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Examining the Needs of First-Generation Students

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COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

EXAMINING THE NEEDS OF FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE

HONORS COLLEGE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR HONORS IN THE DEGREE OF

BACHELOR OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

BY

ASHLEY A. MAYER

COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

2020

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May 2020

Abstract

First Generation Students at Columbus State University identify as having a lack of resources that are helpful to them. This research paper analyzes the problems faced by first generation college students at Columbus State University. These needs were assessed using an electronic survey that was distributed to first generation students. The proposed goals are based around supporting the academic and social well-being of FGS at CSU. A set of strategies and tactics are proposed for reaching these goals.

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Introduction

During an Honors College Advisory Board meeting, it was mentioned that there are not enough resources to help first-generation students (FGS) to prepare for college. There are two common definitions to describe who FGS are, which include “a student for whom neither parent attended college” and “a student for whom neither parent attained a baccalaureate degree” (Ward, Siegel, & Davenport, 2012, p. 3). These definitions both have different meanings. It is important for institutions and individuals who are designing resources for FGS to be aware of which definition of FGS is being targeted because students with parents who attended some college or who received an associate’s degree are still more prepared than students with parents that did not receive any education beyond high school (Ward, Siegel, & Davenport, 2012). The definition being focused on for this project will be “a student for whom neither parent attended college” (Ward, Siegel, & Davenport, 2012, p. 3). FGS face many unique difficulties when coming to college. Each person’s experience is different and not all FGS encounter the same adversities.

As of Fall 2011, 38% of students enrolled at Columbus State University (CSU) reported being FGS (Columbus State University Complete College Georgia Plan, 2012). This significant amount of FGS demonstrates the need for resources to prepare FGS for entering college and to support them throughout their college careers. Currently, CSU does have resources that target FGS, such as Hope Now, which matches four times the amount of money selected students have saved for college (Columbus State University, 2011). CSU has also offered many scholarships to help support FGS. While monetary support is necessary, there seems to be a lack of resources to support FGS outside of funding their education at CSU. There is also a lack of resources to FGS in the Columbus, Georgia community.

Literature Review

In a study by McCallen and Johnson (2019) surveys and interviews were conducted. The participants were FGS who attended City University of New York. The survey consisted of two open-ended questions and two likert-rating scales. One scale measured the participants' interaction with faculty members and the second scale measured the quality of interactions with students, advisors, faculty, student services, and other administrative staff. The open-ended questions asked students to list those who supported their access to college and success in college. The survey was electronic and distributed through Survey Monkey. A total of 252 students participated in the survey. After taking the survey, participants were invited to reach out to the researchers to participate in an interview. The interviews addressed barriers to success in college and the roles of individuals who supported the participants. Ten students participated in the interviews. The results of the study indicate that faculty provide a great amount of support to FGS. These faculty members were perceived as factors that help FGS succeed in college. One limitation of this study is that there is no way of knowing whether the participants' perception of faculty and other individuals as a major factor in their success is due to their FGS status or if it is based on other factors. Further research needs to be done on other factors that FGS feel help them to succeed in college.

Schwartz et al. (2018) conducted a study with 164 incoming freshmen who identified as FGS. The participants were completing a summer remedial program due to not meeting all of the requirements for admission into the university that they would be attending. Participants took a baseline test at the beginning of the summer program and took a post test later on in the program. The survey assessed the participants' relationships with instructors, attitudes and beliefs on seeking support, help seeking avoidance, intentions to recruit support, grade point averages, and

demographics. The results of the study show that the participants were able to build closer relationships with their instructors. The students also participated in interviews. The participants also reported an increased motivation to intentionally seek support and decreased avoidance of seeking help. A limitation of this study is that it only focuses on FGS who did not meet the admission requirements to the college that they would be attending. Therefore, the findings are not representative of FGS who excelled in high school.

Secondary Research

Background

It is important to keep into consideration that FGS have multiple identities that make them unique (Jehangir, 2010). These categories for identities are called “lines of difference” (Núñez, 2014, p. 85). Today, 14 lines of differences have been identified in research on intersectionality, which include race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, national belonging, religion, language, phenotype, and able-bodiedness (Núñez, 2014). There are multiple identity categories, so individuals may belong to some groups that are in the majority and some that are marginalized (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). For instance, an individual could be white and physically disabled. Due to this, the promotion and layout of the content will need to be in a way that caters to multiple groups in the factors listed above. For instance, although FGS are more often from low-income homes and are people of color, this is not always the case. Looking at this, it would not be effective to produce content that only discusses the possible financial problems that can come with being FGS. Considering the intersectionality of identities will allow content to be something beneficial to FGS with various other identities, which will also help to avoid any stereotyping within the content.

According to Núñez (2014),” the multidimensional lens afforded by intersectionality, as well as its focus on power dynamics, makes it an especially promising conceptual framework to address educational equity” (p. 87). Sumi Cho, Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall (2013) have criticized the theory of intersectionality for having an inward focus on the oppressed individuals and lacking in touching on the outside factors that oppress these individuals. To relate this to academic life, this could mean that there is a focus on FGS feeling unprepared due to their lack of experience, while there is no focus on high schools and colleges providing resources for FGS to feel more prepared.

Lohfink and Paulsen (2005) suggest that FGS can have “intersecting sites of oppression” (p. 409). An example of this could be seen in FGS who are of color, women, and have low socioeconomic statuses.

One problem that is prevalent among FGS is the feeling of loneliness and isolation. FGS can feel this great deal of isolation because college campuses do not usually cater to their lived experiences, such as being a person of color or coming from a low-income household (Jenkins, Belanger, Connally, Boals & Durón, 2013). For instance, it may be difficult for FGS to find low cost ways to bond with their peers who are financially able to afford more costly activities. FGS can face problems when trying to build friendships at college because of this challenge.

A second problem faced by FGS is the trouble in connecting with both home life and college life. As mentioned earlier, there is a presence of multiple identities. Student is one of these identities (Jehangir, 2010). Many FGS find it difficult to take on this identity of college student because they may feel that they have to leave behind the parts of their identities that relate to life at home. Many FGS end up dropping out of college because they do not want to feel disconnected from their families and home lives. If FGS do succeed in college, they may feel family achievement guilt for being the first in their families to do so (Covarrubias, Romero & Trivelli, 2015). Many FGS feel the need to minimize their success in college when they are with their families due to this guilt. This is especially true to African American FGS, who may feel that they have avoided problems that their family members may not have, such as drug and alcohol abuse.

FGS also face many problems that are not unique to only them. For instance, FGS who are of color may face racial discrimination and non-FGS may also face racial discrimination (Jehangir, 2010). However, FGS face this in addition to the trouble of assimilating to the culture of a campus, so their perceived stress is at a greater intensity than that of non-FGS. Due to such a great amount of perceived stress, FGS tend to have less satisfaction with life than non-FGS.

Many non-FGS have learned to adapt to college from their parents, so they tend to have an overall better college experience than FGS. For instance, non-FGS are more likely to have already been taught how to perform well in college level courses and to juggle these classes with other activities, while FGS are often times are first introduced to high level courses when they begin college. This change can also lead to FGS having difficulty adjusting to the demands of college while also attempting to manage the social aspects of college.

Another area FGS may have trouble in is seeking out college opportunities (Ward, Siegel, & Davenport, 2012). Non-FGS tend to have the support of their parents when researching colleges to apply to. However, FGS may not be able to make informed decisions because they are forced to be more independent during this process. FGS may even have trouble finding financial resources to help fund their education. FGS also tend to go to college for practical reasons such as being able to support their families and to have a higher income, while non-FGS may want to attend college for the experiences.

Ward, Siegel, & Davenport (2012) suggest that cultural capital is the key resource to success in college. Cultural capital is “the knowledge students and their families have about the variables involved in getting into college... and persisting in college once there” (Ward, Siegel, & Davenport, 2012, p.7). This can include making decisions on which college to attend and how to build social connections while at college. Parents of FGS may be aware that their children can potentially do well in college, but do not have the resources to help them to achieve this success. For instance, a parent may expect their students to get scholarships to go to college but may not know how to seek out realistic scholarship opportunities or understand that scholarships are highly competitive. Cultural capital is just one piece of parental support. Other aspects of parental support include “engaging in decision making, asking pertinent questions, providing financial resources, and giving basic encouragement” (Ward, Siegel, & Davenport, 2012, p. 9). It

was found that parents of FGS may not understand the level of difficulty of college coursework, which could be why many FGS do not feel supported by their families (Ward, Siegel, & Davenport, 2012).

According to Hand and Payne (2008) FGS are different from other marginalized groups because they do not look like they need help, so they do not receive any help.

