



Corinne Nilsen

I am honored to make remarks about inductees into the Bender of Twigs class of 2020 Ms. Corinne Nilsen. Ms. Corinne Nilsen is the Executive Director of a 3.5-million-dollar grant serving students in foster and adoptive care. Ms. Nilsen is a national, regional and local advocate for students.

She administers a Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant funded to serve 2500 students as a part of a statewide grant for the State of Kansas. The Governor of Kansas determines who can complete state grants. To-date, Wichita State University has been the only writer of the grant for over 14 years. The grant is competitive on a national bases and funded by the United State Department of Education. The staff work in privatized offices in Kansas.

Her highly qualified staff provide academic educational services for students from middle school to high school. These include tutorial support, financial aid for college, advising and career exploration, along with tours and special workshops. Nilsen works with staff to provide quality opportunities to school staff with staff development activities and opportunities. The statewide grant works with students in foster care, in over 900 schools. Staff not only work with the students, but also with parents, guardians or other family members. Participants in residential homes receive services during school hours. In addition, staff teach students in high school what to expect from an academic or financial aid advisor and provide referrals to resources such as TRIO programs, disability services and writing/math labs. Staff connect with students on a monthly basis. Students are encouraged to participate in rigorous classes, including, AP, IB Math classes.

The program awards students with scholarships to attend the college or postsecondary institution of their choice. Every effort is made to help students aging out of foster care to be successful and to continue their education. Staff make the best use of resources.

Nilsen is extensive in her research to ensure quality services are available to students and fundable proposals are developed. Ms. Nilsen has been at Wichita State University (WSU) for over 25 years. Her time at WSU has included serving as Assistant Director of Student Support Services and Director of Disability Support Services programs. She has also chaired numerous local and national workshops/committees and made presentations to the same. Ms. Nilsen's dedication is exemplary. All Office of Special Programs staff are honored to work with Nilsen and learn from her. Corinne Nilsen is a phenomenal and extraordinary individual and leader. Also, a wife to Eric and mother and grandmother.