

PARENTS + FAMILIES ARE

PARTNERS

FIRST GENERATION
FAMILY GUIDE



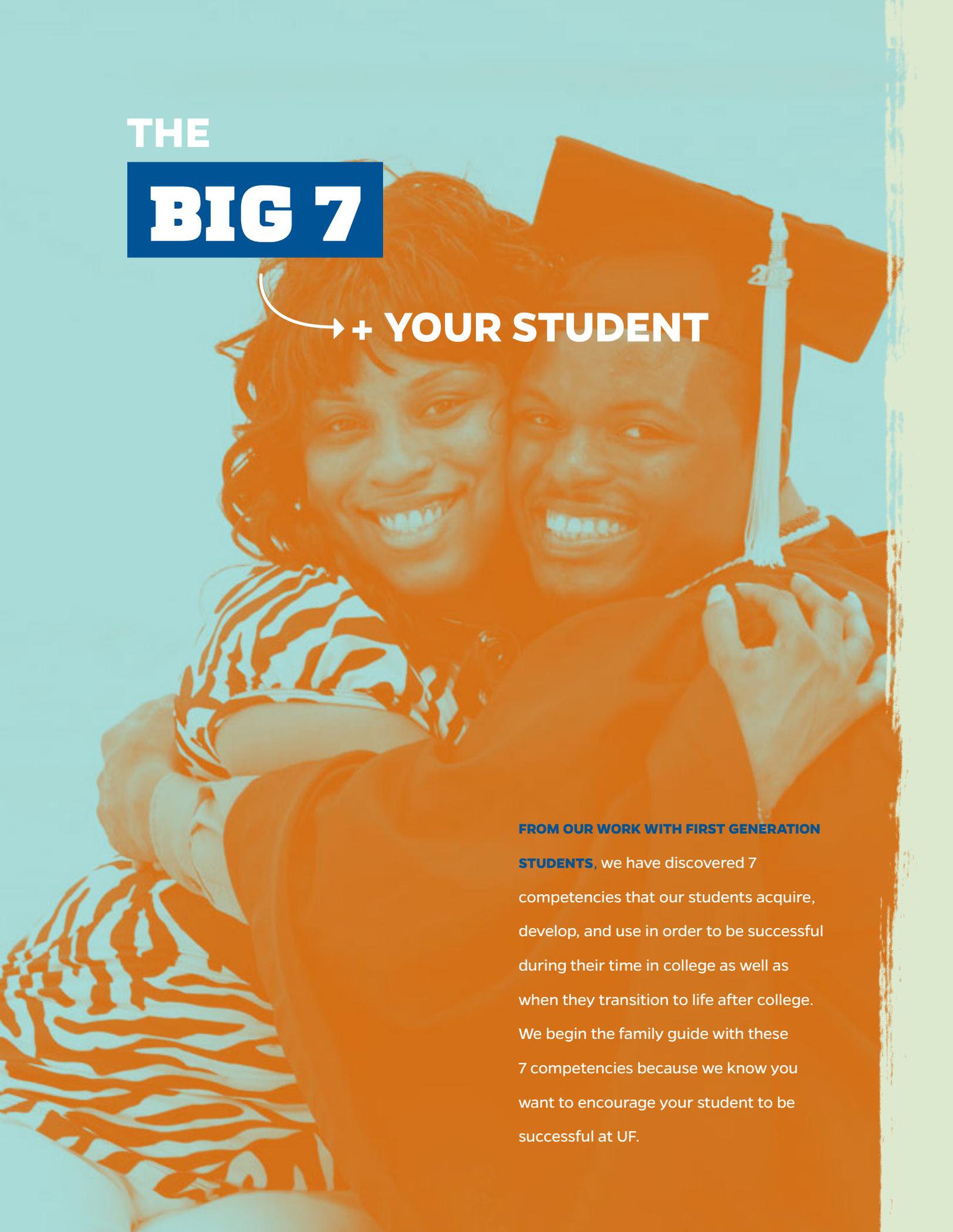
WELCOME TO FLORIDA

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR STUDENT BEING ACCEPTED at one of the most prestigious universities in the country. This guide is your roadmap to be sure you are an integral part of your student's academic career at UF. First generation students often possess diverse skills that can enhance their college experience. Adaptability, resilience, personal pride, ingenuity, and a strong sense of responsibility are what make first gen student stand out. This is because of the lessons they have learned from you as their family members and support system.

