

1 First-Generation College Students & Student Employment

Supporting First-Generation Students: *Institutional Best Practices and Resources*

As the number of first-generation students enrolled in college continues to rise, institutions are responding by creating resources and initiatives to aid students' journeys from enrollment through graduation. At many colleges and universities, career and employment services professionals have established programs designed specifically for first-generation students. Many institutions are looking for new and better ways to serve their first-generation students, but often the most challenging aspect of establishing new student support programs is a lack of models or examples from which to learn.

This resource guide is intended to provide student employment professionals a starting point to explore first-generation student support programs from various institutional types. You will also find examples of alumni networks and ways to build first-generation students' frameworks of support on campus.

First-Generation Student Support In Action

Below you will find examples of how institutions are responding to their first-generation students' career preparation and employment needs. As you review each example consider:

1. What are the similarities and differences between your institution and each of those listed? What can be learned from the approach used by each institutional type?
2. What are several "simple" tools/resources you can create for your students this semester? This academic year?
3. Where are the opportunities for partnerships with other offices or departments? How can any financial burden be shared among the partners?
4. What can be accomplished with your current staffing levels? Do you need to hire student workers? Full-time employee(s)?
5. How can you "sell" your ideas to senior leaders? How will this impact enrollment and retention? What are the other institutions doing to ensure the programs have a positive impact on student persistence?

Institutional Programs and Resources Examples

- Brandeis University Hiatt Career Center [First Generation Student Resources](#)
- Center for First-generation Student Success [National Data Fact Sheets on First-generation College Graduates](#)
- Clark University Career Connections Center [Resources for First-Generation Students](#)
- Cornell University College of Arts & Sciences [Pathways Internship Program](#)
- CSU, Fullerton Career Center [I am First program](#)
- Ozark Technical Community College [First Generation College Student Support](#)
- Swarthmore College Career Services FLI: [First-Generation, Low-Income Student Support](#)
- Tulsa Community College Career Services [Guide for First-Generation Students](#)
- UC Davis Office of Undergraduate Education [First Generation Directory](#)
- UNC Charlotte University Career Center [Professional Clothing Closet](#) (read about the [pilot and expansion periods](#) of this initiative)
- University of Denver Career & Professional Development Center [First Generation Students & Alumni](#)
- University of Minnesota Career & Internship Services [Career Resources for First-Generation College Students](#)
- Washington University in St. Louis [Chancellor's Career Fellows Program](#)
- Willamette University Career Development Office [Career Resources for First-Generation College Students](#)

Alumni Connections

First-generation students struggle to build social capital in college which often results in few professional connections and networks. This, in turn, creates disparities between first-generation and continuing-generation students' post-graduation employment and graduate school outcomes. By developing strong networks of support for first-generation students, institutions can increase students' social capital as they begin their full-time job or graduate school search. Below are examples of institutions that have built alumni connection networks that can benefit first-generation students.

- Clark University [ClarkCONNECT](#)
- Harvard University [First Generation Alumni Network](#)
- Tufts University Career Center [First Generation Students & Alumni Network](#)
- UCLA Bruin Resource Center [First-Gen Professional Network](#)



Other Student Support Program Examples

In addition to exploring programs and services developed by career and employment professionals, NSEA members should consider student development frameworks that can be implemented to build students' systems of support on campus. Developing cross-campus partnerships and programs will help students have a consistent, positive experience in college and will minimize the confusion so many first-generation students encounter.

- DePaul University Office of Student Employment [EDGE Program](#)
- University of Iowa Division of Student Life [Iowa GROW](#)

The First Generation & Student Employment Project is a National Student Employment Association Inclusive Excellence Project with Dr. Matt Newlin

The goal of the project is to establish professional development resources that better understand how first-generation students navigate the campus employment and career services experiences in college

To learn more about the project visit the [NSEA website](#).