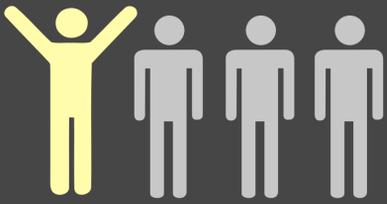


Ways to Make a Difference

First Generation Student Task Force Recommendations

Who are First Gen Students at UI?

About one in four UI undergraduates are from families in which the parents or legal guardians have not completed a bachelor's degree



The entering academic profile of First Generation students is comparable to the profile of continuing generation students in terms of:

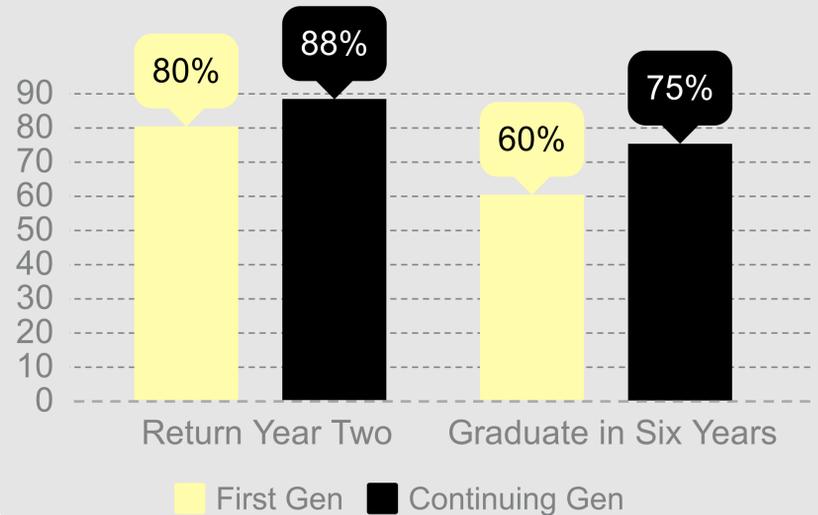
ACT

Grit & Resiliency

High School GPA

Despite coming in with similar academic profiles, first generation students as a group have lower rates of persistence and college completion.

Comparing Retention Data on First and Continuing Generation Students



In Their Own Words:

Observations based on Task Force review of research and interviews with First Gen Students at UI

There is no "typical" first generation student, and it is difficult to make generalizations that apply to the entire group. However, it is possible to identify a number of common characteristics and tendencies that represent the experiences of many.

"The stigma of asking for help is real!"

Proactive Problem-Solving

First Generation students are often committed to doing and figuring out things on their own - which tends to increase resilience, but also may delay or prevent them from seeking help.

First Generation students don't always know what to expect coming in. They need to be encouraged to find support early on, rather than waiting until the challenges have become much harder to address.

Facing the Insider Language of Higher Education

Processes and expectations are expressed in terms that aren't necessarily common knowledge for students - for example, "grading on a curve," or what counts as "class participation"

As such, students do not always see how particular learning experiences or ways of preparing for class are intended to help them succeed on homework or tests.

"Professors look at you funny when you ask questions or tell them you don't know how to study."

"You can do it!"

Family Impact is Huge!

Many students report coming from a tight-knit family that encourages and helps when necessary. Students are often highly motivated to make their families proud and live up to expectations.

And yet, expectations can also add pressure. Families who provide high levels of support and set high expectations don't always have firsthand experience in areas where help is needed (such as financial aid requirements, or balancing work and study).

"You're the first ...
Go big or go home ...
Be a doctor, lawyer, etc."

Supporting First Gen Student Success:

Strategies for Faculty, Teaching Assistants, and Graders

Each first generation student is a unique individual with a distinct constellation of experiences, challenges, and strengths. The following suggestions are beneficial for all students, especially those who are the first in their family to navigate college.

Take the Mystery out of Higher Education

The knowledge that students need to navigate the University can be like a secret handshake that eases the way for students who understand it and limits access and opportunity for those who don't:

- Include thorough, student-friendly explanations for the task, purpose, and criteria for success in descriptions of course assignments
: <https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency/tilt-higher-ed-examples-and-resources>
- Explain key terms and abbreviations that students might not encounter on a regular basis. University College has a glossary of helpful terms that could be added to a syllabus or posted on ICON:
<https://uc.uiowa.edu/student-success/resources-students/helpful-terms>

Coach Students on Specific Strategies for Studying Effectively in the Context of Your Class

Ways of studying in college often vary from one discipline to another, and also from ways that students studied before they came to UI.

- Take time in lecture sessions, discussion sections, labs, and office hours to let students know how to use their time and effort most effectively when they are studying for your class:
<https://tutor.uiowa.edu/academic-success/>
- Some instructors build specific strategies for remembering, analyzing, or applying course materials into assignments or activities as a way to demonstrate effective ways to interact with the course content.

Provide Feedback, Early and Often

Part of student learning is developing self-regulation skills. To do this, students benefit from frequent formative feedback to check their understanding and calibrate to the varying expectations of different instructors and different disciplines.

- Early low-stakes assignments, quizzes, or ungraded practice with feedback can help students learn early in the semester if they are studying in ways that are going to be help them be successful in your course.
- Brief Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) can allow both the instructor and the students to recognize how student learning is going while there is still time to make adjustments.
<https://teach.its.uiowa.edu/file-resource/880>
- Structure discussions to guide students through thinking and problem-solving processes:
<https://teach.its.uiowa.edu/file-resource/993>

Let Students Know That You Think Asking for Help is Part of Being a Successful Student

Students who think they should be figuring things out on their own may also think that asking for help is the same as admitting to you that they're not capable.

- Students may hesitate to come to office hours because they're not sure what to expect. Some instructors provide a weekly focus for office hours ("reviewing for next week's quiz") or incorporate office hours into assignments (such as a project check-in) in order to help students make the first visit and see the value of office hours.
- Let students know what University Resources exist and how to make the most of them – early in the term and at points when they are valuable during the semester. <https://teach.its.uiowa.edu/file-resource/2021>

NOTE: If students are asking you for help, you will want to know appropriate resources on campus so you can respond to concerns that come up in areas outside of your course. <https://dos.uiowa.edu/assistance/quick-guide-for-helping-students>

For more ideas, resources, and research related to supporting First Generation Student Success, visit <https://uc.uiowa.edu/first-generation-students>