At UF, we celebrate the diverse identities of the over 50,000 students pursuing higher education. Nationally, around 20% of all incoming first year students at four-year universities are the first in their families to attend college. These students are first generation college students (First Gen). First Gen students set a new path and blaze a trail for their families and communities by attending college.

We recognize the transition from high school to higher education can be a unique adjustment for any student. To be first in the family to navigate this new experience can be exciting, challenging, or overwhelming for the student, as well as family members. The purpose of this guide is to help you learn more about UF and provide strategies for you to continue to help and support your student in college.





THE

BIG 7

→ + **YOUR STUDENT**

FROM OUR WORK WITH FIRST GENERATION

STUDENTS, we have discovered 7 competencies that our students acquire, develop, and use in order to be successful during their time in college as well as when they transition to life after college. We begin the family guide with these 7 competencies because we know you want to encourage your student to be successful at UF.



THE COURAGE TO ASK FOR HELP AND SUPPORT

There are a number of resources to ensure your student gets the most out of their academic experience at UF. The following services are available to all UF students, but highly recommended for First Gen students.

- **Academic Advising** is offered for all majors at UF.

Students can schedule appointments or walk-in to see academic advisors about degree requirements, course selection, minors, and various other academic related concerns. Academic advisors serve a similar purpose to high school guidance counselors.

- The **University Writing Center** has graduate students who proof read papers and help students learn how to improve their writing skills.

- The **Office of Academic Support** offers various programs to promote a learning experience in which students can achieve their academic goals and reach their fullest potential.

- **Professors and Teaching Assistants (TA's)** set-aside office hours to meet and work with students regarding course material, test preparation and their progress in class. Information on office hours can be found in the class syllabus (aka the class outline that students get at the beginning of each course). Students that utilize office hours not only have a higher chance of doing well in the class, but are also likely to build a relationship with that teacher who could end up serving as a valuable mentor.

- At the **Broward Teaching Center**, tutors help students in areas such as math, science, engineering, and writing.

FAMILY TALKING POINT

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD WHILE THEY ARE ADJUSTING TO THEIR NEW LIFE AT

COLLEGE IS IMPORTANT. You can help by showing you are available if they become stressed or overwhelmed. It is normal for students to go through an adjustment period in order to become fully comfortable with the academic demands of college.

College classes are often designed to be challenging and require even the most academically talented high school students to truly apply themselves and change the way they approach learning. Not doing well on a test or an assignment can be hard for your student to deal with, but it can happen and is completely normal. Try your best to stay positive when talking with your student. If your student has not met with the professor, suggest they start there. Encourage your student to attend office hours. Recommend that your student seek the guidance of an academic advisor may also help. Even the Career Resource Center can provide support when students are trying to decide if their major best suits their academic strengths and interests. Changing majors as well as using tutoring resources are extremely common at UF. By asking for help your student is taking charge of their learning experience, your support and encouragement of this can give your student added confidence in the process.

TALK TO YOUR STUDENT ABOUT:

- Developing good study habits
 - Talking to professors during office hours
 - Seeking a tutor
 - Finding a way to take notes that works best for them
 - Forming study groups with their peers
-



THE ABILITY TO BALANCE MULTIPLE RESPONSIBILITIES

Pursuing higher education is more than just attending classes. We bet your student was involved in co-curricular activities like National Honor Society, sports teams, or volunteering during high school. While in college, it's also very important for your student to get involved in similar ventures.

The University of Florida has opportunities for everyone from culturally-based student organizations to sports clubs. Co-curricular activities are vital for your student to further develop skills like teamwork, communication, and problem solving. If your student is having a hard time finding ways to get involved, consider suggesting these resources:

- **Student Activities and Involvement (SAI)** is comprised of four main areas including Student Organizations and Campus Events, Sorority and Fraternity Affairs, Travel and Recreation Program, and Student Government. The four areas of SAI are home to the over 900 student organizations. www.studentinvolvement.ufl.edu.

