



# FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT SUPPORT

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# Learning Outcomes




## Participants will:

- Understand some of the unique challenges and/or barriers that first-generation students face in transitioning into four-year institutions in the U.S.
- Understand how you might play a role in the academic achievement, sense of belonging, holistic development, and retention of first-generation students at Mason.
- Increase your knowledge of campus resources and networks of support for first-generation college students.

Who are “first-generation”  
college students?





According to ODIME, a **first-generation student** is defined as a student whose parents:

- ❑ Did not receive or complete any level post-secondary education
- ❑ Enrolled at or earned a two-year degree from a community college, and/or
- ❑ Earned any level of post-secondary education outside of the U.S.

Why is it important to discuss  
“first-generation” college students?



*“Think of first-generation students as pioneers, not problems.”*

– The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 2012

- Represent almost a third of the national undergraduate population (U.S. Dept of Education)<sup>2</sup>
- First-generation students at a glance:
  - More likely to come from lower income backgrounds<sup>4; 5; 7; 9</sup> and historically underrepresented racial/ethnic groups<sup>6; 7</sup>, and speak a language other than English at home<sup>7</sup>
  - More likely to be financially independent<sup>2; 5</sup>
  - Generally work more hours per week<sup>2</sup>
  - Rely more heavily on federal Pell grants<sup>2</sup>
  - Not always easy to identify<sup>2</sup>

# Barriers and Obstacles

- ❑ Tend to be less informed<sup>2; 4; 7; 8</sup>
- ❑ Other concerns/responsibilities<sup>2</sup>
  - Work
  - Family
- ❑ Tend to live off campus<sup>2</sup>
- ❑ More likely to perceive college as a means to an end: get a job<sup>2</sup>
- ❑ Less engaged with faculty members and staff<sup>2</sup>
- ❑ May not know about resources<sup>2</sup>
- ❑ More likely to have value interdependence (U.S. colleges tend to value independence)<sup>8; 9</sup>

# Academic and Social Support<sup>1</sup>

- ❑ **Emotional Support:** counseling, mentoring
- ❑ **Instrumental support:** tutoring, workshops (resources, study skills, financial literacy), summer transition programs, need based financial aid, fee waivers
- ❑ **Informational support:** orientation, academic advising, career exploration, financial aid counseling
- ❑ **Appraisal support:** monitoring and assessing student progress, midterm grades, career assessments, self-discovery inventories
- ❑ **Structural support:** culturally relevant practices, learning centers, first-year college programs, learning communities

\*\*These should not be viewed separately, they are on a continuum.



# Persistence and Retention



- ❑ More likely to be part-time students<sup>2; 3</sup>
- ❑ More likely to work full-time<sup>2; 3</sup>
- ❑ Completion rate tends to be longer than their peers<sup>2; 3</sup>
- ❑ Four times more likely to leave college after first year<sup>2; 3</sup>
- ❑ Socioeconomics status is a factor: 43% of low-income, first-generation students failed to complete college after six years<sup>2; 3</sup>

# Today's Resources



- Resources have broadened considerably<sup>2</sup>
  - After school college nights
  - Admissions process weekend programs (“College Goal Sunday”)
  - Websites are more helpful (e.g., U.S. Dept. of Education)
  - College Access Programs (e.g. EIP, TRIO)
  - Summer Bridge Programs (e.g., STEP)
  - Financial literacy seminars
  - Living Learning Communities

# Peer Institutions At A Glance



\*Information obtained from [www.ImFirst.org](http://www.ImFirst.org)

# Boston University



- Pre-College Prep & Outreach COACH (College Opportunity and Career Help)

This Boston University program supports Boston public school juniors and seniors as they form post secondary plans.

- Pre-College Summer Experience Summer Pathways

FREE one-week, residential summer program for female high school students interested in science and engineering.

