academy Director for the University of Utah Academy



Student Advocacy at the Capitol Secures Continued Funding for the Academy

# 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.



**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!



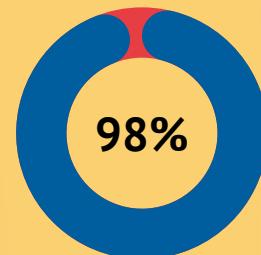
**80%** of SAC scholars were returners from last year

**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

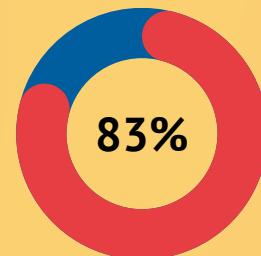
### NATIONAL FIRST STAR CLASS OF 2025

#### National Graduating Class



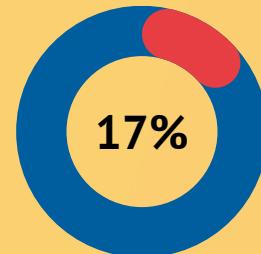
**H.S Diploma: 98%**  
Credit Recovery: 2%

#### Post-Secondary Pathways



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

#### Workforce Pathways



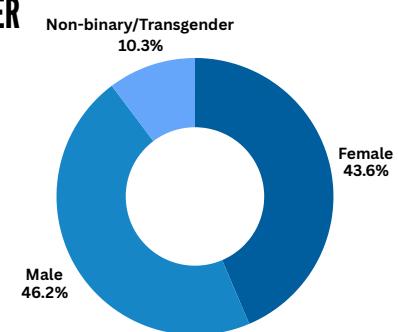
**Apprenticeship/Union: 0%**  
**Full-Time Employment: 17%**  
Military: 0%



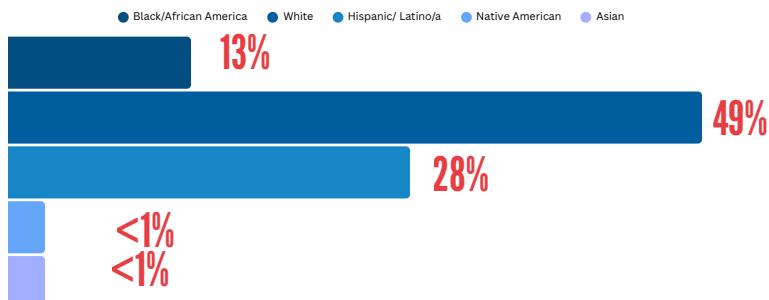
# FIRST STAR UNIVERSITY OF UTAH ACADEMY

## SCHOLAR PROFILE

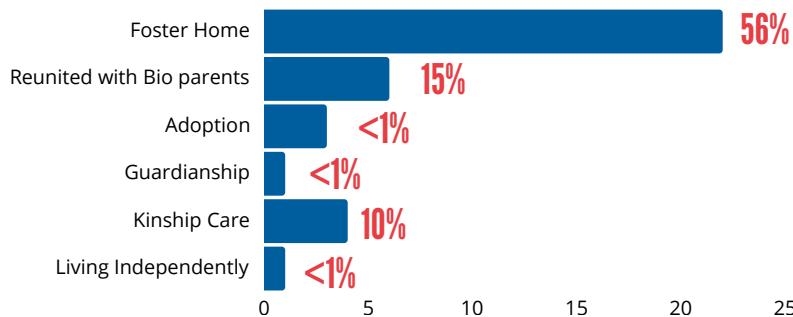
### GENDER



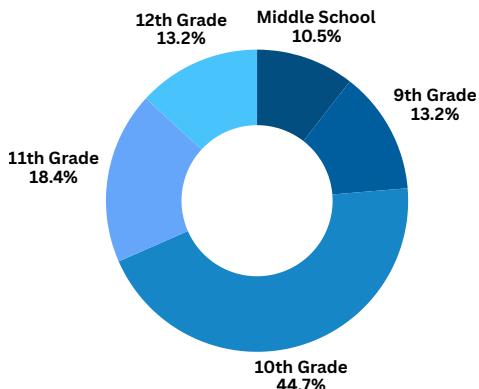
### RACE AND ETHNICITY



### PLACEMENT STATUS



### GRADE LEVEL



### Celebrating Class of 2025

100%

of First Star U.U scholars graduated High School on time!

66%

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

33%

of First Star U.U graduates will go into the workforce!

# FIRST STAR UNIVERSITY OF UTAH IMPACT

## 2024-2025 ACADEMIC YEAR



### LIFE SKILLS AND SELF DISCOVERY

Our math teacher guided students in developing financial literacy by working with real-world numbers, including researching apartment costs, paying utilities, and budgeting for groceries. This hands-on project helped students understand the true cost of living and the importance of financial planning. Twice a week, students also participated in OG Therapy workshops to strengthen social skills, including making friends, communicating effectively, and expressing themselves. These sessions, continued from previous years, remain highly engaging and impactful for youth.

### HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Each afternoon, students participated in a variety of physical activities, including swimming, soccer, basketball, volleyball, and pickleball, with two options available each day. Volleyball on the outdoor sand courts proved to be the favorite activity.



### CAREER EXPLORATION

All participating First Star scholars engaged with the University of Utah Career Services Center to explore potential careers, pathways, and complete aptitude evaluations. Additionally, seniors worked with our community partners at the 1999 Collective to learn about trade schools and workforce-focused opportunities for youth transitioning out of care. Students gained practical skills by developing resumes and cover letters while learning directly from former foster youth about diverse career paths.

