

# The Center for Fostering Success

## **Best Practice, Best Fit**

### Webinar Series

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**Discovery Driven Solutions Related  
to Educational Attainment for  
Students from Foster Care**

*May 8, 2014*



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 **Center for Fostering Success**  
An initiative of WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



# College Students from Foster Care: Is there a Gap between Academic Aspirations and College Readiness?

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May 8, 2014



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# Acknowledgements

## **Co-authors**

Sarah Font and Glinda Rawls

## **Staff and Students**

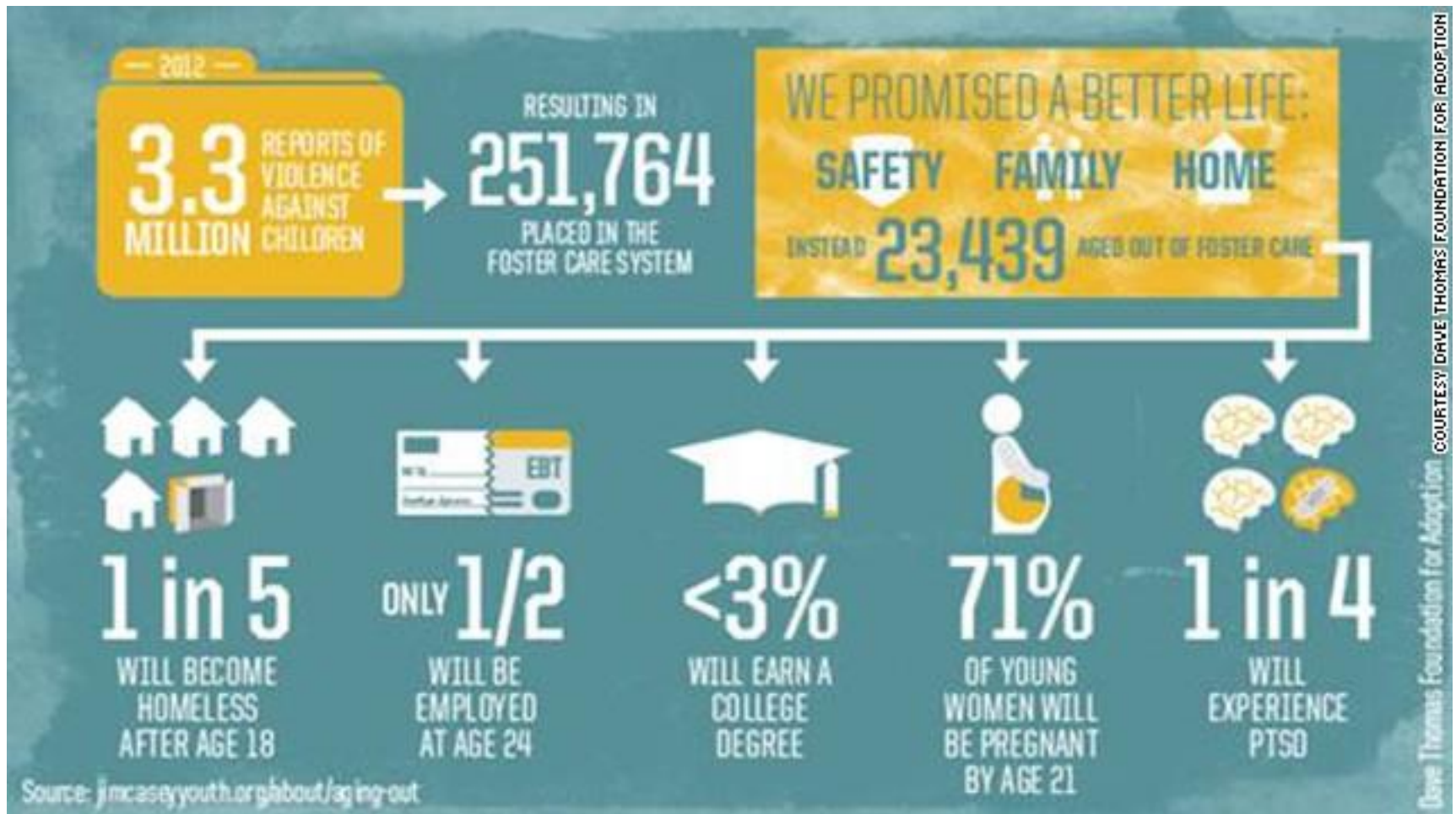
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# Challenges for College Students from Foster Care



# “Aging out” & the Brain



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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVOX1dZ1J6s&feature=youtu.be>



# Aspirations for College

- 93 % of high school seniors had aspirations to go to college
  - [Higher Education: Gaps in Access and Persistence Study \(2012\)](#)
- 71 % of foster youth “want to graduate college;” this increases to 84% when aspirations for “some college” is included.
  - [Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth \(2004\)](#)



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# What is Aging out?

