



UNIVERSITY of  
**HOUSTON**  
DIAMOND FAMILY SCHOLARS

ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE FROM THE  
**DIRECTOR**

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*Raven Jones, Ph.D.*

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Mr. and Mrs. Andrew L. Diamond  
1100 Uptown Park Boulevard  
Houston, TX 77056

Dear Andrew and Andrea,

I am pleased to share with you our 2018-2019 Annual Report for the Diamond Family Scholars Program. The University of Houston remains steadfast and is committed to meeting the complex needs of students formerly in foster care, expanding staff and structure of the Diamond Family Scholars Program, reducing barriers to accessibility, and providing the specialized services students are seeking.

As we build the Diamond Family Scholars Program, I will provide you with a semi and annual review of our accomplishments. I want you to know that your investment in our work matters! This past year, we have set a strong foundation of programs and services that we will provide to students.

Your support makes a marked difference in the lives of children who have been adopted or in foster care. This report summarizes our collective achievements. Through your generosity, the University of Houston is able to empower and embrace this group of students.

Sincerely,

RAVEN JONES, PH.D.  
*Director, Urban Experience Program*

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MISSION  
**STATEMENT**

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Our mission is to create a sustainable framework that allows for the Diamond Family Scholars to take ownership over their educational outcomes, engage in academic and social opportunities that allow them to grow, learn, and actively participate in UH campus life, graduate, and secure employment after graduation. Success will be measured by observing the retention rate, GPA, graduation rate, and active participation in UH campus life such as student organizations, service activities, work-study, and peer mentoring.

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## PROGRAM GOALS

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In response to a generous idea and philanthropic support brought forward by Andy and Andrea Diamond, the University of Houston created the Diamond Family Scholars Program in 2018 to address the needs of our students who have aged out of the foster care system. The Diamond Family Scholars Program comprehensive initiative will focus on retention, academic success, and transition to career after college. Specifically, the Diamond Family Scholars Program will include recruitment and outreach to prospective Diamond Family Scholars, dedicated advising and degree planning, UH mentors, programming that focuses on building life skills, and financial support to defray the full cost of attendance, while maintaining strong connections to community and social services.

Currently, foster care students are self-reported, and reported enrollment at UH has ranged from 60 to more than 100 foster care students annually. Many of these students are seeking support through the UH Urban Experience Program (UEP). With the creation of the new and transformational Diamond Family Scholars Program, we expect additional students to identify as former foster care students and seek assistance. The Diamond Family Scholars Program is necessary to create sustainable and broad support for foster care students at the University and to increase the number of foster care students who graduate from college.

Our goal is to increase successful outcomes among youth who have experienced foster care and are now transitioning into higher education at the University of Houston. Through the Diamond Family Scholars Program, we seek to increase the retention rate and graduation rate of eligible UH students by providing:

- i. Cost of attendance scholarships to undergraduate students accepted into the Diamond Family Scholars Program;
- ii. Hands-on support for eligible students in accessing financial aid and scholarships specific to youth who have experienced foster care, allowing students to maximize their potential to graduate from college with little to no debt;
- iii. Support for eligible students in need of year-round housing on campus to ensure a stable living environment;
- iv. Specialized orientation, advising, mentorship, and activities designed to assist eligible students with navigating the University of Houston;
- v. A campus network and community that is dedicated to student success.

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## PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

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### a. 2019-2020 Student Cohort

- i. **Recruitment:** The first cohort of students was identified through the following process:
  - SFA queried applicants for the 2019-2020 academic year who checked “yes” to the question “Are you a(n) Orphan/Foster Care/Ward of the state” to begin outreach to eligible students, 15 students were identified in this group at the close of January 2019;
  - Each of these 15 students and their guidance counselors received an email from SFA with program details, link to the Diamond Family Scholars Program website, application, and program requirements;
  - Nine students completed the application, personal essay, letter of recommendation, and in-person interview;
  - Six Admitted Students for the inaugural 2019-2020 Cohort, receiving up to 8,500 in scholarship funding and on-campus housing. Chandra Gonzalez, Assistant Director of Scholarships and Financial Aid, conducted in-person interviews at the high school of the student applicants located in the Greater Houston area and the two applicants outside the Greater Houston area, all who received an interview via Skype or Facetime. Raven Jones reviewed the applicants and the results of the interviews.
  
- ii. **Learning:** Curriculum and Learning outcomes were developed in April 2019.
  - Summer Bridge Program
    - Students begin college with adequate financial resources.
    - Students are taking courses aligned with their academic abilities.
    - Students meet peers focused on academic achievement.
    - Students are comfortable with the Urban Experience Program’s staff members.
    - Potential obstacles to academic success are determined.

## b. Program Development

- i. A Diamond Family Scholars Program vision statement was developed and approved: The Diamond Family Scholars Program will be recognized as the preeminent initiative of the University of Houston Urban Experience Program and valued University-wide.
- ii. Established the Diamond Family Scholars Program brand and created a 2019-2020 marketing plan to broaden the awareness of the program both internally on the UH campus and externally, with expanded community partner events and additional media coverage opportunities.
- iii. Printed marketing and communication materials have been created and shared with campus leadership, board of visitors, board of regents, as well as external community partners.
- iv. The Diamond Family Scholars Program website: [uh.edu/diamondfamilyscholars] was created and will serve as the central repository and communications hub for all relevant content for student recruitment and on-going points of pride. It has also been optimized to appear in search engines.
- v. A major accomplishment that demonstrates the University's robust support for the program is the creation of the Diamond Family Scholars Program **Wordmark**



- vi. To increase campus visibility of the program and instill pride among the participating students, a Diamond Family Scholars Program brand tee- shirt design has been created, and is ready for review.
- vii. A full-page advertisement in the main news section of the Houston Chronicle was placed on Wednesday, May 15, 2019, garnering nearly 207,000 impressions. Six copies of the print edition were delivered to Mr. and Mrs. Diamond.

