

First-Generation College Student?

Tips for Success



A first-generation college student is someone whose parents have not earned a bachelor's degree. Being a first-generation college student is something to be proud of, but it can come with its own set of challenges. Here are some tips for tackling those challenges and setting yourself up for success.

Attend orientation activities

Feeling like you belong at college is a big part of being successful. Get college off to a good start by attending any and all orientation activities. This is a great way to meet new people and get acclimated to the campus.

Build connections

It's not uncommon for first-generation college students to feel a bit isolated, especially if it feels like no one on campus shares their background or experiences.

The best way to feel like you belong, and to meet students who share your interests, is to participate in student activities and organizations. Check your college's website for a list of organizations and give a couple of them a try.

Stay informed

Succeeding in college requires more than doing well in your classes. You also need to understand things like drop/add policies and registration procedures. In college, it's often assumed that you already know most of these things, so it's up to you to get clarification when you don't understand something.

Take advantage of it all

Colleges offer lots of valuable services: Career Services, Learning Centers, Financial Aid, Recreation Centers, Health Services, and more. Check your college's website to find out what services are available on your campus. These services are all voluntary, so it is up to you to visit them. Also, regularly check your college's online events calendar to keep up with what's happening on campus.

Ask for help

Asking for help means that you're smart and mature enough to take control of your success. If you're struggling in a class, have questions, or need help, talk to your professor or your advisor. They are there to help you.

Many colleges have First Year Experience Programs and some colleges have services specifically for first-generation students. Talk to your advisor about what kinds of support services are available to you.

Don't feel pressured

Some first-generation college students feel pressure, like their family is depending on them to do well. This can cause a lot of stress. If you ever feel this way, know that your family is proud of you, and just do your best.

Know that you deserve to be there

Don't succumb to "imposter syndrome." Imposter syndrome is the feeling that you're not good enough, or that you've somehow "tricked" everyone into thinking you deserve to be where you are.

You've worked hard to get there, and you will continue working hard until you graduate. *You've earned your spot, and you deserve to be there as much as anyone else.*