For over eight years, the Seita Scholars Program at Western Michigan University has been dedicated to transforming the lives of youth who experienced foster care. As another school year comes to the end, none of the accomplishments achieved this year would have been attainable without the help of our donors, mentors, volunteers, and campus and community partnerships. Thank you for helping to transform the lives of our Seita Scholars.

This past fall, we welcomed 41 new Seita Scholars to campus. With an eye already on the future and graduation, we also launched a new series of seminars to assist our students in preparing for graduation. The Graduation Preparation Seminars (GPS) were held on a monthly basis throughout the academic year, with each focusing on a different topic to correspond with issues students face upon graduation. Guest speakers were invited to present on an array of topics including financial and professional environment preparation, job searching, and interviewing. In addition to providing valuable information, these seminars helped build a sense of community among our upcoming graduates.

Creating such a sense of community is one of the primary goals of the Seita Scholars Program. With the support of our five identity groups – the Lady Butterflies, Engaging Men, Parents’ Futures, Seita Scholars Pride, and the Foster Youth RSO – events such as an Elegance Dinner, a Talent Show to kick off Foster Care Awareness Month, and a panel discussion entitled “Relationship Talks” were held to address issues that are at the forefront for our students.

As a community, we have had the opportunity to celebrate an ever increasing number of Seita Scholars graduates. We celebrated 6 graduates during the summer 2014 semesters, with an additional 18 Seita Scholars earning their undergraduate degrees in the fall 2014 and spring 2015 semesters. This brings the total number of Seita Scholars graduates to 63, with as many as 6 additional Seita Scholars planning to graduate this summer. Together, the fall 2014, spring and summer 2015 semesters represent the largest graduating class of Seita Scholars to date!

As we close out this year, we want to again provide thanks for the support of our community – you helped us make this an exciting year! I look forward to another year of new accomplishments and successes that will help us progress and achieve the goals of the Seita Scholars Program.

Sincerely,

William C. Harris, Director
GOAL

WMU’s goal is to increase opportunities for youth who experienced foster care to pursue higher education and to provide support that promotes success and well-being throughout their undergraduate experience.

OBJECTIVE

The primary objectives of the Seita Scholars Program are to promote academic success toward college graduation that leads to professional employment while maintaining personal well-being, developing career aspirations, and building leadership capabilities.

MAIN COMPONENTS

The program has four main components:

- Create transitions that lead to success in college and career for WMU students from foster care ages 18 to 25.
- Develop a community of scholars among WMU students who experienced foster care, and create a safe community to deconstruct and reconstruct identity.
- Educate WMU students from foster care and their support network to enhance professional skill set.
- Transform WMU students from foster care by integrating experiences of one’s past to build opportunities for the future.
OVERVIEW

To increase successful outcomes among youth who experienced foster care in the state of Michigan, the Seita Scholars Program:

- Provides **full tuition scholarships** to undergraduate students who experienced foster care and are attending Western Michigan University.
- Supports students in accessing additional financial resources 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**.
- Assists students in arranging **year-round housing** on campus to ensure a stable living environment.

GROWTH

The Seita Scholars Program continues to grow and has shown great prosperity since its inception in fall 2008. Prior to the start of the program, there were 12 students from foster care identified on campus. The launch of the Seita Scholars Program brought 51 students from foster care to WMU’s campus.

The program served 77 Seita Scholars in fall 2009 and grew to 118 students in fall 2010. By fall 2011 that number was eclipsed as the program increased its support to 141 students who experienced foster care. This was the first year that all eligible students were not enrolled in the program due to funding limitations, and the program had to establish a wait list for admission.

In fall 2012, the program grew to 160 students, which has since been a constant rate of enrollment. In the fall of 2013, 42 more students were welcomed into the Seita Scholars Program, with 41 additional students entering in the fall 2014 semester.

To support the 160 Seita Scholars enrolled annually, WMU offers $1.6 million in tuition scholarships.
YONICA

WMU Start Date: Fall 2010
Expected Graduation: Spring 2017
Major: Nursing and Interdisciplinary Health Services
Minor: Biological Sciences and Spanish

Career Goals:
I plan to work as a nurse anesthetist and I also have a goal of starting my own non-profit organization to provide clean drinking water and basic health needs in developing countries.

WMU Favorites:
I like the fact that we are open, diverse and accepting of different types of people and that we are an LGBTQA friendly campus. People are also very accepting and open to starting new support programs – that is true of Kalamazoo in general.

The Seita Scholars Program Means:
A stable environment, which has given me the opportunity to achieve all of my goals.

To Program Supporters:
Please know that all of your hard work, time and money is being used in the most positive way by helping to integrate foster youth into society in the future. Thank you!

2014-15 YEAR IN REVIEW

May 2014
• Center of Fostering Success celebrated Foster Care Awareness month with a series of community events.
• Seita Scholars Program unveiled its newly renovated office space at a community open house.

June 2014
• 8 Seita Scholars made the Dean’s List.
• 7 Seita Scholars graduated during the summer commencement ceremony.