Target Audience

It is important that we define the publics specifically so that the resources can be tailored to them. If the resources do not cater to the publics, they will not be effectively aided. The target audience for the resources is FGS at CSU. FGS are students who are the first in their immediate families to attend college. These students may have different experiences than their peers who have parents that have graduated from college. FGS may feel underprepared for college and may be less likely to succeed than their peers. They are also more likely to attend a two-year college than their counterparts. FGS are also less likely to obtain a college degree.

Stakeholders

It is important to identify the stakeholders because, although the resources are intended for FGS, other audiences may be impacted by the resources.

First Generation Students

FGS are primary stakeholders to resources for FGS because they are directly impacted by access to and quality of those resources.

Parents of First Generation Students

Parents of FGS are a secondary resource of resources for FGS because they may be influenced by the outcome of their children's college experience based on these resources.

Institution

Institutions serve as secondary stakeholders because they do hold an impact on resources for FGS. Also, enrollment and graduation rates of FGS may be impacted based on the resources provided.

Faculty

Faculty are also secondary stakeholders to resources for FGS because they can help provide resources to FGS. Also, the success of FGS in their classes may be impacted by these resources.

Research Questions and Methodology

The primary research focuses on the following research questions:

Research question 1: What problems do FGS face at Columbus State University face?

Research question 2: What resources can Columbus State University provide to FGS to help them feel more prepared for their undergraduate studies?

An electronic informed consent form and survey was created using Google Forms. The consent form and survey were distributed to FGS via email. The email list was provided by CSU's Institutional Research and Effectiveness office. The survey consisted of eight questions. The first question asked for students to verify whether they are a FGS. The following questions were open-ended and asked for students to share information about their experiences at CSU and for their opinions on how FGS could be accommodated.

Results

Question 1: Did either of your parents attend college?

Participants had the option to select “yes” or “no” for this question. Out of 135 participants, 100 identified as FGS. The responses from those who did not identify as FGS were not used when analyzing the results.

Question 2: How has your experience been at CSU, overall?

20 of the participants responded with relatively neutral language. These participants described their experience at CSU using words like “fine” and “okay”. Some of these participants also indicated that there are positive and negative aspects of attending CSU. For instance, one participant said, “...overall it has been a learning experience [and] professors are understanding and work with you.” Another student stated that their¹ experience has been, “a great big learning experience. Being a first generation college student forced me to figure out things on my own.” Seven of the participants described their overall experience at CSU as being negative. These students used words like “overwhelming” and “stressful”. However, one student mentioned that although he or she is having a difficult experience, “...the resources and most faculty have been encouraging and helpful in the new experience.” 72 participants described their experience at CSU as being positive. These students used words such as “excellent” and “good” when describing their experiences at CSU. A student stated that although their overall experience was a good one, they “always had difficulty with getting in touch with people to answer my questions and help me finish the necessary paperwork... My very first semester, I almost had to leave CSU because of some confusion over my financial aid that resulted in an owed balance on my account, and no one seemed to be able to help me with it.” Another student

¹ They/their pronouns are used in this paper to be respectful of participants’ gender identities

said, “I have loved every minute of it. Great campus, excellent teachers, and overall great community.” One student stated that they did not have any experience at CSU to discuss.

Question 3: Do you think Columbus State University offers resources to support first generation students?

43% of participants indicated that they do think Columbus State University offers resources to support them. One student stated that CSU offers resources “as long as the student continues to question whether they are doing things right and continues to ask for help.” A second participant said, “Yes, there are a lot of great resources that you can use, especially for me communicating with my advisor has been a huge help in figuring things out.” Another participant answered by saying, “Yes, but there is always room to improve.” 33% of participants did not think that CSU offers resources for FGS. The remaining 24% participants indicated that they either did not know whether there are resources for FGS or that they did not use any of those resources. One student said, “There should definitely be more knowledge support, there were a lot of things that I wish I had known, like there are scholarships for first gen students and I’m sure there is way more out there but I’m a senior now so it’s kind of pointless to ask for advice.”

Question 4: Did you receive any support or guidance as a first generation student before coming to Columbus State University (e.g. in high school, from family members, etc.)?

44% of participants indicated that they did receive support or guidance before coming to CSU. Nine of these students indicated that they received support while still in high school. Also, nine of these students stated that they were given support from family members. Furthermore, many of the students who received support felt that this support was very minimal. A student answered by saying, “My family tried their best to help me and give me guidance, but the only

member of my family to go to college was my grandma, and she graduated over 40 years ago so things have changed quite a bit, especially with technology, so there's only so much advice she can give. As far as applying for FAFSA and even applying to colleges and being confused with applications, my mom supported me through everything but there was really no one to provide guidance.” Another student said they received support from the college that they attended. 55% of participants responded by saying that they did not receive any support before coming to CSU. A participant said, “No. Everything that I have done has been on my own. I receive emotional support from my mother but nothing other than that. Financially everything falls on me.” Another student said, “Other than my Stepmother and Step Aunt driving with me on Freshmen Move-In Day, no. Once I came to college, our worlds separated...” One participant did not answer this question.

Question 5: What are some issues that you’ve faced as a first generation student?

34% of participants stated that they had issues related to financial aid, such as filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), understanding loans, locating opportunities for financial aid, and paying for college. One student said an issue was “My father and I struggling to figure out financial aid and a lot more debt than I should be in due to lack of knowledge. Financial aid was not helpful at CSU for answering these questions.” A participant indicated that they have faced problems related to racism at CSU. Ten students stated that they have not faced any issues. When describing the issues faced as a FGS, a student said, “I feel like I’m being robbed of the true ‘college experience’, but it’s cool because I know that I’ll be the one to set the pace for my kids and grandkids...An incoming freshman shouldn’t have to completely depend on themselves.” Nine students identified with facing difficulties related to pressure and their emotions. One of these students stated that “Everyone wants you to graduate

on time and have straight As.” Another participant said, “Parents think college is easy. That it’s easy to get a job.” 29% of participants discussed having troubles with knowledge of college and what to expect when attending. Some of these students mentioned that many of their peers are more prepared because their parents taught them what to expect. One student said, “There isn’t really a place that you can just go to tell you the information you would need to know otherwise. There are some situations that I don’t know how to handle because there was no way for me to prepare for them.” Another student said, “I feel a step behind everyone else.” Additionally, a student said they had feelings of “Homesickness, isolation, confusion on how to go about going through college” Nine students answered saying that they struggled with managing school and other responsibilities, such as work and family. Other students mentioned having issues with online classes, tutoring, declaring a major, and adjusting to life at college.

Question 6: Is there anything you wish you knew before coming to college?

Seventeen students said that there was nothing they wish they had known before beginning college. One of these students said that although they prepared for college, “you quickly realize that what you prep for is not the same as actually going through it.” Another student said that they do not wish that knew anything, but they wish that they had more support. The students who do wish they knew certain information before starting college mentioned a wide variety of topics and most participants mentioned more than one topic. These included financial aid, financial cost, emotional toll, difficulty of classes, that others face similar problems, the importance of grades, and time management.

Question 7: Do you have any advice for incoming first generation students?

Four participants did not have advice for incoming FGS. The students who did have advice for incoming FGS offered a wide range of advice. They gave advice on studying, campus

involvement, classes, and on not being afraid to ask questions. Students also gave advice on working through the difficulties that may come with being a FGS. One student said, “There is a lot of pressure when you are a first generation student, but just know that you are being an example to the future.”

Question 8: Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience as a first generation student?

54% of participants did not have anything else to share. 33% of participants who shared additional information about their experience as FGS had positive feedback about their experiences. They spoke about being happy that they came to CSU. One student said, “Overall, CSU provides me with a space that I could thrive in as a first generation.” A participant said, “By junior year I was able to fully enjoy and understand college and it’s nice inspiring my younger siblings and older siblings to reach for something higher than what we were born into.” These students also spoke about the sense of pride they feel in being FGS. One participant said, “I worked hard and regret nothing from my struggle. I cried a lot and put a hell of a lot of blood, sweat and energy into this degree, it means so much more to me that I am the first person on either side of my family to graduate from college. I mean I was the first of parents and most of my aunts and uncles to graduate high school.”

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Based on the primary and secondary research, the strengths for FGS in relation to the publics are 1) an increased feeling of preparedness for college and 2) more feelings of happiness when attending college.

Preparedness: The primary and secondary research indicate that resources targeted towards FGS can help FGS have a better understanding of what to expect in college and how to navigate college.

Happiness: Based on the primary and secondary research, FGS feel happier in college when they have resources to help guide them.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses of resources for FGS in relation to the identified publics are 1) it may be difficult to create resources that cater to all FGS and 2) it may be difficult to promote these resources to FGS.

Resources for all FGS: The primary and secondary research that all FGS face different obstacles, so it may be difficult to create resources that are able to help the various problems that FGS may face.

