

# SUPPORTING FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS

Research shows that there are a host of challenges that first generation college students face compared to their counterparts who are members of families where one or both parents attended or completed college. For example, first generation students take more developmental courses, have lower grade point averages, and feel more isolated. Institutions are making a concerted effort to better support first generation students both outside and inside the classroom. Below are some practices that are especially beneficial to first generation students (Freeman et al., 2014).

To help first generation students feel more connected to the academic environment, you can:



## Share your story.

Tell your students about your journey through higher education. Include your first generation status if that is your experience.



## Know their name.

Knowing your students and being able to call their name is another practice that can lead to building a relationship with your students. Using name tents, regularly calling on students to answer questions, and recognizing students by name are ways to connect with your students.



## Ask them to share their story.

At the beginning of the course, ask students to share on a notecard or in an email, important information about themselves such as their preferred name, goals, experiences with the subject matter, and anything else they believe would be relevant to helping them succeed in the course.

Additionally, research on pedagogy has determined that certain activities, across disciplines and context, yield positive outcomes on the learning for all students but particularly first generation and underrepresented students (Schwartz & Gurung, 2012). These are:

- 1 Clearly state the learning goals** in your syllabus and the learning outcomes/objectives for each class. This is extremely useful in helping students focus their attention. Also review them at the end of the class.
- 2 Teach study strategies as well as content.** Share what other students do that are successful can be very useful. Additionally, share how you would (have) approach studying certain content gives them a model to follow.
- 3 Provide frequent feedback on assignments.** Also let students know how you wish them to use the feedback. For example, you can have them address feedback on an assignment for offer additional points or credit.



**Finally, sharing additional campus resources is important.** Let students know that these resources are used by students who want to be successful in your course as well as in college. Give multiple examples of how either you or other students have used these services. You might also choose to invite representatives from these offices to discuss what they do and how students make use of their offerings.

The above are just some of the ways to help first generation students succeed in the classroom. We hope you find these useful. If you have others that you have found particularly beneficial, please feel free to share them with any of the staff of the TLI.

## REFERENCES

- Freeman, S., Eddy, S. L., McDonough, M., Smith, M. K., Okoroafor, N., Jordt, H., & Wenderoth, M. P. (2014). Active learning increases student performance in science, engineering, and mathematics. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(23), 8410-8415.
- Schwartz, B. M., & Gurung, R. A. (2012). Evidence-based teaching for higher education. American Psychological Association.



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