

Randall Trice, BSW '19, MSW '2020  
Executive Director & Founder of Shoes4Grades

When Randall Trice began the assignment in his MSW class, *Fundraising, Grant Writing, and Fiscal Decision Making*, taught by Professor Donna Gallup, he was motivated to encourage and lift children in the foster system to become more than they think possible. The assignment...create a non-profit agency from scratch. And now [Shoes4Grades](#) has launched. Its mission: to improve students' grades by encouraging children to excel in school, to enjoy the learning experience and to become life-long learners.

The power of having a new pair of shoes is like no other. Shoes4Grades is using that motivation by providing shoes to students K-12 in the foster care system to motivate them to learn. He has received funding, and assembled and trained a team that will provide services, and shoes, to these at-risk youth in foster care. The program begins for children at age 12, providing mentorship to them until they have graduated high school. Foster youth have a lot of emotional challenges to deal with, which limit them and put them in a box. The sky is the limit when they have coping skills such as effectively communicating without being aggressive and problem solving. The program is in a three-year pilot stage and designed with one-on-one weekly mentoring and group meetings in an open forum setting. The group setting will be pivotal and something many may be shy with in the beginning, but the goal is to show that meeting new people is great, because the bigger the network they have, the better the odds are to succeed in life.

His own journey in the foster care system was the motivation. "There are many dilemmas people face, and if I can help an individual overcome at least one obstacle at any point in their life, the reward would not be the satisfaction of helping an individual, but rather the opportunity to do more." Randall's journey in the foster care system created many obstacles. He entered at nine years old and lived with seven other kids with an overwhelmed grandmother. He was burdened with the stigma that emanates from the label "foster," was bullied for wearing hand-me-down clothes and shoes, and cast off by older boys in the home. He struggled to find motivation to do well academically, but he knew he needed to think differently. He started to take school more seriously. He also chose to use sports as an escape and motivator to funnel his emotions and keep from getting in trouble. There he met coaches and mentors who came into his life. "It was something, in my eyes, that was ideal. I could emulate those people who had things in their lives I wanted to duplicate or live out myself."

Randall's purpose in life is to support those who do not have the necessary help at their disposal. He credits his preparation to the APU Department of Social Work MSW program for equipping him to realize this dream. Choosing the macro concentration was the best decision he has made, developing skills of money management, grant writing, and mapping out the agency plan in the class with Professor Gallup. Professor Maynard's organizational behavior course taught documentation for hiring people, developing policies, and writing a handbook. These skills are in his toolbox, and he acknowledges he would not have known where to start or how to get funding to run a successful business. He received all the tools he needed from his year (advanced standing program) in the MSW program and now he is literally applying them right after graduation and sharing them with the world.