August 2014
• Two campus coaches and two Seita Scholars represented the Seita Scholars Program at the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative: National Summit on Authentic Youth Engagement in Chicago, Illinois.
• Welcomed 41 new Seita Scholars to campus during WMU’s Welcome Week.

July 2014
• Held the fourth annual Summer Early Transition Week to welcome new Seita Scholars to campus.

September 2014
• Officially welcomed new and returning Seita Scholars to the academic year at the annual President’s Welcome.
• Launched the Graduation Preparation Seminar series for students who are preparing to graduate. The first seminar focused on transitioning and planning ahead for post-graduation.

October 2014
• Seita Scholars Program hosted an event to bring together Seita Scholars and their career mentors, as well as Seita Scholars and mentors looking to work together, in an event at Pinz Bowling Alley.
• The Seita Scholars Parents’ Future group held the first Halloween event for the children of Seita Scholars and staff.
• Seita Scholars gathered in a student organized trip to Gull Meadow Farms to celebrate fall.
• Two campus coaches and a Seita Scholar presented at the Michigan College Personnel Association’s regional conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan.
• Seita Scholars PRIDE held a movie screening and discussion of Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case That Made History, focusing on violence against the LGBTQA community.
• Chris Harris presented at the second annual Anishnaabeg Child and Family Services Foster Care Banquet.

November 2014
• The Seita Scholars Program hosted career mentor and mentee film screening at the Alamo Drafthouse.
• The Seita Scholars Program hosted a pre-Thanksgiving Dinner, and Seita Scholars were invited to spend the holiday with the Seita Scholars Program Director and his family.
• Lady Butterflies, Engaging Men and Seita Scholars PRIDE hosted an event called "Relationship Talks" to discuss healthy relationships.
• A campus coach and Seita Scholar presented at an MYOI conference in Big Bay, Michigan.
• Launched the first annual winter coat and boot drive.
• Paul and Libby Seaver endowment was established.

25% Male
75% Female

2014-15 Cohort Gender Profile
2014-15 Year in Review

December 2014

- 27 Seita Scholars made the Dean’s List
- 7 Seita Scholars graduated in the December commencement, bringing the total number of program graduates up to 52.
- The Elegance Dinner was sponsored by Lady Butterflies, Engaging Men, and Seita Scholars PRIDE. This formal event included a guest speaker, Walter Malone, to talk about relationships. Two Seita Scholars also provided their musical talents.

January 2015

- 138 Seita Scholars returned to campus for the Spring semester.
- A town hall meeting was held as a feedback mechanism for Seita Scholars to voice their opinions.
- The Kalamazoo Community Foundation sponsored staff and student attendance to the Catalyst University leadership event.

February 2015

- Lady Butterflies hosted their first potluck, where the ladies cooked and shared recipes. There was also a demonstration by one member who presented their dish with step by step instructions.

March 2015

- Chris Harris presented with a Seita Scholar and Western Michigan University’s Residence Life Program at National Association of Student Personnel Administrators in New Orleans.
- A campus coach co-presented with Fostering Success Michigan at the Kalamazoo Wraps Conference.

April 2015

- In conjunction with Foster Care Awareness Month, the five Seita Scholar Identity Groups hosted a talent show to kick off the month long celebration.
- 18 Seita Scholars made the Dean’s List.
- 11 Seita Scholars graduated in the Spring commencement bringing the total number of program graduates up to 63.

May 2015

- The Seita Scholars Program and the Center for Fostering Success hosted a series of events in honor of Foster Care Awareness Month, including a film screening and community dine outs.
- Chris Harris and a Seita Scholar presented at Louisiana State University on the Seita Scholars Program.
- University of Michigan Blavin Scholars visited the Seita Scholars Program.
- Chris Harris and Seita Scholars presented at the State Court Administration Office.

OLIVIA

WMU Start Date: Fall 2011
Major: Early Childhood Education
Minor: Integrated Science & Mathematics

Career Goals:
My career goals are to go back home and teach for a few years in the Detroit Public Schools district; which is where I attended school most of my life. Another goal is to eventually open up my own day care/ pre-K/ summer camp for youth ages 1-13.

WMU Favorites:
My favorite thing about WMU is the beautiful landscaping. I love to sit out on campus and study or have lunch and just enjoy the scenery.

The Seita Scholars Program Means: This program means more to me than I can really explain. It goes way beyond the financial support. This program and the individuals in it have given me a family; I say this and really mean it. The coaches are always there when we need them and even the director, Chris, goes above and beyond for us. On numerous occasions he has opened his home to us & always made me feel more than welcomed. My campus coach is like a friend; no matter what it was he has been there; this program has linked me with students I can relate to. If it were not for this program I would most likely feel alone at Western.