Promotion of resources: The primary research indicates that many FGS are not aware of resources available to them, but others are aware of these resources. There are difficulties in getting these resources to some FGS.

Opportunities

The opportunities of resources for FGS are 1) increased enrollment of FGS and 2) increased graduation rate.

Enrollment: Creating resources that allow FGS to feel like they will succeed at CSU may lead to more FGS enrolling at CSU.

Graduation rates: Based on the secondary research, it can be assumed that access to resources lead to FGS graduating from college within four years

Threats

The threats for FGS resources are 1) FGS may not seek these resources and 2) other universities may have resources and initiatives that are more attractive to FGS.

Lack of seeking resources: The primary and secondary research show that FGS often times do not seek support or guidance, which means that they might not use resources that are available.

Competitor universities: The secondary and primary research indicate that some universities provide more effective FGS resources than others, which may lead to FGS choosing to enroll in those schools.

Discussion

According to the survey results, when asked about resources, many FGS at CSU did not think that resources were available to them or did not feel that these resources were accessible. Furthermore, many FGS did not feel that the resources that are provided are enough to specifically aid FGS in the challenges that they may face. The results of the survey indicate that, overall, FGS do not feel prepared when beginning college at CSU. This is due to a lack of resources and lack of knowledge of resources. Many improvements can be made to CSU's resources for FGS. The mission of suggestions for future resources will be to provide resources that are readily available and specific to FGS. The approach will be to support FGS academically and socially.

Goals and Objectives

The survey results present that there is much room for improvement in CSU's efforts to help guide FGS through their time in college.

Goal #1: To inform FGS about the resources that are available to them at CSU.

Objective #1: Create a webpage on CSU's website that has resources for FGS readily available.

Objective #2: Increase the amount of FGS who are aware of the resources at CSU by 20%.

Goal #2: To create valuable resources that are specific to FGS at CSU.

Objective 1: Create digital content to help FGS navigate issues that they may face.

Objective 2: Increase the satisfaction with resources for FGS by 20%.

Strategies and Tactics

Message Strategy

FGS must be targeted to in a way that is empowering to them. CSU is currently rolling out the Create You campaign. Through this campaign, CSU is showing prospective and current students that they can tailor their CSU experience to their unique needs and wants.

Tactic #1: Create You can use the phrase “Create your Legacy” specifically for FGS. In the survey, various participants mentioned their sense of pride in being FGS. They also mentioned what their college education will mean for their families and for future generations. For many FGS, getting a college education is beneficial their entire families.

Website Strategy

Many FGS indicated that they were not aware of resources for FGS or able to find information to help guide them while at CSU. Some participants also mentioned that they could not get answers to their questions.

Tactic #1: Create a webpage that holds all FGS resources in one place.

Promotional Strategy

As stated previously, many FGS were not aware of the resources that are provided to them. Therefore, CSU must do better in promoting these resources.

Tactic #1: Use CSU social media accounts to tell FGS that there are resources for them.

Tactic #2: Create flyers to hang on CSU’s campus and to put in the Cougar Connection to promote resources for FGS.

Resource Strategy

In the surveys, FGS indicated that although there are resources for FGS, they are not always helpful. The resources should cater to the academic and social well-being of students.

Tactic #1: Celebrate National First Generation Student Day on November 8th each year.

This is an opportunity to hold an event that will allow FGS meet other FGS. Some students mentioned that they wish they knew that other students dealt with the same problems that they did. Celebrating National First Generation Student Day will also help create a sense of pride in those who may feel marginalized due to being FGS. Monmouth University established First to Fly in 2018. First to Fly allows FGS to attend events for an entire week. These events highlight accomplishments by first generation, students, faculty, and staff. The events also raise awareness of issues that FGS may face (Monmouth University's First-Generation College Celebration, n.d.).

Tactic #2: Create videos that answer common questions that FGS may have or problems that they may face. Princeton University published a video on YouTube that highlights all of the resources available to FGS and students from low-income homes (PrincetonAdmission, 2019).

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Ashley Mayer, a student in the Department of Communication at Columbus State University. Dr. McCollough, a faculty member in the Department of Communication, will supervise the research project.

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this project is to gain a better understanding of the needs of first generation students when beginning college.

II. Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this research study, you will be given an electronic survey to complete. After we receive your survey answers, we'll review the results. By understanding your viewpoints, we hope to develop digital content to aid incoming first generation students in navigating college. We will not use the data for future research.

III. Possible Risks or Discomforts:

There may be discomfort in discussing your experience as a first generation students. Please know that you are not required to answer or discuss anything that makes you uncomfortable. You are allowed to stop your participation at any time.

IV. Potential Benefits:

Your responses in this survey will give insight into the experiences of first generation students. Based on this, resources can be made to help incoming first generation students better prepare for an education at CSU.

V. Costs and Compensation:

There are no costs to participating in this survey. There is also no compensation for participating in this survey.

VI. Confidentiality:

Your participation will be kept confidential. To protect your identity, the survey will not collect your name or email address. After this, we will identify common themes mentioned in the surveys and this information will be stated in Ashley's research paper. After May 1, 2020, all data will be destroyed through shredding hard copies and deleting electronic files.

VII. Withdrawal:

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and your withdrawal will not involve penalty or loss of benefits.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Ashley Mayer at 248-494-2744 or mayer_ashley@columbusstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu.

I have read this informed consent form. If I had any questions, they have been answered. By selecting the I agree radial and submitting the survey, I agree to participate in this research project.

Agree

Disagree

Appendix B

Survey

1. Did either of your parents attend college?
2. How has your experience been at CSU, overall?
3. Do you think Columbus State University offers resources to support first generation students?
4. Did you receive any support or guidance as a first generation student before coming to Columbus State University (e.g. in high school, from family members, etc.)?
5. What are some issues that you've faced as a first generation student?
6. Is there anything you wish you knew before coming to college?
7. Do you have any advice for incoming first generation students?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience as a first generation student?

Appendix C

Survey Results

Question 0	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8
I agree	No	pretty good	not specifically, everyone has access to the same resources	not really, I always knew I was going to college whether I had support or not	not knowing the specifics of undergrad and graduate school	no	Don't slack off your first year and take it seriously. You want to be able to take some hits to your GPA once you get into your major classes and not take hits during your core courses.	It's not as hard to be a first generation student as it's made out to be.
I agree	No	good!	yes	yes	I always had to do a lot of research on scholarships , how to actually get accepted into college, how to apply, all on my own	n/a	follow through and do everything at 100% to obtain your degree!	n/a
I agree	No	My experience has been very stressful.	Yes	No	Financial aid	I wish I was more prepared for exactly how financial aid works and about scheduling classes.	Please keep in contact with your counselors and stay in contact with your teachers (most will work with you)	

I agree	No	Good	Yes	Yes	Managing course load, with a family at home			
I agree	No	My experience has been well overall. The campus is lovely, and all of the staff has been very accommodating so far. Information is very well delivered throughout campus and the staff to students.	Of course! The whole college process and academic deadlines have been very clear and easy to follow.	Yes, some of my family members are very encouraging and others helped that have their kids already in college.	Not always knowing what to turn in. There is many documents and things that are due that you do not realize the college will need.	So far it has been better than high school and you need to have a good study plan though.	Do not be afraid to be yourself and do not be afraid to branch out and have independence, make new friends, or be afraid to leave high school you behind. College is all about change.	Just lucky to be where I am and be at a good school like CSU!
I agree	No	Pretty interesting	Yes	No	Not knowing what to do for anything	Everything the ins and out definitely	Educate yourself and make smart decisions	No
I agree	No	excellent	I'm not sure. My advisor has been very supportive. I have not taken a college course since completing my associate's degree 27 years ago.	No	Being able to navigate online courses while working full-time and raising a family.	How to find scholarships so I would not have to use student loans.	You can do anything you put your mind to. Pray about everything. Ask for help, it's out there. People around are willing to help.	My grandparents came from Ireland, Poland and Germany to start a new life. Neither of my parents finished high school. My brother who was 9 years older than me was my only

								source of help with schoolwork. Invest in your education so you can invest in future generations.
I agree	No	It has been fun, but stressful at times. Paperwork for college can be confusing but classes are fun.	I don't think so because I do not know of any.	No.	I do not know how to fill out forms for college. I don't know anything about student loans or anything. My prenatal don't know so they can't help me.	How to calculate a college gpa and how to fill out a fafsa.	Reach out to older students or people who have been to college.	It's hard but rewarding.
I agree	No	It's been pretty good. I am a returning student. I graduated high school in 2007 and went to CSU for a year. I started again Spring 2018. So far it has not been bad because my major is	I think so. I learn very quickly, so it wasn't a problem for me.	No.	None.	No.	Do it! Don't quit!	Nothing.

