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Foster Youth Have a 'Bridge' to CSUEB as Renaissance Scholars



PHOTO: KAREN ZEREN

The adjustment to college life and later to independence as an adult can be difficult, no matter one's upbringing and family background. Imagine trying to make that adjustment as a former foster youth. At the age of 18, these young people are dropped from the foster care system, left to fend for themselves—often with little or no financial, emotional, or academic support and guidance. Any thought by them for a college degree must seem like a distant dream.

The university wants to ensure that their dream can become a reality, and with that, the Renaissance Scholars Program was launched in September of 2006. It provides those former foster youth with scholarships, housing assistance, counseling, and emergency funds. A \$19,000 planning grant from the Walter S. Johnson Foundation helped jump-start the program.

The first 20 students entered the program with the start of the fall quarter in 2006. With each year that follows, 10 new students will be accepted into the program. But with more than 140 former foster youth and wards of the state enrolled at the university in 2006, the Renaissance Scholars Program needs further assistance to help make each one's dream a reality.