

*Overview*

A first-of-its-kind partnership nationally, the Fox School has partnered with the U.S. Federal Court since 2017 to deliver experiential learning-based financial literacy through the Supervision to Aid Reentry (STAR) Program, a Federal Reentry Court program in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania for Philadelphia residents on supervised release. With members from U.S. Probation, U.S. District Court, Federal Defenders Office, U.S. Attorney’s Office, and the Fox School, the STAR team provides intensive supervision and resources to individuals returning home from federal prison, assisting with education, training, employment, and other needs. The Fox Financial Literacy Program recently partnered with two additional problem-solving federal courts: Relapse Prevention Court (RPC) and STRIDES (Strategies That Result In Developing Emotional Stability) Court.

The Fox Financial Literacy team helps participants develop skills in budgeting, credit building, and saving/banking, where Fox undergraduate students across majors provide individual counseling and deliver court presentations on topics that help participants improve their financial management abilities. In the last four years, Fox students have assisted dozens of participants in approximately 100+ court sessions, under the direct supervision of the Financial Literacy Program Coordinator.

Fox undergraduate students participate in the Financial Literacy Program by serving as financial literacy educators, where they attend bimonthly court sessions and pre-session team meetings.

During a typical session, students provide follow-up mentoring on specific topics (e.g., budgeting, building credit, interest rate mechanics) for individuals or small groups during the court session. STAR Program participants either request Fox assistance on a particular issue or are referred to Fox students by the STAR team to address specific inquiries. All court mentoring sessions are conducted at the Federal courthouse located at 601 Market St, Philadelphia, PA 19106.

The Administrative Office of the United States Courts filmed a short documentary about the STAR Program featuring the Fox Financial Literacy program that can be viewed here: [https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2020/03/11/court-eases-reentry-community-and-crime-free-](https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2020/03/11/court-eases-reentry-community-and-crime-free-life?utm_campaign=usc-news&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) [life?utm\_campaign=usc-news&utm\_medium=email&utm\_source=govdelivery](https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2020/03/11/court-eases-reentry-community-and-crime-free-life?utm_campaign=usc-news&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

*Supervision to Aid Reentry (STAR) Program Background*

The Supervision to Aid Reentry (STAR) Program (also known as Reentry Court) is a federal reentry court program in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania for Philadelphia residents on supervised release. The Program functions as a partnership between U.S. Probation, U.S. District Court, the Federal Defenders Office, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office. Together, the team provides intensive supervision and resources to individuals returning home from federal prison to Philadelphia, assisting with education, training, employment, and other needs. The participants are divided in two separate courts, where they attend bimonthly sessions in open court before a Judge and report on their progress. After participants successfully complete 52 weeks, they are eligible for a reduction of their supervised release period up to one year. The Program has been up and running for 10 years and has a high success rate.

*Relapse Prevention Court (RPC) Program Background*

The goal of the newly-formed Relapse Prevention Court is to maximize opportunities for long- term recovery from substance use and to facilitate successful completion of the participant’s term of supervised release. Similarly, the treatment and structure in Mental Health Court allows individuals to become stabilized, prevents them from reoffending, and encourages them to live law-abiding lives. While working to maintain their well-being and recovery, individuals in Relapse Prevention Court must also battle the typical reentry challenges.

*STRIDES (Strategies That Result In Developing Emotional Stability) Program Background*

The STRIDES Program in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania is designed to address the distinctive needs of individuals diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness as well as those with co- occurring symptoms of mental illness and substance abuse where mental health is the primary diagnosis. The goal of STRIDES is to maximize opportunities for long-term mental health stability with an emphasis of treating, coaching, and building pro-social supports for the participants so that they can best benefit from effective symptom management through treatment while successfully meeting the conditions of their pretrial release or completing the term of post-conviction supervision. Additionally, the program seeks to prevent recidivism, promote public safety, and assist participants with the many social, familial, and logistical issues they face so that they can be better prepared to address their needs during supervision and beyond the conclusion of that term. Through their involvement in STRIDES, the participants will gain greater sustainable independence and healthy decision-making skills to aid in the process of their life-long mental health recovery.

The STAR, RPC and STRIDES Teams provides resources such as housing, education, pro bono legal assistance, employment/training opportunities, and public benefits screening. The teams meet immediately before the court sessions to discuss each participant’s progress and to develop plans to help the participants succeed. They consider a wide range of issues, from program policy to potential sanctions, and uniformly achieve consensus on all issues. This cooperative spirit has been the hallmark of the reentry program since its planning stages and is a prime reason for its success.

The STAR, RPC, and STRIDES Programs have partnered with the Fox School of Business to provide basic financial literacy to STAR, RPC, and STRIDES participants during reentry court sessions, covering areas such as budgeting, credit building, credit risks, and savings/banking. We are seeking students to participate in the STAR, RPC and STRIDES Programs by serving as financial literacy educators.

**Students who volunteer for this program will need to be available either on Tuesday mornings from 9am-11am or Wednesday afternoons from 3pm-5pm to attend the bimonthly court sessions and pre-session team meetings.**

During a typical session, students would provide a brief overview presentation (10-15 minutes) to all Program participants in the Tuesday morning (Judge Restrepo) and/or Wednesday afternoon (Judge Reid) court meetings. After this presentation, students would provide follow- up mentoring on specific topics (e.g., budgeting) for individuals or small groups during the session. Program participants would either request assistance on a particular issue or be referred to the students by the reentry team to address specific inquiries. All mentoring sessions will be conducted at the federal courthouse [(http://www.paed.uscourts.gov/)](http://www.paed.uscourts.gov/), located at 601 Market St, Philadelphia, PA 19106.

Benefits for students

*Course Credit*

Students will register for zero or one-credit in the Fall and zero or one-credit in the Spring terms through Legal Studies 3582 (Independent Study), with Dr. Jeffrey Boles as the instructor.

*Networking*

Students will have the unique opportunity to volunteer as part of the STAR, RPC, and STRIDES teams alongside federal judges, court officers, other professionals involved in the criminal justice system, in addition to banking executives who also volunteer as STAR, RPC, and STRIDES team members. The experience should present robust networking opportunities for students involved in the program.

*Developing Leadership Abilities and Communication Skills*

Students will be giving presentations, leading discussions and acting as a resource on a variety of financial topics. Such activities, along with the leadership role that the position entails, provide students with opportunities to build upon their communication skills and leadership abilities.

*Career Development and Community Engagement*

Participating in the STAR, RPC, and STRIDES Programs will provide those interested in a career in law, finance, criminal justice and/or education with a window into these worlds. Thinking of going to law school or starting a career in finance? The STAR, RPC, and STRIDES Programs provide an opportunity to explore these interests and learn new areas. They also convey to prospective employers that through this community engagement activity, students are cultivating their skills and exploring career paths.

Students interested in participating on the STAR team for the 2024-2025 academic year are invited to attend an optional information session on Tuesday, April 23, 2024 at 5pm via Zoom <https://temple.zoom.us/j/93465644484>