FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who are first-generation college students?
There is no universal definition for "first-generation college student". Many colleges use the definition: "a student with neither parent having any education beyond high school." Bergen Community College uses this definition.

Challenges facing students.
It is estimated that 30 percent of students enrolled in colleges and universities today are low income, first-generation college students. But 89% of these students will not earn a bachelor's degree six years out from high school. They drop out of college at four times the rate of their peers whose parents have a college or postsecondary education.

There are many reasons that these students struggle to access and complete college. Most times, their parents lack the ability to guide them in the college process because they did not navigate it themselves and they are often in schools and communities where college counseling and college-minded peers are lacking or nonexistent. Academic preparation is sometimes another factor. Research shows that low-income, first-generation college students aspire to attend college at rates equal to their higher income peers whose parents have a college degree.

How is BCC helping?
We know that students respond best to peer influence and personal experiences, especially in the pursuit of college. We also know that students lack access to good information and support in their pursuit of college. BCC helps aspiring first-generation college students by providing academic advisement, career and transfer counseling, co-curricular activities and events, and a host of other services. (see listing of offerings below)

Through media outreach and institutional design, BCC utilizes its college students, deans and professors, alumnai, and community partners, business leaders, doctors and lawyers, politicians who are first-generation college graduates to share their stories and offer some encouragement to future first-generation college students.

Through marketing and outreach to high schools and youth-serving organizations, aspiring first-generation college students, counselors, and college access providers will become users on Bergen’s web application.

Bergen Community College partners with a growing network of four-year colleges and universities who participate in agreements to allow BCC students to transfer easily into their institutions.

Resource List

Athletics
Room G-201 ~ Telephone: 201.447.7182
http://www.bergen.edu/athletics

Bursar
Room L-124 ~ Telephone: 201.447.7105
http://www.bergen.edu/bursar

Bookstore
Room C-108

Center for Student Success
Room A-118 ~ Telephone: 201.447.7171
http://www.bergen.edu/coop

Child Development Center
Ender Hall ~ Telephone: 201.447.7165
http://www.bergen.edu/cdc

English Language Resource Center
Room E-126 ~ Telephone: 201.612.5292

Financial Aid
Room A-129 ~ Telephone: 201.447.7148
http://www.bergen.edu/financialaid

Health Services
Room HS-100 ~ Telephone: 201.447.9257
http://www.bergen.edu/healthservices

International Student Center
Room C-102 ~ http://www.bergen.edu/isc

Library
Room L-226 ~ Telephone: 201.447.7131
http://www.bergen.edu/library

Office of Admissions Records
Room A-126 ~ Telephone: 201.447.7195
http://www.bergen.edu/admissions

Office of Student Life
Student Center ~ Telephone: 201.447.7215
http://www.bergen.edu/studentlife

Personal Counseling
Room HS-100 ~ Telephone: 201.447-9257
E-Mail: PersonalCounseling@bergen.edu

Public Safety Office
Room L-154 ~ Telephone: 201.447.9200
http://www.bergen.edu/publicsafety

Registration & Student Information
Room A-129 ~ Telephone: 201.447.7218
http://www.bergen.edu/registration

Testing Services
Room S-127 ~ Telephone: 201.447.7202
http://www.bergen.edu/testing

Tutoring & Writing Center
Room L-125 ~ Telephone: 201.447.7489/7136
http://www.bergen.edu/tutoring

First Generation College Students

First But Not Alone

What You Should Know About Being a First Generation College Student
The Bergen Community College definition of a first generation college student is a person who is "a student with neither parent having any education beyond high school."

**First Generation college students are...**
- A bridge for their families, empowering themselves with knowledge and creating better opportunities in life.
- Role models for younger siblings and relatives.
- Bravely making a personal choice for a higher level of education.

**What First Generation Students Bring to Campus**
- Diversity and unique perspectives
- A desire to give back to their communities
- Resilience and a very strong work ethic
- Independence and self-reliance
- Awareness of cultural differences and stressors

**Stressors**
First generation students may feel some guilt since they have an opportunity to attend college when their parents may not have.
- They may have had to negotiate most of the college application and financial aid process on their own.
- They may put great pressure on themselves to succeed. Sometimes they feel pressure from family, friends, and school counselors as well.
- Sometimes they have trouble integrating themselves into the college community, making connections, and forming relationships.
- They sometimes struggle with creating a self-identity as a college student and finding their voice.
- They sometimes do not have the same financial resources as other students and, therefore, they may have to work more hours at a job.
- Sometimes they find they have less self-confidence than other students and may have a greater fear of failure.
- First generation students sometimes experience racism and stereotypes at college and may be adjusting to their first experience living as a minority within the dominant culture.
- They struggle to balance responsibilities between their family and academic commitments.

**What Can Help**
- Joining extra-curricular activities (clubs, sports teams, volunteer activities, etc...)
- Support from professors and other mentors.
- The counseling center can help during the transition to college.
- Research shows that first generation college students cope better with support from family and friends.
- They often find support from other first generation students on campus.