



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fairmont State University and KVC West Virginia Create Innovative Pathway to College for Youth in Foster Care

FAIRMONT, W.Va. (March 14, 2024) — Governor Jim Justice announced during a press conference today, that Fairmont State University, in partnership with KVC West Virginia, has created Middle College at Fairmont State University.

"Middle College at Fairmont State University exemplifies our commitment to providing every young person with the tools they need to succeed," Gov. Justice said. "By empowering youth in foster care to pursue higher education, we are investing in their future and the future of our state. This initiative embodies the spirit of collaboration and compassion that defines West Virginia. I commend Fairmont State University and KVC West Virginia for their vision and dedication to making Middle College a reality."

Middle College at Fairmont State University empowers youth ages 16-18 who have experienced foster care and is the only program of its kind in the nation. Participating students will earn their high school diploma and an associate degree simultaneously while supported by Fairmont State and KVC professionals. Middle College is now accepting referrals for the Fall 2024 semester.

"This innovative and important program is made possible through the vision and dedication of many people and organizations from around the state," said Fairmont State University Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dianna Phillips. "Governor Jim Justice provided the leadership and support that enabled us to begin this journey. Senate President Craig Blair saw the potential of Middle College and became an immediate champion. Additionally, House Speaker Roger Hanshaw has been a staunch advocate. I am incredibly grateful to the three of them for their leadership and advocacy. Middle College is a partnership that reflects the best of community care; leaders from the WV Department of Education, Higher Education Policy Commission, the Department of Human Services, and of course KVC have become stalwart champions."

Developed through a collaborative partnership between Fairmont State University and KVC West Virginia, Middle College transforms West Virginia's educational landscape and breaks down barriers to higher education. This program provides a college experience for high-school age students, and participants experience the same advanced academic programming, amenities, and vibrant campus life that the college-age population enjoys. Students reside on Fairmont State's cozy and secure campus seven days a week, year-round.

The concept of high school students enrolling in college classes has been around since the late 1960's. Middle College is unique because it focuses on this most deserving population-- youth ages 16-18 who have experienced foster care.

“Students that graduate from Middle College will be able to transfer into baccalaureate programs or enter the workforce,” said Phillips. “They will be prepared and well on their way to a successful future!”

“We believe that every young person, especially youth who have experienced foster care, deserves the chance to reach their full potential,” said KVC West Virginia President Brent Lemon. “Middle College at Fairmont State University offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for youth to achieve their educational dreams while receiving unwavering stability and support. KVC’s team of residence hall staff, case managers, therapists, and specialized supervisory staff ensure the safety, stability, and well-being of participating students.”

All tuition, fees, and campus living expenses are fully covered by federal and state sources. Additionally, KVC’s community-based support services and round-the-clock on-campus assistance are provided at no cost to participating students, creating a nurturing environment where students can excel.

“For nearly 160 years Fairmont State has committed itself to providing education that transforms people and communities,” Dr. Mike Davis, president of Fairmont State University, said. “Middle College continues this commitment. As a result of this innovative program, Fairmont State will provide transformational opportunities to a vulnerable, but deserving, population, and unleash the vast potential of these students.”

Middle College at Fairmont State University makes a lasting impact on the lives of youth who have experienced foster care, providing them with a unique opportunity to write their own stories and soar to new heights.

For more information or to refer a student, please visit www.fairmontstate.edu/middle-college/

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About Fairmont State University:

The 120-acre main campus of Fairmont State University sits on a hillside in Fairmont, West Virginia, the county seat of Marion County. The University turns opportunity, passion and hard work into excellence in a vibrant, close-knit campus community where students and teachers become your friends for life. Students enjoy the opportunities offered by a comprehensive state university combined with the personal attention and campus atmosphere expected from a small, private school.

About KVC West Virginia:

KVC West Virginia is a private, nonprofit organization and a leading child welfare agency and mental health treatment provider. With over 20 years of experience, KVC enriches and enhances the lives of children and families through trauma-informed services such as foster care, adoption, outpatient mental health treatment, in-home family preservation, and educational support services. KVC is accredited by The Joint Commission, widely recognized as the gold standard in healthcare. Learn more at kvcwv.org.