



Annual Report

AY 2022-2023



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

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Guardian Scholars Annual Report AY 2022-2023

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Executive Summary

The Guardian Scholars program is a University-sponsored student support service for students who experienced foster care. The program is housed in the Division of Student Affairs at Ball State University. The mission of the program is to provide a place of belonging and support for students who have experienced foster care. Within the Guardian Scholars, students are connected to peers who shared similar childhood experiences and a network of professionals trained to support their unique needs on campus. Through this program underrepresented, at-risk students experience equity and access to higher education at Ball State University.

The Guardian Scholars program provides a variety of support for program participants including regularly scheduled coaching meetings for academic, financial and intercampus interventions. Program seminars and events also provide learning, leadership and community building opportunities to students.

The following is a summary of program outcomes for the 2022 academic year:

- 49 students served, including;
 - 14 program participants,
 - 2 affiliates,
 - 14 student service recipients
 - 19 onboarding/admissions support
- 145 coaching meetings and 10 programmatic events were held
- Participating students averaged term GPA's of 2.813
- Three program graduates earned their diplomas
- \$67,276 was contributed through monetary donations and in-kind giving
- \$10,000 in scholarship funds was awarded to four students

Section I: Impact

The Guardian Scholars program served 14 program participants and 2 program affiliates this year. An additional 33 students received miscellaneous student service or admissions related support. Program participants included 5 returning students and 9 students new to the program. This year we modified our program structure to include part-time and online students, as well as those eligible students who wish to remain unaffiliated with their identity as a foster care alumnus. Program engagement is coded along the following parameters. Program Participants had 4+ program engagements in a given term. Students in the Student Service engagement category had 1-3 program engagements in a given term. Affiliates are those students who are online, part-time or elect to have lesser program engagement. We also track outcomes for those students who self-identified as program eligible, but had no further program contact in a given term. Robust recruiting and admissions support for future Guardian Scholars took place throughout the year.

Our students universally face maximum financial need with zero expected family contributions (EFC) and have a large overlap with 21st Century Scholars and Pell Grant recipients. The Guardian Scholars program serves underrepresented students with 47% (14/30) of enrolled students served this academic year identifying as students of color. Guardian Scholars students are among the Universities highest-risk because each student is overcoming traumatic life experiences and/or the ongoing effects of instability in their families of origin while they are pursuing their post-secondary degrees.

