

THE CENTER FOR DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

THIS IS US



THE FIRST-GEN YEARBOOK

FIRST GEN INSIGHT

FACULTY AND STAFF AT AU WHO WERE FIRST GENERATION.

RESOURCE GUIDE

HELPFUL RESOURCES AT AU.

JOIN THE COMMUNITY

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED AND CONNECTED.

ISSUE 2 • VOL 1 • NOVEMBER 2020



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M-F 9-5pm



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A Letter to First Gen Students

For many the term first-generation college student (first gen students) may not be a familiar one, so we may ask, "What is a first gen student". A first-generation college student is defined as a student whose parents/legal guardian(s) have not completed a bachelor's degree. This would make you the first in your family to attend a four-year college/university and attain a bachelor's degree. You may be the first in your family, maybe your parent(s)/guardian(s) have completed a degree but in a country outside the US college system, or maybe your sibling was the very first one to attain a bachelor's in your family. No matter the definition if you feel you're of the first in your family to chart this new territory and identify with the experiences then AU's first-generation community welcomes you!

We in the Center for Diversity and Inclusion are so happy that you've chosen to view The First Gen Yearbook- 2nd Edition. The purpose of this yearbook is to show faculty and staff that identify as first-generation college students in hopes of connecting with current undergraduate students. Those you see in this yearbook all identified as first-generation college students during their undergraduate years. Just like you may be now, they too were and continue to be trailblazers through undergraduate and graduate programs to even the careers that they currently hold. Our hope is that students and staff/faculty sharing the first gen identity will be able to connect and share in their experiences while also charting forward on what they hope to accomplish in the future.

The first generation college student experience is to be celebrated as we navigate looking to make our families proud and find what we personally define as success, all while sometimes figuring how to navigate the new terrain on our own. The year 2020 has proven to be truly uncharted territory and we are proud of you as you've gone forward through a pandemic, on line learning, and a number of obstacles. We do ask you to take a moment to truly recognize what you've accomplished thus far and know that you are not alone. Your AU community is here to support and celebrate throughout the way. Those featured in this yearbook are just a fraction of those that are ready to assist during the journey and prepared to celebrate at the finish line with you.

Thanks,

Shannon D. Smith, M.A.Ed (he/him/his)

Assistant Director, Student Success & Transition

Center for Diversity & Inclusion



SHARON ALSTON

SHE/HER/HERS

VICE PROVOST FOR
UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT

FRANKLIN AND MARSHALL COLLEGE
C/O 1975

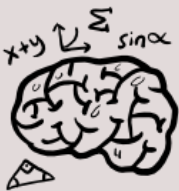
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY AND
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND C/O 1997

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Feel proud of what you accomplished (don't second guess yourself) and don't hesitate to get involved. Don't be afraid to make mistakes and ask for help.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

It's important to understand that we all have areas of insecurity. Just remember to keep track of your accomplishments/successes.





DIRECTOR OF CONFERENCE &
EVENTS SERVICES

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW
ORLEANS C/O 1986
THE JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY C/O 1997



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Enjoy your time as a freshman. Find a mentor-- either a professional staff or faculty Join a club, Greek org, etc--find your passion you will find "your people" to help you navigate your college experience

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Don't just go to Grad School or Law School right out of college if you are not feeling it! If your particular vocation in which you are pursuing is relatively stable right now go for it.--Maybe take a year or two off from school to catch your breath! Or see if you can Intern somewhere to possibly get your "foot in the door" of the place you want to be. I know these are challenging times...REMEMBER, you are SMART, you are STRONG, and you have WORKED HARD these past 4 years at a premier institution of higher learning... you will PERSERVERE through all of this... have faith in YOU—it will pay off—I promise!! BEST of LUCK!





OLGA CORDERO BRANA



SHE/HER/HERS

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Study a lot, think a lot, work hard: DO NOT GET BEHIND in your coursework. Take advantages of all opportunities the university offers (like attend lectures even if they are not in your field). Take a break during summer if you have something productive to do (like work) or else take a course (s).

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

You are almost there; keep studying.

