



First Generation Graduate Students

DEFINITIONS, RAMIFICATIONS, RESEARCH NEEDS



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Limited Research

- Numerous studies focusing on first generation undergraduate students
- We only found 3 articles focusing on graduate FGS!
- Definition is challenging and the percent of FGS is directly affected by the definition used.
- *I'm First* uses “neither parent received a 4-year degree.”
- What about students who don't have parents who finished a graduate degree? The “script” is indeed different.
- Researchers suggest that the challenges faced by FG undergraduate students are compounded when they pursue graduate school.
- Little, if any, actual data indicating persistence, completion, etc. for FG grad students.



Areas in Need of Support

- Decision to attend graduate school
 - Ability to relocate?
 - Capability to handle workload level?
 - Perceived capacity for conducting research?
 - Tate et al. (2014) found that perceived ability to conduct graduate-level research was a significant predictor of actively pursuing grad school in low-SES, FGS from underrepresented groups.
- Preparing a competitive application
- Developing a research agenda



Suggestions for Support

- Begin conversation early in UND career (freshman/sophomore)
- Ensure accumulation of skills and experience to make student competitive
- Involvement in undergraduate research
 - Increases competitiveness of application and potential for assistantship
 - Decreases anxiety/uncertainty about research
- Help with selection of potential programs
 - Including introductions to potential mentors



Suggestions for Support

- Assist with application
 - Statement of purpose, CV, writing sample
 - Contacting/recruiting recommenders
- Financial
 - FGS likely have fewer familial resources and are solely responsible for funding grad school.
 - Helping FG undergrads complete with minimal debt
 - Help potential grad students understand/navigate graduate financial aid (e.g., assistantships, fellowships)
- Involve families in pursuit of graduate school
 - Tate et al (2014) found that the more students' family values influence their career path, the less likely they are to pursue graduate education.



Questions/Topics for Panelists

- Introductions and family background
- Why did you decide to attend graduate school?
- What about graduate school did you find most intimidating as an undergrad? Has that concern turned out to be valid?
- Did you have undergrad research experience?
- How did you pick MSU? Did anyone help with the application process?
- What about financial challenges? How did/do you meet them?



Advice

- For undergrads considering grad school
- For institutions who want to optimally support FG grad students



Questions? Comments?





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