

First-Generation Students and Advocacy Recommendations

Characteristics	Strengths	Strategies for Support
Often lack “college knowledge” and assume other students do.	Exhibit a sense of pride in their goals and endeavors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the “hidden curriculum” of college expectations and strategies for success. • Review your syllabus and include supportive language in your descriptions and policies.
Are not necessarily “traditional” (live off-campus, work full-time, attend part-time, etc.).	Are often independent and self-reliant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage (or require) interdependent behaviors (tutoring, study groups, etc.). • Be mindful of course requirements that are geared for traditional, on-campus, non-working students. • Normalize and model self-advocacy and help-seeking behaviors.
May focus on “practical” majors or majors with a direct line to a career (e.g., nursing, athletic training).	Come to college highly motivated, often by situational or family circumstances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide intellectually stimulating content, assignments, and opportunities. • Openly discuss career development and choices in your discipline. • Connect your course content to broader skills development.
Are often low-income.	Display skills of resourcefulness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be mindful of the costs of course materials. • Provide alternatives, workarounds, or information about emergency funding for course materials.
Have strong family connections.	Serve as translators or are code-switchers themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the influence of parents and family on student behaviors and choices.
Experience marginality.	Display resilience in the face of adversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include ways for all students to contribute to class discussions. • Discuss discipline-specific learning strategies.
May experience Golden Child Syndrome, Imposter Syndrome, and/or Survivor’s Guilt.	Are appreciative of support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normalize the developmental process of college transition: academically, intellectually, culturally, socially, and emotionally. • Hold one-on-one conferences with students.