



Florida Atlantic University scholars program helps first-generation students graduate debt-free



BOCA RATON, Fla. – First-generation college students face many unique challenges when trying to navigate their collegiate experience.

Florida Atlantic University is making that process much easier for some of them with its Kelly/Strul Emerging Scholars Program.

It provides financial, academic, and social support to first-generation college students.

When Dodlee Mosilme graduated from high school, he knew he wanted to go to college, but didn't know how to get there because no one in his family had done it before.

"It's confusing. You're lost. You don't know what to expect, right?" Mosilme said.

Then, he got a recommendation from a student at Florida Atlantic University to apply for the Kelly/Strul Emerging Scholars Program.

"I was inspired by the scholarship to go ahead and press submit when I realized the structure and community that the scholarship offered," Mosilme said.

Now going into its tenth year, the program awards selected scholars a four-year financial aid package including tuition, on-campus housing, books and a meal plan.

It's specifically for those like Mosilme - first-generation students who are eligible for the Pell grant and have a financial need.

"There's a lot more support that also follows the students. So that support comes from folks like myself and my team in the first-generation office. We're meeting with them one-on-one. And we also have a lot of campus partners that are connecting with them," Dr. Vanessa Kay Herrera, director of first-generation student success at FAU, said.

Students receive career planning advice, mentoring, and help landing internships, which turn into jobs post-grad.

"Sometimes it starts with those internships. I mentioned someone who's working with an engineering firm now, that really happened because of an internship she had while she was a student," Herrera said.

The program has 80 current scholars and 67 alumni. Mosilme will soon join them in May with a degree in biology and several job offers already lined up.

"It's beyond paying for your classes, housing, meals, right? It's also having that preparation, and that community of people that are pushing you to be, not only your best self during your college years, but your best self after and beyond," Mosilme said.

The deadline to apply for the Kelly/Strul Emerging Scholars Program scholarship is Feb. 27.



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Emerging Scholars**

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