		Spanish which I am fluent in. What was a problem was my Pre-Calculus class when my major was Astrophysics. I switched because I barely passed.						
I agree	No	It had been good	Somewhat	No	I had difficulty knowing how to figure out financial aid, housing, and doing classes.	New more about the financial and classes	To ask as many questions in order to understand.	
I agree	No	The courses are fairly easy, the institution as a whole could improve on some aspects. Overall, I thoroughly enjoy CSU.	They may, but I have not been aware of any. I don't really expect to be treated differently because I am a first generation student, so I guess I can't complain.	No.	Being a first generation student, my parents did not understand FAFSA and did not see the importance of an education therefore do not help pay for my education.	Better study habits.	Don't let the thought that your parents or others in your family succeeding without an education hinder you from enacting your dreams.	Not at the moment.

I agree	No	Excellent	Yes	No	None	No	If you take time off, you may not choose to go back	N/A
I agree	No	On a scale of 1-10, I'd give it a 7 or so.	Unsure.	High school didn't help for jack all. Most of my family never went to college, or just did online only. It was hell and high water for myself and my parents to get me into college in the first place.	I'm unsure about everything I do. My advisors never told me how crap of a plan I had- do all my core classes first and then just focus on my major- they never told me that it sucks because now I have to come back for an extra semester for 2 classes.	How your grade depends on the professor and not how much work you put into something.	Change majors. You are free to do so- don't like being an art major? Change. Don't like being a polisci major? Change. Don't let your parents tell you differently- BUT, be prepared for what credits will count towards your new major. Make sure you plan ahead.	If you're freshmen roommates stick with you, you'll despise them Sophomore year (it's just a thing, it's weird) but you'll all be friends after that year. For the love of all that's good take a shower. On Friday's, take the shuttle bus downtown with a portable freezer bag, and go to the market at one of the stops. Use your Cougarcash there.
I agree	No	Honestly, a really great experience!	I would say so!	Very little, but yes.	Not having much advice to base my experiences or expectations off of.	Just how expensive everything is.	apply for SCHOLARS HIPS!	I'm in college for a reason. Not only to achieve a degree in the field I wish to pursue,

								but to prove a point.
I agree	No	Good.	I have never heard of any resources for first generation students	No. I became pregnant in high school and dropped out my senior year. Teachers did not try to talk to me about my future. College was unheard of in my family, so I did not have anyone to talk to me about it.	I do not know a lot of "common knowledge" things that other students already knew. And my family does not understand what I am going through because they have never done it their selves. I feel a lot more distanced from everyone because I feel different from my fellow classmates and different from my family.	I wish I were better informed and stressed with how important it is to begin taking your major related courses immediately. I am going to finish my senior year with multiple extremely difficult classes.	Do not get your information from only one source. I wish I would have reached out to numerous professors/advisors for their opinion and help.	N/a
I agree	No	It's been a pretty great experience	Yes	Yes, from my mom and my advisor	Everyone wants you to graduate on time and have straight As	How hard it is and the money you invest into it	Take a year off after high school to save and really know if college is what you want	

I agree	No	My experience at CSU has been a good one. Freshman year was a bit rough but since then I have had many new opportunities and met awesome people.	Not really	A little	Parents think college is easy. That it's easy to get a job. That money is more than your education & actual experience.	I wish I knew how much college affects your emotional state of mind.	Stay true to yourself, remember why you're there and know who your real friends are. Also to never give up and lose track! Last but not least, know which classes you're supposed to be taking do not let the advisors get over on you.	No
I agree	No	Very good	Yes	Yes Family Members, Friends, Teachers etc.	Balancing my time with work , homework, assignments and family	No I did a lot of research and communicated with a lot of people who was currently in school or just graduated to prepare. But you quickly realize that what you prep for is not the same as actually going through it.	Study, do not procrastinate, ask for help, no question is a dumb one, don't give up no matter how hard it gets. The prize at the end is worth it all.	Transferring to CSU was the best decision I have made.

I agree	No	It has been overwhelming at time; however, the resources and most faculty have been encouraging and helpful in the new experience.	Yes	My high school teachers were extremely helpful in giving advice and helping me in times when I was registering and I was confused because none of my family knew how to do these things either.	Sometimes it is harder to figure out what some things are asking for, for example, applying for scholarships, financial aid, or registration. This is because none of my family has ever gone through the process before, thankfully, I had my teachers.	That self-discipline is key. You have more free time than in high school and despite being dedicated, which is shown by us being first generations to pursue college, it can be hard at times to keep good time management.	Take a deep breath and keep the hard work and dedication that you have had in high school all through college. Yes, at times we are at a disadvantage; however, having a positive mindset that you will leave will a college degree can help wonders.	When you do not feel overwhelmed, there is a sense of pride and accomplishment that you feel because despite my unconventional life, I am the first person in my family to go to college, and I will leave with a college degree.
I agree	No	Overall I have enjoyed my time at CSU, through all the good and bad times -- these 5 years have helped me learn so much about myself and the world.	I'd have to say no, there was not anything special offered to me just because I am a first generation student. I made due with all the challenges just like every other student does.	Other than my Stepmother and Step Aunt driving with me on Freshmen Movie-In Day, no. Once I came to college, our worlds separated, outside of major holidays and life events (on their end) there isn't much going on there.	Money was my biggest issue, I had to support myself and my grades struggled because of the work I had to do outside of school and home work. Distance was another, I went to school 3 hours away from my family. Support, my family didn't know how	You have to really want to be in college, a lot of times it's going to be hard -- for a hundred different reasons. It's okay to do stuff alone and it's okay to do stuff for yourself.	You are your biggest supporter, if you want this and you think you can -- then you will. Live your dream and don't let anything stop you. It's going to be hard, but it is so worth it. I believe in you, if no one else does - I do. If you can't believe	I worked hard and regret nothing from my struggle. I cried a lot and but a hell of a lot of blood sweat and energy into this degree, it means so much more to me that I am the first person in either side of my family to graduate from

				My Nana has assisted some over the years with helping me pay for tuition or books.	to help or support me in something like furthering my education -- so I didn't really have that until I made significant progress in my years at CSU and then I got some from faculty and the friends I made. Communication, I feel like I needed way more information on what I was getting myself into than I did.		in yourself, I will for you.	college. I mean I was the first of parents and most of my aunts and uncles to graduate high school.
I agree	No	It has been awesome. I literally feel like I'm at home with people who are genuine.	I honestly haven't received any other resources to support just first generation students, that wasn't offer to any other student here at CSU.	Church and family members are my support group. They continue to guide me to finish , even when I feel like giving up.	A major issue was finance. I to support myself, as well as my mother while continuing my education.	I wish I knew more about the scholarships and the actual cost of college. I wouldn't have left for college my first year, if I knew I wasn't going to	Plan ahead, save, and continue to have faith that everything will work out just fine.	I may have some regrets on how I started my years in college, but I also learned from my experience that your number one supporter will truly be yourself.

						have the support I needed.		
I agree	No	Good	Yes	Yes	No Financial aid	Who to take a loan with	Keep moving forward	No
I agree	No	Online student overall it has been a learning experience professors are understanding and work with you	Yes.to my knowledge	No. Nontraditional student	Not too many just adjustment to the workload	No	Be prepared for the workload and balancing your schedule	No.
I agree	No	My experience at CSU was a pretty good experience. I was a transfer student at CSU my sophomore year. Now ending my undergraduate year, I don't believe any other campus would have fit me as well as CSU has. I	I'm not sure if CSU offers and resources for first gen students, if so, I never received any of the information or have been reached out to so probably not.	I did receive support before attended CSU at my high school and through family, as well as other personal connections.	I believe that staying motivated during rough patches in undergrad was an issue for me. Not that I wanted to give up or drop out, it was just extremely overwhelming at times where the thought of me being a first generation, being an	I wish that I would've know that taking classes especially the ones seen as difficult, that taking classes was all about how you perceived the material and how much you believed in your ability to overcome challenges.	My advice for any incoming first gen student would be for them to believe in themselves because many other people from different families were able to do so, so it is attainable. When things seems to get tough hold on to thought that someone in your	I am excited and proud to be a first generational student!

