

First-Generation Student Facts:

A first-generation student is one whose parents have not completed a four-year degree.

1. Approximately 4 in 10 undergraduate students enrolled at UNK are first-generation college students.
2. Nationally, first-generation students participate in organizations, undergraduate research, paid internships, and study abroad at lower percentages than continuing-generation students(<https://firstgen.naspa.org/files/dmfile/FactSheet-021.pdf>); thus, explanations and encouragement from faculty about engagement and experiential learning are essential.
3. UNK is a First-Gen Forward Institution, recognized and supported by the NASPA Center for First-Generation Student Success; this designation recognizes higher education institutions that demonstrate a commitment to improving student experiences and advancing outcomes for first-generation students.

Tips for Faculty Members to Work Effectively with First-Generation Students by Understanding their Unique Perspectives:

- Make classroom content accessible by encouraging students to connect their classroom knowledge to their lives.
- Let students know that it is normal to feel challenged academically in college and encourage them to approach your course with a growth mindset.
- Using analogies assists first-generation students in grasping the big picture, and helps students not feel overwhelmed or discouraged by unfamiliar content.
- Promote student self-efficacy and academic grit. Reference: <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-first-generation-college-students/>
- Recognize that first-generation students exhibit resiliency already, which has resulted in their college acceptance.
 - Promote further resiliency by highlighting pathways for students to improve their academic performance.
 - Allow room for growth by encouraging students to submit multiple drafts of class projects.
 - Promote and reward intellectual inquisitiveness that emerges from the student's lived experience.
- Create student centered policies that are inclusive and communicate respect for students. Reference: <https://collegetransitioncollaborative.org/policy-review/>

Tips for Faculty Members to Build Relationships with First-Generation Students:

- Work to develop rapport and build relationships with first-generation students.
 - Recognize first-generation students in the classroom.
 - Acknowledge students by answering emails and phone messages promptly.
- Show that you are open to your students' questions and concerns.
 - Create an office hour policy that explains what office hours are used for, and then encourage students to visit you outside the classroom.
 - Provide clear information about how and when students can best reach you.
 - Offer positive feedback when students visit you during office hours to discuss the course.
- Share your story, especially if you're first-generation student. Modeling first-generation success can inspire students.
- Take certain circumstances that impact first-generation students into consideration. While highly motivated to earn a college degree, first-generation students may face barriers to success.
 - First-generation students may have varying levels of familial engagement. Some may feel a lack of support, while others may feel pressure to succeed.

- Knowledge about college and higher education may be limited.
- Students may face daunting financial concerns. Some students are working nights and evenings to pay their expenses and may also be contributing to their family's financial well-being.
- Imposter syndrome is common among first-generation students, who may worry that they don't belong in college.

Tips for Faculty Members to Help First-Generation Students Navigate the College Classroom:

- Create an inclusive classroom environment from the first day of by constructing a syllabus that is friendly to first-generation students. Reference: <https://collegetransitioncollaborative.org/syllabus-review-guide/>
 - Course expectations and due dates should be clearly expressed.
 - Provide information about resources that are available to students who need additional support.
- Create an intuitive Canvas page that is easy for students to navigate.
 - Provide clear guidance on course expectations and due dates.
- Provide transparency on assignments and projects so that students understand your expectations.
 - Explain in detail the task you want students to accomplish. "What do I want students to do?"
 - Include the purpose of the assignment or project in your instructions. "Why am I asking students to do this?"
 - Use rubrics to provide the criteria by which assignments are evaluated. This allows students a better understanding of how their coursework will be scored. "How will I evaluate their work?"
 - Provide examples of excellent and average work as context for students as a reference for those who may not have been exposed to your discipline previously.
 - Model discussions for students. First-generation students may not be familiar with classroom discussion procedures/atmosphere at the college level.
 - Set deadlines for students who may still be learning time management skills, and ensure those deadlines are consistently expressed in course materials. Reference: <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-first-generation-college-students/>
- Make sure students can gauge their success in your class by keeping posted grades current. Enter zeros promptly for missing work in the Canvas gradebook. If the assignment is left unscored it will not calculate into the cumulative course grade, and the student's overall class grade will appear deceptively inflated.
- Provide tips for the classroom culture you expect. Not all first-generation students are familiar with the classroom environment on a college campus. Reference: <https://www.marquette.edu/first-generation-students/classroom-etiquette.php>
 - Discuss the expected classroom behavior/etiquette you expect to see in your classroom.
 - Be explicit about the use of electronics in the classroom, including laptops, smartphones, headphones, and voice recorders.
 - Talk with students about your expectations for in-class communication.

REFERENCED WEBSITES:

Teaching First Generation College Students:

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-first-generation-college-students/>

Faculty Tips for First-Gen Students: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/06/03/video-series-aims-help-instructors-help-first-generation-students>

First-Generation Faculty Share Tips for Success:

<https://www.ucdavis.edu/majors/blog/tips-trends/first-generation-faculty-tips-success>

Teaching First Generation College Students Guidebook:

<https://www.miracosta.edu/student-services/tutoring-and-support/docs/TeachingFirstGenStudentsGuidebook.pdf>

<https://www.ctl.upenn.edu/office-hours>

Classroom Etiquette: <https://www.marquette.edu/first-generation-students/classroom-etiquette.php>

Revising Syllabi to Improve Student Experience:

https://studentexperienceproject.org/change_idea/revising-syllabi-to-improve-student-experience/

5 Ways to Contribute to Student Self-Efficacy in Your Courses: <https://studentexperienceproject.org/5-ways-to-contribute-to-student-self-efficacy-in-your-courses/>

For more information about First Gen Lopers at UNK, visit: <https://www.unk.edu/firstgen/index.php>

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Date: July 2022