PROFESSORIAL LECTURER
MATHEMATICS & STATISTICS

UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO C/O
1980
THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA C/O
1988



Misty DENHAM-BARRETT

SHE/HER/HERS

ASSOCIATE
DIRECTOR OF
RESIDENCE LIFE

PHILADELPHIA
UNIVERSITY C/O
2010
RIDER UNIVERSITY
C/O 2012

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Don't jump into friendships with the first people who are nice to you. I wish I had spent more time looking for people who actually had similar experiences and values opposed to clinging to the first group of people I made "friends" with. They turned out to not really have my best interest at heart.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

I wish I would have spent more time understanding my financial situation and if I could go back, I would tell myself to make smarter choices to better set myself up for success opposed to struggle in grad school

WHAT THREE QUESTIONS DO YOU WISH YOU HAD ASKED THROUGHOUT YOUR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AS A FIRST-GEN?

- 1** What are some grants I may be eligible for?
- How and to whom can I bring up the burnout I'm feeling, without seeming like I'm unable to succeed academically?
- 3** How can I connect with other first-gen students?

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Slow down and enjoy this last year - you've worked incredibly hard for a long time and are deserving of celebration

SENIOR ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF RESIDENCE LIFE

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
LOWELL C/O 2008
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY C/O
2010



ANY/ALL



TALISA CARTER

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Be you. You're enough. Asking for help is a strength.
Comparison is the thief of joy.



SHE/HER/HERS

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
C/O 2010
UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE C/O
2018

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

Re-frame fear with faith. Remember where you come from. Focus on where you're going.

Point of Pause



REPEAT
THIS

*I am doing the
best that I can.*

I am enough.



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

The first gen experience will follow you into your professional career as you learn a new way of being.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMEN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Don't compare yourself to others- your college journey is YOURS. Trust yourself.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

I've talked with others about it, which helped me to realize that I wasn't alone. I also had to build my trust and confidence that I knew what I was doing and deserved to be in college (undergrad and grad).



SHE/HER/HERS

AUX INSTRUCTOR & ADVISOR

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

C/O 2009

& 2014

CCLARK@AMERICAN.EDU



DANIEL DEHOLLANDER

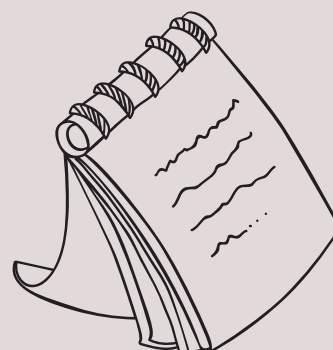
HE/HIM/HIS

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

I would encourage myself to befriend responsible and caring upper-class students. I would also encourage myself to ask more questions and sit down with more faculty and staff to learn about their career paths.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU EXPOSED YOURSELF TO DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS A FIRST-GEN?

It wasn't until I was far into my degree program that I learned about other fields. As a curious individual, I took this as an opportunity to pick up a minor. Ultimately, this helped me see that there were many other career paths that existed in the world and changed my perception on how to approach career learning.



ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,
CAREER & PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW
YORK COLLEGE AT GENESEO
C/O 2009
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
C/O 2013



CAROLINE DELEON



SHE/HER/HERS

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, FIRST
YEAR ADVISING

ALFRED UNIVERSITY
C/O 2007

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY C/O 2011

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

It's okay, you'll be fine. To remember that it's about the journey and not the destination.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU EXPOSED YOURSELF TO DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS A FIRST-GEN?

I took advantage of anything and everything I could. I recall going on job tours of companies and engaging with leadership conferences because it was good exposure and an opportunity for me to build confidence and gain strength in networking. Even if I had no clue what the topic was, I felt it was important to take advantage and engage.



SHE/HER/HERS

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,
OFFICE OF MERIT AWARDS

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY C/O
2005
BRYN MAWR COLLEGE C/O
2015

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

It's not just about grades! Talk to your professors, seek their advice and feedback, and get involved on campus and in the local community. When you get a final paper back, don't just see what you did right. Engage with the professor's comments, and try to improve the paper even after the close of the class. Develop and maintain relationships with your professors, as they are a potential network AND will need to write your grad school recommendations.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Slow. Down. You've done well, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you are ready to go right to graduate school or whatever your goal is. Explore all of your options and speak with your mentors about the best way to achieve your goals.



