

The term First Generation Students most often refers to those students whose parents have had no college or university experience. These students face a number of barriers in accessing post-secondary education. They frequently lack adequate academic preparation in high school and are typically less knowledgeable about how to apply to post-secondary institutions or access the financial options to support their education. They are more at risk of delaying their enrolment and have difficulty integrating once enrolled and remaining enrolled to completion. Parental awareness of education options is low and support is often absent in helping students enter to post-secondary system, and integrate smoothly once they get there. Many families are unable to provide financial support and may rely on the income generated by the child to support the family. The additional pressure to generate income while studying can negatively impact a decision to apply as well as affect retention rates once enrolled. Perhaps the greatest barrier is lack of confidence. First generation students have difficulty seeing themselves as capable of being in college or university, likely having experienced reinforcing negative messages from teachers, counselors, family and peers.

### **First Generation LEADS Initiative - Overview of Program**

George Brown College has become a leader in serving non-traditional students by creating partnerships and collaborations that link individuals and communities to opportunities through education, developing new pathways and increasing access to post-secondary education.

#### **Who We Serve**

The LEADS Initiative serves First Generation populations who need specialized support to make the transition to post-secondary education. This target population consists of a mix of disengaged high school students, mature students, and unique vulnerable groups such as Crown Wards, street youth, new immigrants and single parents.

#### **Objectives**

The LEADS Initiative has **three objectives**:

1. Outreach - build capacity to transition more FGS to post-secondary
  - raise awareness, interest in, and aspirations for post-secondary education
2. Transition - expand capacity to serve current FGS for successful transition
  - create a *bridge* to post-secondary that emphasizes early and ongoing support and activities that reduce anxiety and ensure engagement
3. Retention - integrate successful initiatives into College policy and practice to ensure retention

- ensure First Generation student persistence and success to maintain sustained engagement, and continue to build capacity within the College to support First Generation students.

The **four core goals** of this Initiative are to provide:

1. FG populations, who might not otherwise consider post- secondary education, with genuine choices and options for their future
2. FG populations (high school, mature, and college students) with opportunities to have positive interactions through advising and mentoring that will build meaningful and enriching relationships that support their education
3. Opportunities for FG populations to develop a concrete connection with post-secondary life through on-campus visits and events.
4. FG populations with the necessary tools and support to develop the skills they will need in their post-secondary careers.