- “Aging out” of foster care is a legal event that occurs when the court formally discharges a young person from the State’s custody based on the youth’s chronological age.
- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008
  - Increasing number of States offer foster care beyond 18 years old



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# Resources for Youth Aging out of Foster Care

[www.fosteringssuccessmichigan.com](http://www.fosteringssuccessmichigan.com)

- Independent living programs
- Education Training Voucher Program
  - Provides up to \$5,000 per year for youth enrolled in post-secondary education, up to age 23 years old
- Health care for former foster youth to 26 years old
- Campus-based support Programs



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# Research on youth aging out of foster care

Compared to others approaching emerging adulthood, foster youth

- are unprepared and without a viable plan;
- Less able to depend on family for shelter, adult guidance, and financial support
- Lag behind other youth in educational attainment
- Received few encouraging messages from adults about pursuing college

(Literature review: Unrau, Font, Rawls, 2012)



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# EDUCATIONAL Barriers to Post Secondary Education

Foster youth are more likely than others children to:

- ↑ drop out
- ↑ be placed in special education classes
- ↑ repeat a grade
- ↑ suspended or expelled
- ↑ rate of changing schools

(Literature review: Unrau, Font, Rawls, 2012)



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# OTHER Barriers

## to Post Secondary Education

Foster youth are more likely than other emerging adults to

- ↑ FINANCES – coordinate multiple systems for financial resources
- ↑ HOUSING – not have a co-signer
- ↑ HEALTH – have physical & mental health needs
- ↑ LIFE SKILLS – assume “adult” responsibilities earlier
- ↑ RELATIONSHIP – discontinuity with caregivers
- ↑ IDENTITY – pseudo-independence, survivor thinking



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# Research Questions

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

- How do freshman students from foster care compare to other college students in terms of their “readiness for college engagement”?
- How do freshman students from foster care perform academically in their first semester of college, compared to other first-time in any college freshman at the same institution?



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# Study Sample

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

## Convenience Sample

- 81 students who aged out of foster care attending WMU, 17 – 20 years old
- 65% female
- 55% minority race or multiracial

## Population of First-Time-in-Any-College (FTIAC) at WMU

- 50% female
- 21% minority race or multiracial



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# Data Collection

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

## Readiness for College Engagement

- College Student Inventory (CSI), Noel-Levitz
- 194 questions, 17 scales, 4 broad categories
  - Academic Motivation
  - Social Motivation
  - Receptivity to Student Services
  - General Coping