		was able to find community, grow my relationship with God, grow my professionalism and become more into who I really am and want to become more of.			example for my family was the driving force.		family is looking up to you, someone sacrificed so be the example and put your best foot forward. Find community. Stay connected. Take time for yourself. Don't be so self-critical. Everything be fine, God is with you!	
I agree	No	I have really enjoyed my time here at CSU. I have made amazing experiences, met great professors, and learned so much.	Not as much as they could	No	Not knowing how to do the legality things such as financial aid forms and other miscellaneous things.	Not really.	Know that you are doing this for you. Your family will not understand and it will be SO frustrating. Don't waste your time explaining, just find people who do understand the struggle you may face.	I really do struggle with the lack of support systems on the family side, but I have met incredible people and resources on campus that have helped. Freshman year was hard because I did not know those people. All has worked out in the end.
I agree	No	Decent	Yes	Yes- mentor	Difficulty studying,	Need self-motivation	Give it your all never give	It's challenging

					blocking out problems at home		up or look back.	but it's possible!
I agree	No	Amazing	Nothing specially designed for first generation students	Not really	Not knowing some of the "basic" things that come with college. I also am the person who has to answer my own questions.	Not really but I wish there was more support for me during college	Just to ask for help when you need it because there's no stupid questions	
I agree	No	It's been good. There are somethings I have problems with but overall CSU has been good to me.	If they do its not out in the for people to find information on.	No. All I knew is that that had a great communications program and I wanted to be in it.	Affording to come to school in my own.	Loans and how they work.	Before taking out a loan know the ins and outs of them. Travel. Take chances and go for what you dream of doing.	You will have your low moments but you will also have your high moments. Keep to it and everything will work itself out.
I agree	No	Pretty great. I attended another college right out of high school and my experience at CSU has been better by far.	Yes - There has not been a question I've had that has gone unanswered .	No	Out of high school I did not have a mentor or anyone to help me understand financial aid. My parents were unable to help as they were more confused than I was. So, not	It is nothing like high school and you really have to be mature enough to care about your own success.	Stay on track. It's SO easy to let things unravel but much harder to reassemble everything again.	No

					having a mentor was a huge barrier.			
I agree	No	It has been pretty good so far. It is a little difficult to judge, being that this is my first semester, and we have had all of this Covid-19 nonsense to deal with. Having to deal with these issues, with it somewhat dismantling my first semester, I would say it has gone as well as it could.	I am unaware of any extra or other support available for 1st gen students.	No, not really	Just feeling lost a lot of the time. It sometimes seems as though everyone at colleges just expects you to know how to do and handle everything. I've spoken to many students who have echoed these feelings.	I'd just like for advisors to do a better job of understanding students and helping them to figure out the direction they need to be headed. It has seemed as if most advisors are asking you what you should do most of the time, and the truth is, you often do not know very much more than a vague idea of what you want or need to take and what not.	Just do a lot of research on your career goals and ask many, many questions until you feel comfortable.	
I agree	No	I am an older student and	I can't say that anyone ever	My family supported my decision	Really just concerns of how to pay	APA format	Go outside of your normal friend group	It will all be okay.

		not immersed in student life, but it has been fine overall.	reached out to me about it.	and I felt it was expected. Also, my friends were going.	back loans if I can't get a job.		and meet people.	
I agree	No	Educational ly, everything has been fantastic. Administrative things(i.e. financial aid), I have always had difficulty with getting in touch with people to answer my questions and help me finish the necessary paperwork, etc. My very first semester, I almost had to leave CSU because of some confusion over my financial aid that resulted in an owed balance on my account, and no one seemed to be able to	If there are resources, I was never aware of them.	No, I was completely on my own in trying to figure things out.	Not knowing where to start/having a timeline for having things done, such as taking the SAT, filling out applications, scholarships , etc./where to fill out the necessary forms/know ing what organization s I can be a part of as a Freshman. There is not only a lot of paperwork involved, but there are also many programs (i.e. Servan Leadership and the Honors College) that as a freshman I could take advantage of in order	I don't really have an answer to this question because I didn't know anything, so I had to learn everything.	If you know anyone who has graduated before you and may be going to the university you hope to go to, reach out to them with all the questions you may have. They're usually more than happy to help you with the process. Because of what I went through, I offer my help to anyone from my high school when I find out that they are looking to come to CSU. I think of it as being kind of a mentor/almo st having a friend before being a part of the university.	It's hard for me to think of advice for others because I had to do everything by myself. I didn't have the support of my family, I didn't have anyone in my school that was willing to help me figure things out, I didn't know if there was anyone at CSU I could have reached out to. I am where I am today simply because I was self-motivated and driven to make things happen and make them work and took the

		help me with it.			to put my best foot forward; however, if I had not stumbled upon their websites, I may have never become a part of them.			time to figure out everything. I've had to learn how to be completely independent from the start, which is a good thing I guess.
I agree	No	Overall, my experience has been great. Any confusion I had I emailed whoever I thought I should and they cleared up my confusion. I transferred from a different institution that didn't seem to really care about their students, and my experience has been very	They definitely offer resources to help students overall to answer questions, but I don't know from what I've seen that I could say they offer resources to specifically help first generation students.	My family tried their best to help me and give me guidance, but the only member of my family to go to college was my grandma, and she graduated over 40 years ago so things have changed quite a bit, especially with technology, so there's only so much advice she can give. As far as	I feel a step behind everyone else. Especially when first applying to colleges and my first semester, I felt like I didn't know anything because no one in my family attended college. There are still times where I feel like I don't know anything and everyone	I wish I had known that everyone gets confused sometimes. While I do feel a step behind those that are not first generation students, I also know that there are some things you have to experience yourself. Other students might struggle with the transition	Utilize every resource you can. There really is no such thing as a stupid question. If you're confused, then there is no shame in asking for clarification even if you think it should be obvious. Odds are, whoever you are asking has more than likely heard the same question before.	It's so important to find a community where you can be yourself. It makes the transition so much easier when you're surrounded with people you can rely on. Personally I joined a sorority, which in itself was very confusing as, again, no one in my family had gone to

		different here, for which I am grateful.		applying for FAFSA and even applying to colleges and being confused with applications, my mom supported me through everything but there was really no one to provide guidance.	else does because I never had the guidance and I never had anyone to give me advice based in knowledge from experience.	too, so I'm not completely alone in that.		college/been a part of Greek life, but I'm lucky to have found a diverse community where I know I can ask questions about how things work and they won't judge me or think me stupid.
I agree	No	Hard, because I had to transfer from another college and felt like I had to restart all over again, but I'm slowly getting the hang of it.	I think they do, as long as the student continues to question whether they are doing things right, and continue to ask for help.	I did. At Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College I received support from a scholarship named CAMP which is based on students who have parents who have worked in the fields. Usually most of the students are first generation college students, they help in money, class, registration, tutoring, and	·Not knowing that our GPAs were important ·Not knowing about FAFSA properly ·What credit hours mean ·Loans ·Handling school and work at the same time Being away from home	Yes, known that GAPs were important throughout high school and college.	Always ask for help.	I am proud to have gone through the struggle. I learned the hard way, and I'm paying the consequences now. I'm slowly reaching up to my goal and close to graduating.

				mentoring students throughout their first year.			
I agree	No	My business professors have been great but CSU as a whole is just okay, not the best.	If there is anything that they do provide, I am unaware of it.	Not really.	I don't think I faced any problems academically being a first generation student but I did experience some difficulty with finances and being able to pay for college.	I wish I would have realized how expensive each course is and that it is important to take your classes seriously because it could cost you hundreds of dollars if you have to retake a course.	Take your courses seriously because they are expensive and it's your money you are wasting if you have to retake them. Create a study schedule and stick to it. The library is your friend especially the study rooms. Always carry an umbrella, calculator, and an extra scantron. Sit towards the front of the class even if that's not where your friends are sitting.
I agree	No	Wonderful besides parking administration	None different than other students	No	Not knowing financial aid opportunities	Yes how to apply for financial aid to avoid loans	Stay dedicated. When times get tough, think of how well worth it

							will be when you are done	
I agree	No	Great	Yes	No	No issues so far	No	Be on time have materials for class and be ready to learn new things	
I agree	No	CSU is awful... Schwob School of Music is incredible.	Absolutely not	I have family members that did, yes	My father and I struggling to figure out financial aid and a lot more debt than I should be in due to lack of knowledge. Financial aid was not helpful at CSU for answering these questions.	No	Apply for everything 100000 years in advance.	
I agree	No	It's been great.	Yes	No	FAFSA	You have be grounded and organized.	Try your best and don't always sit in your dorm.	Even if you are shy or introverted still go out and try to make friends.
I agree	No	It has been alright	No	no	none	no	no	
I agree	No	It's been a learning experience overall with the good and the bad	Yes	Yes	It was all new to me and I wasn't as ready as I should have been	The expectations from different classes	Make sure to take your senior year seriously	I love going to school, I've learned so much about life and myself