Lori FELTON

FELTON@AMERICAN.EDU

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

It will be okay if the path ahead does not go as outlined. Graduation is a beginning and not an end. Be easy on yourself, you are the first to graduate from college, but not the first in your family to have a career and navigate life. Talk to others, learn from their stories and think about how you want to shape your own path.

WHAT THREE QUESTIONS DO YOU WISH YOU HAD ASKED THROUGHOUT YOUR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AS A FIRST-GEN?

1

How do I stay focused on the learning process and not the end goal of completion?

2

How do I live in the moment without guilt and worry about the future?

3

What can I do to network better and build strong relationships with faculty, field supervisors and peers/future colleagues?



TARA FLAKKER

SHE/HER/HERS
ACADEMIC ADVISOR

EASTERN UNIVERSITY/O 1995
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH C/O
1999

FLAKKER@AMERICAN.EDU

Point of Pause

AFFIRMATIONS
FOR
YOU!

I CAN DO THIS

I AM EXCITED TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW TODAY

I AM CAPABLE OF BEING A GREAT STUDENT

MY ABILITY TO LEARN IS IMPROVING EVERY DAY

IT IS OKAY TO ASK FOR HELP

I AM DOING MY BEST



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Be open to learning as much as you can. Participate early and often.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

In hindsight, I was at pains to be something of a 'know-it-all' and displayed an arrogance that was unsuitable to my educational and lifetime achievements. I was fortunate to have academic mentors that guided me towards more expansive understandings of my academic fields, and thus allowed me to make much more of my undergraduate experience than simply completing the degree program.



MICHAEL GIESE

HE/HIM/HIS

ASSOCIATE REGISTRAR FOR
CATALOG AND CURRICULUM

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
BALTIMORE COUNTY C/O 1997
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY C/O
2008

MGIESE@AMERICAN.EDU



CAROL IDO

SHE/HER/HERS

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES
SPECIALIST AND REFERENCE
LIBRARIAN

THE OHIO STATE
UNIVERSITY C/O 1990
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK C/O 2013

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Don't be shy! Ask lots of questions, try not to make any assumptions, put yourself out there. There are so many opportunities to meet people, explore interests, and learn about life, on top of all the academics. Chances are you have something in common with everyone, and there are some people who share your interests or experiences.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

By the fall, make a five-year plan (or if that's too intimidating, make a three-year plan). Start looking at jobs announcements or applying to graduate programs in September. Dream big, put yourself out there, and brush off any rejections. It's a big world and there is a place for you in it.

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MARYANN JACKSON

SHE/HER/HERS

COMMUNITY DIRECTOR,
HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL LIFE

BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY C/O
2014

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY C/O
2017

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Allow your accomplishments to soak in. You worked so very hard to get to this point, enjoy it!

WHAT THREE QUESTIONS DO YOU WISH YOU HAD ASKED THROUGHOUT YOUR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AS A FIRST-GEN?

- 1** What scholarships are currently available for students?
- 2** "Would you mind repeating that again?"
- 3** Are there any other class options which would fulfill this credit obligation?





HE/HIM/HIS

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Slow down, you will do well (even though you are surrounded by others who seem better prepared). Develop a support group of friends as soon as possible. Don't neglect extracurricular activities that are fun (not pursued for resumé purposes).

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR

HARVARD UNIVERSITY C/O
1971
OXFORD UNIVERSITY C/O
1977

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

I was fortunate enough to find a group of friends/roommates who had similar backgrounds and were less intimidated by college. They were also extroverts (I was not). Over time, I also learned who the real impostors were.

KAHLER@AMERICAN.EDU



JOSH KEILHOLTZ

HE/HIM/HIS

YOO-JIN KANG

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE
UNIVERSITY C/O 2014

HOW ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

Crying. a lot. Finding faculty and mentors I trusted who held a LOT of space for me. Joined a woman of color coalition, which brought together students, staff, and faculty.

SHE/HER/HERS

COORDINATOR FOR ALCOHOL
AND OTHER DRUGS INITIATIVES

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
BALTIMORE COUNTY C/O 2015



WHAT THREE QUESTIONS DO YOU WISH YOU HAD ASKED THROUGHOUT YOUR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AS A FIRST-GEN?