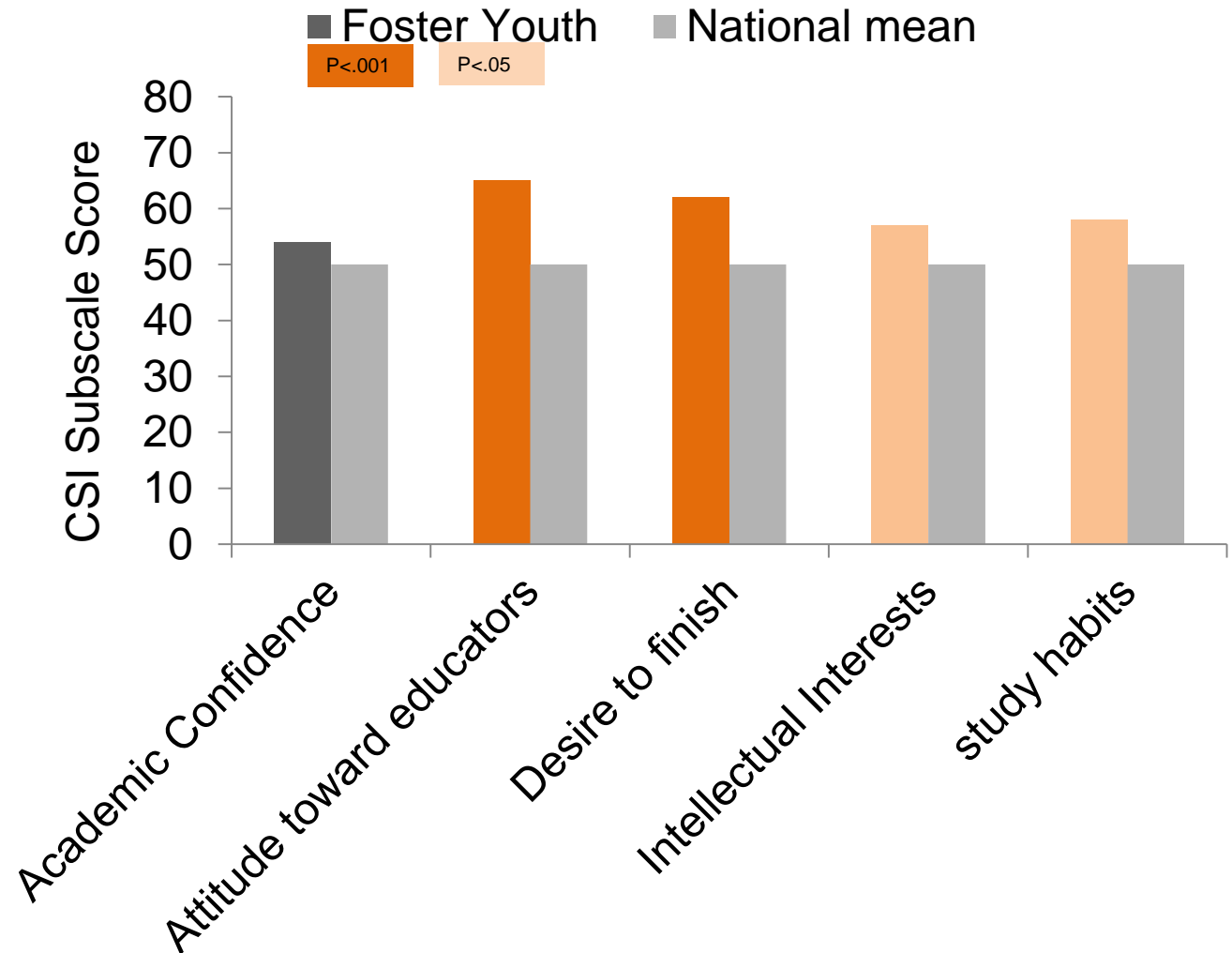
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# Readiness for College Engagement

- **Academic Motivation**
  - Academic confidence
  - Attitude to educators
  - Desire to finish college
  - Intellectual interests
  - Study habits
- **Receptivity to...**
  - ...academic assistance
  - ...career counseling
  - ...social enrichment
  - ...personal counseling
- **Social Motivation**
  - Sociability
  - Self-reliance
  - Leadership
- **General Coping**
  - Sense of financial security
  - Family support
  - Openness
  - Ease of transition
  - Career planning

