First-Generation Students

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First-Generation Students Defined

Students who represent the first in their family to attend college (Harlow & Bowman, 2016).

Students whose parents have no college education (Bui & Rush, 2016).

Students whose neither parents or guardians completed a baccalaureate degree (Ishitani, 2016).
A WALK IN MY SHOES...
About First-Generation Students

First-generation students represent nearly one-third of the national undergraduate population (Department of Labor, 2008).

Approximately 43% of first year college students identify themselves as first-generation (Chen & Carroll, 2005).

Parents of first-generation students tend to come from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Bui & Rush, 2016).

First-generation students are more likely to be minorities, financially dependent, rely on financial aid, and more likely to work 40+ hours a week (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2012).
First Generation and Low Income

Seventy-one percent of students starting at four-year campuses who are neither first-generation nor low-income earned a bachelor’s degree in six years, the Pell Institute in Washington, D.C., reported in 2011, using the most current data available.

The share dropped to 51 percent for first-generation students and even lower — 32 percent — for first-generation students who also are low-income.

For more information
College graduation rates

Of students who initially enrolled in a four-year institution, those who were first-generation and low-income had the lowest six-year graduation rates.

**NOT LOW-INCOME, NOT FIRST-GENERATION**
- 9.7% Still enrolled
- 71.2% Attained bachelor's degree
- 15.8% Dropped out
- 3.3% Attained associate's degree or other credentials

**FIRST-GENERATION, NOT LOW-INCOME**
- 13.3% Still enrolled
- 51% Attained bachelor's degree
- 26.7% Dropped out
- 9% Attained associate's degree or other credentials

**LOW-INCOME, NOT FIRST-GENERATION**
- 12.8% Still enrolled
- 47.8% Attained bachelor's degree
- 32.7% Dropped out
- 6.6% Attained associate's degree or other credentials

**LOW-INCOME, FIRST-GENERATION**
- 18% Still enrolled
- 31.6% Attained bachelor's degree
- 40.4% Dropped out
- 10% Attained associate's degree or other credentials

Note: Low-income defined to mean a student's family income of $25,000 or less. First-generation is considered to be students from families in which neither parent received a bachelor's degree or higher.

Source: Pell Institute
Important Statistics of First-Generation Students

Less likely to enroll and graduate from college (Astin & Oseguera, 2005; Syner, Tan, & Hoffman, 2004)

More likely to drop out of college (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Mehta et al., 2011)

Lack academic preparation, which can impact career goals (Harlow & Bowman, 2016)

High likelihood remedial coursework required (Engle & Tinto, 2008)
Important Statistics of First-Generation Students

Perceive barriers to success (Davies & Casey, 1999; Jehangir, 2010; Mehta, Newbold, & O’Rourke, 2011)

Lack career information and skills (Harlow & Bowman, 2016)

First-generation students report the lowest level of career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) and career maturity (Harlow & Bowman, 2016).

Feel a lack of support from faculty or mentors (Dennis et al, 2005; Owen et al., 2010)
High Impact Practices - Relationships and Mentoring

**Relationships**

Relationships student build (or not) with faculty impact persistence (Tinto, 1990).

Student-faculty relationships improve the odds of persistence (Longwell-Grice, 2008).

**Mentors/Peer Relationships**

The opportunity and ability for first-generation students to work through issues with mentors and peers is critical for navigating higher education (Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins, & Serrata, 2016)
High Impact Practices - Parents’ Role

Parents serve as a consistent and continuous resource for children

Parents and home environment they provide affect their children’s academic achievement (Davis-Kean, 2005)

Parental involvement:
- Participate in school activities and programs
- Communicate with child about school
- Restrictions at home that support learning
- Educational expectations for child

(Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins, & Serrata, 2016)
Parents’ Role Continued

Emotional Support - Parents need to exhibit pride in students but not excessive pressure

Parental encouragement of students to take algebra in eighth grade contributed to link between math curriculum and college enrollment (Bui & Rush, 2016)

Important Note:

Managing family relationships can be challenging for students as they are evolving in their identity as a college student while at the same time managing their role with family (Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins, Serrata, 2016).
High Impact Practices - Schools’ Roles

High academic expectations of students (Bui & Rush, 2016)

Expect students to go to college

Students attributed success to teachers who expected all students to go to college (Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins, & Serrata, 2016)

Encourage parent involvement (Bui & Rush, 2016)

Mentor students

Career preparation

Provide support

First-generation students need interventions earlier than high school
Hidden Curriculum

These students often are unaware of what’s known as the “hidden curriculum”—the mix of bureaucratic know-how and sound study skills that can make or break a student’s first year in college.

Researchers are learning much more about first-generation students these days, showing that a combination of simple nudges and regular check-ins from mentors can go a long way toward making such students feel confident that they can navigate the strange waters of college academics.

Hidden Curriculum--Financial Aid

Fact: School is expensive.

It’s a rare student who can afford higher education with the money they already have in their bank account. At least 66 percent of students rely on financial aid in the form of scholarships, grants, loans, or work-study programs to help pay for school.

It’s important to remember that student loans must be paid back when school is over (whether or not a degree is completed). Scholarships and grants do not need to be paid back.

Students need help with how to fill out FAFSA
GRANTS
Need based money without repayment

SCHOLARSHIPS
Merit or performance based money without repayment

WORK STUDY
Need based campus job, earnings get paid directly to student as wages

FEDERAL LOANS
Fixed low interest rate money that has to be repaid
Hidden Curriculum--Office Hours

First-generation students are often less likely than peers to ask for help.

Easy solution--figure out office hours of instructor and counselor, and go talk to them. They are there to help.
Hidden Curriculum--Find a mentor

Help students know how to find other students or instructors on campus who come from a similar background.