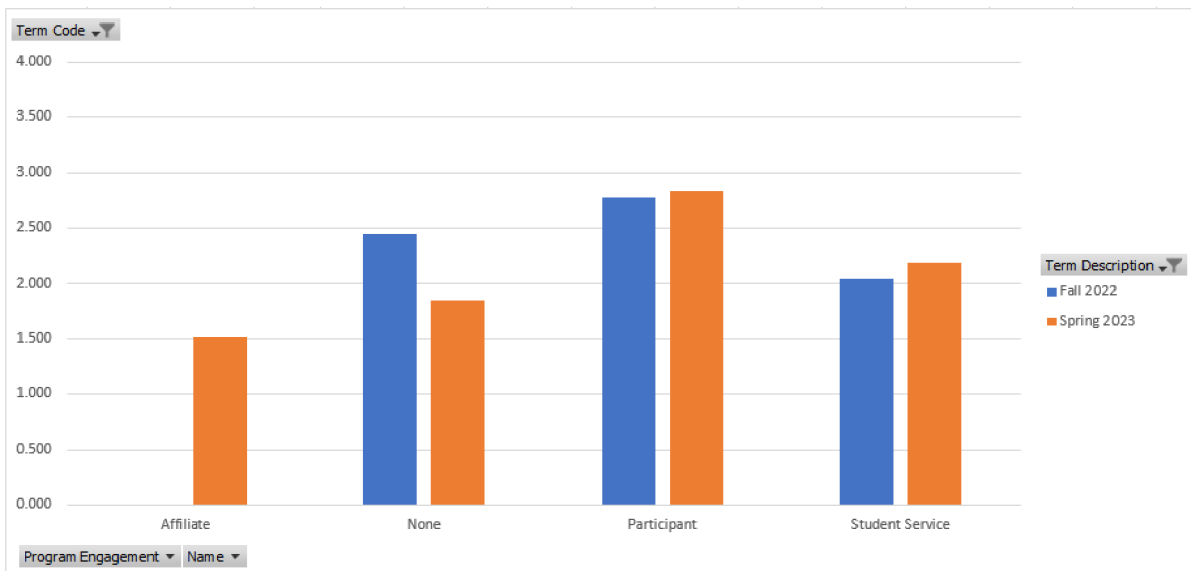
Student Wellbeing, Health, and Safety

- Program Manager held 145 personal coaching meetings used to assess current student wellbeing and make appropriate referrals to intercampus and community support agencies
- Student health related referral agencies utilized by the program included: BSU Health Center, BSU Counseling Center, BSU UPD, Open Door Health Services, IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital, Jeffers Driving Academy, Ball State Financial Credit Union
- Program seminars were held on Overcoming Self-Criticism (Counseling Center), Credit 101 (BSFCU), Driver's Education Prep (Jeffers Driving Academy) and Cooking on a Budget (Hospitality, Leadership & Innovation faculty)

Student Success (Retention, Persistence, Completion)

- Term GPA's organized by program engagement were as follows:
 - Program Participants: Fall 2.784; Spring 2.843
 - Student Service: Fall 2.043; Spring 2.187
 - Affiliates: Fall 0; Spring 1.517
 - No Engagement: Fall 2.445, Spring 1.848

Average of Term GPA	Column Labels		
Row Labels	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Grand Total
Affiliate	0.000	1.517	1.011
None	2.445	1.848	2.221
Participant	2.784	2.843	2.813
Student Service	2.043	2.187	2.115
Grand Total	2.371	2.399	2.385



- In AY 2022 the Guardian Scholars program retained 1st year students from AY 2021 at a rate of 60% (3 of 5). We anticipate retention of 1st year students from AY 2022 to be at 67% for program participants and 80% for those receiving student services.

	AY					Ave
Column1	AY 2018 (4)	AY 2019 (6)	AY 2020 (2)	AY 2021 (5)	AY 2022 (5)	Retention Rate
1st Year Retention Rate	75%	83%	50%	60%	60%	66%

*Current research indicates 1st year foster care alumni are retained at a rate of 50% without targeted supports.

- The Guardian Scholars program anticipates recognizing 3 graduates during the 2022 academic year, including 1 pending summer graduate. The average graduation rate for the last five program cohorts (AY 2015-2019) is 58%. Since its inception in 2004, the program has currently celebrated 39 Ball State University graduates.

Column1	AY 2015 (4)	AY 2016 (5)	AY 2017 (7)	AY 2018 (4)	AY 2019 (8)	Ave Graduati on Rate
Graduati on Rate	75%	100%	29%	25%	63%	58%

*Current research indicates foster care alumni graduate at a rate of 20% without targeted supports.

- Program scholarship awards totaling \$10,000 were awarded between four students in the 2022 academic year.

Inclusive Excellence (Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)

The Guardian Scholars program is comprised entirely of marginalized, at-risk students. Not only has every student experienced foster care, but there is intersectionality with low-income, 1st generation students who disproportionately represent marginalized identities, including race and sexual orientation. Services provided through the program are a direct reflection of the University's commitment to Inclusive Excellence and high impact Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices.

- 47% (14/30) of enrolled students served this academic year identified as students of color

Sense of Belonging & Community Building

The Guardian Scholars program is, at its core, a place of belonging for students who experienced foster care. Students who participate in the program build and share community with peers who have had similar life experiences. Attending program seminars and events allows students to build community with one another for a stronger sense of belonging on campus, actively combatting belongingness uncertainty among this demographic.

- Between program seminars and events, program participants had 10 programmatic opportunities for community building with their peers during the 2022 academic year.

Student Learning & Development

Program coaching meetings and seminars are fertile ground for student learning and development to take place.

Learning objectives in coaching meetings included:

- Self-advocacy
 - Academic advocacy- communication skills
 - Mental health advocacy- self-awareness
 - Medical advocacy- establishment of primary care
 - Financial aid advocacy- appeals and scholarships
- Study skills
- Time management
- Accountability
- Boundary setting
- Goal setting
- Higher education system navigation
- Navigating social services

Learning objectives in seminars included:

- Life skills
- Cooking/Nutrition skills
- Budgeting/Banking skills
- Combatting Self-criticism
- Driver's Education Preparation

Professional Discovery and Career Readiness

Students in the Guardian Scholars program are often working part or full time while taking full time classes in order to prepare for their future careers.