## c. Maximization of External Resources

- i. Student Financial Aid has determined financial aid packages for the first student cohort.

## d. Living Learning Community

- i. Established for the 2019-2020 Diamond Family Scholars Program student cohort within the Cougar Village residence hall.

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## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

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- a. The Summer Bridge Program** will assist with the transition to the University by providing students early access to University resources and clear information regarding Diamond Family Scholars Program expectations and responsibilities.
- b. Fourth Annual Foster Success Day-** Monday, June 10th—Off-campus partners from Child Advocates of Fort Bend, Child Advocates of Montgomery County, and the HAY Center of Depelchin participated. The Diamond Family Scholars Program was shared with event participants. Students and partners participated in a campus tour and information session on the Urban Experience Program and the University’s resources, student panel, and lunch.
- c. Off campus Partners Informational Lunch Event** is scheduled for August 8, 2019.



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## METRICS FOR SUCCESS

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The Diamond Family Scholars Program will focus on four main metrics to gauge success over time: the number of prospective foster care students reached through outreach and recruitment activities, retention rate of Diamond Family Scholars at UH, graduation rate of Diamond Family Scholars at UH, and surveys of Diamond Family Scholars each year to measure academic and personal growth over the course of the program. The current four-year graduation rate of UH foster care students is 37%, a rate that we specifically aim to increase substantially in the first four years of the Diamond Family Scholars Program. Our goal for the first four years of the Program will be to achieve at least a 60% graduation rate, higher than the current four-year graduation rate at UH. Our long-term goal is to achieve an 80% graduation rate for Diamond Family Scholars.

**a. Number of prospective foster care students reached through outreach and recruitment activities**

- i. UH Admissions is in the process of establishing a scannable QR code that enables and creates a link to a radius or SharePoint form that will capture student information, and this code will be linked on the Diamond Family Scholars Program flyer.

**b. Retention rate /Graduation rate**

- i. Determined as students transition through the Program. Determined after first cohort matriculation.

**c. Annual surveys of Diamond Family Scholar Program participants**

- i. First survey at the end of year one of Alpha cohort

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## ADVANCEMENT **OPPORTUNITIES**

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A targeted Matching Gift Table has been created to identify potential corporate, foundation and individual Diamond Family Scholars Program philanthropic supporters. University of Houston Advancement has currently identified several corporate and foundation supporters that align with Diamond Family Scholars Program mission and goals and plans to solicit for the 2019-2020 Academic Year. University Advancement has started funding conversations with key prospects such as The Meadows Foundation, the Ray C. Fish Foundation, and the Harry and Isabel C. Cameron Foundation. The Urban Experience Program and University Advancement are currently strategizing how to best engage potential individual supporters with a giving history to programs that align with the Diamond Family Scholars Program.



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## STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

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**Kolby Robinson** was hired as Assistant Director for Diamond Family Scholars Program effective June 17, 2019. Kolby Robinson has 10 years' experience in working with former foster youth in K12 and family services and placement settings. She worked at Barbara Jordan International Preschool and Hope Academy Charter School where she routinely performed case management in coordinating and conferring with clinician, staff, foster youth and their kinship caretakers. Kolby has extensive knowledge of the local foster care landscape as a social worker. In her established career, she has handled a large case management and developed behavioral intervention service plans for students. She also has experience establishing collaborative relationships with multiple stakeholders to benefit youth outcomes. She is very familiar with event planning for foster youth and supporting foster youths' individual needs. Kolby completed her Bachelor's degree in Child and Family Studies in 2009 and her Master of Social Work in 2012. She is a licensed Social Worker.

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COLLEGE FAIRS, CONFERENCES, PRESENTATIONS,  
INVOLVEMENT/OVERSIGHT AND/OR  
**AWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

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- a. Raven Jones presented the Diamond Family Scholars Program at the January Regional 6 Service Program conference. Attendees included: licensed Texas case managers and community partners, such as HAY Center of DePelchin, Covenant House, etc.
  
- b. Urban Experience Program with the assistance of the Office of Admissions is creating a list of potential College Fairs and Conferences for student outreach and Diamond Family Scholars Program awareness.
  
- c. Foster Care College Fair-BCFS in San Antonio
  - i. UH Admissions Maria-Christina Galivan (Access and Outreach Specialist) recently attended college fair for high seniors.

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## COLLABORATIONS AND **PARTNERSHIPS**

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- a. Met with Depelchin President, Jenifer Jarriel, and attended the Annual Depelchin Families for Kids Luncheon
  
- b. Met with The HAY Center leadership and attended the Annual HAY Center Luncheon as a guest of Board Member, Brent Spraggins, from UH Bauer College.
  
- c. Foster Success Day- Held June 10, 2019 with off-campus partners from Child Advocates of Fort Bend, Child Advocates of Montgomery County, and the HAY Center of Depelchin.
  
- d. Off Campus Partners Informational Lunch will be held at the Hilton Hotel August 8, 2019.

