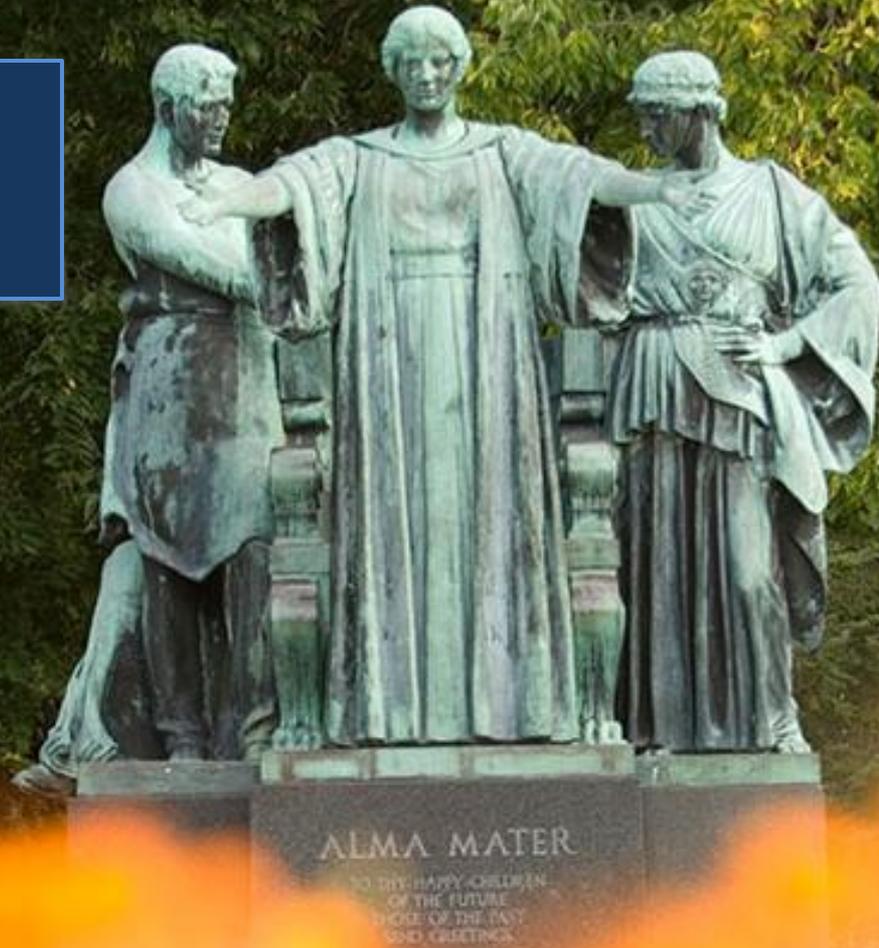


First Generation Outreach: Student Perspectives & Best Practices



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Overview

- Defining the Population
- Cultural & Emotional Difficulties
- Academic, Financial, and Professional Difficulties
- Student Perspectives
- Proposed Outreach Efforts



Defining the Population

- Defining “First Generation” students: Undergraduate students “whose parents never enrolled in postsecondary education.” National Center for Education Statistics
- Depending on the source, as many as 30-47% of entering postsecondary students are first generation students.
- As many as 24% of entering college freshmen are both first generation and low-income.
- Only 47% of First Generation students enrolled in any postsecondary institution the year after graduating from high school, as compared to 85% of students whose parents had college degrees.



Demographics of First Generation Students

- From the U.S. Department of Education's National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS: 88), as reported in *Straight from the Source: What Works for First-Generation College Students* ("Straight from the Source"), The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education



First Generation Students Are More Likely to

- Be female
- Have parents born outside the U.S.
- Be non-native English speakers
- Be married, have children, and be single parents
- Be financially independent from their parents
- Be older
- Have earned a GED

- Source: “Straight from the Source” at 16.



First Generation Students Are More Likely to

- Delay entry into postsecondary education after completing high school
- Attend college closer to home
- Live off-campus
- Need remediation
- Attend part-time
- Work full-time
- Not receive financial help from family to pay for college
- Source: “Straight from the Source” at 16.



Academic Challenges

- The application process: most first generation students do not receive help from parents or family members in the admissions process.
- 55% of First Generation students take some remedial courses in college; compared to 27% of students whose parents hold bachelors or advanced degrees.
- 40% of First Generation students take remedial math, as compared to 16% of second generation students.
- 13% of First Generation students take remedial reading, as compared to 6% of second generation students.



Academic Challenges

- First generation students are overrepresented among entering students at less-than-two year and two-year institutions.
- First generation students comprise 73% of students at less-than-two-year institutions and 53% of students at two-year institutions.
- “[F]irst-generation status itself is a risk factor even after taking demographic and enrollment characteristics into account.” (Straight from the Source, at 14.)