I agree	No	It's been good.	I didn't need any specific resources, so I never asked if any were available	Yes, from older siblings	Racism	The academic challenges	Get help if you need it	No
I agree	No	good	Not for working students. The hours of operation are limited.	No. joined the military directly.	Understanding why I have to take general "Core" classes. Financial aid was complicating as well.	The real difference between Tech schools and universities .	Ask lots of questions. From money to classes.	no thank you
I agree	No	It was good till this whole online thing	I would say so	No	My family doesn't really understand the stress of college. The only thing they know is from TV so they don't understand how adult the whole process really is.	I wish I was better at studying. I never had to study in high school to make straight A's but college has taken some work.	Study.	It's been a lot of pressure from my family to do well and make it through.
I agree	No	Excellent	Yes	No	Understanding the financial aid process, fully understanding the college process from enrollment	More about financial aid, how loans work,	Reach out to as many resources as possible	Overall, CSU provides me with a space that I could thrive in as a first generation.

					to graduation			
I agree	No	Everything has been great, I love the professors.	Yes, first generation students have the same resources as any other student.	No	Many students have more knowledge about their major and career since their parents have the career they are studying for.	No	Ask around for help, never stay put.	
I agree	No	I have loved every minute of it. Great campus, excellent teachers, and overall great community.	I don't really have much to compare it to but I would say yes.	No, I did not.	Adjusting to the schedule, while being a mother of two and working full-time.	I wish I had known how important it is to build relationships with peers and working through study groups to help lighten the workload.	Don't be scared to reach out to your professors if you need help. They care about seeing you succeed and are more than willing to help if you need it. Also, talk with peers and build friendships. It is a lot easier to adjust when you have other people to talk to that are going through the same thing as you.	I wish I had done it sooner!! =)

I agree	No	Good	yes	no	I have been out of school a while now	no	no	no
I agree	No	Satisfactory, I suppose.	Sure.	Not at all.	Assignments being distributed via multiple platforms instead of one. Leads me to believe Cougar View isn't effective for all class types. Can lead to issues with organization.	I wish there was a class for helping adults reintegrate into a school environment. Personally, I haven't been to a formal school in nearly 12 years.	Develop healthy study habits, time management and routines prior to starting/attending college.	The professors state that they don't care if you show up to class or not, but will drop you from the class if you aren't attending; even if you're completing coursework. Attendance shouldn't matter if you're completing coursework.
I agree	No	Pre-Corona, it's been great. Post, I am not a fan of online learning.	Yes	No	None	No	No	No
I agree	No	Welcoming and encouraging	Overall a lot of info is provided but especially financial info is hard to come by directly or is complicated to	High school offered a small amount of guidance. Mostly it was simply a push to pick a school and go rather than solid guidance to pursuing the	Understanding financial aid and managing the monetary side of school took the first year of guesswork before I	A better understanding of the money for school and advice for planning a class schedule depending on other engagement	Take the time in your schedule to make sure you can breathe and have alone time on top of time for classes and homework	It's been a task to get everything in control but making the best of my knowledge and teaching my parents the best I can so that

			understand. Which is probably two fold, the system being convoluted and the school not having readily accessible and understandable	best options for individuals	knew what was the best way to use my money	s like having a job or needing extra time for rehearsals and practices		they understand everything helps a lot so you aren't trying to do anything alone
I agree	No	Okay.	No.	No.	Understanding the lay out of the campus and having printed materials in the classroom.	No, Overall I have enjoyed my experience.	Hang-on! No one knows what they are doing.	No, thank you.
I agree	No	I have had a really positive experience at CSU. I attended CVCC briefly prior to my enrollment at CSU, and the experiences have been vastly different. CSU offers a healthy amount of resources to its students	I think CSU offers a healthy amount of resources; there are tutoring centers and support labs for all subjects, as well and necessity areas to help benefit students' environments.	My experience with CSU advisors and support labs/tutors has been a positive one. Faculty is easy to communicate with and they are adamant about making sure you succeed when you run into a problem.	I personally have not encountered any radical issues, but I think an ongoing issue is organization in the financial aid department.	You have a lot of independent responsibility for ensuring your financial aid, class registration, and all of the in-between technical details are correct for enrollment, registration, etc. I think another	I think that a lot of high schools expect hand holding and immediate direction when it comes to college in comparison to high school. In this respect I don't think high school properly prepares students for the college experience.	Whether you're looking for a campus experience, hybrid experience, or online experience, CSU has a lot of flexibility to create your schedule and have control over the type of college experience you want to have. While

		and a lovely campus experience. I have attended for two semesters and have loved staff and faculty.				thing to prepare for is pushing books at the start of the semester, as you are usually expected to have your books before FASFA even gives student their financial aid money.	You do everything from financial aid, to registering for classes and being responsible for your own work, and the work load can be pretty intensive depending on the subject and instructor. Self-discipline and responsibility is very important.	the independence of college is refreshing, you're confronted with a lot of mandatory responsibility, but having control over your situation can help you feel more confident about the college experience you have.
I agree	No	Satisfying and rewarding overall	Yes	Yes	Student debt	How important degree progress is	Take classes as much as you can and try to make time for school as much as possible.	It has been satisfying and rewarding overall.
I agree	No	Great! Would not have had the same opportunities if I went somewhere else	Not really, none that I have seen	No	Classes, financial aid, lack of self-esteem, family support	Financial planning, loans, work-study, scholarship opportunities	Become friends with your professors that really care. They are your best ally, especially during your senior year. There are so many trials and	Never give up. Everything will pay off in the end and never let anyone stand in your way

							tribulations that will arise during that time and you need all the help you can get	
I agree	No	csu strives for me as a student to go beyond learning and so far I've had a great experience within the university with a variety of groups and events so yes, it's going very well so far.	n/a	yes	Not knowing that there would be financial challenges along the way!	Learning a little more about being prepared for it mentally especially with a part time job or with playing a sport.	To strive for the best you. There will always be situations or problems that you may face or may not be able to comprehend right there and then but that's life, learning new things along the way. Also, don't be scared to ask for help.	No
I agree	No	It's been a pretty good experience. It's refreshing to be on my own while working on achieving my dream career.	CSU offers some reasons but I wish there was more. I am currently a sophomore/ junior and I had to learn as I grew with CSU about different things second generation	I received a bit from my high school teachers and high school friends who had gone off to college before me.	Having to expect the unexpected. I wasn't informed about certain college things and how it can get super stressful at times. How to maintain a job and college at the same	I wish I knew that college is an experience and it can be too much at times but for me, it's worth it.	It's going to be a brand new experience! Be prepared to step out of your comfort zone if you are not used to making friends outside of your high school friends. Practice going to your	Overall my experience has been great. I made friends fast and joined clubs. If I could do it all over again I would.

			college students would have already been informed about prior to college.		time. How to go out and network.		classes before they begin. Get familiar with your roommates. Go to the cafe and ask what their hours are. Find out where the university police station is.	
I agree	No	So far pretty good.	I do think they do but they lack proper guidance as to how to use those resources	No	Being able to navigate how to enroll in classes and what a good schedule would be for being a full time student and employee.	What I could be involved in and how. Also what other opportunities are available as an active duty member.	It'll feel overwhelming but exciting. You will face challenges you feel like no one else is but there are other people like you and you do not have to go through this alone. Take this experience and grow upon it and do not dwell on the negative. Reach out to the available resources that campus provides.	Go Cougars!
I agree	No	It was good. I enjoyed almost all	If they do I was	no	Having to learn how to apply for	More about financial aid, and	Ask your professors questions and	

		of my classes.	unaware of them.		financial aid on my own, sign up for classes, etc.	more about what you can do with every major.	lean on friends when you need help.	
I agree	No	I have found a few concerns with housing, but overall well.	Yes	None	None so far	How important building a good schedule is	Ask any and all questions. Even if you feel it is a "dumb question"	I have not had any pressure on my back from relatives about college, which is nice.
I agree	No	Great	Not sure	No	None	No	Work hard	No
I agree	No	Good	Yes	Yes	Not knowing what to expect	Financial aid	Talk to someone in college, even if it's not family	No
I agree	No	Hard, they make it extremely difficult for first gen students who come from a poor background to succeed. They have issues processing financial aid and advisors are lackluster. I almost was kicked out of housing due to covid-19 and the university	Nope	No	Difficulty with getting loans due to my parents not having lower income and thus a lower credit score. Having to get a job while taking 19+ hours of courses to support myself. No support system from family about college due to them having no understanding about it.	It is ridiculously expensive if you are not wealthy	Apply for every scholarship you can and go to the most affordable option, not the prestigious one.	There needs to be free higher education to level a playing field for lower income students

		sucked at handling it.						
I agree	No	Not bad, I did not live on campus so it was a different experience.	Sure	Yes	I did not know what to expect freshman year	A guideline to follow	Find a person who has been to college and ask questions if you are confused.	Nope
I agree	No	It hasn't really been great. I've been having a hard time getting professors to understand me.	No	No	Financial aid, study habits, communicating with professors, etc.	I wish I knew about dual enrollment so I could've knocked out some general core classes. I also wish I would've taken my first major class my freshman year instead of listening to the advisors at CSU my freshman year because they didn't have my best	Do your research on classes you need to take! Don't go by everything your advisor says because they don't know what works best for you. Only go to the meeting because your required to buy have your own plan because you're the one taking these classes not your advisor.	

