

First-Generation Students in Transition at an Open Admissions University

Findings:

First-generation students face barriers to college integration that are not always alleviated through participation in organizations that are not specific to first-generation students. Six out of seven students in this focus group belonged to student organizations on campus, and while these organizations helped students in their transition to college, they did not fully bridge first-generation students' integration into the university setting. Among other challenges, these students expressed a need for guidance on how to communicate the rigors of a college education to parents who do not have first-hand experience of these demands.

Washburn University's Initiatives to Help First-Generation Students:

Washburn's efforts to support first-generation students fall in line with the university's open admissions goal to provide postsecondary education to populations that would normally be left out of the university experience.

- First-Generation Mentoring Program: The First-Generation Mentoring Program connects students who are first in their family to attend a four-year university with alumni and community members in the Topeka area who want to help current Washburn students succeed.
- Ichabod Success Institute: The Ichabod Success Institute is a program designed to help direct-from-high school students prepare for a successful transition to Washburn University. The institute begins with a 5-week residential program that runs during the summer.
- First-Generation Family Newsletter: This newsletter informs families about university deadlines, shares strategies for student success, and showcases student achievements. The newsletter helps students share their college experience with family members and enables family members to better support their students.
- First-Generation Student Organization: We Are F1rst
 - *We Are F1rst* helps first-generation students navigate the college experience by clarifying university terminology, creating mentorship opportunities, and connecting students to campus resources.
- First-Generation Student Buttons: Washburn's Center for Student Success and Retention has created "*Proud to be First*" buttons to celebrate first-generation students around campus.
- First-Generation Website
 - Washburn.edu/firstgen

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