- The **Center for Leadership and Service (CLS)** enhances the education of students through meaningful service opportunities. They will consult students on volunteer opportunities that best fit with their interests. www.leadershipandservice.ufl.edu.

- **Recreational Sports** offers experiences that enrich the lives of students through fitness, sports and adventure play. Students can get involved in club sports, intramural sports, team building exercises and much more. www.recsports.ufl.edu.

- **Multicultural and Diversity Affairs** provide a wide range of services, educational opportunities, learning, support, outreach, activities and engagement for students. MCDA is a collective collaboration between the Institute of Black Culture; Institute of Hispanic-Latino Cultures; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Affairs; Asian Pacific Islander American Affairs; and Intercultural Engagement. www.multicultural.ufl.edu

- **Gator Athletics** are an integral part of college at UF. Student come together to cheer on UF's champion athletic teams. All registered UF students can attend any sporting event (excluding football) FREE with their Gator1 ID. Student football tickets are available for purchase at the ticket box office. www.gatorzone.com.

FAMILY TALKING POINT

MANY STUDENTS COME TO COLLEGE AS THE ONLY, OR ONE OF A FEW, STUDENTS

FROM THEIR HIGH SCHOOL. It's ok to come to college without knowing anyone.

Encourage your student to use the first few weeks of the semester to bond with their roommates and classmates. Friends can be a great support in college; especially friends who share similar interests. Encouraging your student to look into the various organizations at UF is a great way to ensure s/he is beginning to form bonds and relationships with other UF students. Sharing your excitement and enthusiasm about your student being at UF can help them better adjust to college life.



As well as the responsibilities of classes and campus involvement, we also understand and acknowledge that your student may have commitments not directly tied to college such as work and family. We know that our First Gen students often continue their responsibilities back home while balancing college. While we encourage students to put academics first, we do support them in finding employment and staying connected to their families and communities. We recommend part-time positions, usually no more than 20 hours a week, that offer students a chance to work while also be successful in the classroom.

- **Employment on campus** is often ideal due to schedule flexibility and location. Students may find jobs in various campus departments and offices; often these jobs will be labeled as OPS (Other Personnel Services). Some students may have the ability to work thru their financial aid awards in the form of Federal Work Study Positions. <http://www.sfa.ufl.edu/programs/employment/>

- **Employment off campus** can be found throughout Gainesville in various sectors. Students should keep in mind the time commitment and location of possible jobs. We recommend students maintain clear communication with employers regarding their class schedules. Students will get a copy of their syllabi for each class at the beginning of the semester. The syllabus will contain exam and quiz dates as well as due dates for all assignments. Students should always plan ahead to ensure work does not conflict with class responsibilities.

- **Family and Community Relationships** are extremely important and often motivate First Gen students. Your student's role in your family is an integral part of their identity, but can sometimes be at odds with the transition to college. Being homesick is a common experience especially in the beginning of your student's time at college. Traveling home for visits and regularly communicating with you are great ways to stay connected, but in moderation. Students traveling home every weekend often end up struggling more in classes and have a harder time forming peer relationships on campus. We suggest students focus on being at college by putting academics first and creating communities on campus with the intention of celebrating the time they have here so that when they do travel home during long weekends and holidays they can truly enjoy the time spent with family.





THE KNOWLEDGE TO MAKE WISE DECISIONS WITH MONEY

The cost of a college education is not to be taken lightly. It is expensive. Every college or university determines their cost of attendance - the average cost of being at college for the academic year. Costs include everything from tuition and fees, housing, books, and more. Students fund college in a variety of ways. The first step to obtain money for college is to fill out the free **Federal Application for Student Federal Aid (FAFSA)**. This application gathers information about your family income and assets. The FAFSA becomes available each year beginning January 1st. It is processed through the Department of Education and determines your student's eligibility for federal student aid. The FAFSA results are then sent to the financial aid office at UF. The financial aid office determines how much additional financial aid the student will receive in the form of grants, scholarships, and loans. In order for your student to be eligible for many forms of aid, **UF must receive an error-free FAFSA by March 15 every year. We recommend students complete the FAFSA by March 1** at the latest to allow for processing. Estimated tax information may be used on the FAFSA website: www.fafsa.gov.

