

A REPORT FOR ANDY AND ANDREA DIAMOND ON
THE DIAMOND FAMILY SCHOLARS
2019–2020

▶ JUNE 2020





A Letter from the Director

As we come to the close of our first year of the Diamond Family Scholars Program, there are two words that continue to ring: thrilling and transformational. In this first year, we have seen the ideas, hopes and vision of our founders, Andy and Andrea Diamond, come to fruition in the lives of our first cohort of students. Not only was it a pleasure to serve as the director of the program but also an honor and privilege to watch these students grow as young adults at the University of Houston.

When the year began, no one knew what to expect but we all entered with an open heart and mind and ready to enjoy the ride ahead. Our students attended their first summer bridge where they each met for the first time and began to sow seeds to build their "...family". It was never expected for our students to bond as quickly and organically as they did, but it was an added benefit. They attend our program events together and many of them shared classes together as well. They looked out for each other the way that a family would. If you ask any of them the word that is said the most it's "family."

From our first official event with Andy and Andrea Diamond, to our heartfelt Thanksgiving dinner, our students and founders have created bonds and found commonality amongst each other. As we closed 2019, we held high expectations for what 2020 would bring. Our students kicked off the Spring semester with high recognitions for their hard work in the fall; one was even invited to The Honors College. They were breaking barriers and overcoming statistics that show that a student that fits their profile should not be successful in their first year of college. They were defying the odds and I do not think they even realized it.

They were able to spend their first college spring break in New York City. Little did we know that the trip to NYC would be our last time gathering as a group. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, our spring semester quickly turned virtual. But without hesitation or delay, Cohort I quickly adapted to the change and made the most of it. We continued to keep weekly and monthly contact by continuing our meetings via Microsoft Teams and Zoom which helped bring some normalcy to our lives. It was truly the "family" they had created that helped them get through the end of the semester. These students all closed the spring semester with GPAs over 3.0. Yet again, defying the odd.

As we move forward with our second year, I can only think that even more greatness lies ahead when we add six more outstanding students to the program. We still have more odd to defy and more barriers to break for students who have experienced time in foster care. But each day, we are one step closer.

Thank you for a great year and an even better outlook for years to come.

Kolby M. Robinson, LMSW

Our Mission

Our mission is to create a sustainable framework that allows for our foster care youth 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 is 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.

Our Goals

As we close our first year of this transformational experience, the Diamond Family Scholars Program will continue to make strides towards its goals of:

1. increasing the graduation rate of former foster care students from 37% to 80% from the first year to the fourth year of program,
2. creating a sustainable housing and support network for students formerly in the foster care system, and
3. improving postsecondary outcomes for students who have been traditionally underrepresented so that students are well prepared for careers.

Our **immediate** focus lies with creating a sustainable housing and support network for students formerly in the foster care system.

We have accomplished this through building an on- and off-campus partner network that can support the student from a holistic approach.

Metrics for Success

Recruitment

A total of **80** students were directly emailed an invitation to apply for the program based on a financial aid query and use of Microsoft survey to gauge student eligibility and commitment to university attendance.

Our social media reach continues to increase with over 100 followers on Instagram and a student created and operated Tik Tok account.



Retention Rate

Diamond Family Scholars Program Cohort 1 boasts a **100% retention rate** for the 2019-2020 academic year with all students returning for Fall 2020.

Statewide and nationwide retention rate of former foster youth are at 72% and 77% respectively (Watt, Faulkner, Bustillos, & Madden, 2018).

Key Components

- ◇ Engaging Programs
- ◇ Campus Liaisons
- ◇ Reliable Support
- ◇ Relationship building for increased accountability among students
- ◇ Impactful Outreach and Recruitment