- Students explore their professional preferences through dialoging about their work experiences in their coaching meetings.
- Students receive periodic information regarding job/internship opportunities on campus and in the Muncie community.
- Students were encouraged to attend the Cardinal Job Fair and utilize the Cardinal Closet for their professional wardrobe needs.

Section II: Student Impact/Success Stories

The Guardian Scholars program is ripe with student impact/success stories. The holistic nature of the program aims to meet each student in their unique place of need, walking alongside them towards a healthier reality, with new tools, experiences, and beliefs about themselves. Here are snippets of some of the more inspiring Guardian Scholars stories from AY 2022.

Profile 1: Aaliyah, Graduate- May 2023

This student joined the Guardian Scholars as a first-year student in AY 2019. Her academic progress in her first couple of years was tumultuous as she realized that the medically adjacent traumas she had experienced in her adolescence were an insurmountable barrier to her success in the nursing profession. At that time she made the decision to change her major to another passion, Dance. This decision proved to be among her best, as she is now a degree holder and plans to pursue a future in Dance education as an independent business owner and/or Dance instructor. Her remaining semesters on campus were not without challenge, as she navigated ongoing crises in her biological family and at times undertook a caregiving role for her minor sibling. Through tears, this student shared words of encouragement to underclassmen at our End of the Year Celebration. "I didn't think I would make it to graduation," she said. Aaliyah was a 3-year scholarship recipient. "The ability to receive the Guardian Scholars Program Scholarship over the years has helped me so much. It is tough coming to college with no help from anyone."



Profile 2: Female*, Sophomore

This student entered the Guardian Scholars after struggling immensely in her first year (AY 2021). She was facing academic disqualification following the spring 2022 term. During this academic year, she has not only brought herself completely out of academic distress, but she earned her first 4.0 term GPA in spring 2023. Throughout the year, she navigated complex medical testing and is awaiting results to find out whether she will need major (brain) surgery in the coming year. This year she has utilized campus housing 365 days a year as she is homeless without secure campus residence. She is thrilled to have signed her first lease off campus, and will have greater food and housing stability moving forward.

*this student has not permitted use of her name or photo in program communications

Profile 3: Mersadez, 1st year, non-returning

It may seem unusual to include a non-returning student in a student success profile, but this student's story is a great example of how returning to Ball State isn't always the best outcome for Guardian Scholars students and isn't always indicative of academic failure. Mersadez entered BSU in a science heavy program, and learned in her fall semester that she was not equipped academically to be successful in the field. This caused her to be on academic probation after her first semester. Together we identified a career interest that would be better suited for her, Elementary Education. This student increased her GPA substantially between fall and spring terms. Despite this impressive academic turn-around, and living in the residence halls, she struggled to form relationships on campus. In order to make ends meet, she was often working multiple jobs which kept her from having time for other student organizations. That reality combined with unsafe/unhealthy living situations being experienced by her younger siblings (in her absence) caused this student to make the decision to transfer to a community college in her hometown. She will now be able to continue to pursue her teaching certificate while providing support to her siblings and regaining a sense of belonging in her environment. Her future may still have obstacles, but she left Ball State with a solid GPA, her financial aid in tact, and her ability to be successful at another institution maintained. This is a success on every level! We will miss Mersadez but desire the best outcomes for our students, even if that means they don't continue at Ball State.



Section III: Promising Practices

In AY 2022 the Guardian Scholars Program Manager identified a major barrier to student success on campus and beyond graduation: ability to obtain a driver's license. Students without a driver's license face barriers to access for their basic needs on campus. These students are limited to jobs within walking distance to campus, which are often lower-paying. They also lack transportation to fulfill their food-related needs during breaks. For those students who graduate without a driver's license, their ability to obtain degree-related employment is crippled.

The following barriers were identified through student testimony during coaching meetings in both the Guardian Scholars and Independent Cardinals programs.

