I. Overview

Under the Office of the Senior University Dean for Academic Affairs, the Office of Research, Evaluation and Program Support (REPS) seeks proposals for academic research projects that increase understanding of pathways of postsecondary success for youth in foster care, particularly focused on the City University of New York (CUNY) context.

II. Organizational Background

The Office of the Senior University Dean for Academic Affairs

The Office of the Senior University Dean for Academic Affairs oversees a wide range of programs and initiatives at the University, including adult literacy programs, service learning, early childhood professional development, collaborative programs with the New York City public schools, workforce development and continuing education, as well as programs such as the CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP), Accelerated Study in Associates Program (ASAP) and CUNY Start.

The Office of Research, Evaluation and Program Support

The Office of Research, Evaluation and Program Support (REPS), situated within the Office of the Senior University Dean for Academic Affairs, supports a variety of educational and workforce development programs by providing data and information essential to developing and improving programs and partnerships. The primary focus of REPS is to examine these programs and the impact they have on students' academic skills and achievement, college readiness, workforce readiness and other key program outcomes. REPS provides statistical support and analysis, including empirical research and program evaluation, to a variety of audiences, including program administrators, campus officials, and a national audience of educators, researchers and policymakers.

III. About the CUNY START-ASAP Foster Youth Initiative

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation awarded the Office of the Senior University Dean for Academic Affairs a significant grant to establish and enhance pathways that will increase enrollment and graduation rates among foster youth in CUNY. Under this grant, CUNY Start will recruit foster youth with remedial needs to participate in the program, and will provide

additional support for those students as they meet CUNY's assessment requirements. Upon gaining proficiency or significantly reducing their level of remedial needs, CUNY Start will guide students toward enrollment in the ASAP program, where they will continue to be supported through graduation. Students who meet ASAP eligibility at the point of recruitment may directly enter ASAP. The grant also aims to support the development of CUNY's strategic partnerships with NYC foster care agencies, to enhance the capacity of CUNY Start advisors to better serve youth from foster care, and for the development of a comprehensive research agenda to support CUNY-bound youth in New York City's Administration for Children's Services.

IV. REPS' Foster Youth Research Initiative

As a part of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation foster youth grant, the Office of Research, Evaluation and Program Support (REPS) is leading a research initiative to study college access and success for youth in foster care. The initiative will consist of 1) evaluation and research on the CUNY Start-ASAP Foster Youth Initiative and 2) research on transition age foster youth in general, with a focus on the CUNY context. This research initiative aims to generate deep knowledge of factors impacting college access and success for foster youth at CUNY and program supports that may improve post-secondary outcomes for this population. In addition to the substantive topics of interest, the research initiative seeks to break ground in accessing existing data sources not commonly used for foster youth research and pursue both quantitative and qualitative studies of programmatic impact.

V. Faculty/Administrator Fellowships

Under the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation foster youth grant, three two-year faculty/administrator fellowships, each in the amount of $40,000 are available.[1] The fellowships are designed to promote research that will support and expand the foster youth research initiative led by REPS. The research fellowships will provide an additional means for integrating this project into the entire University community and generate deep, scientific knowledge of pathways of postsecondary success for youth in foster care.

Topics/Areas of Interest

The foster youth research initiative is particularly focused on issues of college access and success for transition age youth in foster care. As a University community, we are seeking to understand obstacles to post-secondary success experienced by foster youth and a range of promising evidence-based solutions. To that end, topics and areas of interest include, but are not limited to

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[1] The grant will be paid either through summer salary and/or course release.

- The role of structural barriers, including the legal landscape and policies, governing agencies and programs;
- Understanding the scope of existing support programs, evaluation of program impact, as well as barriers inherent in their design and implementation;
- Understanding innovative programmatic solutions; what makes these programs unique/different from other support programs with similar educational missions;
- Exploring the interaction between the complexity of foster care youths' lives and whether and/or how the existing structural and programmatic landscape poses barriers/opportunities for college entrance;
- Developing an understanding of the connections between foster youths' lives, including population characteristics (e.g. race, sex, gender, social class, etc.), and college access;
- Making new theoretical connections based on empirical evidence—that generates promising frameworks for understanding these issues;
- Understanding the relationship between foster youths' middle and high school experiences, pathways to college, and post-secondary outcomes;
- Understanding aspects of the college experience that are especially problematic for foster youth;
- Understanding how specific higher education contexts (i.e. community college, four-year college, trade schools) shape the experiences and academic outcomes of foster youth; and
- Expanding the literature on youth in foster care with strong methodological contributions.