Trends*

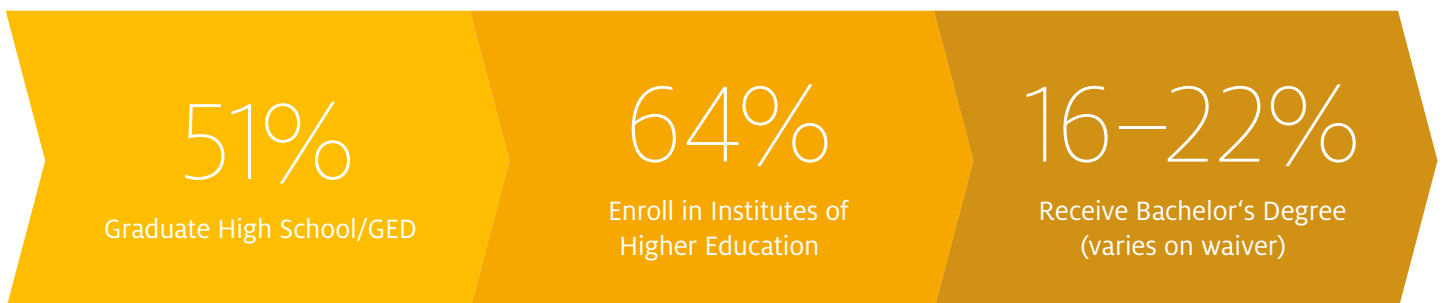
National: Foster Youth



National: All Youth



Texas: Foster Youth

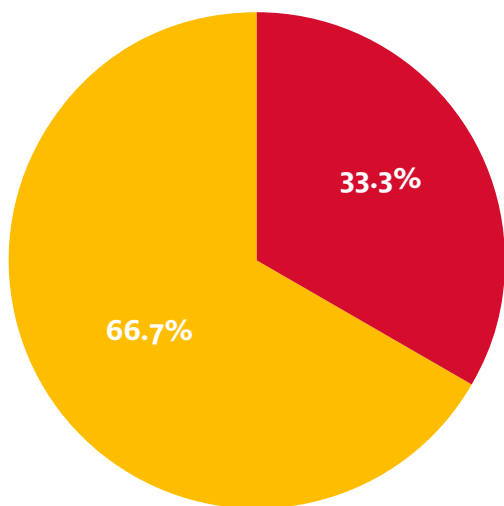


* (Watt, T., Faulkner, M., Bustillos, S., & Madden, E. (2018). *Foster Care Alumni and Higher Education: A Descriptive Study of Post-secondary Achievements of Foster Youth in Texas*. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 36(4), 399-408. doi:10.1007/s10560-018-0569-x)

Scholar Profile & University Life

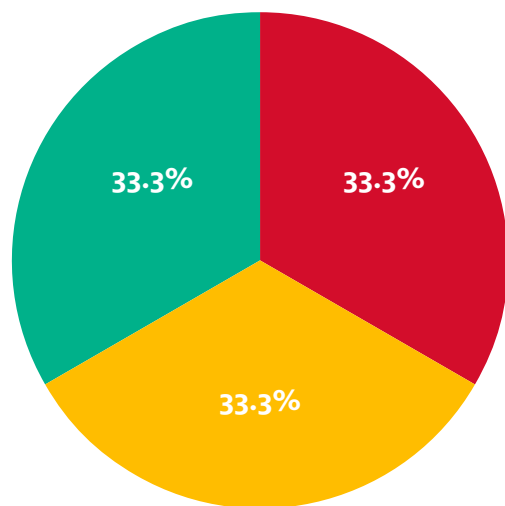
Diamond Scholars come to the University of Houston from a variety of experiences and backgrounds from across the state of Texas. They represent students from historically underrepresented and marginalized identities in higher education. The program strives to provide a holistic approach to support services provided to these students in an effort to meet their individual needs. As the program grows, we seek to increase the diversity of the cohorts to provide students with a worldly experience of cultures and ethnicities.

This year our students made their mark on campus by joining fraternities, becoming leaders in service organizations and joining their respective professional societies and organizations.



Scholar Gender Identities

- Male
- Female



Scholar Racial Identities

- White/Caucasian
- Multiracial
- Hispanic/Latinx

3.3

Fall Overall GPA

3.5

Spring Overall GPA

When compared statewide and nationwide, Diamond Scholars are well above the 1.8–1.97 average (Watt, Faulkner, Bustillos, & Madden, 2018).

1

Student invited to join The Honors College for Spring 2020

3

Students named to the Dean’s List for Fall 2019 and Spring 2020

33%

Used State College Tuition Waiver

September Kickoff



Programming Overview

September Kickoff

The Diamond Family Scholars Program kicked off the year with an official launch with our community partners. Our program director was able to provide an overview of the program and what it has to offer students as well as discuss desires for collaborations with those present.

Our students were able to meet Andy and Andrea Diamond and President Renu Khator at our September Kickoff event. The Diamonds and the students were able to chat and connect over various topics while getting to know each other.