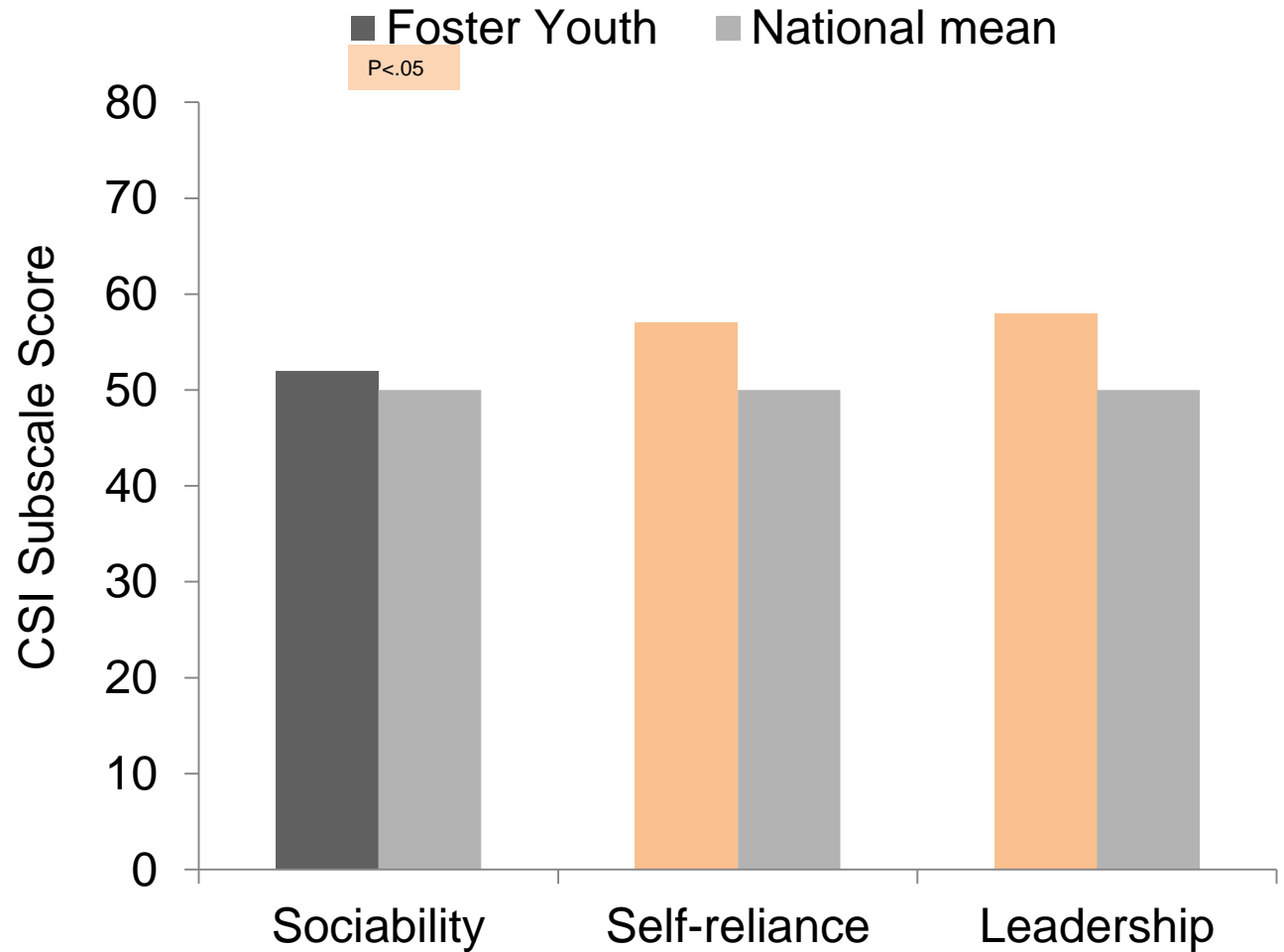
# Academic Motivation



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Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

