

# College Admissions for First Generation Students

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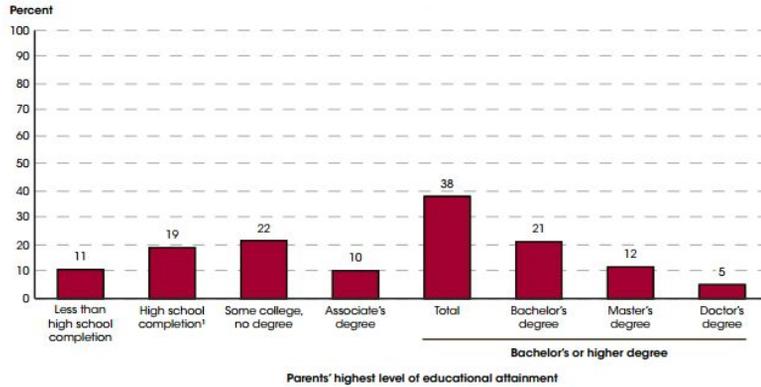
## What is First-Gen....

- National Center for Education Statistics
  - “Undergraduates Whose Parents Never Enrolled in Postsecondary Education”
- Chapman University
  - “A first-generation college student is defined as a student whose parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have not completed a bachelor’s degree”

There is no universal definition for First-Gen which can make identifying your first generation students really tricky. Students are often identified as being first gen based on their own self report.

# National Center for Education Stats Condition of Education

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of 5- to 17-year-olds, by parents' highest level of educational attainment: 2014



<sup>1</sup> Includes parents who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.  
NOTE: Parents' highest level of educational attainment is the highest level of education attained by any parent residing in the same household as the child. Parents include adoptive and stepparents but exclude parents not residing in the same household as their child. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

When we think about first gen students based on this info we can see that we are at least talking about 30% of our students based on one definition. If we go by 2nd definition we are talking about 62% of our students

Since there is no one definition for first gen and we are relying on student's self reporting to identify first gen students, the best way to ensure we serve all first gen students is building a school wide college admissions program. This more inclusive method ensures no student gets left behind and all our students benefit from the programming.

## Build your team

- Students
- Parents
- Teachers & Staff
- Administration
- Community Stakeholders
- College/University Representatives

This is not a one person job. You are working within a school that is a system so use that your advantage. Find the allies in your school who support your work and who are willing to help you through the process.

Keep in mind that students belong to a family system and that family system should be included in the college admissions process.

## 3 Main Tasks

- Exposure
- Education
- Support

Think about a time when you did something new for the first time or a time where you found yourself somewhere totally foreign. It is scary and uncomfortable. Navigating the higher education system is the same way for first gen students. If they are the first in their family to try to navigate this system they are in foreign territory. Even some of the language and terms we use is new to first gen students. When working with first generation students think of yourself as a travel guide into the world of higher education. You need to expose them to their options, educate them so they understand the “language” of higher ed and what they are doing, and support them as they navigate the process. It is super important to remember that first generation students are in unknown territory and that is scary. You want to support them every step of the way so that they don't feel lost, overwhelmed, or alone.

## Freshman Year

- College Fair
- University Visits
- After School Tutoring
- Gallop to Graduation
- Parent Information Nights
- Classroom Presentations

Main goal: build relationships

Working with first generation students requires trust and to build trust you need to build a relationship with the student & their family. Make yourself known, let them know what you do, and start building relationships with them in their freshman year.

## Sophomore Year

- PSAT
- Career Interest Inventory
- Sophomore Interview/Course Selection
- College Fair
- University Visits
- Gallop to Graduation
- Parent Information Nights
- Classroom Presentations

Big change between frosh and soph year is the PSAT. All sophomores are required to take this test and counselors are expected to go over the results. Work with the counselors to meet with the students and explain their scores to them. In course selection counselors ask about post-high school plans and career plans to make sure students are working towards the right diploma. Use this information to build your programming.

## Junior Year: Fall Semester

- Senior Workshops
  - Sr Year Timeline
  - Prepping for the SAT/ACT
  - Common Application 101
  - Intro to Personal Essay Writing
  - Scholarships 101
  - Letters of Recommendation
- College Fair
- College Visits
- Scholarship Search
- Financial Aid Options

Think of the college admissions process as prepping for a game. Freshman and sophomore year are the practice years. You want to build a relationship with your students and their families and get them started thinking about the college admissions process. Junior year is like a scrimmage game. You are practicing the plays so when it is game time you know what you are doing. Junior year is important because it is when you are preparing your students to “play” the college admissions game next year. Let them know what to expect, have them start to take college entrance exams, have them practice writing their personal statements so when it is game time they are ready to go.

## Junior Year: Spring Semester

- Junior Interview
- ACT & SAT
- Brag Sheet
- Classroom Presentations

## Senior Year: Fall Semester

- Senior Interview
- Finalize college options
- Build relationship with college recruiters
- SAT & ACT
- Scholarships
- FAFSA Night
- College Application Week

Senior year is game time. Create opportunities for your students to put into action all the work you have been doing the last four years. Bring in college admissions recruiters to help them fill out their applications, host a FAFSA night where financial aid reps can help them fill out their FAFSA and support your students every step of the way.

# College Application Week

- Senior Workshops
  - Sr Year Timeline
  - Prepping for the SAT/ACT
  - Common Application 101
  - Intro to Personal Essay Writing
  - Scholarships 101
  - Letters of Recommendation
- Reno Sparks Goes to College Week
  - College Fair & College Visits
- Application Workshops
  - Common App Day, TMCC Day, UNR Day
- School Wide Celebration

Schools traditionally have Homecoming Week, why not a college application week?  
Filling out college applications is a huge accomplishment so celebrate it.

## Senior Year: Spring Semester

- Accept admissions
- Scholarships & FAFSA
- Loose Ends
  - Housing
  - Testing
  - Orientation
  - Class Placement/Selection
  - Major Exploration
- End of Year Celebrations
  - Scholarship Night
  - Senior Assembly/Academic Signing Day

At this point your students have applied to the colleges of their choice and now need you to help them tie up loose ends.

# First Generation Student Considerations

- Reach out early
- Involve the Family
- Graduation Requirement Information
  - Diploma Types
  - GPA: unweighted vs. weighted
  - Course selection: college admission requirements, AP/Honors options
- College & Career Information
  - Career Types
  - Types of Degrees
  - Cost of Attending
  - The College Experience & Transition
- Check your values

Some students will go through the entire college admissions process and then decide to not enroll...that is okay. Check your values and remember when working with students some of them aren't just first generation to go to college, some are first in their family to graduate high school. It is okay for them to choose a different path.