- 1** How do I integrate volunteer and internship experiences into my resume?
- 2** How can I benefit from counseling?
- 3** How do I find mentors?



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU EXPOSED YOURSELF TO DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS A FIRST-GEN?

Impostor syndrome was incredibly real during grad school. My first and second semesters were rampant with feelings of inadequacies and comparisons to others in my cohort whom I felt were "better" than me. However, during one of my classes, we all ended up bringing up the fact that ALL of us felt that way, which was super comforting to know we all shared in the same struggles.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

Once my best friend left Penn State after our first year, I had to go out of my comfort zone and meet new people. I volunteered at the LGBTQA Student Resource Center which eventually led to an internship position which eventually led to my first career in higher education.

JOSHK@AMERICAN.EDU

JOSH KEILHOLTZ

HE/HIM/HIS

ACADEMIC ADVISOR IN CAS

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE
UNIVERSITY C/O 2014
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY C/O 2019



Point of Pause



MOMENT
OF
REFLECTION

THINK ABOUT YOUR
LAST ACCOMPLISHMENT
AND REMIND YOURSELF
WHY IT WAS SO GREAT!



RAINA LENNEY

SHE/HER/HERS

ASSISTANT VICE
PRESIDENT OF
ALUMNI RELATIONS

FLORIDA STATE
UNIVERSITY C/O
1995
GEORGE
WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY C/O
2002

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU EXPOSED YOURSELF TO DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS A FIRST-GEN?

I was a theater major. I rehearsed a minimum of 30 hours/week, and worked two jobs - 15 hours a week at a federal work study job, and 15-20 hours a week at a restaurant. I took 18 hours of credit each semester. With the exception of my work study jobs (one in the library and the other in the alumni relations office at the School of Theatre), and one or two opportunities auditioning for summer stock opportunities, I did not take advantage of other opportunities.

WHAT THREE QUESTIONS DO YOU WISH YOU HAD ASKED THROUGHOUT YOUR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AS A FIRST-GEN?

1

Is there assistance available for students who cannot afford to take advantage of internships and other experiential opportunities?

2

How can I better understand the implication of my financial situation?

3

What resources exist for navigating life after I graduate?

lenney@american.edu



NADIR MCCOY

HE/HIM/HIS

COORDINATOR, FRATERNITY/SORORITY
LIFE

NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
C/O 2016
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA C/O
2018

**WHAT THREE QUESTIONS DO
YOU WISH YOU HAD ASKED
THROUGHOUT YOUR
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AS
A FIRST-GEN?**

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE
YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN
YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING
SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION
STUDENT?**

You will struggle and at times you won't even realize it. Have grit, have perseverance, be confident. But not all at once. Give yourself the chance to grow, give yourself time to grow. You will be surprised so see how far you have come.

- 1** What is important to YOU?
- 2** Why is X, Y, Z important to you?
At the end of the day, what do YOU
wanna do and does it make you
happy?
- 3**

NMCCOY@AMERICAN.EDU



DOMINIQUE OVERMAN

SHE/HER/HERS

INTERIM DIALOGUE & DIVERSITY
PROGRAMS COORDINATOR

TOWSON UNIVERSITY C/O 2017
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
C/O 2019

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Carry every validation and encouragement from your first-gen experience into your job search or graduate studies. In addition to being the first to attend college, you also are the first to navigate a job search post-college or make a post-college plan. I would remind myself that you are just as deserving of good things happening to you post graduating, as you were deserving during undergrad. Apply for that job, that Fulbright, that internship, that master's program because you deserve to be in those spaces.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

I challenged negative thoughts I had about myself and my capabilities by asking myself "would you say that to one of your friends that's also first-gen?" I would never tell someone else that they should lower their standards or that they didn't deserve to be in certain courses or experiences, so I also shouldn't say that to myself.

DOVERMAN@AMERICAN.EDU



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Build relationships with faculty. Get involved in a campus club or activity every semester Find ways to value the difference that you bring

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Stay connected to friends and faculty—this is a beginning, not an ending. Be patient. It might take a year or two to land a job that you really want.