Academic Challenges – Before Enrolling in College

- Lower levels of academic preparation.
- Lower educational aspirations.
- Less encouragement and support to attend college, particularly from parents.
- (Straight from the Source, at 14.)
- Our students did not echo these sentiments regarding parental encouragement.



Academic Challenges – After Enrolling in College

- Navigating the bureaucracies of university/college systems
- Less confidence in academic abilities
- Less likely to engage in academic and social experiences associated with success in college, *e.g.*, studying in groups, interacting with faculty and other students, participating in extracurricular activities, and using support services
- (Straight from the Source, at 17.)



Retention & Persistence

- 89% of low-income First Generation students leave within six years of starting college without a degree.
- More than 25% of First Generation students leave after the first year of college.
- Low-income, First Generation students are four times more likely to drop out during their first year than higher-income second generation students.
- First Generation students are twice as likely to leave college without earning a degree, as compared to students whose parents had college degrees. (Straight

from the Source, at 14.)



Retention & Persistence

- Only 26% of first generation students who enrolled in postsecondary education earned a bachelor's degree within eight years, compared to 68% of students whose parents went to college.



Financial Obstacles

- Little support regarding how to finance post-secondary education.
- Research shows that the chances of a student from a disadvantaged background will take the necessary steps to apply to and enroll in a four-year institution are considerably higher if the student and her parents receive information about financial aid. (Straight from the Source, at p. 17.)
- Language barriers
- Challenges to students whose parents may be illegal



Financial Obstacles

- Increases in financial aid, particularly grants, scholarships, and work-study, increase the likelihood that first-generation students will persist in college. (Straight from the Source, at p. 17.)
- Increases in loan debt increase the likelihood that first-generation students will depart before obtaining a degree. (Straight from the Source, at p. 18.)
- Activities that provide students with information about financial aid not only inform *whether* students attend college, but *where* they attend college. (Straight from the Source, at p. 20.)



Financial Obstacles

- Pre-College programming can help students understand the differences between various types of aid (*i.e.*, grants, scholarships, and loans)
- Identifying various sources of aid (*i.e.*, federal, state, institutional, external)
- Completing applications for governmental, institutional, and external aid
- Interpreting financial aid award letters (Straight from the Source, at p. 25.)
- Other financial obstacles: application fees, travel costs,

visits, text books



After College – Entering the Working World

- First-Generation students may not have the professional networks and contact that their second-generation classmates may have.
- May have difficulty tapping into the “hidden” job-market.
- Professors can operate as a bridge in developing those networks.
- Our students noted that the jobs touted by the College were not the jobs they were interested in.



Student Perspectives

- High school guidance counselors were not helpful and not available for college application guidance.
- Pre-college programs were helpful – if students knew about them.
- While parents are supportive, they cannot relate to what the student is going through. “She’s not married, but she’s in school.”
- Need to be self-motivated
- Cycle of misinformation



Suggestions for Outreach

- In our increasingly bilingual society, knowing some conversational Spanish is a practical skill that can of benefit to everyone. Spanish language classes could be proposed as a needed professional development strategy to those in management at one's workplace. In addition, it demonstrates an awareness and sensitivity to the needs of the Hispanic population.
- Don't wait to find out accidentally if a student is "first-generation;" ask on the application, and then have a plan for integrating those students.



Suggestions for Outreach

- Normalize “first-gen” outreach. Invite students who are first generation to come visit with you personally. Invite them to question you on anything they do not understand. Emphasize that college is for learning and there is nothing wrong with not knowing.
- Emphasize that there is no “right” formula for going to college any more. People from all walks of life go to college and take various paths to get there.
- Have a staff member dedicated to the special needs of the First Generation College Student.



Suggestions for Outreach

- Have first-gen mentors (students or faculty who were first generation themselves).
- Many would-be students and their parents lack the know-how of applying to college. Colleges should educate students while they are still in high school about the logistics of applying to college, including entrance requirements, course expectations, choices of major and financial aid application procedures.
- Persistent, early intervention and assistance in applying to college is most helpful.



Suggestions for Outreach

- There are federally-funded programs in place to address the specific issues that face first-generation college students. TRIO and Robert McNair Programs that give academic and tutoring services to first generation students.
- Colleges should focus on developing skills and employability among students. Schools with high numbers of first-generation students (like many in California) have implemented “workforce 101” courses to increase the social and intellectual skills of future graduates.



Suggestions for Outreach

- Develop a system in which first-gens are not simply told that a support system exists that they may access at their discretion, but rather, requires that those students check in at least once during both the fall and spring semesters to address any concerns they might have.
- Other support that may benefit first generation students includes early registration, academic advising, career counseling, financial aid counseling and monetary assistance.



Suggestions for Outreach

- Outreach to first generation students in high school and their parents regarding the importance of taking advanced coursework, especially in math.

