Creating Environments that Foster First-Generation College Students’ Sense of Belonging

Dr. Brett L. Bruner, Director of Transition & Student Conduct
Dr. Teresa L. Clounch, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs/Title IX Coordinator

2018 IMPACT Summit on College Student Mental Health
Springfield, MO
A Defense Department dictionary helped this poet write in the language of war

BY MARY JO BROOKS  September 19, 2016 at 3:53 PM EDT

Poet Solemaz Shari’s book “LOOK” examines the violence of war using language pulled from a military dictionary. Photo by Arash Saednia.
I. Introductions & Learning Outcomes

II. Terminology

III. Review of Literature

IV. Theory to Practice: Strategies to Support a Sense of Belonging

V. Campus Assessment Tool for First-Generation Student Excellence
Learning Outcomes

As a result of participating in this session, participants will:
• Describe “sense of belonging” related to first-generation college students.
• Compare and contrast the mental health of first- and continuing-generation college students in transitioning into their first year of college.
• Describe their role in providing outreach to first-generation college students in establishing a sense of belonging.
• Identify at least 1 strategy to create environments that foster first-generation college students’ sense of belonging.
Terminology

• **First-generation college student:** “a student for whom neither parent attended college or a student for whom neither parent attained a baccalaureate degree” (Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012, p. 3)

• **Continuing-generation college student:** a student “with at least one parent with a four-year college degree” (Leopold, 2014, para 2)
Terminology

• **Retention:** “a rate or percentage of students who return from one enrollment period to another” (Habley, Bloom & Robbins, 2012, p. 8)

• **Persistence:** the process through which a student “continues to enroll at the institution after matriculation” (Habley, Bloom & Robbins, 2012, p. 4)
Terminology

• **Cultural capital**: “the extent to which one is comfortable and familiar with the norms and culture of the institution” (Lundberg, Schreiner, Hovaguimian & Slavin Miller, 2007, pp. 58-59)

• **Social capital**: “resources embedded in social structures, accessibility to those resources, and use of such resources” (Nichols & Islas, 2016, p. 63)
• **Class-identity reformation**: “a shift in the social class to which individuals feel they belong” (Hinz, 2016, p. 285)

• **Transition**: “an event or nonevent that is perceived as significant by the student: something occurs that was either anticipated or unexpected, or a significant event that was expected to happen does not” (Schreiner, 2012, p. 3)
Review of Literature: Pre-College Characteristics
Review of Literature:
Transition to Higher Education
Review of Literature: Mental Health
Review of Literature:
Family Engagement & Interaction
SEPARATE STRATEGIES

INTEGRATED STRATEGIES
Theory to Practice: Campus-Based Strategies
Theory to Practice: Campus-Based Strategies

- Summer Orientation – parent & family track
- Summer Transition Series – New Student Online Hangout
- Golden Beginnings Pre-Orientation Program for First-Generation College Students
- First-Gen Breakfast during Fall Orientation Weekend
- Faculty/Staff/Alumni/Peer Mentorship Program
- First-Generation Thematic UNIV 101 course
- Common Reading Experience: This I Believe.
- First 40 Days programming – Greetings of Gratitude
- Zeneration One Living Learning Community
Theory to Practice: Regional Coalitions

THE CONFERENCE
The Howard First Generation Student Union will host the second annual fyGy! 2016, which will bring together students, administrators, alumni and community partners to strengthen and empower the first-generation community for collective change.

THE MOBILIZERS
fyGy supports a cross-functional team of student leaders dedicated to first-generation student community building, improving institutional support, and sharing best practices across institutions.

BEST PRACTICES
fyGy's approach is to identify, systematize, and then disseminate the best practices of support for first-generation college students, by looking at local and national practices.
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<th>Area</th>
<th>Sample Questions</th>
<th>Current Efforts</th>
<th>Action Plan</th>
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<td>Training/Professional Development</td>
<td>• What training or educational workshops does your campus provide for faculty and staff around the needs of first-generation students?</td>
<td>• Training workshop offered through faculty development (began Spring 2015)</td>
<td>• Planning a Symposium (Sep 2018)</td>
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<td>• Developing online learning module for faculty and staff (launching Spring 2018)</td>
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<td>• Host webinars, documentaries, etc., open to faculty and staff (next one April 2018)</td>
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How will you move #FirstgenForward?
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Dr. Brett L. Bruner – blbruner@fhsu.edu
Dr. Teresa L. Clounch – tlclounch@fhsu.edu

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