VI. Application Instructions

Letter of Intent (LOI) Stage

The submission deadline for LOIs is April 29, 2016. Questions about the RFP can be emailed to the Office of Research, Evaluation and Program Support at **tay@cuny.edu**. Click on the link to fill out and submit the LOI: https://cunysud.formstack.com/forms/tay_letterofintent

The form for the LOI must be filled out and submitted in order to be considered by the Selection Committee. The requested information to be provided in the LOI includes: (1) a title for the proposed project, (2) a description of the research, (3) an explanation of how the proposed project fits within this initiative, (4) information on the project's methodology and significance, (5) the budget required to complete the research [2] and (6) proposed collaborators, if applicable.

The LOIs will be reviewed and evaluated by a joint Selection Committee that will select the most promising and appropriate proposed projects. At this point those candidates selected will be asked to submit a full proposal.

Full Proposal Stage

Principal investigators (PI) invited to submit full proposals will be notified by May 20, 2016. Full proposals must be received by June 24, 2016 and must follow the format and guidelines below in order to be considered. Further details on the proposal submission process will be communicated to PIs who advance to that stage.

All proposals must be single-spaced, typed with one-inch margins. Font size may be no smaller than 11-point and no larger than 12-point, and font type must be Times New Roman. Proposals that do not follow these font and margin specifications will not be accepted. Emphasis should also be placed on completeness and clarity of content. All documents should be submitted in PDF format. The full proposal must include all of the information below.

The following is a description of components that will be required for all full proposal submissions. Additional information on each of these will be provided when full proposals are invited.

A. Cover Sheet (provided with invite to submit proposal)

B. Table of Contents

C. Abstract: The abstract should be included on its own page following the Table of Contents and should be no longer than 200 words.

D. Proposal Narrative:

   a. Problem Statement: What is the overall context for this work?

   b. Project Objectives: What research questions will be answered by this project?

   c. Project Significance: Why is this work important? Who is the target audience?

   d. Background: How did the problem evolve? What has been done to date? What existing literature addresses this? Also discuss previous work that the PI and/or co-PI has done in this area.

   e. Project Description and Methodology: How will you answer the research questions? What is the methodological contribution?

   f. Expected findings: What findings do you expect from the project? What types of recommendations do you anticipate as an outcome from the project?

   g. Deliverables: What specific products do you anticipate as a result of this research? How will you disseminate findings?

E. Appendices:

   a. Project Timeline: Tabulate all aspects of the proposed project as previously described, including data collection, data analysis, and completion of deliverables.

   b. Detailed Budget: Provide a tabulation of the estimated budget.

   c. Budget Narrative: Describe the purpose of items in the detailed budget.

   d. Curriculum Vitae (CV): A CV should be included for the PI and co-PI (if applicable)

e. References: Please list relevant literature, working papers, websites, and other sources either referenced in the proposal or relevant to the proposed research.

VII. Timeline

RFP Activity	Date
Release RFP (includes request for LOI)	**March 25, 2016**
Deadline to submit LOI	**May 20, 2016**
Selection of PIs invited to submit full proposals; further submission instructions provided	**June 3, 2016**
Deadline to submit full proposal	**July 1, 2016**
Notification of awards sent	**August 1, 2016**

VIII. Eligibility

The PI must be a faculty member or administrator affiliated with a CUNY college or administrative office. Applicants can only have their name on one proposal for this competition. Proposals may come from scholars with expertise in foster youth research or those recently investing in this research area. The project must be accomplished within a two-year time span, starting from the date the funds are administered.

IX. Evaluation Criteria

Three fellowships in the amount of $40,000 will be awarded. Criteria used to select projects for a fellowship award include:

1. **Significance:** Does the study address an important problem or question in research on post-secondary success for foster youth? Does it build upon prior findings? How does it advance the field? What will be the impact of this project on future research on post-secondary success for foster youth?

2. **Approach and methodology**: Is the design adequately developed and rigorous for the purpose of the study and commensurate with the research question(s) addressed? Is the methodological approach well justified? Is the methodological contribution clearly stated?

3. **Potential influence:** Will the results be publishable in scholarly journals, for University leadership, and/or practitioners? Will the results provide deep knowledge that will help to enhance the University's goal to more effectively support post-secondary success for foster youth?

4. **Capacity for success:** What are the qualifications of the investigators? Are investigators well-situated to successfully complete the proposed project and disseminate findings?

5. **Feasibility:** Are the proposed project activities and timeline practical within the given timeframe?

6. **Dissemination**: Does the proposed project include clearly outlined and realistic mechanisms that will lead to widespread dissemination of project results, including, but not limited to electronic communication systems, publications, and presentations at professional society meetings?

7. **Value for money**: Will the proposed value from the project warrant the money spent?

X.   Contact Information

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