



Guardian Scholars

University of California, Merced

Mission:

To provide a network of academic and personal support services that promote degree attainment for foster youth at UC Merced.

Vision:

To become the premier destination for foster youth seeking higher education throughout the Central Valley and California. We believe in the inherent strength, resilience, and ability of every foster youth to obtain a college degree and conquer their chosen field.

Qualifications:

In order to be considered for admission to the Guardian Scholars Program, students must be *actively enrolled* at UC Merced; or be accepted and have submitted their *Statement of Intent to Register* (SIR); **AND** meet at least **ONE** of the following requirements:

- Must have been in *verified, court-ordered, foster care, legal guardianship, or kinship care* on their 18th birthday.
 - Must currently be in foster care and receiving AB-12 funding.
 - Must be Chafee grant eligible.
 - Must be ILSP eligible.
- ***Note:** *if you are not sure whether you qualify under any of these guidelines, please consult with your court-appointed social worker, ILSP worker, attorney, or immediate care provider. Generally, adoption cases or short-term placements (under 6 months), or placements that ended more than 2 years prior to the student's 18th birthday will not be considered.*

Documentation:

Although each county varies in their foster care delivery, all county and state child welfare agencies have access to CWS/CMS, a state-wide database that informs social workers and supervisors whether or not a youth was in care at any point in their life, as well as the dates in which they were in care. In most cases, you would ask your most recent social worker or your Independent Living Skills (ILSP) Coordinator to generate what is commonly referred to as a “*Letter of Dependency*”. This letter should include a few key pieces of information:

- Your full name and date of birth.
- Your assigned CWS-CMS case number.
- The beginning and end dates for which you were in care.
- The county in which your foster care case was opened.
- The type of care you were in: (foster care, legal guardianship, kinship care, probation etc.).
- Contact information for your social worker and/or ILSP case worker.

Student Requirements:

- Attend and participate in the Guardian Scholars Orientation.
- Meet with the GS Coordinator or GS Advisor twice per semester.
- Keep GS staff up to date with any changes in contact information and /or residency.
- Keep GS staff informed of any impediments to your personal well-being or academic success as soon as they occur.
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress.
- Agree to GS midterm progress reports each semester.
- Agree to GS Learning Contract if satisfactory academic progress is not made.
- Attend at least one GS event per semester.
- Assist your fellow Guardian Scholars.
- Represent the program at official functions when able to do so.
- Follow all university, residence hall, and community rules and laws.

Programs and Services:

- **Orientation and Evaluation** – All Guardian Scholars will take part in a comprehensive orientation that will cover all programs and services. Students will also complete the Ansell-Casey Life-Skills Assessment so that Guardian Scholars staff may develop the best plan of action to guarantee your success.
- **Priority Registration** – Guardian Scholars are able to register for classes prior to the general student population.
- **Priority Year-Round Housing** – Guardian Scholars who have completed their housing applications on time as well as their payments or fee deferments on time are guaranteed a space in the residence halls. Our Extended Stay Program also allows Guardian Scholars to remain in the residence halls during winter and spring breaks.
- **Tutoring** – Free tutoring services are available to Guardian Scholars through the Bright Success Center.
- **Textbooks** – Guardian Scholars who remain in good academic standing will be eligible for a small textbook stipend each semester. At the end of the semester students must return the textbooks to the Guardian Scholars Program for use by other students. Students who do not meet satisfactory academic process are still eligible to borrow textbooks from our lending library.
- **Psychological Counseling** – Free individual and group counseling is available to Guardian Scholars through the Counseling & Psychological Services office.
- **Mentoring** – Mentoring is an essential part of the Guardian Scholars Program. You will be provided a peer mentor upon entrance into the program with the expectation that you assume the role of a peer mentor by your 3rd year. We believe that each one must teach one.
- **Explore the Valley** – Each semester Guardian Scholars will have the opportunity to attend a special event that exposes them to one of the Valley's many natural, educational, historic, and cultural attractions.
- **Guardian Scholars Club** – A member-sponsored and administered club open to all UCM students with the goal of furthering the visibility of foster youth in higher education.
- **Friday Night Fun** – A once-a-month opportunity for Guardian Scholars to connect with local in-care youth. The goal of these get-togethers is to encourage and inspire the next generation of foster youth to pursue higher education.

- **Workshops** – A variety of academic and life-skills courses are offered each semester. These classes are designed to assist students with becoming more confident, independent, and prepared for college and beyond.
- **Resource Guide** – Each student is provided with a physical and digital copy of our resource guide that lists useful information on everything from education and employment to health care and housing.
- **Liaison Services** – Guardian Scholars staff will ensure that your academic needs are met with minimal difficulty by working closely with key departments and officials on campus.
- **Academic Advising** – Enrolling in the proper classes in the correct order can be difficult to figure out. All Guardian Scholars will receive one-on-one academic advising to ensure that they are on the track to success.
- **Life-Skills Counseling** – Transitioning from high school to college can be quite stressful on top of transitioning into adulthood and independence. Guardian Scholars staff is available to provide advice and perspective on the issues many of us face in our daily lives.
- **Emergency Financial Assistance** – Under certain circumstances, Guardian Scholars may be eligible for a small stipend to cover necessary expenses that are not able to be covered through any other means. Please check with the Guardian Scholars Coordinator to determine whether or not you qualify.
- **Internship and Scholarship Opportunities** – As a Guardian Scholar, there are numerous opportunities for you to fund your education and gain valuable workplace experience. Opportunities will vary each term. Check with the Coordinator for the latest information.
- **California Youth Connection** – CYC is a state-wide, youth-operated, legislative advocacy group for foster youth. Over the years they have helped pass numerous laws that have positively impacted foster youth throughout California. Guardian Scholars are encouraged to attend and participate with our Merced chapter of CYC.
- **Merchandise** – Guardian Scholars will be provided with various GS merchandise throughout the year that help us to promote and raise awareness for the program. Specific items will vary from year to year.

Application:

Students who believe they may qualify for the Guardian Scholars Program should submit an application online at:

[www...](#)

Contact Information:

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