FINANCIAL AID COMES IN A VARIETY OF FORMS:

- **Grants:** do not have to be repaid. These are typically awarded as need based federal or state aid.
- **Scholarships:** typically, these also do not have to be repaid. They typically come from private corporations or organizations or may come directly from UF.
- **Loans:** money that a student may borrow to offset the cost of college. These must be repaid (including interest). Federal loans often have more leniency and lower interest rates but private loans are also an option.
- **Federal Work Study:** a program designed for students to earn money through part-time jobs on campus.
- **The Office of Student Financial Affairs at UF** creates an annual Financial Aid Handbook as well as offers students financial aid advising and workshops to better understand the aid they receive. <http://www.sfa.ufl.edu>

FAMILY TALKING POINT

REMINDE YOUR STUDENT TO UPDATE THE FAFSA EACH YEAR. Updating the FAFSA is often easier and quicker than the first application. Information from the previous year can be re-submitted if you do not anticipate any major changes in your finances. Help your student put finances in perspective. The financial aid money received is meant for school purposes. The costs associated with attending a university can be expensive and students sometimes feel obligated to offer financial support to their family. It is most helpful to students when families understand the financial burden of college expenses and encourage the student to make wise decisions with their money.



AN APPRECIATION FOR THEIR BACKGROUND AS A FIRST GENERATION STUDENT

First Gen Students are embarking on brand new experiences that change the path of their lives and their families. Understanding how their identity as a First Gen student impacts and shapes them is a crucial step in their development as college students, adults, and professionals. Your student's identity is made up of various components and the First Gen identity intersects with the characteristics and traits they developed at home. While at college, First Gen students should take advantage of the chance to explore the intersection their identities.

- **Study Abroad Programs** provide an opportunity for your student to experience a foreign culture while also offering them the opportunity to earn college credit. Various programs going to several countries are offered during Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters as well as during shorter holiday breaks. For First Gen students, the ability to travel abroad might be non-existent if not for college. By participating in Study Abroad Programs First Gen students are able to experience a completely new country and culture and expand their understanding of the world and their identity in it. Scholarships are available as well as various other funding options. Often times, study abroad experiences do not cost very much more than the typical semester. Students are encouraged to talk to their academic advisor as a first or second year student if they are interested in studying abroad. While not a rule, most students go abroad in their sophomore or junior year.

<https://www.ufic.ufl.edu/sas/>

- **Gatorship** is an intensive weekend and day retreat aimed at developing leadership skills through thought provoking activities and discussion about race, gender, religion and identity. <http://www.multicultural.ufl.edu/programs/gatorship/>

- The **First Generation Empowerment Summit** is an all-day retreat focused on the power of claiming your story and better understanding the significance identity has on the college experience for first generation students. The Summit is targeted at second year first generation students. <http://fos.ufsa.ufl.edu/news/comments/first-generation-summit-helps-students-claim-their-stories>

FAMILY TALKING POINT

REMINDE YOUR STUDENT THAT YOU ARE PROUD OF THEM AND THE PATH THEY

ARE TAKING. Encourage them to embrace all aspects of their identities and find empowerment in their community at home and at college. While all First Gen students are the first to go and graduate from college, each student brings unique culture and experiences with them. By immersing themselves in college and opportunities to explore their identities, your student is finding their place and developing skills to become independent.



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familiar!



FAMILY TALKING POINT

HAVE OPEN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE A FIRST GENERATION STUDENT.

Encourage your student to connect with other first generation students and people who have been identified as active supporters of first generation students. It is also good to reassure your student of your continued support and admit that you may not have all of the answers. While making connections can be intimidating, the first step can be exploring via social media. Sit with your student and take the time to check out Facebook (UF Florida Opportunity Scholars Program), Instagram (MFOS@UF), Snap Chat (MFOS@UF) and Twitter (FOS@UF).