Let them know they can ask how these individuals dealt with the pressure to fit in socially or financially.

https://www.ameritech.edu/blog/first-generation-student-survival-guide/
Suggestions for Retention of FGS

Make the Systems Apparent

FGC students, as well as many of their later-generation peers, need to be aware of the structure of the university, available programs, and sources of support. Unspoken rules of higher education also need to be made apparent. For example, students may benefit from explicit encouragement to seek help from professors and tips on finding jobs that allow studying. Face-to-face, paper, and technology-based resources should all be considered.

Student Mentoring

A peer or faculty mentoring program would allow universities to offer FGC students individualized assistance, support, and advocacy. Mentors might be trained to address self-efficacy and stress management. Mentors do spring up naturally through extracurricular and scholastic interactions, but the option of a mentoring program may benefit students who need a guiding hand in the beginning and may help reduce initial isolation.
Suggestions for Retention of FGS

The Importance of Faculty

Faculty members are often in a unique position to support students. Universities might consider training faculty to be sensitive to issues critical to FGS student retention. Personalized attention from faculty can make the difference between retention and attrition.

Recognize the Positive Contribution of FGS Status to Identity

FGS status is often associated with the risk of dropping out of college. However, FGS status can be a source of resiliency and pride. Universities can encourage pride and create role models by noting FGS status when publishing the accomplishments of alumni, faculty, and staff. Universities may also consider how their mission and culture connect to students’ identity and create a sense of belonging for FGS students.
Suggestions for Retention of FGS

Respect and Include Families

Although FGC students’ families have had little contact with universities, they influence their students’ success. FGC families may not contribute in traditional ways (e.g., paying tuition, traveling to parents’ weekend, advising on majors and collegiate life). However, families can serve as important motivators (Gofen, 2009), emotional supporters, and role models. Universities can ensure FGC families feel welcome and have positive avenues of communication with the university. This could bolster an important source of support and lessen potential identity dissonance.

https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/2011/02/resiliency-among-first-generation-students/
Supporting First-Gen Students

Help establish a regular college presence on high school campuses.

Set up college visits. First generation students benefit from personal experience of asking face-to-face questions.

Look for summer bridge programs.

Some universities offer programs that give students a preview of the college experience.
Supporting First-Gen Students

Exam provider ACT now gives colleges free access to information about underserved high school seniors who opt in to be contacted by the institutions.

Look for universities that offer a first-gen living learning community.

The living spaces and programming are intended to help foster supportive relationships among students and allow for ongoing guidance from faculty.

Also encourage students to find organizations and clubs that are geared for first-gen students.
Angelo State University (ASU) First-Gen Living Learning Community

Students self-select (if a student identifies they are first-generation they are eligible for living learning community - no verification required)

First generation students housed in one dorm on ASU campus (Carr Hall for 2017-2018)

Residence life, student services, and academic programming geared for first-generation students

Curriculum & Instruction faculty within the College of Education partner with student services to mentor students, build relationships, and transition first generation students into higher education environment

Family-style meals are shared periodically with first-generation students, mentors, and other key members identified throughout academic year to help first-generation students
Supporting First-Gen Students

ACT Fee Waiver

During 2017-18, ACT will again make fee waivers available for economically disadvantaged high school juniors and seniors.

ACT waivers cover the registration fee for either the ACT (no writing) or the ACT with writing. This includes one report to the high school and up to four reports to four college choices.

Eligible students may use a MAXIMUM of two fee waivers.

Students who qualify for the fee waiver also obtain access to the ACT Kaplan Online Prep.

https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/FeeWaiver.pdf
Supporting First-Gen Students

SAT Fee Waiver Eligibility Requirements

You’re enrolled in or eligible to participate in the federal National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

Your annual family income falls within the Income Eligibility Guidelines set by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (provided below).

You’re enrolled in a federal, state, or local program that aids students from low-income families (e.g., Federal TRIO programs such as Upward Bound).

Your family receives public assistance.

You live in federally subsidized public housing, are in a foster home, or are homeless.
Supporting First-Gen Students

SAT Fee Waivers

Registration fee for SAT or SAT subject tests.

Four score reports

Question-and-Answer Service (QAS) or Student Answer Service (SAS), which give more information about the types of test questions and how the student answered them.

Up to four college application fee waivers

Supporting First-Gen Students

SAT School Day

Testing on a school day doesn’t interfere with weekend work or family obligations.

More students are able to show up and take the SAT when it’s offered in their school.

Stress is lower because students test in familiar location with staff they know.

Students who have been struggling academically are provided with another opportunity to demonstrate their college readiness to universities.

Students who take the SAT can use College Board programs that support college access, including application fee waivers and four free score sends.

Students can access Official SAT Practice and Khan Academy and career planning resources at Roadtrip Nation.
Supporting First-Gen Students

Scholarship opportunities:

Institutional

The Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF) and Walmart Foundation are proud to offer financial assistance to outstanding students who will be incoming freshmen at one of the 47 publicly-supported Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) within the TMCF member-school network.

Texas A&M Regent’s Scholarship

Florida First Generation Matching Grant
Non-profit that works with first-generation college students for 12 years starting in sixth grade and all the way through college. While teachers, counselors and schools can change every year, Breakthrough is different because of that consistent guidance.

http://breakthroughctx.org/
Resources

Summer Melt Handbook

Resources

I’m First!

An online community celebrating first-generation college students and supporting those who will be

http://www.imfirst.org/#!
Resources

Go College Now

http://www.gocollegenow.org/
for-educators/
Resources

College for Every Student

http://www.collegefes.org/
Resources

Reach Higher

https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/reach-higher
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References Continued


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