To Program Supporters:
To the supporters, you all are a blessing in more ways than one. Without you this program wouldn’t be; which means I most likely wouldn’t have the support I have now. It is just really wonderful knowing that someone that I don’t know is willing to provide the funds needed for me to be successful; that alone motivates me to not give up and always do my best. Thank you!
**Seita Scholars Performance**

Research has shown that foster youth are not only less likely to enroll in college but they are also less likely to graduate with a college degree in 6 years. Only 2-4 percent of foster youth are expected to graduate college, compared to 24% of their non-foster care peers in the general population. The table below compares Seita Scholars who are First Time in Any College (FTIAC) to other FTIAC freshman at WMU in the same semester. The table shows that Seita Scholars are less academically prepared for college, and this academic achievement gap persists in the first semester of colleges, as evidenced by lower Fall GPAs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2012 (Cohort= 48)</th>
<th>Fall 2013 (Cohort= 43)</th>
<th>Fall 2014 (Cohort= 41)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seita FTIAC Count</td>
<td>Seita FTIAC Count</td>
<td>Seita FTIAC Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average ACT</td>
<td>34 18.76</td>
<td>31 18.32</td>
<td>33 18.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School GPA</td>
<td>35 3.09</td>
<td>31 3.15</td>
<td>30 3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Semester</td>
<td>37 2.39</td>
<td>32 2.51</td>
<td>33 2.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Seita FTIAC Count</th>
<th>Seita FTIAC Count</th>
<th>Seita FTIAC Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>22 2.51</td>
<td>14 2.67</td>
<td>12 2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>10 2.41</td>
<td>11 2.49</td>
<td>14 2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5 1.68</td>
<td>7 2.18</td>
<td>7 3.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Program Supports**

The Seita Scholars Program is designed to address the academic gaps that many youth who experienced foster care encounter, which lead to the initial achievement gaps demonstrated in the data above. Among these program supports are:

- Full tuition scholarships to undergraduate students who experienced foster care and are attending Western Michigan University
- 7 Campus Coaches (24 hour on call support, meeting student needs at locations and times that are convenient to the student)
- Access to additional financial supports for youth who experienced foster care (e.g. the Education and Training Voucher, Michigan Education Trust Fostering Futures scholarships, Youth in Transition funds, and more)
- Support with other systems (e.g., courts, human services, Medicaid, public assistance)
- Student care packages (Welcome Week, Exam Week, Campus Breaks)
- Graduation preparation assistance (Graduation Preparation Seminars)
- Year-round campus housing
- Financial aid and financial planning assistance
- Work study, employee skill development
- Academic assessment, support and monitoring
- Campus engagement and social connections
- Cultural and personal identity development
- Leadership development
- Career mentoring
**Student Outcomes**

The Seita Scholars program is a learner-centered, theory-based, and data-driven program. A sample of fall semester student outcomes for all seven cohorts of students who entered Western Michigan University as first-time college students is presented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent enrolled through to end of Fall semester</th>
<th>FTIAC Average</th>
<th>2008-09 N=51</th>
<th>2009-10 N=47</th>
<th>2010-11 N=57</th>
<th>2011-12 N=57</th>
<th>2012-13 N=47</th>
<th>2013-14 N=43</th>
<th>2014-15 N=41</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>99</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Percent withdrawing from one or more courses during the Fall semester | 16 | 42 | 52 | 38 | 33 | 19 | 16 | 15 |

| Percent with Fall GPA at 2.0 or higher | 82 | 38 | 73 | 60 | 53 | 65 | 75 | 64 |

| Percent with Fall GPA at 3.5 or higher | 28 | 0  | 18 | 13 | 9  | 16 | 6  | 4  |

| Percent who persisted from Fall to Spring semester | 92 | 83 | 91 | 94 | 91 | 89 | 94 | 94 |

| Percent who returned to WMU in Fall of second year (retention) | 75 | 46 | 85 | 70 | 69 | 68 | 84 | -  |

**Persistence to Graduation**

To date, the Seita Scholars Program has 63 graduates of Western Michigan University, with 1 additional Seita Scholar graduating from another institution. This brings the graduation rate of Seita Scholars far above the national average for youth who have experienced foster care.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seita Scholar Cohort</th>
<th>On Track to Graduate Spring 2013</th>
<th>On Track to Graduate Fall 2013</th>
<th>On Track to Graduate Spring 2014</th>
<th>On Track to Graduate Fall 2014</th>
<th>On Track to Graduate Spring 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Terence

WMU Start Date: Fall 2011
Expected Graduation: Spring 2016
Major: Communications
Minor: Drug Addictions

Career Goals:
I just want to help as many people as I can. I want to come back to school and get my master’s degree and possibly become a medical social worker.

WMU Favorites:
I have a chance to interact with people I would have never met if I never came here.

The Seita Scholars Program Means:
An opportunity to better myself and experience life in a new way.

To Program Supporters:
I am forever grateful for the opportunity that you are letting me have to change my life for the better.

Did you know that the 2014-15 Cohort of Seita Scholars are pursuing over 16 different majors in the sciences, arts, aviation, education and professional degree programs at WMU?
Community Partners

- Community Mental Health
- Community Volunteers
- Foster Care Youth Boards
- Lutheran Social Services (Educational Training Voucher)
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

2014–15 Major Support

- AT&T
- Guido A. and Elizabeth H. Binda Foundation
- Kalamazoo Community Foundation
- Michigan Education Trust (MET)
- Paul & Bonnie MacGrayne
- Pete & Libby Seaver
- Private & Individual Donors
- Speckard-Knight Charitable Foundation
- State of Michigan
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation