

SEM and First Generation Students – Canada & the USA



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Overview of Session

1. Introductions
2. Data on First Generation Students in the USA
3. Data on First Generation Students in Canada
4. Barriers to Success in both Nations
5. Overview of Research on Social Differences and Difference-Education and First Generation Student Success
6. Interactive exercise at your tables
7. Report back and large group discussion

USA Data on First Generation Students

- 34% of 5-17 year olds in the US are considered first generation students
- 41% of those are African-American
- 61% are Latino
- 23% are white
 - NCES, 2012

USA Data on First Generation Students

- 82% of non-first generation students enrolled in US colleges immediately after high school
- 54% of first generation students whose parents finished high school enrolled immediately
- 36% of those whose parents had less than a high school education enrolled immediately
 - Choy, NCES, 2001

USA Data on First Generation Students

- 50% of students in US higher education are first generation
- 30% (5.6 million) of US college freshmen are first generation
- 24% (4.5 million) are first generation *and* low income
- More than 25% of those will leave after their first years
- Only 11% will eventually graduate
- Whereas 55% of higher income, first generation students will
- And 78% of higher income, second generation student will
 - US Department of Education, 2010

USA Data on First Generation Students

- The average age of enrollment for first-generation college students is 22, compared to 20 for students who are not first generation
 - 54% of first-generation students were financially on their own, while only 27% of students who were not first generation had full financial responsibility for themselves
 - 30% of first generation students had dependents with 11 percent being single parents, while only 14% of non-first generation students had dependents and only 4% were single parents.
- Concordia University-Online, 2009

Canadian Data on First Generation Students

- As of 2011/2012 almost 2 million students were enrolled in Canadian post-secondary institutions
- Over 90% were domestic; 9.3% classified as international
- 56% of students were enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program or above
- 56% of all students enrolled were women
- In 2011 over 460,000 students graduated with just over half with a baccalaureate degree

Canadian Data on First Generation Students

- **2011 Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology** reviewed the barriers to post-secondary education in Canada
- Approximately 17% of students whose parents have a high school education or less go on to university compared to about 50% for students with university-educated parents
- Students with parents who have some post-secondary education are more familiar with the environment and are more likely to guide their students through the system

Canadian Data on First Generation Students of Immigrants

- When taken as a block, the students of immigrants show higher university participation rates than the Canadian-born population
- According to Statistics Canada, non-immigrant first generation Canadians “had a 37.7 percent rate of university participation, as compared with university participation rates of 57.0 and 54.3 percent for first and second generation immigrants, respectively”
- It appears that the children of immigrants to Canada are a relatively advantaged group in our society in terms of education...However...

Canadian Data on First Generation Students of Immigrants

- While “Chinese-speaking immigrant youth tend to do as well or better than Canadian-born youth in terms of secondary school graduation rates, grades and participation in pre-university courses” other groups such as “Spanish-, Creole- or Vietnamese-speaking immigrant students generally perform below their Canadian-born counterparts”
- High value placed on education and language skills

Academic Barriers and University Challenges

Barrier

- Report lower educational aspirations
- More likely to enter college academically underprepared
- Reading comprehension and critical thinking do not improve at as high a rate
- Earn lower GPAs and take fewer academic hours
- Avoid majors and courses in math, science, and humanities

Challenge

- Create an environment that affirms students' strengths and encourages their educational pursuits
- Provide opportunities for supplemental instruction, remedial instruction, and/or learning skill development
- Demonstrate the value of liberal education

Cultural Barriers and University Challenges

Barrier

Challenge

- Less likely to identify college as necessary to achieving goals
 - Parents lack “college knowledge” related to navigating the college environment
 - Only 50% identify their parents as supportive of their decision to attend college
 - “[Live] simultaneously in two vastly different worlds while being fully accepted in neither”
- Demonstrate the long-term benefits of a college education
 - Integrate with family to create “buy-in” when possible and/or appropriate; encourage autonomy as necessary
 - Assist students in recognizing and accepting their dual roles
 - Provide culturally-sensitive services that address the specific needs of first-generation students

Social Barriers and University Challenges

Barrier

Challenge

- More likely to live off-campus
 - Less likely to participate in on-campus organizations/events
 - Identify their closest friends as full-time employees rather than college students
 - Report higher rates of isolation and discrimination
 - Perceive faculty as “distant” or unconcerned with them as individuals
- Provide cost-effective housing options and/or ways to integrate with Housing programs and initiatives
 - Target first-generation students when advertising organizations and events
 - Foster a safe and inclusive campus community
 - Create opportunities for first-generation students to form relationships with faculty

Financial Barriers and University Challenges

Barrier

Challenge

- Uninformed about financial aid – forms, processes, etc.
- More likely to have additional financial obligations
- Have fewer resources to pay for college
- Nature of and time allotted to work differ from that of second-generation students
- More likely to meet employment obligations than academic obligations

- Supply materials about financial aid and the financial aid process that are easy to access and easy to understand
- Assist students in minimizing out-of-pocket costs
- Provide ample opportunities for on-campus employment
 - M. Selby-Theut

Research on Social Differences and First Generation Student Support

“Closing the Social-Class Gap: A Difference-Education Intervention Improves First-Generation Students’ Academic Performance and All Students’ College Transition” in Psychological Science

- ❖ Whether Educating first-generation students about how their different backgrounds matter can improve their transition to college and enable them to overcome background-specific obstacles to success.
- ❖ 5 Social Differences – Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Social Class, and Sexual Orientation
- ❖ Difference-Education applied to the experimental group
- ❖ Students in the difference-education condition experienced less stress and anxiety, better adjustment to college life, and more academic and social engagement than the control group

Interaction

First Generation Students and Social Differences

- ❖ 5 Social Differences – Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Social Class, and Sexual Orientation
- ❖ Discuss how social differences can be a barrier and a means to success
- ❖ What Programming and Services could be or have been deployed (best practices) to support social differences as a means to success for first generation students?
- ❖ Report back to larger group

Thank you!

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