- Basic understanding of the licensing process, as relevant to adult drivers
- Lack of access to vehicles for completion of practice driving hours
- Lack of access to eligible, licensed adults with whom to complete required driving hours
- Lack of funds for paying for driving schools
- Lack of transportation to driving schools or the Bureau of Motor Vehicles

Efforts were made to establish a program partnership with a local driving school, Jeffers Driving Academy. The owners of Jeffers Driving Academy committed to providing solutions for each of the above-named barriers to access. Due to this partnership, students in our programs now have direct access to services which have the potential to be trajectory-changing life skills that are often over-looked as a privileged status by their non-marginalized peers. Continuing to seek out partnerships, both on campus and off, for the betterment of student's lives is a Promising Practice that is pivotal to the fulfillment of holistic support programming.

Section IV: Trending

Having made significant changes to the program structure going into the 2022 academic year, we are collecting our first data on student elected program engagement trends. Student engagement is fluid across terms and there is much to be learned about the factors impacting student decision-making in this area. Since its inception in 2004, the Guardian Scholars program has had only one format, namely full cohort-based program participation. Given the new option of a three-tiered support structure, students engaged in the following ways in academic year 2022:

	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Average Term GPA
Program Participants	12	12	2.813
Affiliates	1	2	1.011
Student Service	9	9	2.115
None, after self-identifying	5	3	2.221

As mentioned earlier, program engagement is coded along the following parameters. Program Participants had 4+ program engagements in a given term. Students in the Student Service engagement category had 1-3 program engagements in a given term. Affiliates are those students who are online, part-time or elect to have lesser, but intentional program engagement. We also track outcomes for those students who self-identified as program eligible but had no further program contact in a given term.

Though these numbers appear static across the terms, they represent a variety of changes in engagement and enrollment status across students served. We will be keeping a close eye on program growth and type of engagement as it correlates to student outcomes moving forward. This year program participants have shown significant evidence of positive academic outcomes over their peers who opted for the student service engagement level with term GPA's. This difference is hard to identify by simple glance at the data when dealing with averages. For example, in Fall 2022 50% of program participants earned over a 3.0 GPA, while only 9% of those in the student service or no engagement categories did. Additionally 100% of program participants were retained from Fall to Spring term, but 45% of those with lesser engagement had earned probationary or disqualified status and 27% were non-returning after 1 semester. Outliers in the data that represent long-time participants who became less active in their final semesters on campus, or those new students who are academically advanced and do not wish to engage with the program should be noted when considering these trends.

Section V: Staff Development

Guardian Scholars program manager, Bria Zolman, engaged in the following staff development activities in AY 2022.

*Denotes DEI initiative

Professional Development:

Date	Type	Name	Notes
May 2022-October 2022	Professional Development	Healing Centered Engagement Certification	Online certification through Flourish Agenda
June-July 2022	Professional Development	Digital Leadership in Higher Education by Josie Alquist	Book study for Social Media Superteam, Student Affairs
July- Sept 2022	Professional Development	Leadership on the Line by Heiftz, Linsky	Book study with AVP team
7/21/22	Professional Development	Qualtrics Level-Up Beyond Surveys	By Scott Reinke, through University Human Resource Services- Learning and Development
09/29/22	Professional Development	IYI Youth Worker Café, Muncie	Topic: Community Violence & Grief
10/13/22	Professional Development	Inclusive Excellence Hiring Guide Training for Student Affairs	Divisional Training with HR presentation on Inclusive Hiring best practices
12/8/22	Professional Development	IYI Youth Worker Café, Muncie	Topic: Youth Homelessness
12/15/22	Professional Development	Student Affairs Recognition Workshop	Attended Divisional workshop on recognition strategies
1/27/23-4/14/23	Professional Development	Spring 2023 book read sponsored by LEAP Indiana	Privileged Poor book club (virtual)
2/22/23	Professional Development	IYI Youth Worker Café, Virtual	Topic: ACE Interface (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

Classes Taken:

Admitted into BSU Executive Development for Public Service Master's Program- December 2022

Spring 2023 Registration:

EDAC 631 (3)

Summer 2023 Registration:

SOCW 540 (3)

EDPS 606 (3)

Professional & Campus Presentations:

Date	Type	Name	Notes
July 12, 2022	Speaking Engagement	Guardian Scholars Outreach at Muncie Rotary	<u>30 minute</u> presentation on program with Q&A, donor outreach
8/25/2022	Speaking Engagement	Coalition of Women's Organizations, Vivian Conley Award Recipient	Award acceptance speech on Guardian Scholars
9/6/22	Speaking Engagement	The Chronicle for Higher Education: Virtual Panel "How Creative Partnerships Increase Colleges' Impact"	Spoke on Virtual Panel about Guardian Scholars program in interview about creative partnerships in higher education
9/21/22	Professional Presentation	DCS 3CM Resource Provider Fair, Government Center, Indianapolis	<u>10 minute</u> presentation to statewide DCS Older Youth Service (OYS) providers on the Guardian Scholars program, plus tabling.
10/4/22	Professional Presentation	HRL Guardian Scholars & Independent Cardinals Presentation	Co-presented on Guardian Scholars program to BSU Housing/Res Life staff
11/17/22	Professional Presentation	Exchange Club of Muncie	Guardian Scholars donor outreach presentation
12/5/22	Professional Interview	BSU Foundation, Digital Impact Series	Filmed donor outreach and appreciation video piece

Professional Service:

Date	Type	Name	Notes
8/2022-9/2022	Professional Service	Aging Out Institute Award Program Judge	Judged award applicants in the Flame Award category, of which we were a recipient in 2021.
8/2021-current	Professional Service	Muncie Community Schools-Community Engagement Council	Elected Vice-Chair Nov 2022 Serve as an advocate and liaison for MCS through fundraising, teacher support and community engagement. Spearheaded the implementation of a Student Assistance Request funding process in 2022.
May-June 2023	Professional Service	AD of Student Success Coaching Search Committee	Served on the hiring committee for the incoming Assistant Director of Student Success Coaching

Section VI: Collaborations & Partnerships

The success of the Guardian Scholars program is intricately linked to the strength of program partnerships. Program collaborations occurred both within the Division of Student Affairs and in the broader campus community. Additionally, our program has several key collaborations with community organizations.

Inside the Division, the program collaborated with:

- **University Police Department**– Provided coordinated support efforts for students needing wellness checks
- **Counseling Center**– Served students mental health needs, provided seminar instruction, participates in Guardian Guide Network
- **Dean of Students**– Coordinated care efforts for students with BIT referrals
- **Housing and Residential Life**– Collaborating on break housing accommodations for students lacking safe and reliable break housing, staff member served on our Scholarship Review Committee, participates in Guardian Guide Network

Outside of the Division, the Guardian Scholars collaborated with:

- **Learning Center; University College, Academic Affairs**– intercampus referrals to online resources and tutoring services, participates in Guardian Guide Network
- **Retention and Graduation; Enrollment Planning and Management**– provided student support with regards to 21st Century Scholars and other academic barriers, participates in Guardian Guide Network
- **Writing Center; English Department, College of Science and Humanities**– provided student writing support through intercampus referrals, participates in Guardian Guide Network
- **Academic Advising; University College, Academic Affairs**– collaborated on student scheduling needs and major changes, staff member on the Scholarship Review Committee, participates in Guardian Guide Network
- **Office of Financial Aid; Enrollment Planning and Management**– Provided frequent consultation on student financial aid packages and cost of attendance threshold, processed scholarship awards, staff member served on our Scholarship Review Committee, participants in Guardian Guide Network
- **Office of Admissions; Enrollment Planning and Management**– coordinated onboarding support for incoming students who were identified during the admissions process
- **Faculty; Colleges/Academic Affairs**– collaborated on student wellness, attendance status and academic policies when grades were being impacted by extra-curricular barriers

Community Partnerships included:

- **Prevent Child Abuse of Delaware County-** In-kind donors of birthday gifts and winter break box gift cards totaling \$5,250.
- **Tri Kappa sorority-** Members include in-kind donors
- **Open Door Health Services-** provided coordinated care efforts for scholars utilizing their services, including support of Navigators for social service applications and establishing primary care providers for medical needs or mental health referrals
- **Exchange Club of Muncie-** Flags of Honor monetary donation recipient

Monetary donations to the program totaled \$56,644 and the program received an estimated \$10,632 in in-kind contributions. The total value of contributions to the Guardian Scholars through April of the 2022 academic year was \$67,276.

Contributions AY 2022	Amount
Monetary donations	\$56,644
In-kind gifts	\$10,632
Total	\$67,276