



OLD DOMINION  
UNIVERSITY

# FIRST STAR OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY ACADEMY 2025 IMPACT REPORT



# ABOUT FIRST STAR ODU ACADEMY



## OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF ACADEMIC INNOVATION AND LEARNING SUPPORT (AILS)

The Office of Academic Success Initiatives and Support, formerly the Center for High Impact Practices, supports academic success in the classroom and beyond. The mission of the department is to empower learners to thrive academically, personally, and professionally.

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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

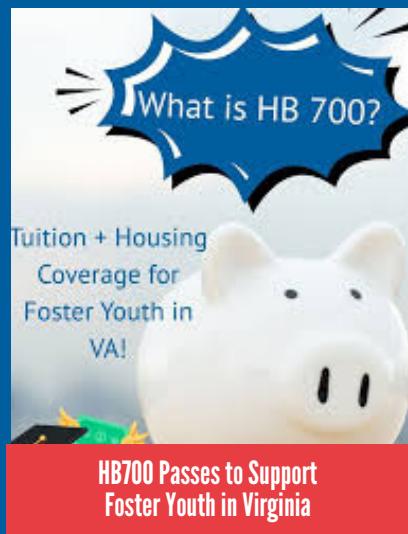
98%

HIGH SCHOOL  
GRADUATION  
COMPLETION

COMPARED TO 50% NATIONALLY



## FIRST STAR ODU ACADEMY IN THE SPOTLIGHT



# 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!



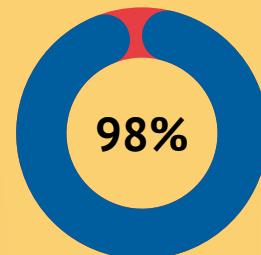
**80%** of SAC scholars were returners from last year

**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

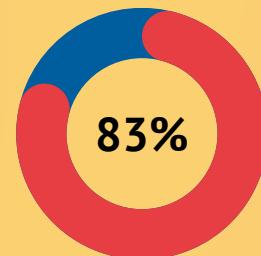
### NATIONAL FIRST STAR CLASS OF 2025

#### National Graduating Class



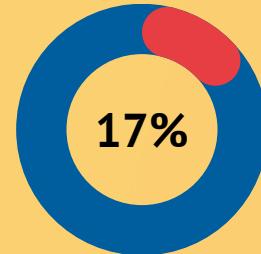
**H.S Diploma: 98%**  
Credit Recovery: 2%

#### Post-Secondary Pathways



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

#### Workforce Pathways



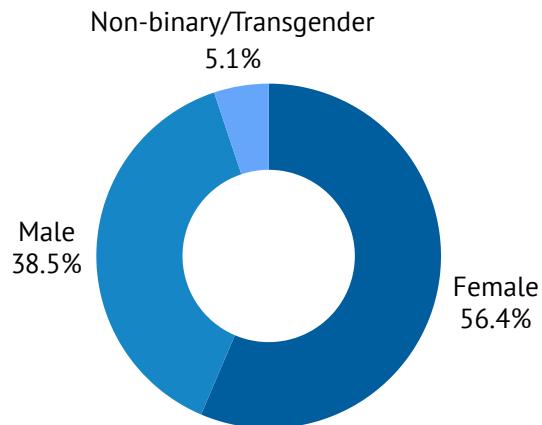
**Apprenticeship/Union: 0%**  
**Full-Time Employment: 17%**  
Military: 0%