A NETWORK OF SUPPORT COMPRISED OF PEERS AND ADULT MENTORS

More than ¼ of the University population is first generation. There are also many first generation faculty and staff members. First generation students can connect through their shared experiences of getting to and through college. Having a community is one thing first generation graduates have identified as a factor to their success at UF. Your student can join the **First Generation Organization (FGO)**. FGO exists to foster a diverse community amongst students who are first in their families to attend college by providing opportunities to strengthen self-awareness, strive for academic excellence, and develop leadership skills while giving back to the UF and global communities.

Connecting with **First Gen Peers** is a way for your student to meet others with shared and common experiences. The transition to college is often made easier when students create a smaller community of peers. The process of going to college is difficult for all students and the pressure of adjusting and fitting in can cause stress. By joining organizations such as FGO, your student can make UF smaller and more personal. An important aspect of being First Gen is being a trailblazer and thus opening the door for others. Many First Gen students at UF are active in volunteering with local and home high schools to aid younger First Gen students in the journey.

In addition, the Division of Student Affairs is home to the Office of First Generation Student Support. The caring staff aims to increase the enrollment of high achieving first generation students at UF while providing a variety of resources for current first generation students to aid in the journey to academic success. .

A FEW RESOURCES OFFERED BY FIRST GEN STUDENT SUPPORT:

- **Advising** - Students can come into the office to schedule a meeting with one of the First Generation Student Support staff. Staff is available to assist students with navigating the college experience.

- The **Florida Opportunity Scholars Academy of Leadership** (FOSAL) is a year-long leadership program that teaches self-awareness, career preparation, and global awareness.

FOSAL is open to 3rd and 4th year first generation students.

- The **First Generation Advocate Program** connects students with faculty and staff on campus who support and understand the needs of First Gen students at UF. This is a great way for students to begin making connections to the faculty and staff members here on campus.



A CONFIDENCE IN THEMSELVES THAT THEY ARE CAPABLE OF SUCCESS

The University of Florida has graduated thousands of first generation students. These alums have gone on to pursue advanced degrees in graduate school and professional school like law and medical school. Many alums working in well-paying jobs where they use the skills they developed in life and in college. The Office of First Generation Support is pleased to have a network of first generation alums through the Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars Program who give back by sharing with current students their experiences since graduating from UF.

The **Featured Alumni Talks** have been a great addition to the services offered to first generation students. The talks are either in person or via Skype and are designed so that alums can share their experiences and answer questions about their time at UF and as a professional. Many students find these talks informative and empowering, especially when thinking about what it means to be first generation.

FAMILY TALKING POINT

IF YOUR STUDENT HAS ANY DOUBT IN HOW SUCCESSFUL S/HE CAN BE, THEN PERHAPS THEY SHOULD HEAR FROM SOMEONE WHO WAS IN THEIR SHOES ONLY A YEAR OR TWO AGO. First generation students are just as capable as their non-first generation peers of succeeding. The skills that first generation students bring to college-such as resilience, strength through adversity, passion, independence, and perseverance- are what is needed to be a success no matter what career path one takes. First Gen students can sometimes feel that they are “imposters” and do not fit in with fellow college graduates and professionals. It is important to help your student understand that not only are they deserving of their success and achievements, but they are well prepared and stand out because of their special first generation identity.





FAMILY TALKING POINT

YOU ARE YOUR STUDENT'S MOST INFLUENTIAL SUPPORTER. It is important your student knows that you will stand behind her/him no matter what academic major they chose and what career path they pursue. Encourage your student to carefully plan for their future. Part of that plan should encourage opportunities to network with professionals in that chose field through internship or job shadowing experiences. You could sit down with your student to help craft career goals.

But remember, you may have different ideas for their career. Ultimately you want your student to be happy, healthy, and successful. Their eventual career path should excite them and you should be able to hear the passion in their voice when they talk about that career or major.



A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE INCLUDING SHORT AND LONG TERM GOALS

Graduating from college can be daunting. Prior to college, their educational journey was pretty planned: elementary school, middle school, high school, and then college. For the first time, students may experience an unsettling uncertainty.