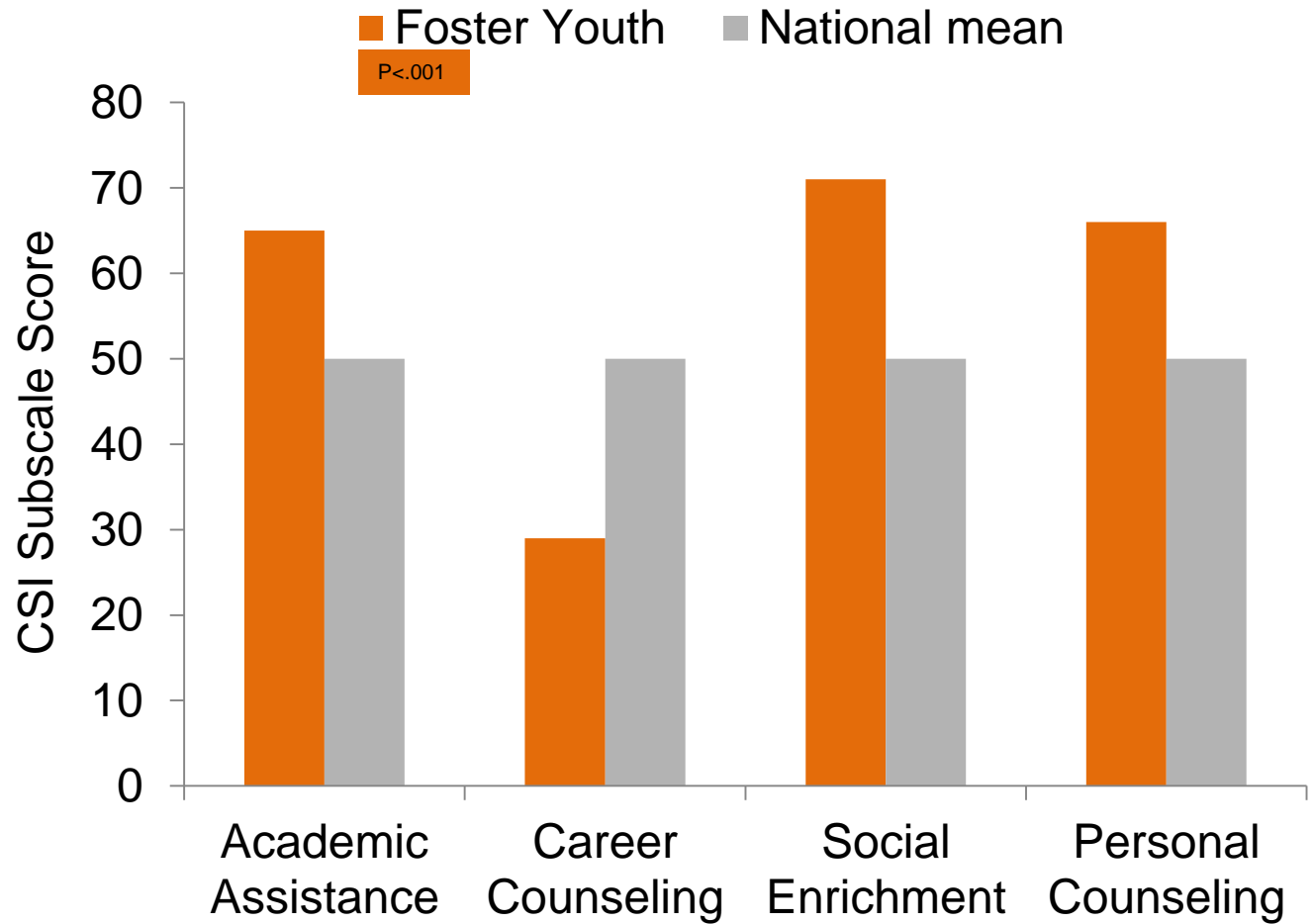
# Social Motivation



Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

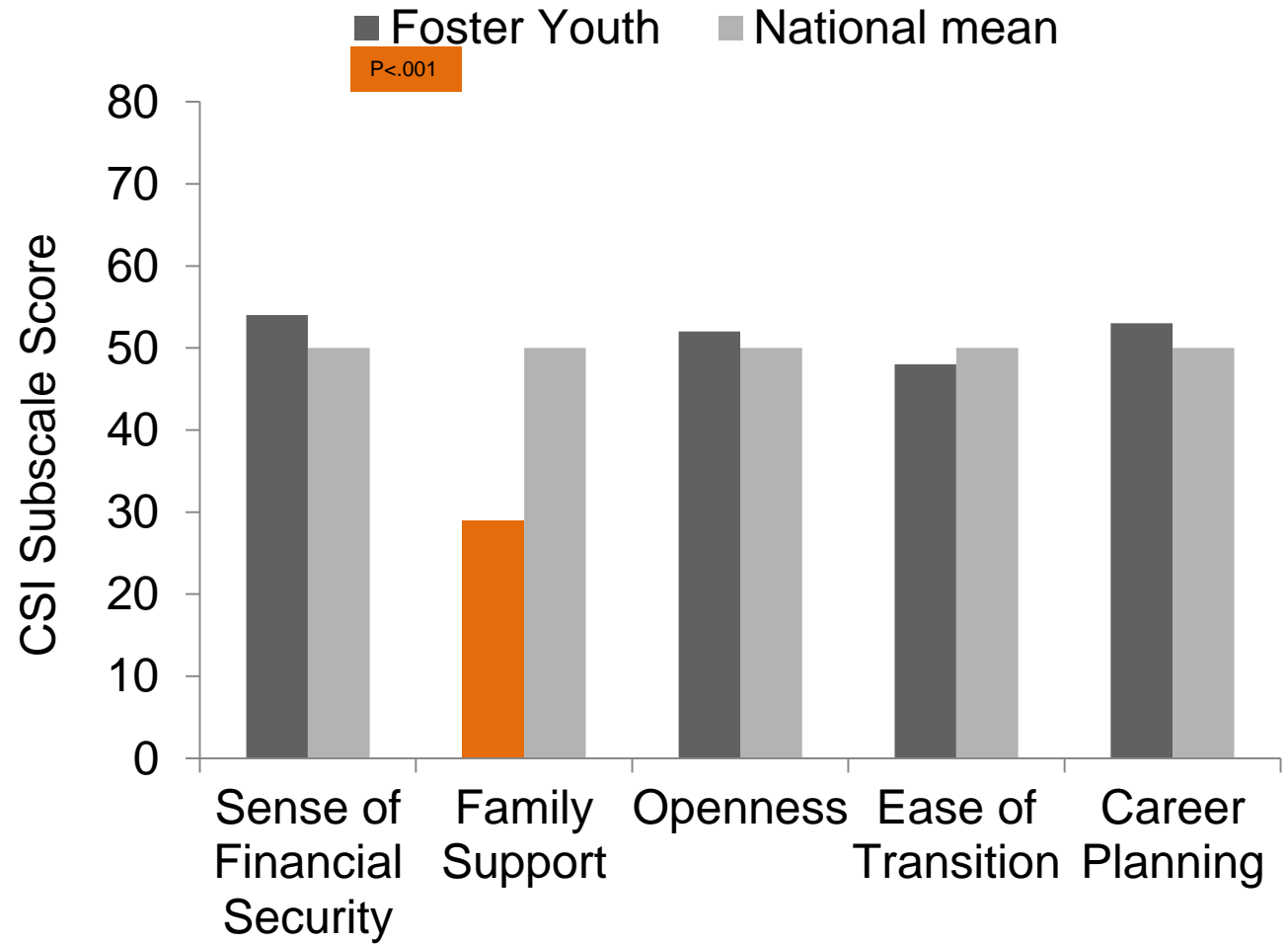


# Receptivity to Student Services



