Best Practices for Working with First Generation College Students

Recurring quotes and ideas in literature

* “Living simultaneously in two worlds without being accepted in either.”
* Focused guidance
* Confidence Building
* “Creating an individual culture of success”

Research Evidence

* Financial instability, usually high amongst FGCS, is a determining factor as to whether students retain in college. *If a faculty member or administrator sees a financial opportunity that might benefit the student, it might be useful to share it within their course*
* FGCS normally see attending college solely as a method of getting a good job and/or to prepare them for a specific career.

*Professors can work to shift that viewpoint into one that not only cultivates the academic aspect of attending college, but the holistic one as well*

* Self-regulation skills, such as time management and study skills, empower students and engage them in the process of learning. Self-regulated learning is also the most significant factor that leads to a higher GPA for FGCS.

*Faculty can encourage FGCS to practice self-regulation skill. The greater the amount of skill they learn and practice, the higher the GPA.*

* Novice-to-expert models of mentoring are helpful for FGCS. FGCS thrive in college when they establish a strong academic contact that provides validation that they are capable of completing college-level work, that their ideas and opinions have value, and that they are worthy of the attention and respect of faculty, staff, and peers.

[Project GRAD](http://projectgrad.org/about/) Recommendations

* Nationally recognized mentoring program that seeks to help low-income communities.
* Remember the importance of letting students ask for help and help initiate social connections in the classroom.
* Direct FGCS to other students in the course that they can create study groups with. Two FGCS that I spoke to said this would have helped them through their first year at Baylor
* Culturally FGCS may come from families that don’t value the student new role as a college student. Remind students that they do have a place at Baylor, despite their families reservations
* Highlight the importance of students being introduced to the proper “soft skills” or cognitive skills that will not only help them excel in class, but in their future careers such as:
  + Conscientiousness (realizing one’s shortcomings and work ethic)
  + Agreeableness (teamwork)
  + Emotional Stability
  + Variations of extroversion
  + Openness to new experiences
* A Houston based Project GRAD initiative found that 100% of students retained into their sophomore year in by keeping in contact with a professor during their freshman year.

*Be open to students via email if they have any issues during their course.*

[The Pell Institute](http://www.pellinstitute.org/) Findings and Recommendations

* An organization that promotes the educational pursuits of low-income students across the nation.
* It is important for students to remember and maintain a balanced course load.

*Baylor FGCS usually enroll in many classes their first semester and they pursue more intensive majors and many may have jobs due to financial needs their parents and families cannot always help alleviate.*

* FGCS and/or socially disadvantaged students found their professors to be apathetic as to whether they passed or failed and also expressed feelings of intimidation towards their professors.

*Professors can encourage students to meet with them during office hours and by appointment to try and alleviate those insecurities*

* Take a “case management” approach when it comes to academically tracking the FGCS in their courses.
* Encourage students to attend office hours or set up appointments frequently to better understand their needs in order to better assist the student. Utilize MAP-Works to view and address any risk factors the student may be exhibiting to better assist students
* Share FGCS retention methods with other colleagues that are faculty or administrators so they too can better assist any FGCS they come to find in their courses

Best Practices in the Classroom

* FGCS and disadvantaged students typically are not aware of supplemental instruction or tutorial programs available to them, and do not have the same help navigating college as their non-FGCS peers.

*Encourage students to connect with NSE mentor, if Student Life has assigned you one. The NSE peer leader can also direct students to supplementary instruction.*

* Incorporate U/BU 1000 curriculum, such as study skills and analytical skills, into course.

FGCS will learn to apply it into their work early on and Pell institute research shows they not only frequently put it into practice, they also pass it onto their student peers

* Encourage FGCS in your NSE course to attend workshops/seminars/events that will help FGCS engage with peers and administrators that are interested and focus on the academic success and needs of first-generation students, if they are aware of any
* Depending on the level of involvement that a professor would like to have in the lives of FGCS, professors can serve as educators and advocates of FGCS and their families.

*Baylor University has a Parents Network with staff who keep in touch with parents and provide a network for communication*