***Tips for Advising First Generation College Students***

First generation college students on our campus are typically defined as those whose parents did not attend or did not graduate from college. These students like all other students at our university meet the qualifications (academically) for admission.

**Common Challenges or Needs of the First Generation College Student**

**First gen students often do not fully understand the “college student role”.**

* Academic skills and competencies are not always enough for success in college.
* First gen students often need assistance with understanding the college student role and how best to meet the expectations of college students. This circumstance puts first generation college students at a disadvantage for staying enrolled and earning a degree.
* First generation, low-income college students have the added disadvantage not only by their parents’ lack of information and experience with college, but also by other social and economic factors that may limit their educational opportunities.
* Advisors can provide a “model” for the first gen student. Advisors and upper class peer advisors who were first gen themselves can assist first gen college students greatly by serving as a role model and mentor.
* Advisors can share their own stories of college experiences which can model success for first gen students as well.
* Advisors can connect these students with faculty, staff, and other successful experienced upper class first gen students to assist them with mastering the college student role.
* Advisors can assist students in establishing not just academic but also personal goals needed to ensure academic success.
* Advisors can assist first gen students with self-advocacy.

**First gen students are often unaware of or are reluctant to use campus resources.**

* Advisors need to make sure first gen students are aware of campus support services and the resources these services provide especially those designed or geared for the first generation student.
* Advisors should consider creating a list of contacts to be able to provide an actual person to send students to when making referrals.
* Advisors should encourage students to utilize these services, share the advantages of these resources, and ensure students that using these services is standard for all college students.
* Advisors can convey the message that it is okay to ask for assistance, this is not a sign of weakness, but rather the successful students are the ones who take advantage of these resources.
* Advisors should show pride and acknowledge the successes of their first gen students.

**First gen students often want and need to establish a trusting relationship with their advisor.**

* Advisors need to be accessible and available to address a first gen student’s needs.
* Advisors can become familiar with the student’s background and family life.
* Advisors need to be prepared and ready to support and guide the first gen student. Open communication is the key to establishing this relationship.
* Advisors should focus on empowering the students (do not be an enabler) to take responsibility for their education while appreciating all that impacts their efforts. Hold students accountable.
* Advisors need to consider the environment in which they provide advisement to ensure a sense of confidence and safety especially when discussing things more personal in nature.
* Advisors need to keep in mind that while students are able to get answers to quick questions via email or other technology, many first gen students in particular prefer face to face sessions – the “human connection”.

**First gen students sometimes bring with them fears of inadequacy even though they meet all the requirements for admission to college.**

* Advisors can assist first gen students on how to be effective self-advocates.
* Advisors need to acknowledge and help the first gen students also recognize the skills, resiliency, and own cultural capital each brings with them to this university experience.
* Advisors should be careful not to patronize or pity the first gen student, but rather equip them with the basic tools to effectively navigate our university environment.

**Campus Resources**

***Educational Opportunity Program/Renaissance Scholars***

***Cultural Centers***

***Ethnic and Women’s Studies***

***Learning Resource Center***

***Reading, Advising, Mentoring Program (RAMP)***

***Disability Resource Center (DRC)***

***ARCHES (Trio program for DRC registered students)***

***Counseling Services***

***Ombuds***

***CPP Upward Bound***

***Center for Community Engagement***

***Certain student clubs/organizations – examples below***

* Hermano/as Unido/as
* Delta Delta
* EOP Student Union
* D.e.p.i.e.
* Inter-Tribal Student Leadership Council
* Black Student Union