CELINE-MARIE PASCALE

SHE/HER/HERS

PROFESSOR SOCIOLOGY

GLASSBORO STATE COLLEGE
SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ C/O 2001

PASCALE@AMERICAN.EDU



**EstHER
PHILIP**

SHE/HER/HERS

AUX INSTRUCTOR AND FIRST
YEAR ADVISOR

GRAND VALLEY STATE
UNIVERSITY C/O 2014
CLEMSON UNIVERSITY C/O 2018

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

It's ok to not know everything in "how to college," but get over that fear to ask for help.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU EXPOSED YOURSELF TO DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS A FIRST-GEN?

My family wanted me to be a medical doctor, but my senior year of college I switched my major to Liberal Studies with emphasis in "Women and Leadership in Healthcare." This supported my dreams to study and work in student affairs because I believed education was empowering and liberating, especially in the college atmosphere.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

I still deal with imposter syndrome and not feeling like a failure in doing what my family wanted me to become. I stay rooted in my values and purpose of ubuntu, which helps me forget about those fears. I also surround myself with community that understands and keeps me motivated in this path.

WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU WISH YOU HAD ASKED THROUGHOUT YOUR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AS A FIRST-GEN?

1 What can do to build my financial literacy and save money in the long run?

2 Can I have a first gen faculty/staff/student mentor?

EPHILIP@AMERICAN.EDU



HE/HIM/HIS

T DIRECTOR FOR
NITY & SORORITY
LIFE

VERSITY OF WEST
FLORIDA C/O 2012
APPALACHIAN STATE
UNIVERSITY C/O 2014

While my experiences may not have been the "traditional" route of career, I sought out leadership experiences. I knew as an early college student that I wanted to go into Higher Education, so most of my experience came from leadership positions or having research or papers written in that context.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

Some of the ways I dealt with fear was from speaking with full-time staff members. Most of the time I would feel that I am not performing on the same level as my peers would, so seeking advice on papers or quizzes helped me hear from the "experts" that I am on the right track. It also helped me seek out my own mentors - who I still speak with today.

TROBERTS@AMERICAN.EDU

Point of Pause

MOMENT
OF
GRATITUDE
CHALLENGE

LIST THREE PEOPLE THAT
HAVE HELPED
YOU ALONG THE WAY:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Seek out tutoring and continue to ask questions until you have a clear answer. Within your normal routine try to have one thing that sticks out as very different from the ordinary day such as run, perform poetry, explore a place off campus, etc. It always helps to have something different so you don't fall into a boring routine.

HE/HIM/HIS

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, STUDENT
SUCCESS & TRANSITION

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY C/O
2009

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY C/O 2013

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU EXPOSED YOURSELF TO DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS A FIRST-GEN?

I simply talked to people and had authentic conversation. I hated the term "networking" because it sounded so transactional but found out those conversations I was having and people I met were actually authentic networking in action. Through conversations and being involved in various circles (whether organizations, job, or friend group) I was surrounded by people who were either looking at different career options than I was or that had different paths toward the same one.



SHANNON Smith

SSMITH@AMERICAN.EDU



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU EXPOSED YOURSELF TO DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS A FIRST-GEN?

Embrace opportunities, even if they do not completely make sense in your "ideal" professional path. Believe in yourself and be open to change.

WHAT THREE QUESTIONS DO YOU WISH YOU HAD ASKED THROUGHOUT YOUR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AS A FIRST-GEN?

- 1 How could studying abroad fit into my academic schedule?
- 2 What resources are available to me to help me succeed?
- 3 Are there staff and faculty that are first generation that understand what I might be going through?



JONATHON SORGE

HE/HIM/HIS

DIRECTOR, ALUMNI
OUTREACH

EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY C/O 2006
OHIO UNIVERSITY C/O 2009

SORGE@AMERICAN.EDU



HE/HIM/HIS

FIRST YEAR
ADVISOR AUX
INSTRUCTOR

CREIGHTON
UNIVERSITY C/O
2006 & 2009



Arthur
Stallworth

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Learn how to properly study. The SQ4R method worked for you later on. Prioritize learning, study efficiently, continue to be a good person because with patience everything else will take care of itself.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

I didn't have impostor syndrome because I felt I had a solid understanding of the value of diverse experiences on a campus. I was part of bringing something plenty of people have not been around before which is needed for learning. I did not deal with failure as well as I could have but I coped by pressing on and understanding there are various paths towards success.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Stick with Psychology. Continue to cultivate friendships and extend it further with networking.

