STUDENT SERVICES PROGRAM REVIEW – ANNUAL UPDATE

Area: Guardian Scholars Foster Youth Center	Manager: Christina Tafoya

1. **Program Overview**

The Guardian Scholars Foster Youth Center at Oxnard College opened in the last week of August, 2015. The purpose of the center is to provide support for students who are or were in the foster care system. The support is aimed at increasing their persistence, retention and overall success in their educational endeavors through the Ventura County Community College District. The Center provides a safe and comfortable space for the students to connect with other students who have shared very similar life experiences.

The Guardian Scholars Foster Youth Center is staffed by a part-time Project Specialist (8 hours a week) who works with the District Specialist to insure that the foster youth student have a local point of contact and are easily able to access services and resources on the Oxnard College campus.

Students are referred to the center in various ways. Some students self-identify themselves as foster/former foster on their financial aid application. A list is obtained from the financial aid office and verified through county social workers. A list has also been compiled by the District Specialist. These lists are currently being updated, as they do not accurately reflect the foster and former foster youth attending Oxnard College. Students are also referred to the center by professors and community members, in particular CASAS (Court Appointed Special Advocates), County Social Workers, Foster Parents and Relative Care Providers (Resource Families). There are also students who just walk-in. The Center has been publicized in an article that ran in the President's Newsletter, and the Project Specialist recruits (most recently at Condor Day). There are currently 15 youth that access the center. There have been several meetings to get student input on what they would like to see the center become.

Since the Center has opened, students have signed in more than 1500 times (duplicated), and over 1000 time since the beginning of the Fall Semester, 2016. According to the lists I have received from the District Office, Financial Aid, and students I have verified through the County of Ventura Child Protective Services, there are approximately 25 known foster and former foster youth currently attending Oxnard College. Of these, 15 regularly utilize the Guardian Scholars Center.

In collaboration with the OMEGA group and the student equity fund, students are offered monthly parking permits, monthly bus passes, and meal vouchers for the Condor Café. The students also have access to computer use with free printing, school supplies, healthy snacks

and drinks and new and 'gently used' clothing and household goods trunk. In September of 2016, a Food Share Pantry was opened in the Center. Once a week, Mental Health Counselor Linda Martinez leads a group with the students. The students have been connected with the EOPS program, CARE, and CalWorks, as well as scholarship opportunities. The students have also developed a sense of community within the Center.

Because the center is open from 10:00-3:00 daily, students are coming in and out of the center all day. Many of these students just need someone to talk with, and often times this impedes on my time to work on the Foster & Kinship Care Education Program.

The changes that have occurred since the last Program Review are that more students are utilizing the center, a Food Share Panty has been opened and a weekly group has been set up with Linda Martinez.

2. Planning

a) The location (JCC-3A), hours (10:00-3:00) and layout of the Center are working. It is comfortable, welcoming and spacious. The students are utilizing the Center to do homework, seek and get resources, rest between classes, get a nourishing snack, stock up on canned goods to take home, and talk with friends. They have applied for scholarships. This can be maximized by increasing the number of youth that use the center consistently on a daily/weekly basis. The key to that is to continue and increase the support provided with more hours for the Project Specialist and other improvements to the Center, both physical and in terms of services provided.
The access to the Project Specialist to address questions, concerns, help with applications, etc., works most of the time, but because it is a part time position, sometimes the Center is closed during scheduled open hours (10:00-3:00) due to meetings on and off campus.

b) It is difficult to schedule a meeting where the majority of the students attend. The plan to address is to offer incentives (Barnes & Noble gift certificate for example) to attend, as well as providing lunch. Getting students connected with other resources on campus has proven to be difficult. More one on one meeting time regarding academic issues would be beneficial, but adequate time for this sometimes does not permit this. Motivating some students to apply for scholarships continues to be difficult. The plan to address it includes holding scholarship workshops with groups and offering incentives.

3. Budget

- Salary and benefits for a part-time Project Specialist ($50,000)
- Funding for school supplies and materials ($2,000.00)
- Funding for food (snacks) for GSFY Center ($2,000.00)

- Funding for personal hygiene supplies and other emergency personal necessities for students ($1,000.00)
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4. Resource Requests

1) Scholarship Fund ($10,000)
2) Gift Certificates for Grocery Stores ($2,000)
3) Larger refrigerator ($700.00
4) Copy Machine ($700.00)