Service

Students participated in UH Day of Service at the Houston Furniture Bank.

Popsicles on the Patio

Students were able to enjoy a cool treat with program director and meet other student members of Urban Experience Program.

Thanksgiving

We celebrated Thanksgiving at McCormick and Schmicks with Andy and Andrea Diamond, the Urban Experience Program Staff and the Diamond Scholars. All were pleased and left full as we parted to celebrate the holiday.

Diamond Christmas

For Christmas, the Diamond Scholars chose to gift the Diamonds with some program swag as a small thank you gift.

Spring Break in NYC

Students spent 4 days and 3 nights in the city that does not sleep, New York. Upon our arrival, we immersed in the fast-paced lifestyle that brought us over 15,000 steps each day. Central Park proved to be a bike ride away as students rented bikes and rode to the famous green space for an afternoon of sun.

Zoom Life

Social distancing could not keep us away from each other. We continued to meet monthly and hosted through Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Thanksgiving



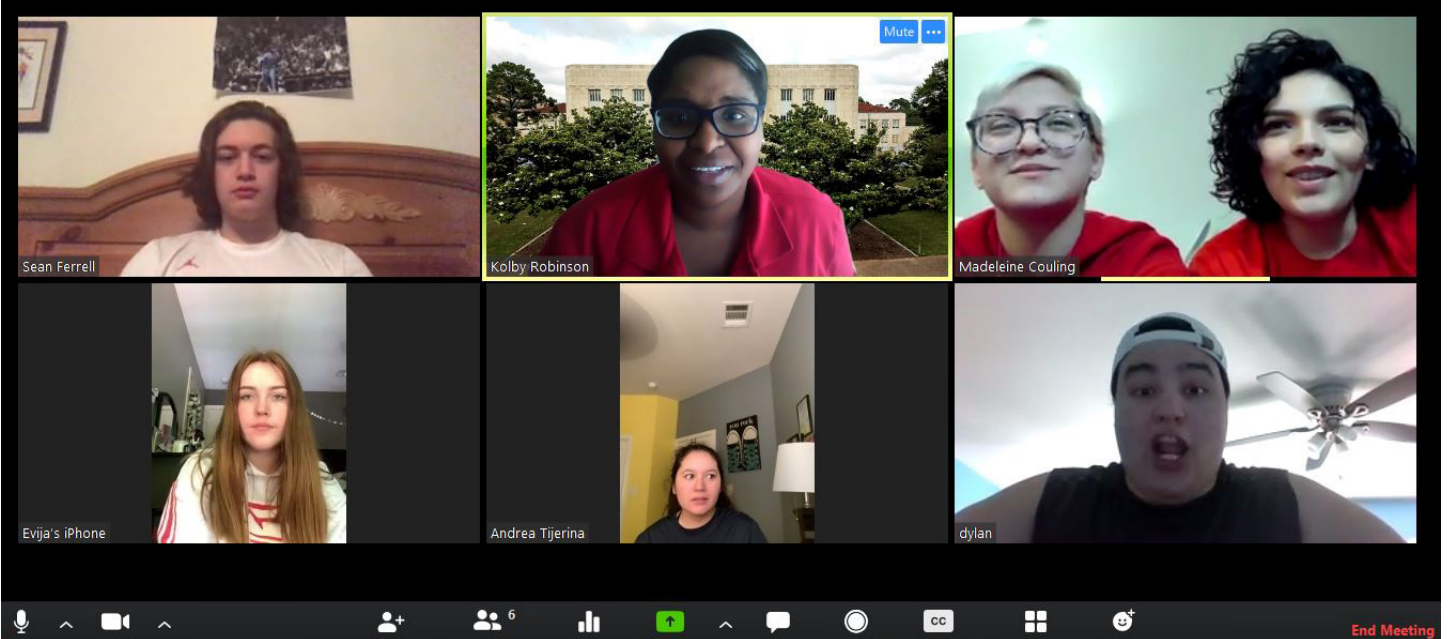
UH Day of Service



Spring Break in NYC



Zoom Life



Outreach & Recruitment

1. **Depelchin**
2. Texas Foster Care Association
3. Houston ISD Foster Care Liaison Group
4. **DFPS Pearland, Houston, Austin**
5. **DFPS PAL Program–Houston and Austin**
6. Texas School Social Worker Conference
7. **Region 4 Foster Care Consortium**
8. Houston ISD
9. Fort Bend ISD
10. Aldine ISD
11. Spring ISD
12. Cypress Fairbanks ISD
13. Pearland ISD
14. Austin ISD
15. **KIPP**
16. **YES Prep**
17. **EMERGE Houston**
18. Presbyterian Children’s Homes and Services
19. Grace Manor
20. **St. Jude’s Ranch for Children**

Total of 20 established and viable partners throughout the state of Texas.