						interests. They only care about money and keeping you here for 5+ years for a bachelor's degree.		
I agree	No	Overall it was very good. I got to network with the professors and since CSU is not too big, I got to know many professors.	In my opinion, I am 50/50 about this question. CSU provides with great advisers and I feel like they have helped me greatly. On the other hand I think more could be done to help.	High School counselors, and asking teachers about college.	Not facing that help that some students can get from parents who did attend college.	How to better manage my time.	There is a lot of pressure when you are a first generation student, but just know that you are being an example to the future.	
I agree	No	I enjoyed it	If they do I did not know about them	No	Parent maybe don't know expectations and everything that goes with being a full time student	How to properly study	Never let the stress become too much. Connect with friends and know that you will get through it.	Making friends and connecting with fellow student help you get through it. We are all going through the same thing and understand

								your struggles
I agree	No	It started off good, then by the end a sophomore year it started going downhill. Everything was horrible for a year, then I changed my major end of Fall 2019 and now everything is a whole lot better.	Yes	Yes	None	Yeah how much housing was going to be and the meal plan being a demand and not a choice.	It's nothing like high school! The tutoring center should be your best friend.	Nope!
I agree	No	It's been okay. I would say almost easy but I also work for the CSU so I have a more in depth knowledge of how some processes work.	I think it could be improved. More courses geared towards nontraditional students would be nice since I work full time. Most courses in my field are offered during business hours (8a-5p) and I cannot spend	I did. My family and friends have been very supportive, my high school was sort of supportive but I graduated in 2003 so information was limited/different.	Finding courses to fit my work schedule that also balances with personal life.	How to pay my bill, what made up my bill charges, how to limit student loan debt.	Do not take out loans UNLESS you NEED to. Know your Academic Calendar and the deadlines. If you don't understand what someone is telling you, ASK ASK ASK. Ask to speak to someone else, ask for clarification until you are	It's been rough. I started and stopped college 2 times before committing to finishing. It's still rough. I get burn out by the end of each semester. Don't take a full load if you aren't comfortable with it. Changing your major is OKAY! If

			<p>evenings on campus since I have a household to take care of. I believe CSU could improve by reaching out to the students when they are sophomores and juniors in high school to better prepare them for the process, something my department has pushed for. But no one seems to like to talk about the facts of higher educations (money, debt). They only want to talk about how fun and exciting going to college is.</p>				<p>certain you understand. These questions are not dumb, you aren't a bother, the staff is employed to assist everyone. Ask your Advisor about how your schedule will impact your Financial Aid. If they don't know, ask Financial Aid.</p>	<p>you don't know what you want to go into, that's fine. I am 35, on my third college, and still sometimes feel like I don't know if this is what I want. Talk to your major's department for advice, ideas. Keep going to class. Effort matters a lot. You don't have to be the best, just give it your best.</p>
I agree	No	none to speak of so far.	I'm sure they do, but I'm unaware of them.	I'm active military, so all my sources are in the	Had a field training exercise that ran through my first	unsure	I'm not sure. It would depend on the question.	once again, unsure.

				Education Center.	class so I had to drop.			
I agree	No	My experience with college has been great so far. I have had a couple of challenges from being the only one in my family who is in school but I figure things out on my own.	I would say yes, but I personally don't take advantage of any of those resources.	No. Everything I that I have done has been on my own. I receive emotional support from my mother but nothing other than that. Financially everything falls on me.	There isn't really a place that you can just go to tell you the information you would need to know otherwise. There are some situations that I don't know how to handle because there was no way for me to prepare for them.	I wish I knew more about student loans. Also the classes that have textbooks but there are other ways to get them other than paying the high prices at the book store.	Yes, ask as many questions as you can. Don't be so hasty to buy the textbooks. Always have backup courses picked out just in case a class you need becomes full.	College is worth it. Though it can be stressful, don't quit. Everything will work out.
I agree	No	A lot of small complications and frustration but you get what you pay for, CSU is cheaper compared to other GA Universities .	There should definitely be more knowledge support, there were a lot of things that I wish I had known, like there are scholarships for first gen students and I'm sure there is way more out there but I'm a senior	Nope	Financial advice - finding out how I get help as a first gen student. Also just not having general knowledge about how the system works, I'm at year 6 and I'm still learning myself.	WFs affect your GPA more than anything and that there are scholarships for first gens.	Apply for every scholarship available if you none of your parents went to college! Also speak financial advisors from multiple universities (your university is biased and wants the most money from you)	Please do not major in something that makes your parents happy. Major in something that makes you happy. I changed my major 5 times in secret just finding something that we all agreed with, that was a waste of my

			now so it's kind of pointless to ask for advice.				and keep in mind that a university is a business, they want your money!	money and 6 years at CSU just ended up being an AAS with a minor.
I agree	No	It's been okay	They offer some	No	Financial aid, going about college in general, and how to do good in college	That financial aid is a pain and not everyone gets a scholarship	Befriend upperclassmen and get their advice and help and support	
I agree	No	good	seems so	no	getting used to online classes	no	take a class that teaches you HOW to study	
I agree	No	A great big learning experience. Being a first generation college student forced me to figure out things on my own. I didn't really have the luxury of going to my family with questions. (You can probably imagine how horrible the	I'm sure they do but I have seen any information about it. I also don't recall hearing anything about it during orientation. I probably wasn't listening though.	Absolutely not. When I first went to college in 2015 I had to pay for everything myself. The whole "broke college student" thing seemed like a joke because all my friends just had to ask their parents for money and I just had to pray. I also didn't know	I feel like I'm being robbed of the true "college experience" but it's cool because I know that I'll be the one to set the pace for my kids and grandkids. Not being able to relate to certain things. An incoming freshman shouldn't	Everything lol! But mostly the do's and don'ts of student loans. I didn't know what a parent plus loans was, or what exactly a grant was. I just signed my name because I needed to get back in my classes.	Don't let your questions pile up in your head! ASK SOMEONE!	Looking back, I see that you will never be 100% prepared for anything in life but every second is an opportunity to prepare yourself.

		<p>verification process was for my mom) I'm always back and forth from the advising center asking a thousand questions. But I didn't start here at CSU, I started at Alabama State University in 2015 fresh out of high school and I've made lots of progress since then but every school is different (thankfully CSU is a lot better and organized than Bama state)</p>		<p>what work study was nor did I have the means to get an off campus job. At Bama state they were trying a new verification process called KHEAA verification which caused a lot of students to get purged from classes and because of that I didn't get my refund until second semester. So I had zero money for the whole first semester.</p>	<p>have to completely depend on themselves.</p>			
I agree	No	Good	Somewhat	No	financial aid responsibility	how expensive classes are	Study and have an alternative if you don't have financial assistance	better communication between staff (Bursar office) and student

I agree	No	Pretty good. A few bad eggs don't ruin the dozen.	Kind of. They kind of throw you in and see if you can swim.	No.	Knowing how to have time management and knowing how to study. I am a full time mom to teens and a wife so I'm always juggling.	How to manage my time and effectively study.	Make sure you reach out consistently.	No.
I agree	No	very good	I don't know exactly because I am a twice over adult learner (I am post bacc. but I always felt supported.	Honestly, no,..... my advisor was my main person for guidance.	Fear of failure!	I wish I had the support to push forward even when I didn't get in Physical Therapy school. I should have applied to more places and reapplied the following year.	Don't give up ! Surround yourself with positive people, listen to your advisor or find a professor that is willing to mentor you. If you don't get in to medical school, PT school or another next step, keep trying, Don't let your parents squash your dream!	CSU has much to offer but you have to be the one to pursue it. Don't be fearful.....
I agree	No	Overall my experience has been great.	Yes	Yes before I transferred to Columbus State University, I was a part of Trio (Student Support	I had to learn how to adjust to college life	Prepare early and don't procrastinate	Get involved in campus life. For example, first generation students can join an	No

				Service) at Andrew College.			organization or participate in campus activities	
I agree	No	It has been okay.	yes	no	none	getting my associates degree while in High School	Don't be lazy. Stay organized and you will succeed	no
I agree	No	It has been okay, not the best but not the worst	No	No	Not knowing how to do a lot of things, I had to figure everything out on my own	How to navigate campus life, How to make friends, How to be noticed by professors	Ask a lot of questions make upper classman friends and go to campus events	It's hard but you adjust and people at home will live through you because they didn't get to experience it and its annoying but it's best to just be understanding and let them do so

