FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT SUPPORT

Teejay Brown
Walter Parrish
Ebadullah Ebadi
Montrel Tennessee
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Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Multicultural Education
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.”

- Represent almost a **third** of the national undergraduate population (U.S. Dept of Education)**²**
- First-generation students at a glance:
  - More likely to come from lower income backgrounds⁴; ⁵; ⁷; ⁹ and historically underrepresented racial/ethnic groups⁶; ⁷, and speak a language other than English at home⁷
  - More likely to be financially independent²; ⁵
  - Generally work more hours per week²
  - Rely more heavily on federal Pell grants²
  - Not always easy to identify²
Barriers and Obstacles

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

- **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\textsuperscript{2; 3}
- More likely to work full-time\textsuperscript{2; 3}
- Completion rate tends to be longer than their peers\textsuperscript{2; 3}
- Four times more likely to leave college after first year\textsuperscript{2; 3}
- Socioeconomics status is a factor: 43% of low-income, first-generation students failed to complete college after six years\textsuperscript{2; 3}
Today’s Resources

- Resources have broadened considerably²
  - 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
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.
Pre-College Prep & Outreach GW Pre-College Program
A six-week Pre-College Program offers 11th 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.
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 7th through 11th 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 students 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??
References