UF offers many resources to prepare students for the transition out of college. The **Career Resource Center** (CRC) is open to all students and alums for career advice. The CRC has many services such as resume critiques, mock interviews, and career fairs. The CRC also has a library and many online resources. In addition, the CRC helps students connect with companies looking for bright, new employees.

www.crc.ufl.edu

Students also find mentors on campus to guide them along the way. First generation students often have questions about how to achieve their career goals. Many students know where they want to go, but lack the knowledge of how to get there. The **Life Coach Program** is offered to all third and fourth year first generation students. Students are paired with a trained UF faculty, staff, or graduate student to receive one-on-one guidance in post-graduation planning. http://fos.ufsa.ufl.edu/programs/fosal/life_coach/

Internships are opportunities for your student to experience work in their desired field while also building their professional skills and resume. Internships can result in job offers and open the door for networking and professional relationships. It is very important for First Gen Students to take part in internships because they might not have any others chances to shadow and experience the career they desire. Students can take part in an internship for varying lengths of time during the year. While some students participate in internships during the academic semester, an ideal time is during an off-semester when they are not taking a full class load. Internships can be found through the CRC as well as within each academic college at UF. Some internships are paid and others are unpaid.



STUDENT

→ PERSPECTIVES

JEFF SATINE

Major: Health Education and Behavior
Hometown: La Gonave, Haiti

As a first generation college student, family support is vital. My family doesn't have the financial capacity to support me while in school, however, they play a key role in my emotional stability during times of stress and everything else college students face on a daily basis. As a first generation college student, there is enormous pressure to succeed. For me the pressure of being the first person in my entire family to attend college and seeking to earn a bachelor degree is strenuous. Whenever I get stressed out from an exam or project, I can always count on my parents to have the right words of wisdom to lift up my spirit. Specifically, my mother who lives Haiti reminds me of the privilege I have in the United States compared to my former classmates back in Haiti. She encourages me to keep striving forward even when times are tough – that means everything to me.





ISMELDA ALVAREZ

Public Relations
Jennings, Florida

Through the process of transitioning to college/UF what was the best support your family offered you?

Through the process of transitioning to UF, the best support my family gave me was motivation. Coming from a single-parent, low-income home has not been the easiest. Growing up, I watched how hard my father worked everyday to provide for my siblings and me.

That in itself is my motivation for me to pursue higher education. I want to live a life where my family and I are financially stable.

What family support do you wish you had?

The family support I wish I did have was family visits. Beginning a new season in life where you are “kind of on your own” can be intimidating. That said, I wish my family would have visited me every once in a while. There is nothing closer to home than to see familiar faces of those who know and love you.

How did you talk to your family about your major and intended career path?

My family always knew that my major would consist of helping others. Therefore, choosing to pursue public relations wasn't a surprise to them.

What was the biggest hurdle in communication with your parent about college?

The biggest hurdle in communication with my dad is that he has never been to college. Not to mention, he does not speak English very well. Therefore, it is difficult to explain certain things about college life.



JOSE ALVAREZ

Family Youth and Community Sciences
Hometown: Jennings, Florida

**Through the process of transitioning to college/UF
what was the best support your family offered you?**

Although being financially supportive was not as easy, the fact that my dad was willing to go out of his way to make sure I had everything to pursue my life goals the next 4 years gave me a sense of security. I knew

I had someone that I could turn to no matter how far away I was from them. He encourages me and motivates me daily.

What family support do you wish you had?

I definitely wish I had financial support to get me through the first two weeks of the semester before financial aid paid. Also I wish my family had the opportunity to visit me as often as my friend's parent visited them freshmen year, because of work it was very rare that they could drive to Gainesville.

How did you talk to your family about your major and intended career path?

My family and I came to UF with the mindset that I would become a doctor. However, everything changed after freshmen year, when I realized I my passion was never to become a doctor. I had to sit with my family, and explain to them my passion in life. It wasn't easy, especially when your family has been so supportive, and you want to continue to make them proud. It took time for them to realize, and see the passion inside of me.

What was the biggest hurdle in communication with your parent about college?

My dad, a single parent, expected me to go to college. As the oldest, I hoped to one day become financially successful and help my family out of our low-income environment. My dad worked extra hard during my high school years so that my siblings and I wouldn't have to work. His hard work allowed us to simply focus on school. So there wasn't a hurdle, if anything it was a blessing to talk to my family about college.



Ben Hill Griffin Stadium