### LEADERSHIP AND SELF ADVOCACY

Scholars participated in a diplomacy simulation workshop, gaining firsthand experience in responding to a public health emergency. The activity helped students understand the roles of various organizations involved in public health response and provided an opportunity to practice advocating for their ideas.



### COLLEGE READINESS

While living on the University of Utah campus, students explored university resources and participated in workshops designed to introduce them to college life. They toured campus, engaged with campus organizations, and experienced aspects of "college life" firsthand, including using dining halls, the student union, the library, and campus transportation. Additionally, seniors participated in weekly courses offered by our community partner, the 1999 Collective, focusing on selecting majors, choosing colleges, and planning for life after care.

# FIRST STAR UNIVERSITY OF UTAH IMPACT

## 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

The Summer Residential Program, held June 22<sup>nd</sup> through July 18<sup>th</sup>, gave scholars a transformative weekend of growth, connection, and new experiences that built skills to support their future success.



Life Skills



College & Career Readiness



Leadership & Advocacy

# FIRST STAR UNIVERSITY OF UTAH ACADEMY

## COMMUNITY IMPACT



### PEER MENTOR RECOGNITION

First Star recognizes the positive impact peer mentors have on our scholars. The First Star U.U Academy awarded one peer mentor this summer for their years of service and unwavering support of the academy.

- 62% are current students or alumni of host university
- 53% identify as first generation
- 27% identify as current or former foster youth
- 11% identify as former First Star scholars



### CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT



Dave Thomas  
Foundation  
for Adoption®

Through the "Modeling Permanency Project," a fellowship with Kent State University and the Dave Thomas Foundation, the University of Utah Academy and other First Star Academies receive hands-on coaching, mentoring, and training to strengthen permanency and caregiver support programs. This initiative equips academies to better serve youth impacted by foster care and their caregivers, building on the successful model implemented at the First Star Kent State Academy.

### 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 UNIVERSITY OF UTAH ACADEMY

## THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



CATHOLIC  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICES



Utah Department of  
**Health & Human Services**  
Child and Family Services

### Community Stakeholder Acknowledgments

#### Academy Programming Partners

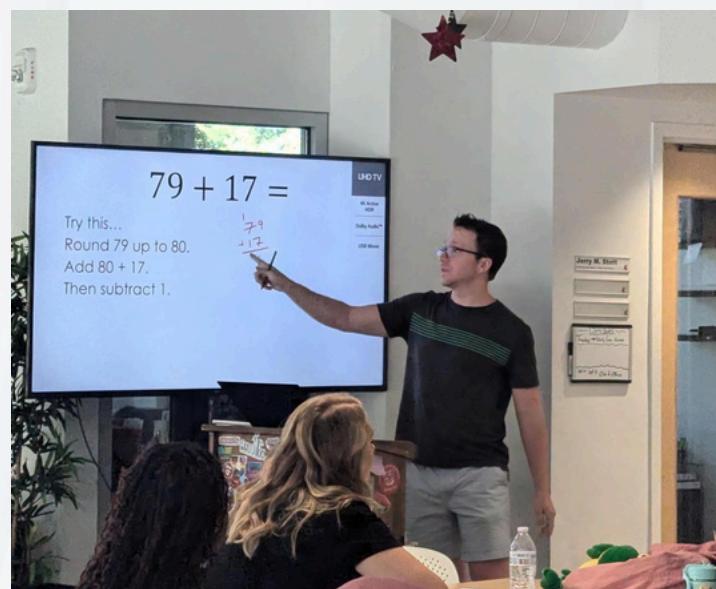
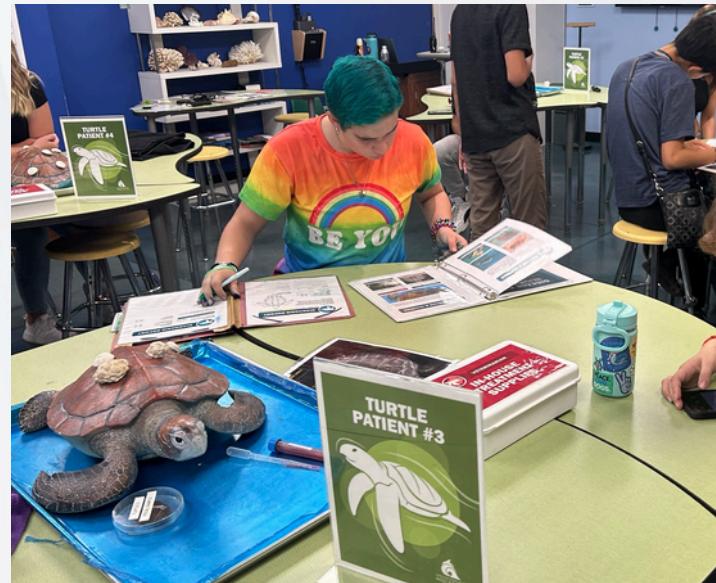
1999 Collective  
OG Therapy  
National Ability Center  
Planned Parenthood of Utah  
University of Utah Career Services  
Building Up Youth  
Informal Science Education Enhancement Organization

#### Scholar Recruitment Partners

Catholic Community Services  
Utah Division of Child and Family Services  
Utah State Board of Education  
Ute Indian Tribe Education Department

#### Funding Acknowledgements

Taco Bell Foundation  
Utah Juvenile Justice-Youth Services  
Utah Division of Children and Family Services  
Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs



## HOW TO GET INVOLVED



REFER A STUDENT.



VOLUNTEER.



DONATE.