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 graduate 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?
References


References