Bold names are major contributors.

Student Voices

*"This scholarship and the people involved were the best thing that could've happened to more for college. **Because of them, I felt I had the best chance of success and I did succeed, for which I will be forever grateful.** Thank you to the Diamonds for making it all possible. Also thank you to Ms. Kolby and Dr. Jones for helping me along the way and making my first year of college the best it could've been!" —Dylan R.*

*"**I really felt that I was actually cared for.** If I needed anything, no one hesitated to do what they could to get me what I needed." —Sean F.*

*"The Diamond Family Scholars program gave me the resources to flourish as a freshman in college, offering a home to grow and seek guidance to ensure success. **The Diamond Family Scholars program has given me a space to explore who I can be with a new family by my side.**" —Maddie C.*

*"Being a part of the Diamond Scholars made my freshmen year of college made it that much better. As an architecture student, I spent most of my time in the studio. **By going to events and seeing the other Diamond Scholars made it all worth it.** Not only did it provide the financial aid that I needed, we created a family full of friendships that will hopefully last for a long time. I am so excited to meet all the new Diamond Scholars and grow our family!" —Evy J.*

*"My first year of college has come with many challenges, but with that being said, it has been some of the best times of my life thanks to the rest of the Diamonds. This program has allowed me to not only make new connections but find a group of people that I truly consider to be family. Coming to UH I was very nervous and had no idea what to anticipate. **Being given the opportunity to live with people that have gone through some of the same hardships that I have has really aided me and allowed me to flourish as an individual.** To recap, this year has come with many surprises such as this pandemic we are going through but overall I would say the Diamonds have had a wonderful year. I can't wait to see what lies ahead for us." —Marcela M.*

*"My experience as a Diamond Family Scholar was amazing! This scholarship has allowed me to build a family and a safe community within the university. I have made lifelong friends who I know I will always count on and consider them my family. **This scholarship has showed me that anyone can overcome the odds and break the stigma of the foster care system if they have a community to rely on.**" —Andrea T.*



Looking to the Future

Housing

Cohort 1 of Diamond Scholars will be upperclassmen and moving to our new home in Bayou Oaks. The Scholars will have access to a full kitchen, living room, study rooms and outdoor patio areas. Their excitement about moving cannot be contained.

Diamond Mentor

While the onset of COVID-19 put a halt to our in-person efforts for launching our Diamond Mentor Program, we are continuing to move full steam ahead with our planning and preparations for a successful Fall 2020 of matching our 12 scholars with on campus mentors that will play an integral role in their ongoing transitions.

New Diamond Scholars

We are so excited to announce that we have successfully interviewed and offered 6 incoming freshmen the opportunity to join this transformational program. All students have accepted the offer and are excited to meet everyone and begin their college careers.



Campus Liaisons

1. Student Housing and Residential Life
2. Office Scholarships and Financial Aid
3. Center for Student Involvement
4. Center for Fraternity and Sorority Life
5. Frontier Fiesta
6. Money Mentors
7. UH Graduate College of Social Work
8. Office of Faculty Engagement and Development
9. Dean of Students
10. Admissions
11. University Career Services
12. Counseling and Psychological Services
13. LGBTQ Resource Center
14. UH Wellness
15. A.D. Bruce Religion Center



Donor Impact

The generosity of Andy and Andrea Diamond has forever changed the lives of UH students who have been adopted or grew up in foster care. The first cohort of the Diamond Family Scholars have completed their first year at the University of Houston, putting them one step closer to making an impact with their degrees.

The success of the Diamond Family Scholars will only soar with the continued generosity of the Diamonds and our Diamond Family Scholars donors. Gifts help ensure Scholars have the ability to afford everyday collegiate necessities, as well as avoid obstacles that could affect their education.



Thank You



UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON**