

# Dual Enrollment Student Profile: Iris

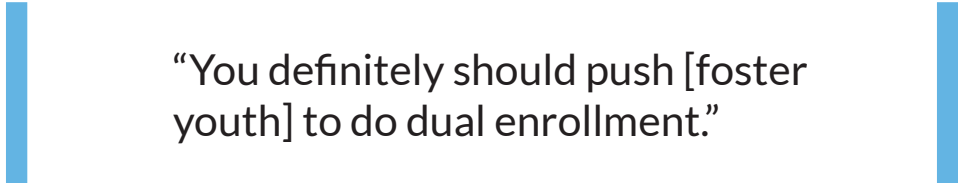


Iris is an 18 year old Riverside Community College (RCC) student who found her way to community college via dual enrollment. Iris is a foster youth who bounced around to a couple of different high schools, took her first dual enrollment class as a junior in high school and a second class her senior year where she met the RCC Guardian Scholars Foster Youth Specialist, Jeremy Johnson. Iris was encouraged to join the Guardian Scholars learning community at RCC when she graduated high school. That is where Iris has landed in her first year of college, making her way through a major in psychology and working as a Guardian Scholars peer mentor helping to connect foster youth to resources at the college and in the community.

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Foster youth go through many transitions moving from high school to college while they also often face relocating and adjusting to new living situations. Iris faced those same challenges in her junior and senior year of high school, but faced them with determination and focus to reach her goals and make the most of her life situation by leveraging and building a network of support. Iris reflects on the judgment she and other foster youth often face: “A lot of the time, foster youth is a negative thing but it doesn’t have to be negative. A lot of the time we can just change it into something more positive and use that. For me, I’m getting school paid for... my FAFSA helps me have a lot of benefits.” Iris still has to work on and off campus, but she sought out work and employers that respect her student schedule and allow her flexibility when she needs it.

Iris is directed and focused on majoring in psychology and building a career as a psychologist. She appreciates the community and support she receives at RCC in the Guardian Scholars program and wants to continue to serve as a peer mentor there helping other students like her.



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## To Foster Youth

Iris wants you to know:

“Just because we’re foster youth doesn’t mean we’re not capable ... some people consider that a disadvantage ... it doesn’t mean that’s our whole world.”

## To High Schools and Colleges

Iris has some ideas for how you can better support foster youth:

- Know the foster youth at the college and in your classrooms. Check in on them once in a while. Being seen and feeling like someone is looking out for them is important to feeling a sense of belonging.
- Don’t underestimate foster youth, but also understand that the foster care system “is a lot of trauma.” Foster youth may be dealing with changes in their living situation, managing court appearances, adjusting to a new high school with differing graduation requirements all while facing the prospect of adulthood and next steps. These necessary but often confusing processes can be stressful, but foster youth can and are persisting despite these obstacles. “You definitely should push [foster youth] to do dual enrollment. I think it is very beneficial. It’s free college courses and you finish faster.”