Putting First Gen First:
Meeting the needs of first generation students
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- Bachelor of Communication - Information Design (Mount Royal University)
- Master of Education - Educational Research (University of Calgary)  
  - Inclusive Education  
  - Leading & Learning in the Digital Age  
  - Capstone Research: Needs of First-Generation Students
- Worked in private-sector marketing & communications
- Nearly 6 years at UCalgary, working with undergraduate & graduate students
How did I become interested in first-generation students as a population?
“It is important to understand that first-generation students are a diverse group of students and not a monolith, which means that their individual motivations, lacks, necessities and wants may differ, however when assessed as a group, trends can be discovered in their experiences.” - Emma Lockyer
Who are first-generation students?

- Students who do not have a parent who attended or graduated from post-secondary (depending on which source you use).
  - In a literature review I went with the broadest definition as I had sources that used both
- More likely than their continuing-generation peers to “drop out” / leave without completing a degree
- More likely than their peers to:
  - Be of a racial minority
  - Be from a lower socioeconomic background
  - Be from a rural community
- More likely to take out student loans and work more hours
- Typically have lower standardized test scores & less likely to have taken advanced high school courses (Advanced Placement, Honours, International Baccalaureate, etc)
Social Capital
What is it and why is it important?

The networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. - Oxford English Dictionary

- Information sharing by parents, family members and friends
- Understanding unspoken norms
- Assistance navigating systems
  - Jargon
  - Who to ask
  - Available resources
Jamboard Activity
What are some barriers/challenges that first-gen students may face in post-secondary?
Barriers to access & success

- Lack of family support - both support to attend and emotional support while dealing with the challenges of higher education
- Academic preparation and confidence in academic abilities
- Financial resources
- Navigating institutional systems
- Time
- Lack of community
## Needs & wants of first-generation students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs</th>
<th>Wants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Understanding of academic systems</td>
<td>● Support from faculty and advisors</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Understanding of academic rewards</td>
<td>● Engagement in extra academic programs</td>
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<td>● Communities of belonging</td>
<td>● Connection to community</td>
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<td>● Peer support</td>
<td>● On campus employment</td>
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<td>● Psychological support</td>
<td>● Financial aid</td>
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Breakout Rooms
How can we as advisors help first-generation students overcome barriers and be successful in post-secondary?
How can we as advisors help first-generation students overcome barriers and be successful in post-secondary?

- Use clear language and avoid abbreviations, acronyms and jargon when communicating with students
- Provide clear referrals to other campus resources and services
- Help find and foster community
- Show support
Questions?
Want to connect?
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References


References


Cobb, J. (2018). higher ed can learn from first-gen students. Contexts. 17(1).

Covarrubias, R., Landa, I, & Gallimore, R. Developing a Family Achievement Guilt Scale Grounded in First-Generation College Student Voices. Personality and Social Psychology Journal. 46(11).


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