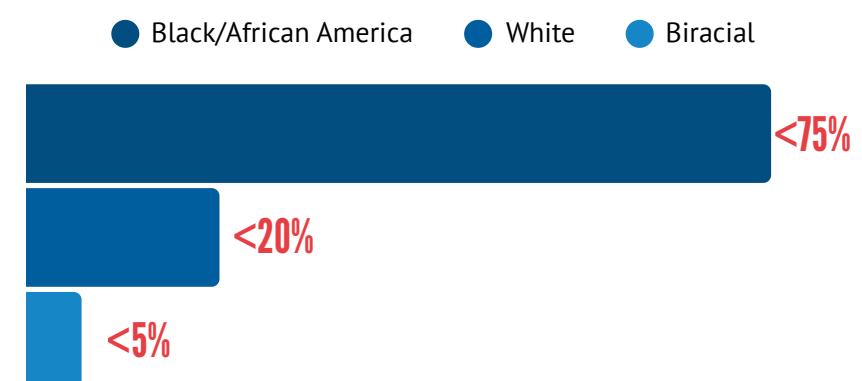
# FIRST STAR ODU ACADEMY

## SCHOLAR PROFILE

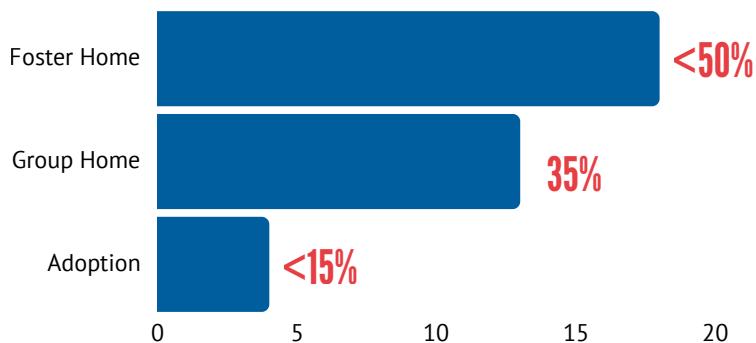
### GENDER



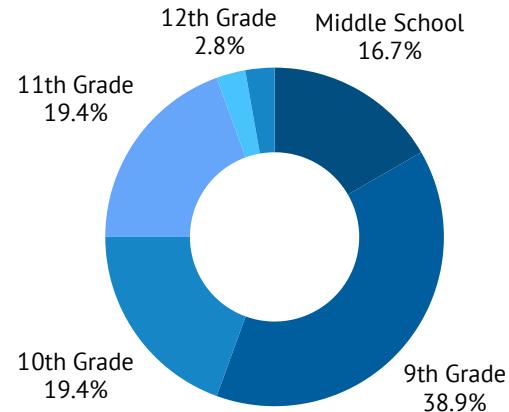
### RACE AND ETHNICITY



### PLACEMENT STATUS



### GRADE LEVEL



Celebrating Class of 2025



of First Star ODU scholars graduated High School on time!

# FIRST STAR ODU IMPACT

## 2024-2025 ACADEMIC YEAR



### LIFE SKILLS AND SELF DISCOVERY

Scholars engaged in a variety of hands-on learning and community service experiences throughout the program. They served lunch to students, staff, and community members as part of their commitment to giving back. Scholars also previewed The Game of ChaNJE, a financial literacy game created by a local tax advisor and business owner, gaining practical insights into money management. In partnership with Easter Seals, they participated in cooking and communication workshops, working in pairs to prepare stuffed peppers from scratch while building teamwork and life skills.

### HEALTH AND WELLBEING

This academic year emphasized mental health and well-being, beginning in September with Khayla Walker, who guided scholars on building and maintaining healthy relationships and setting boundaries within their friend groups and communities. Subsequent academies offered opportunities for yoga, guided and seated meditation, and recreational activities to support mindfulness and stress reduction. In May, Teens with a Purpose led scholars in self-expression through poetry, while the ODU Health Promotions department taught participants how to create portable aromatherapy capsules, calming bottles, and other relaxation tools to support daily wellness.



### CAREER EXPLORATION

The academic year began with Vision Driven 757, who introduced scholars to careers in real estate. In March, scholars enhanced their resumes and learned cooking skills, with one scholar securing part-time employment just two weeks later. In April, a local entrepreneur shared how she built Bruce Braids into a successful business, teaching scholars and interns braiding techniques and strategies for creating multiple streams of income.

### LEADERSHIP AND SELF ADVOCACY

Scholars showcased their creativity and skills through their culminating Photovoice IRB project, highlighting their unique perspectives and talents. They took an active leadership role in the Talent Show, assisting staff with planning and execution while representing the program to the audience. During the summer residential program, scholars also led the student awards ceremony, celebrating achievements and fostering a sense of ownership and community within the program.



### COLLEGE READINESS

Scholars participated in the Homecoming Parade, proudly representing the ODU First Star Academy—Go Monarchs! They received guidance from college students on preparing for higher education while still in high school. Additionally, scholars toured campus with the president of Foster-U and took part in a lunch-and-learn session with the Digital Builders, where they learned how to apply AI tools for academic and creative projects.

# FIRST STAR ODU 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!



## ACADEMY HIGHLIGHTS

The Old Dominion University (ODU) Academy recently hosted a culminating event to celebrate the achievements of its students and families. As the program transitions, we are pleased to announce that Tidewater Friends of Foster Care will become our new community partner, carrying forward the First Star Academy model to continue supporting youth in foster care with academic, social, and life skills development.



# FIRST STAR ODU ACADEMY

## COMMUNITY IMPACT



### PEER MENTOR RECOGNITION

First Star values the meaningful impact peer mentors have on our scholars. The First Star ODU Academy supported the professional growth of three undergraduate interns at ODU, providing them with hands-on experience in mentoring and program leadership. National First Star peer mentors are:

- 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

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

**100% of families at ODU Academy receive monthly check-in's regarding their scholar's participation in the program and academic case management support.**



### FOSTER CARE AWARENESS MONTH ADVOCACY

In partnership with Tidewater Friends of Foster Care, First Star ODU Academy hosted its annual recruitment and community event for foster youth during the month of May for Foster Care Awareness Month. Hampton Roads youth in care and First Star scholars participated in life skills and wellness programming designed to support self-exploration and college readiness.

# FIRST STAR ODU ACADEMY

## THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



### Community Stakeholder Acknowledgments

#### Academy Programming Partners

Aviation Institute of Maintenance  
Black Brand: Start Simple  
Monarch Teach at ODU  
National Pan-Hellenic Council, ODU Chapter  
Old Dominion University  
Photovoice IRB: Dr. Mindy Gumpert, ODU Faculty  
Preparing 4 College 101  
Teens with a Purpose  
Tidewater Friends of Foster Care  
UMFS: Project Life  
Vision Driven 757

#### Scholar Recruitment Partners

City of Norfolk Human Services & Norfolk Public Schools  
Teen Titans Youth Services

#### Funding Acknowledgements

Jack and Jill Foundation  
Hampton Roads Community Foundation  
Blocker Foundation



## HOW TO GET INVOLVED



REFER A STUDENT.



VOLUNTEER.



DONATE.