Who are First Gen Students at UI?

The entering academic profile of First Generation students is comparable to the profile of continuing generation students when looking at:

- Grit & Resiliency
- High School GPA

Despite coming in with similar academic profiles, first generation students as a group have lower rates of persistence and college completion.

In Their Own Words:

Observations based on Task Force review of research and interviews with First Gen Students at UI

There is no “typical” first generation student, and it is difficult to make generalizations that apply to the entire group. However, it is possible to identify a number of common characteristics and tendencies that represent the experiences of many.

"The stigma of asking for help is real!"

Proactive Problem-Solving

First Generation students are often committed to doing and figuring out things on their own - which tends to increase resilience, but also may delay or prevent them from seeking help.

First Generation students don’t always know what to expect coming in. They need to be encouraged to find support early on, rather than waiting until the challenges have become much harder to address.

Facing the Insider Language of Higher Education

Processes and expectations are expressed in terms that aren’t necessarily common knowledge for students - for example, “grading on a curve,” or what counts as “class participation”

As such, students do not always see how particular learning experiences or ways of preparing for class are intended to help them succeed on homework assignments or tests.

"Professors look at you funny when you ask questions or tell them you don’t know how to study."

Family Impact is Huge!

Many students report coming from a tight-knit family that encourages and helps when necessary. Students are often highly motivated to make their families proud and live up to expectations.

And yet, expectations can also add pressure. Families who provide high levels of support and set high expectations don’t always have firsthand experience in areas where help is needed such as financial aid requirements, or balancing work and study.

"You can do it!"

"You’re the first ...
Go big or go home ...
Be a doctor, lawyer, etc."

For more ideas, resources, and research related to supporting First Generation Student Success, visit uc.uiowa.edu/first-generation-students