- Scholarship & Financial Aid National Hispanic Recognition Program

Boston University awards a four-year, \$20,000 tuition scholarship to National Hispanic Recognition Program finalists with exceptional high school academic records.

# George Washington University



- Pre-College Prep & Outreach GW Pre-College Program

A six-week Pre-College Program offers 11<sup>th</sup> graders the opportunity to live on campus, take classes offered by the faculty and to earn credits and to explore Washington, D.C.

- Scholarship & Financial Aid Need-Based Scholarship and Grant Aid

The University has initiated a fixed tuition plan for the duration of students' undergraduate studies and a tuition grant for up to ten consecutive semesters.

# Northeastern University



- 16% of undergraduates are first-generation

- Scholarship & Financial Aid Torch Scholars Program

Torch Scholars receive full tuition, fees, and room and board, as well as significant personal and academic support throughout their undergraduate careers.

# University of Florida

- Pre-College Prep & Outreach College Reach Out Program

Its primary objective is to strengthen the educational motivation and preparation of low-income and educationally disadvantaged students in grades 6-12.

- Pre-College Prep & Outreach Student Science Training Program

The SSTP is a 7-week residential research program for selected rising juniors and seniors who are considering medicine, math, computer science, or engineering careers. The program emphasis is research participation.

- Pre-College Prep & Outreach Student Recruitment Conference

This conference provides the opportunity for 7<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents to learn more about admission requirements, student life at UF, leadership development opportunities, community resources and mentoring.

- Scholarship & Financial Aid Florida Opportunity Scholars Program

Scholarship covers tuition and books, as well as living expenses after any family contributions (EFC) are made. The goal is for students to earn a bachelor's degree and graduate without student loans.

# Resources and Networks of Support at Mason

- Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Multicultural Education (ODIME)
  - Student Transition Empowerment Program
  - Study Halls
  - Resource rooms
  - Campus partnerships (e.g. Learning Services)
- Early Identification Program
- Office of Student Financial Aid: Liz Carter
- Office of Student Involvement