STALLWOR@AMERICAN.EDU



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Don't wait for someone to give you the answers to the questions you have. Be proactive in figuring out what you need and how to get that help. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it, but know that you're more than capable of navigating the system just as well as anyone else.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU EXPOSED YOURSELF TO DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS A FIRST-GEN?

Attend events, reach out to faculty and staff, and look into things you might not think would be interesting. Take advantage of the resources on campus - they're here for you to use!



Briggitte Svastegui

SHE/HER/HERS

SIS UNDERGRADUATE ADVISING ASSISTANT

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY C/O 2018

BRIGGI@AMERICAN.EDU



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU EXPOSED YOURSELF TO DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS A FIRST-GEN?

Throughout college, I found different clubs and organizations that were associated with my interests or major in order to find folks that had similar goals and paths as myself. Being apart of academic clubs gave me an opportunity to apply for scholarships or jobs that I would have been unaware of. I also applied to be a Resident Assistant and an Orientation Leader. While I moved forward with being an RA, this experience helped me understand how my institution worked, where campus resources were, and ways to enhance my leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills. I believe this campus job helped prepare me for many other positions I have held since.

SHE/HER/HERS

COMMUNITY
DIRECTOR IN
HOUSING AND
RESIDENCE LIFE

WESTERN CAROLINA
UNIVERSITY C/O 2014
& 2016

WHAT THREE QUESTIONS DO YOU WISH YOU HAD ASKED THROUGHOUT YOUR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AS A FIRST-GEN?

- 1** How can I study abroad?
- 2** Ways I can connect with other first-gen students (groups, programs, etc.)?
- 3** Are there other ways that first-gen students can be supported on campus?



ANDREW TOCZYLOWSKI

HE/HIM/HIS

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICES, KOGOD SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

SUNY ONEONTA C/O 2006

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT C/O 2008

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Try everything! Immerse yourself in the campus, go to club meetings, visit different offices and departments, sign up for competitions, try everything at least once to figure out what you do or don't like.



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

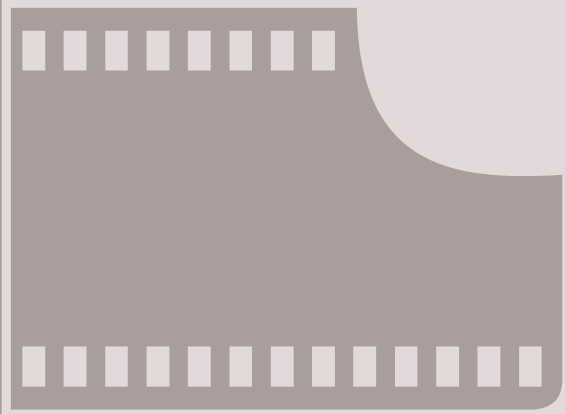
Found others who were first gen and figured things out together. I knew stuff they didn't and they knew stuff I didn't so it was helpful to connect regularly to share what we learned or what we were confused about to see who knew what or where to find the answers.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Learn more about job benefits (especially retirement). Start saving for retirement during your first full-time job right away.

Point of Pause

7 DAY
JOURNAL
PROMPT



DAY 1: WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE IN THE NEXT YEAR?

DAY 2: YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL IN LIFE?

DAY 3: WHAT HABIT DO YOU WANT TO START FOR SELF LOVE?

DAY 4: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING TO DO WHEN ALONE?

DAY 5: WRITE A LETTER TO YOUR TEENAGE SELF.

DAY 6: WHAT KEEPS YOU MOTIVATED?

DAY 7: ONE THING THAT YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF IN QUARANTINE?