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# General Coping

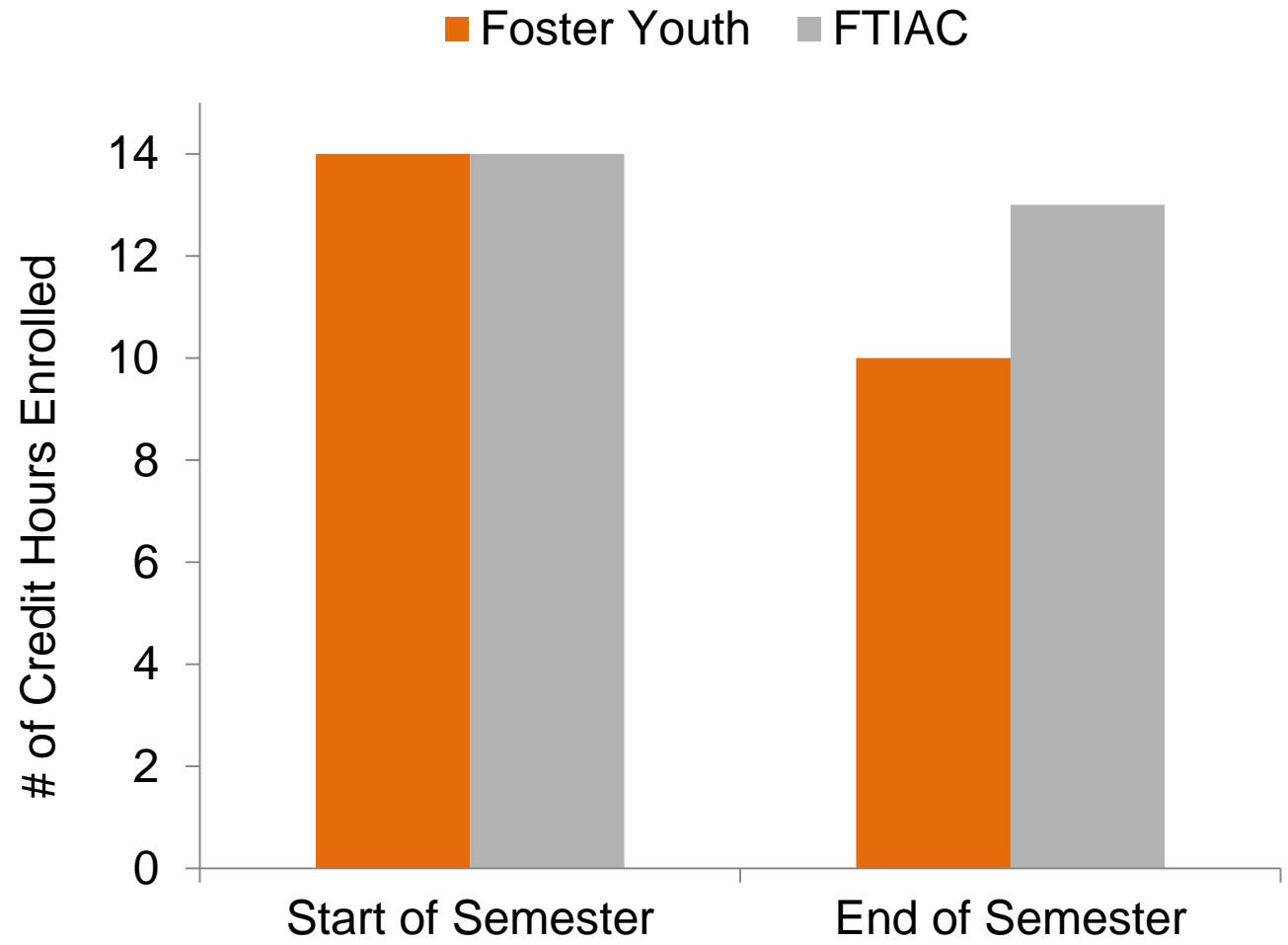


Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)



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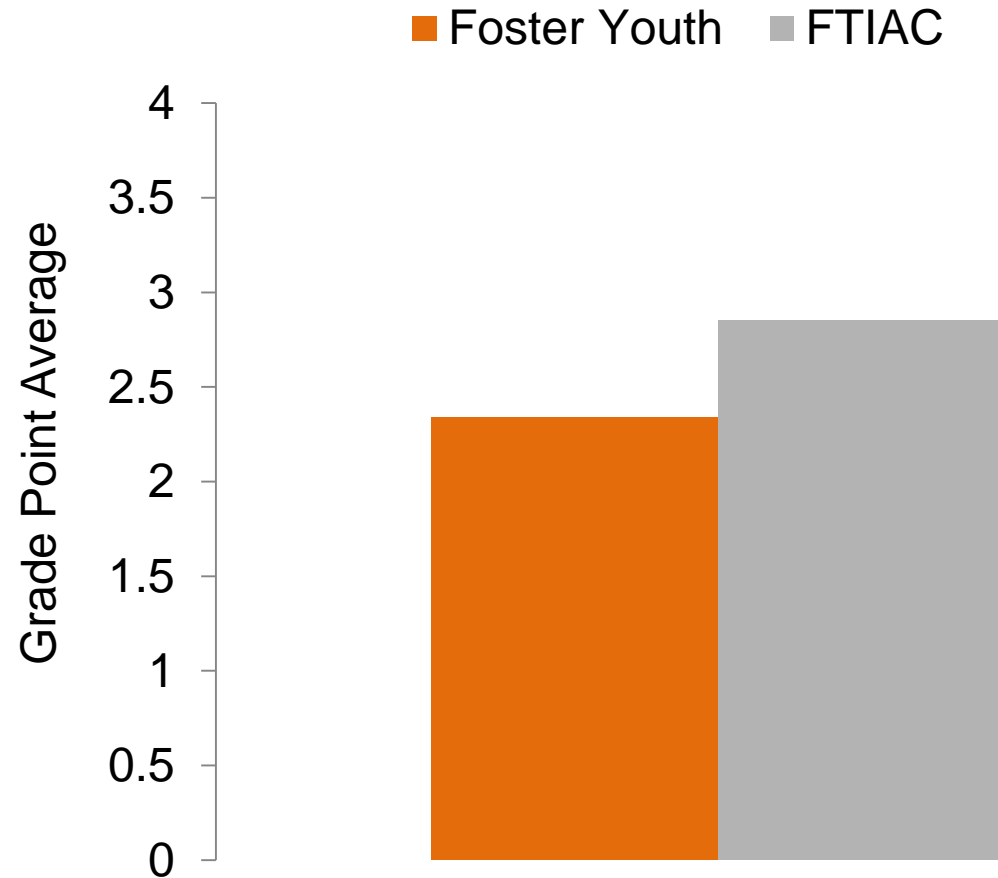
# First Semester Credit Hours



Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)



# First-Semester GPA



\* The difference in end-of-semester GPA parallels observed differences in ACT and GPA scores at admission.

