New students gain an edge at Iowa

Iowa Edge offers support to first-generation college students and those from underrepresented backgrounds.

Juan Morales knew what this day meant to his parents.
His father, a humble man by nature, stood a bit taller by his son’s side. His mother worried her oldest child would miss her cooking and go hungry while away from home.

Morales understood the sacrifices his parents had made so he could be the first in their family to go to college.

I know I will have to work hard on prioritizing and managing my time wisely,” says Morales, an incoming first-year student at the University of Iowa. “But my parents have done a good job helping me get where I am today.”

Morales, who grew up in Storm Lake, Iowa, and who plans to major in finance, will also get extra help from Iowa Edge, a program offered to students who come from underrepresented backgrounds, as well as to first-generation college students. The idea behind the program is to ease students' concerns and ensure that participants successfully transition into college life at the UI.

Iowa Edge gives parents some peace of mind too.

“I am happy there is this program to help him,” says Juan’s father, Agustin Morales, adding, “I am still a little nervous.”

This year, Iowa Edge marks its 10th anniversary. Programming began Sunday, Aug. 14, with an early move-in, followed by a family welcome at the Iowa Memorial Union. Events will culminate with a banquet on Wednesday, Aug. 17. In between, participants will take part in team-building activities, tour campus, and interact with faculty. Photo by Tim Schoon.

Four things you should know about Iowa Edge:

1. This year is the program’s 10th anniversary.

2. To date, 786 students have participated.

3. The second-year retention
participants will take part in team-building activities, tour campus, and interact with faculty.

As of Aug. 12, accepted applicants included 35 students who identified as Latino, 27 as African American, six as Asian/Pacific Islander, 26 as multi-racial/other, five as Caucasian, two as Native American, and one as Dutch.

Nadine Petty, director of the UI Center for Diversity and Enrichment, told Iowa Edge students and their families how out of place she felt as a first-generation college student at the University of Rochester, where she didn’t have the support of a program like Iowa Edge.

“I didn’t know what I didn’t know,” Petty says. “Iowa Edge provides you with all kinds of resources to make sure you know where to go and who to talk to.”

Valerie Garr, diversity coordinator for the UI College of Nursing and a member of the Iowa Edge advisory board, says the program connects participants with faculty and staff who help acclimate students to campus.

Samuel Pang, 19, of Mount Pleasant, Iowa, is grateful for the support he received from Iowa Edge in 2014, when he was a first-year student. This year, he is an Iowa Edge peer leader and will help guide the program’s newest participants.

“Iowa Edge provided me with a peer group and a way of getting help when I needed it,” he says.

Chris Smith, of Chicago, hopes Iowa Edge will help his son, Khalil, meet the challenges of college and life now that he's away from home.

“Our concern is time management,” Smith says. “He won’t have someone waking him up or giving him a ride anymore when he’s late.”
The Iowa Edge program has been operating since 2006 through the Kevin and Donna Gruneich Charitable Foundation, with additional support from the Center for Diversity and Enrichment in the UI Chief Diversity Office. Kevin Gruneich graduated from the Henry B. Tippie College of Business in 1980.

For more information about Iowa Edge:

- Blog: diversity.uiowa.edu/programs/iowa-edge
- Twitter: @TheIowaEdge
- The Center for Diversity & Enrichment’s Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/U-of-Iowa-Center-for-Diversity-Enrichment-170373939694424/?fref=ts
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