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

1. Ask as many questions as you can--there's truly never a stupid one, and someone else in the room will always be grateful you spoke up.
2. Write things down so that you remember the details later when talking to your mom. This is especially needed when it comes to financial aid, housing, and study abroad.
3. Everyone is totally lying about how well-adjusted they are. You're all going through it--some are just better at faking it than others

KYLE WHITAKER

HE/HIM/HIS

FIRST YEAR ADVISOR AUX
INSTRUCTOR

ELON UNIVERSITY C/O 2014
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND,
COLLEGE PARK C/O 2018

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU EXPOSED YOURSELF TO DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS A FIRST-GEN?

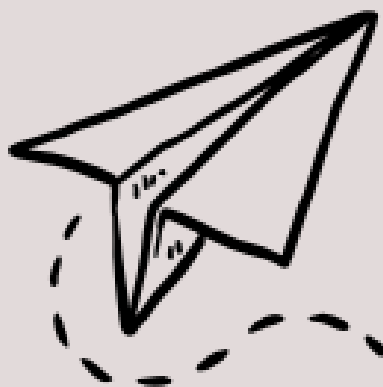
I applied for any and everything that seemed interesting to me at the time, regardless of career connections or "marketability." I had no idea what I wanted to do in the long-term, so I followed my interests and the people whose company I enjoyed and felt challenged by, and I let the rest come naturally. I talked to as many adults as I could, even if I was only even remotely interested in their work, which helped me figure out the things that I did NOT want to do. This also helped me get connected with programs specifically for first-gen college students, such as conferences and on-campus opportunities. I realized quickly that if I didn't tell my story, people weren't going to be knocking down my door to ask about it. I had to market myself, and I did so by following my curiosity and talking to everyone who would listen.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

I learned how to deal with a fear of failure in the only way I think you truly can: by failing, and failing hard. I applied for a summer job on-campus that was connected to my interests in education, thinking it would be a perfect fit and the way forward in a possible career. When I didn't get the job, I was devastated--but I had to find some other way to make money to afford campus housing. I took a job as a tour guide, which felt far less impressive at the time. It was only when I realized how much more I gained from becoming a tour guide that I started to understand that I had failed for a reason: that education job simply wasn't meant to be, but something else was. I didn't have backup plans with internships and family connections back home, so I did the best I could and realized that if I was going to fail, it was because something else needed to happen in my life. That tour guide job connected me with staff and administrators who would later write my recommendations for graduate school--so I was right where I needed to be.



"I did the best I could and realized that if I was going to fail, it was because something else needed to happen in my life."





**SHATINA
WILLIAMS**

SHE/HER/HERS

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR
TRAINING

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-IRVINE
C/O 2015

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-
MADISON C/O 2009

BOSTON COLLEGE C/O 2015

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Being a first-generation college student is not easy and that is okay. It is okay to not know something or feel as though you have some catching up to do. It means you will have to work harder to be in the know.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU EXPOSED YOURSELF TO DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS A FIRST-GEN?

I got involved in various opportunities. It was not until I had a conversation with my mentor, telling him what I like and what I don't like that we determined that I would like to be a Psychologist. I did not know what a psychologist was or what graduate school was. My mentor walked me through the entire process.



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU MAY HAVE DEALT WITH FEAR OF FAILURE OR IMPOSTOR SYNDROME AS A FIRST GEN?

I found my tribe. I found people who understood what it was like and we shared information together. For example, I did not know that I could receive free tutoring on my campus or that going abroad for studies was a thing. It was only through conversations that I learned and was encouraged to pursue those things that I did not know were opportunities.

WHAT THREE QUESTIONS DO YOU WISH YOU HAD ASKED THROUGHOUT YOUR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AS A FIRST-GEN?

1 How do I find a mentor?

2 Am I on track to reach my goals?

3 Can you help me with this?



SHE/HER/HERS

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN RACE,
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

C/O 1999

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY C/O 2010 &
2015

SHErri WILLIAMS

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Know that you bring knowledge that others don't have and it is as valuable as you are. You earned your position. Own it and act like it.



JAMIE WYATT

SHE/HER/HERS

DIRECTOR, ACADEMIC
LEARNING COMMUNITIES

SUNY COLLEGE AT BUFFALO
C/O 1991
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY C/O
2000



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Don't be afraid to ask questions. You won't out yourself. Everyone is new at this college thing just like you.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU EXPOSED YOURSELF TO DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS A FIRST-GEN?