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)



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# Summary of Results

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

Compared to other college freshman,  
students from foster care report

- Higher motivation to engage academically
- Higher motivation to engage socially
- Lower family support
- About the same level of coping skills
- Completing fewer credit hours
- Lower Grade point average



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# Implications for Practice

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

- Perfect storm leading to academic failure and drop out
  - The combination of high hopes, low (or difficult) family support, academic struggle, and average coping skills is a set up for “high confidence, low competence”
- Aspirations ≠ Actions
  - What students from foster care wish for will not necessarily translate into actions or results. Skilled support and intervention is needed.



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# What You Can Do

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

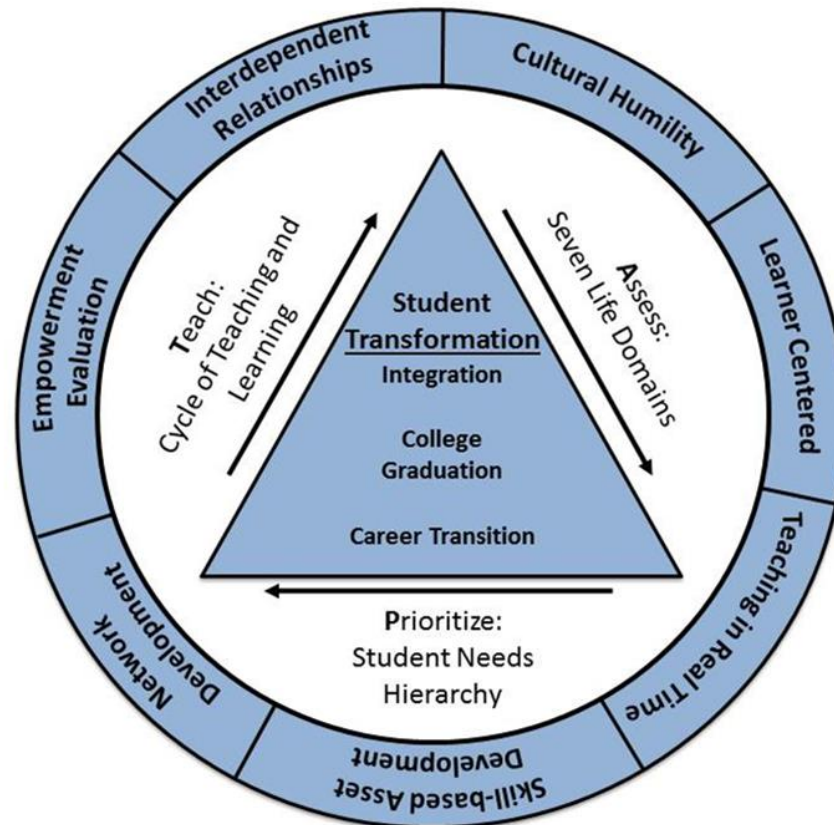
- Educate child welfare and college professionals about the unique needs of student from foster care
  - [www.fosteringsuccessmichigan.com](http://www.fosteringsuccessmichigan.com)
- Early engagement with students from foster care is critical
  - Target competence building with students
  - Do not overplay confidence building with students
- Get specialized training to support students from foster care



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# Become a Trained Coach

## The Fostering Success Coach Model



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Information about training: contact [jamie.crandell@wmich.edu](mailto:jamie.crandell@wmich.edu)  
(After 5/30/14 go to: [www.wmich.edu/fosteringSUCCESS](http://www.wmich.edu/fosteringSUCCESS))



Thank you for attending!

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- Visit [www.fosteringuccessmichigan.com](http://www.fosteringuccessmichigan.com) for more information about upcoming webinars or to access a recording of today's webinar.
- If you have a research study that you are interested in presenting via this series, please contact Dr. Yvonne Unrau, Director of the Center for Fostering Success at [Yvonne.Unrau@wmich.edu](mailto:Yvonne.Unrau@wmich.edu) with your ideas.



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