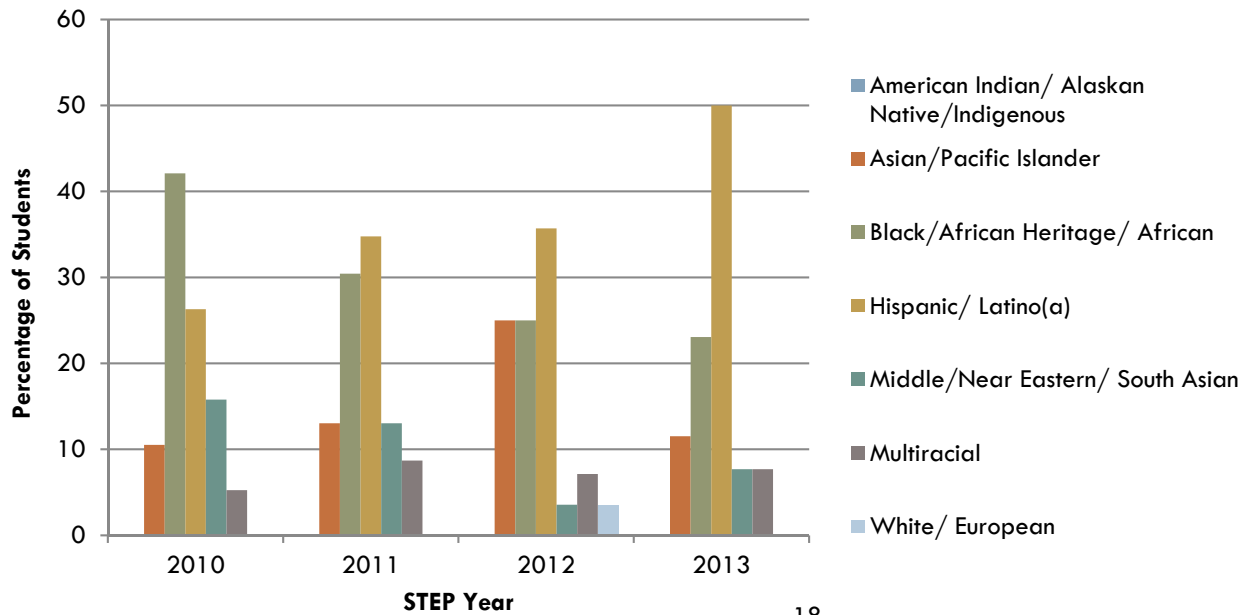
# STEP At-A-Glance

- 107 active (102 undergraduate)
- 72% speak a language other than English
- 85% are from Northern Virginia
- 56% qualified for free or reduced lunch in high school
- GPAs:
  - Cumulative for all STEP students: **3.21** (undergrad)
  - Summer GPAs by Year:
    - 2010: 3.52
    - 2011: 3.45
    - 2012: 3.44
    - 2013: 3.85

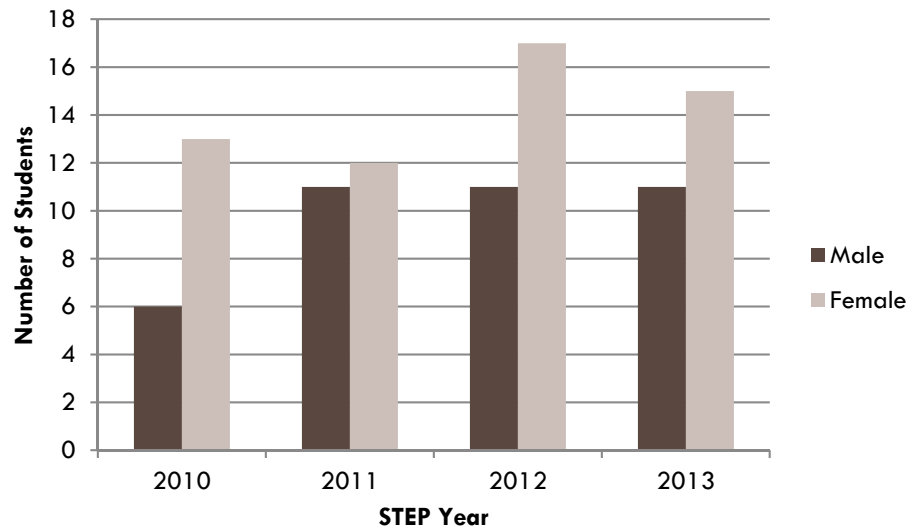
Data as of summer 2013

# STEP Demographics

## Enrollment by Ethnicity: 2010 - 2013



Gender (overall):  
 Male: 40.63%  
 Female: 59.38%



# Pending Programs and Initiatives

- 1,628 first-generation were admitted to Mason in fall 2013
- 498 of those student enrolled
- STEP: 26 students; EIP: 33 students (5 overlap) = *serving 10.8% of first-year first-generation students*
- First-Generation Living Learning Community
- First-Generation Registered Student Organization Task Force
- STEP: *transitions* programs

# Implications for University Life



- Design intentional initiatives and strategies to support students at all levels
- Consider how your office or department provides services (e.g. ODIME extended hours)
- Culture/environment of offices and departments
- Cultural Competency (e.g. Inclusive Learning Community Series)

# Support from University Life



- Participate in workshops for STEP, LLC, RSO, EIP
- Be aware of biases and assumptions
- Consider the academic and social support model
- Recommend student leaders as:
  - STEP Mentors
  - Academic Mentors for EIP
  - Mentors for identity-based student organizations

# Student Questions



- ❑ What were some of your fears or concerns about attending college at Mason?
- ❑ What are some unique skills, attributes, and/or talents you bring to Mason as a first-generation college student?
- ❑ Why have you stayed at Mason?

Questions??



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