I actively sought out faculty mentors and internship opportunities.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF DURING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE ABOUT NAVIGATING SCHOOL AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT?

Learn how to create a budget and don't take out extra loan money for frivolous expenses. Have fun, but realize that you're going to be paying interest on that late night pizza for a very, very long time!!!

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU EXPOSED YOURSELF TO DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS A FIRST-GEN?

Studying abroad for an entire semester was not financially feasible for me, but I craved an international experience! I took a short-term summer course in Italy that was the perfect fit. Consider opportunities like Alternative Break or courses with abroad components built-in. They can be just as life-changing as semesters abroad, while still allowing you to work throughout the school year.



DIRECTOR, DONOR RELATIONS
& STEWARDSHIP

ITHACA COLLEGE C/O 2008
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY C/O
2012

SHE/HER/HERS

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Point of Pause



CDI
CHALLENGE

1. JOIN THE AU CDI - FIRST GENERATION COMMUNITY (FACEBOOK GROUP)
2. VISIT ONE OF THE RESOURCE SITES ON NEXT PAGE
3. MESSAGE A FIRST-GEN FRIEND AN AFFIRMATION
4. EMAIL ONE OF THE FACULTY/STAFF ABOUT THEIR FIRST-GEN EXPERIENCE

First-GEN CAMPUS RESOURCES

Center For Diversity & Inclusion:

<https://www.american.edu/ocl/cdi/firstgen-faq.cfm>

Career Center:

<https://www.american.edu/careercenter>

Counseling Center:

<https://www.american.edu/ocl/counseling>

Financial Aid:

<https://www.american.edu/financialaid>

First-Gen Study Abroad:

<http://bit.ly/firstgenabroadau>

Health Promotion & Advocacy Center:

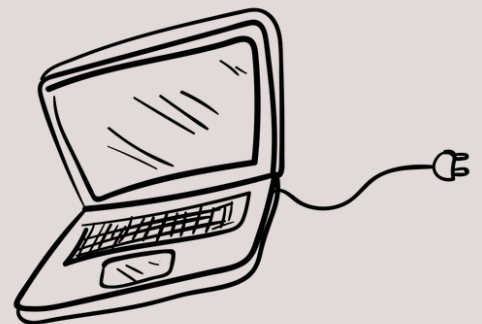
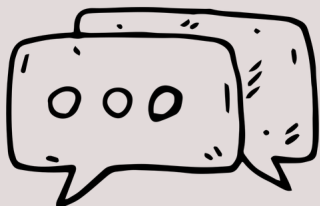
<https://www.american.edu/ocl/promote-health>

The Market:

<https://www.american.edu/ocl/the-market.cfm>

Merit Awards:

<https://www.american.edu/careercenter/meritawards>



the YEARBOOK Directory

my
all
all

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Jamie Wyatt 34

ADMISSIONS

Sharon Alston 4

ADVISING

Tara Flakker 15

Josh Keilholtz 22

Brigitte Suastegui 34

ALUMNI RELATIONS

Raina Lenney 24

Jonathan Sorge 32

Cassandra Zacharkiw 44

CAMPUS LIFE

Yoo-Jin Kang 21

Dom Overman. 26

Shannon Smith 31

COUNSELING CENTER

Shatina Williams 40

FACULTY

Talisa Carter 9

Olga Cordero Brana 6

Miles Kahler 20

Celine-Marie Pascale 27

Sherri Williams. 42

FIRST YEAR ADVISING

Camille Clark 11

Caroline DeLeon 13

Esther Philip 28

Arthur Stallworth 33

Kyle Whitaker 38

FRATERNITY & SORORITY LIFE

Nadir McCoy 25

Travis Roberts 29

GUEST SERVICES

Kim Araya 5

HOUSING & RESIDENCE LIFE

Misty Denham-Barrett. 7

Ashley Boltrushek 8

Maryann Jackson 19

Myranda Thomson 35

KOGOD

Daniel DeHollander 12

Andrew Toczydlowski 36

LIBRARY

Carol Ido 18

OFFICE OF MERIT AWARDS

Lori Felton 14

REGISTRAR

Michael Giese 17





PROUD TO BE
FIRST