

1st-Generation College Students

First-generation college students are those whose parents and grandparents did not attend or graduate from college. Many times, first-generation college students are the first members of their family to go to college, and they may share some of the following characteristics:

- Work at least part-time while attending college
- May choose to attend college part-time
- Come from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds
- Come from ethnic-racial minority backgrounds
- Live at home with family or relatives, or may choose a college or university that is geographically close to home thus making it easier to visit
- May have significant family and work responsibilities they need to balance with their academics
- Are twice as likely to drop out of college than their non-first generation counterparts before their second year in college
- Are less likely to socialize with peers from school or take part in student organizations

Being a 1st generation college student brings unique challenges which can impact academic performance in a negative way. First-generation college students may experience some of the following:

- Culture shock/stress – students may experience a cultural conflict between home and the university environment, while they may also be confused about the expectations of being a college student
- Family responsibilities that conflict with academic responsibilities
- Lack of understanding from family about academic responsibilities and may experience alienation from family support
- Financial difficulties
- Lack of understanding about campus culture – need for networking, accessing resources, knowledge about the college campus
- May have difficulty making or finding community on campus
- May lack identity as a student
- May have difficulty or feel apprehensive about connecting with their professors before and after class or during their office hours
- Have difficulty making connections between career goal and academic requirements
- May wonder if they have what it takes to succeed at the university
- May experience frustration with the system
- May experience depression and anxiety

If you are a 1st generation college student, here are some tips on what you can do to have a positive experience at Marquette:

1. **Get involved** – One of the keys to feeling like you belong on campus is to get involved in student groups. Meet others with similar interests. Marquette has approximately 250 student organizations from which to choose (<http://www.marquette.edu/osd/organizations/index.shtml>)
2. **Make friends with other students** – Find people for whom you can provide mutual support and encouragement through the college experience. You might do this by being part of a study

group, by engaging in group projects in class, or just approaching another student and saying “Hi!” You never know, you may become lifelong friends!

3. **Get to know your professors** – Attend their office hours and introduce yourself. If you are having difficulty in a class, ask your professor for help. The professors can provide important mentorship and suggestions for increasing your chances of success.
4. **Locate a Diversity Advocate**
(<http://www.marquette.edu/dsa/diversity/advocateprogram.shtml>) – Diversity Advocates are administrators, faculty and staff on campus who are dedicated to providing mentorship and support to students from diverse backgrounds. Advocates have pledged to encourage inclusiveness on campus and can be identified by their Diversity Advocate placard placed in or near their offices. They can provide a space in which you can talk about your difficulties and victories on campus.
5. **Learn about your financial aid options!** First-generation college students often think of the cost of their education as a burden as opposed to an investment. Further, they may choose to take out private loans before exhausting their federal loans. Visit the Office of Student Financial Aid (<http://www.marquette.edu/financialaid/freshman/index.shtml>) to discuss how to finance your education.
6. **Learn about the resources on campus** – resources include:
 - a. **Student Educational Services** (<http://www.marquette.edu/oses/>) - provides tutoring, and assistance with study skills such as time management, test taking, note taking, procrastination and effective college reading
 - b. **Disability Services** (<http://www.marquette.edu/oses/disability/index.shtml>) - who can help set you up with academic and non-academic accommodations
 - c. **Career Services Center** (<http://www.marquette.edu/csc/students/community.shtml>) – aids in job and internship search, help with resumes and interviewing, employer research and salary negotiation, assistance in applying to graduate and professional school
 - d. **Counseling Center** (<http://www.marquette.edu/counseling/>) – provides brief individual, group, and family\couples counseling, as well as career/major exploration, consultation and outreach in the form of presentation on topics such as stress management, communication skills, mental health education, etc.
 - e. **Campus Ministry** (<http://www.marquette.edu/um/>) – provides pastoral care, programs for service and justice, faith formation, retreats and worship
 - f. **Recreational Sports** (<http://www.marquette.edu/recsports/index.shtml>) – provides club and intramural sports, instructional programming, recreational facilities, and health and wellness assessments
7. **Cultivate awareness of your experience** – Learn to tune into how you are doing physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually. Are any of these areas being neglected, or are they being over-stimulated? Try to attend to each of these areas so that your whole self is well-rounded. The best recipe for success is creating balance in your life.
8. **Seek help when you recognize a problem** – Too often, first-generation college students try to do it all alone and do not seek help. Seeking help is not a weakness; rather, it is a sign of strength, resilience and persistence. And it can greatly impact your ability to succeed at Marquette!