Letter from Director

In 2007, the Seita Scholars Program at Western Michigan University was a small idea with tremendous potential. As I reflect on the hard work and dedication over the past seven years, I write with pride about the accomplishments and strides the program has taken this past year. As this year comes to an end, none of these achievements would have been attainable without the help of our donors, mentors, volunteers, and campus and community partners. Thank you for helping to transform the lives of our Seita Scholars.

This year, we saw 12 Seita Scholars walk across the stage and transition from college students to university educated adults by receiving their diplomas. This brings the total number of graduates coming from the Seita Scholars Program to 37 as of spring 2014, with more preparing to graduate during the summer months. As we watched these 12 scholars leave the program and start an exciting new chapter in their lives, we also welcomed a new cohort of 42 students to campus in the fall of 2013. This growth allowed the Seita Scholars Program to support 160 students for the second consecutive year.

As the Seita Scholars Program continues to develop, we were proud to introduce two new campus coaches to help better support the needs of our students. The increase in coaching staff creates the opportunity for more one-on-one interactions, improving efficiency and timely support for students.

Entering the spring term, the Seita Scholars Program was recognized by the Center for the Study of Social Policy Youth Thrive Exemplary Program. This program identified the top 15 initiatives across the country making a critical difference in the lives of foster care youth or those involved with child welfare systems. Students were a large part of these conferences, speaking on their experiences within the program, its opportunities and benefits.

A highlight of 2013 was taking 15 Seita Scholars to visit Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, MD; and Philadelphia, PA. On this trip, the students held meetings with staff from the White House, the House Ways and Means Committee, Congressional Research and the office of U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow. They served on a discussion panel at the first Philadelphia regional conference bridging local foster care and higher educational institutions looking to implement programs similar to WMU Seita Scholars.

I look forward to another year of exciting new accomplishments and successes that will help us progress and achieve the goals of the Seita Scholars Program. Thank you again for the work each of you have done to make this a wonderful year!

William C. Harris,
Director
Goal of the Seita Scholars Program

The program’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. 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. 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 have aged out of 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.

Key program support

- Seven campus coaches (24-hour on-call support, meeting student needs at locations and times that are convenient to the student). Coaches are trained in the Fostering Success Coaching Model
- Student care packages (Welcome Week, exam week, campus breaks)
- 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
- Healthy living, physical and mental health care
- Support with other systems (e.g., courts, human services, Medicaid, public assistance)

Stacy S.

**WMU start date:** 2013

**Major:** Occupational Therapy

**Minor:** Undecided

**Career goals:**

My career goal is to one day be a successful OT working in either a hospital or maybe even have my own practice.

**WMU favorites:**

What I enjoy the most at WMU is spending time with the friends that I have made on campus and always checking out all the different events that go on around campus.

**The Seita Scholars Program means:**

The Seita Scholars Program means a lot to me. It has given me the opportunity to attend a wonderful university, that I otherwise would not be able to financially afford if it was not for this scholarship.

**To program supporters:**

I would really like to thank everyone who has supported our program. It means absolutely everything to me and all the scholars to have such an amazing opportunity and to have those who support us not only financially, but in every other way possible. And for that, I am truly grateful.
Seita Scholar demographics

Since fall 2008, the Seita Scholars Program at Western Michigan University has enrolled 296 students from foster care. The Seita Scholar student group is a diverse group of individuals who have a wide range of college and career interests. Demographic characteristics of the total incoming student group (since 2008) are shown below.

- **Home counties**
  42 counties in Michigan, one county in Indiana and one in Texas

- **Gender**
  59.5 percent female, 40.5 percent male

- **Race**
  46.3 percent black or African-American, 40.9 percent white non-Hispanic, 12.8 percent other

- **Age**
  18 to 25 years old

- **Majors**
  Over 39 different majors in science, arts, aviation, education and professional degrees

- **Status upon acceptance**
  74.7 percent first-time college students, 22.3 percent transfer students

Student growth

The Seita Scholars Program continues to grow and improve 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 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. The program grew to 141 students in fall 2011, and that was the first year that all eligible students were not enrolled in the program due to funding limitations. In fall 2012, the program welcomed 47 new Seita Scholars and grew to 160 students, and in the fall of 2013, 42 more students were newly welcomed into the Seita Scholars Program. To support Seita Scholars, WMU offers $1.6 million in tuition scholarships.
Seita Scholars performance compared to other first-time freshman students at WMU

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 six years. Only 2 to 4 percent* of foster youth are expected to graduate college, compared to 24 percent of their non-foster care peers in the general population. The table below compares Seita Scholars who are First Time in Any College to other FTIAC freshman at WMU in the same semester. The table below shows that Seita Scholars are less prepared academically for college, and this academic achievement gap persists in the first semester of college, as evidenced by lower fall GPAs.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2011 (Cohort=57)</th>
<th>Fall 2012 (Cohort=48)</th>
<th>Fall 2013 (Cohort=43)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>Seita F/FTIAC Count</td>
<td>FTIAC</td>
<td>Seita F/FTIAC Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3,132</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average ACT</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>18.82</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School GPA</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Semester Fall GPA</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All percentages are based on original cohort number.

Entering spring semester, our first cohort was on a 38 percent WMU graduation rate, while 30 percent had received their degree, exceeding expected graduation rates for youth who experienced foster care. See the table below for current information on the persistence to graduation rates of all Seita Scholar cohorts.

Third-semester retention rates show that Seita Scholars are consistently exceeding historical graduation rates for youth who experienced foster. The program’s retention rate increased considerably over the past 4 years versus the first cohort, and is expected to remain about 70 percent for fall 2014.
Student outcomes

The Seita Scholars program is a student-centered, theory-based, and data-driven program. A sample of fall semester student outcomes for all six cohorts of students is presented below.

It is worth noting that annual second year retention rates for Seita Scholars are nearly equal to those of WMU students who have not experienced foster care.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008-09 N=51</th>
<th>2009-10 N=47</th>
<th>2010-11 N=54</th>
<th>2011-12 N=57</th>
<th>2012-13 N=47</th>
<th>2013-14 N=43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent enrolled through to end of Fall semester</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent withdrawing from one or more courses during the Fall semester</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent with Fall GPA at 2.0 or higher</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent with Fall GPA at 3.5 or higher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent who persisted from Fall to Spring semester</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent who returned to WMU in Fall of second year (retention)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Orlando B.

**WMU start date:** 2010  
**Major:** Accounting  
**Minor:** International Business

**Career goals:**  
My career goal is to build my own business.

**WMU favorites:**  
What I enjoy most about WMU is the emphasis on diversity and forward-thinking approach to education. We have a great president who strives for these, so I believe these are in our core values as Broncos.

**The Seita Scholars Program means:**  
The Seita Program was quite possibly my only way of completing college. Without the support this program gave me, I quite possibly would still be at home in the ghetto trying to make ends meet.

**To program supporters:**  
I am forever grateful for everything you have done to make this program work. It is because of you individuals that this is all possible. They say one person can’t change the world, but you have definitely changed my world.

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**WMU Seita Scholarship highlights**

- Full-tuition for WMU undergraduate degree
- Students reside on campus and participate in the Seita Scholars Program
- An Education and Training Voucher eligible student who maintains good academic standing, budgets wisely, and meets deadlines may graduate with a bachelor’s degree with no or low student loans
Milestones for the Seita Scholars Program 2013-14

May 2013
- Six Seita Scholars selected to participate in study abroad with scholarship support

June 2013
- One more Seita Scholar graduates from WMU, bringing the total number of graduates to 26

July 2013
- Hosted second annual Career Mentor Dinner to match potential mentors and scholars
  - Held third annual Seita Early Transition Week for incoming Seita Scholars

August 2013
- Welcomed 42 new students into the Seita Scholars Program
- Fifteen Seita Scholars travel to Washington D.C. on a leadership retreat to represent our program
- One more Seita Scholar graduates from WMU, bringing the total number of graduates to 27

September 2013
- Seita Scholars Pride group attended the “Out for Work” conference in Chicago, Illinois
- Held first Parents’ Futures Group meeting for Seita Scholars who are parents

October 2013
- Launched Engaging Men Initiative (EMI), a support group for men in the Seita Scholars Program
- One Seita Scholar attended and presented at the California College Pathways Blueprint Conference

November 2013
- Two Seita Scholars selected as Foster Youth 100
- Initiated new women’s group, Lady Butterflies for Seita Scholar women, and held first meeting in December

December 2013
- Nineteen Seita Scholars make the Dean’s List
- One more Seita Scholar graduates from WMU, bringing the total number of graduates to 28

January 2014
- The Center for Fostering Success announced as recipient for the Youth Thrive Award
- Eight Seita Scholars selected to participate in study abroad with scholarship support

February 2014
- Seita Scholars Pride group attend and present at the MBLGTACC conference in Kansas City, Missouri

March 2014
- One Seita Scholar is honored as a Presidential Scholar, the highest undergraduate honor

April 2014
- Eighteen Seita Scholars make the Dean’s List
- Nine more Seita Scholars graduate from WMU, bringing the total number of graduates to 37
- Two Seita Scholars selected as Foster Club All-Stars
The Seita Scholars Program means:
The Seita Scholars Program has helped me become the well-rounded person I am today. After four years, I have been a part of numerous events for the program, and each one has helped me to grow, learn, and expand my mind as I prepare to graduate from college. I am very thankful to be a part of this program because of the opportunities made available to me, the coaching and the friendships I have made.

Campus partners
Academic Advising Offices
AFSCME Local 1668 (service union)
Career and Student Employment Services
Center for Academic Success Programs
Children’s Trauma Assessment Center
Counseling Services
Dining Services
Disability Services for Students
Division of Multicultural Affairs
Division of Student Affairs
First-Year Experience
LBGT Student Services
Office of Admissions
Residence Life
Sindecuse Health Center
Student Financial Aid and Scholarships
WMU Department of Public Safety

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

Major support for the Seita Scholars Program is provided by:
Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan
Guido A. and Elizabeth H. Binda Foundation
Harold and Grace Upjohn Foundation
Kalamazoo Community Foundation
Paul and Bonnie MacGrayne
Speckhard-Knight Charitable Foundation
State of Michigan
W.K. Kellogg Foundation