I agree	No	I would rate my experience as a 3/5. CSU is a great school, but doesn't have the energy or excitement other colleges do.	Not to my knowledge. I think the school offers resources such as on campus living, and counseling which may help first generation students. However, I don't think there is any resource specifically for first generation students.	Yes, I received a lot of encouragement and preparation from both my family, and high school. I also received a lot of advice from friends that started college before me.	Knowing how the college system works in both academics and finances. It was difficult for my family and me to know what to do when preparing to pay the bursar or dealing with financial aid. For example, we were not sure whether or not to take out a student loan. We knew that loans were not ideal and that we should try not to take one out, however, the financial aid office pushed getting loans very strongly. If it weren't for others that had	How to evaluate my degree path and making sure it aligns with my future career path. Also, how to handle the financial aid office in resisting the pressure of taking out student loans. I guess I would also like to have known in what ways the university is trying to help me, and what resources the school offers that are better left not taken, such as student loans.	Get involved and make sure to have a good group of people (family, friends, professors, mentors, and experienced college students) that can help you as you go throughout your first year in college. If you live on campus, use your RA/Community Advisor to help you navigate college life. They should be a great resource to help you adjust.	No
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					<p>been to college before helping us, I would likely be stuck with an unwanted loan.</p> <p>As for academics, I was not sure what to expect when selecting classes, knowing how they would likely impact my GPA, or what the classes could be used for when applying for jobs after graduation.</p>			
I agree	No	it's been a up and down experience	Somewhat	Yes	<p>A lot of pressure on me to do well, finances, nowhere to turn to for advice</p>	more about how things work	Just be prepared mentally and find someone who can help you	n/a

I agree	No	It's been great for the most part	No	Yes I was encouraged to attend and told it would be a fulfilling experience	Homesickness, isolation, confusion on how to go about going through college	You're really on your own at the end of the day, How to prioritize	Finding a work/life balance is key to happiness. No one tells you how demanding both college work and new friends/partners/roommates can be, but each plays an important part in your overall experience and success.	By junior year I was able to fully enjoy and understand college and it's nice inspiring my younger siblings and older siblings to reach for something higher than what we were born into
I agree	No	It's definitely been a learning experience.	No	Yes	Learning in multiple different ways has made me more insecure about expectations .	Mental health is important.	The best advice is to be true to yourself. Do things that make you a better version of yourself instead of trying to fit in a box. It's easy to be influenced in ways that make you feel safe in any environment but don't conform to society if it affects your well-being.	School is challenging in itself if you're unsure of the future but the time of being a student is a reward to a successful future.

I agree	No	It has been great!	I do not think so honestly. I feel that it would be better if there was an event for first generation students to attend with their parents and see how it's going to be or how the process is done to be able to apply for the university.	I received it in high school.	We didn't know how to complete some of the simple things, such as FAFSA, where to apply, how to apply, and what we need to do so that I could go and study.	No	The only advice I can give is to work hard because college can have its own ups and downs.	It's exciting and an honor to be able to change my future generation with just taking the first step of going to a university.
I agree	No	Excellent!	I have not heard of them	Encouragement but I am on my own financially	Finances I wish CSU offered more scholarships for First generation students because student loans are not enough	N/A	Take your upper levels as you get the prerequisites! Because taking all of your core first will get you behind if some of your classes are only offered every 2 years!	I have had a great experience in transferring to CSU! I would like more ways to get involved with helping first generation students in any way that I can! Whether it be advisement or even just someone to show them around!

I agree	No	Good	Yes, but there is always room to improve.	None	Understanding my emotions at a new environment .	I hope that I know how to understand and deal with my emotions better, so that I implement better actions in my social life.	You always keep hoping and trusting yourself in both social and academic aspects. More than that, if you encounter a hard issue and need some help, you should ALWAYS ask for help. Don't try to keep the burden to yourself and solve every issue by yourself. The issue that you need help with does not have to be academic, but also can be social, and psychological. Also, going to college is a gift that you should appreciate and a journey that you will learn to enjoy. Don't stress yourself on the fact you are a first generation	
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							student, instead, you should feel proud of it and appreciate it because you are the first of your family.	
I agree	No	Positive	I think they offer plenty of resources for students in general but I think there could be a bit more communication on how to receive help and with daily activities as well when it comes to first generation students.	I received short-lived support from my high-school counselor at the start and my family is very supportive.	I was completely lost on what exactly was available to me and how to go about introducing myself and finding classes.	Not that I can think of right now.	It's very difficult to find your footing at first, but putting in the effort and hard work really does pay off.	
I agree	No	Fine. Some classes have been challenging, while others have been easy. The CSU Climbing Club is fun to be a part of.	I personally do not use any resources that are to aid my experience as a college student. The only resources I have used are the financial aid office to	I did receive some guidance from friends I graduated with, but this was only in terms of which professors to take and how to navigate MyCSU	The only issue I have faced is deciding what my major should be. I have changed from IT to Pre-Medical as I believe I will be able to withstand	I wish I knew which major I would end up going to, so I wouldn't have been a semester behind in my major classes.	Just trust yourself, and be ready for challenges that close relatives may not be able to help with.	Find a club that interests you, because meeting other people that have already been through your current situation helps with confusing questions that may arise.

			help with confusion surrounding my financial obligations as I go to school.		the pressure that comes from going into the medical field.			
I agree	No	My initial experience was not good and pushed me towards another school. After re-enrolling, my overall experience has been a good one I've been pushed to succeed even when there are hurdles in the way.	Yes	Yes, from my husband and children.	I have not faced any issues.	Yes. I wish that I had learned good study habits.	Do it. Don't quit because you hit a bump in the road. You won't regret it. Don't let any obstacles or hurdles stand in your way.	Not really.
I agree	No	Challenging due to personal life issues, but CSU staff has been amazing with accommodating and assisting me to ensure I finish strong.	Not specifically, the resources that they offer are great. But they don't cater to first generation students, and I believe these students need the	Yes, From high school teachers and counselors.	Lack of financial support	College is hard but use the resources available before you encounter a crisis situation.	Be strong. Be courageous. Believe in yourself and seek guidance from those who have the capability to help.	

			most support because it is definitely hard to get it when family isn't really understanding of the struggle sometimes.					
I agree	No	It was great I enjoyed it a lot.	Yes	No	tutoring	N/A	Make sure you stay ahead of all assignments	N/A
I agree	No	It has been great, so far all of my experiences with the faculty have been positive and I have received help whenever necessary.	Yes, there are a lot of great resources that you can use, especially for me communicating with my advisor has been a huge help in figuring things out.	Yes, both of my brothers also attended CSU so they were able to help me out.	Not being able to ask my parents how their experience with college was, so I am kind of going in blind as I don't really know what the "college experience" should be like.	That is not as scary as people make it out to be, of course there will be some trials and tribulations but that comes with everything, not just college.	To be open to help from the staff at CSU or any college, and if you don't feel like it's necessary to contact them then talk to your friends or classmates, they have also helped me tremendously when I feel like my questions are too trivial for my advisor.	Overall, I think that my parents not going to college hasn't hindered me in anyway besides not being able to hear their stories. But, I know they are proud that I am furthering my education and they are happy I am to do what they did not.

I agree	No	<p>For a relatively small campus, the quality of the classes I've been a part of are good. There are some issues with consistency and organization between professors (in particular, how CougarView is used/not used), but other than that, things are going well.</p>	<p>I honestly don't know. I'm in my 30's and haven't really looked into it, but I would be surprised if CSU didn't have a first generation program of some sort.</p>	<p>The only support I got was from FAFSA</p>	<p>The only issue that may be remotely related to be a first generation student is coming from a poor background. This meant no financial contribution from my parents when I attempted college the first time when I graduated high school (which resulted from me dropping out my first semester because I could not secure enough financial aid to prevent me from working 60 or more hours a week). While not always the case, student's with parents that have</p>	<p>Not that I can think of.</p>	<p>Before you commit to a degree plan, do extensive research and, as much as possible, do some job shadowing/in interviewing of people in the profession you're trying to enter. This might save a ton of heartbreak, time, and money because if you don't, you'll likely change your major several times because you will come to realize you don't actually like the thing you wanted to be when you grew up (or you're just not good at it, which is fine, but it may be time to try a different route). Put in the work before you commit to truly figure out if it's the</p>	<p>Not that I can think of. Good luck on your thesis.</p>
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					graduated college are more likely to have financial assistance from them making them more likely to succeed in college. I eventually chose to join the military so I could pay for college.		right path for you.	
I agree	No	It's been good overall. As an older student who works full time and has children, I wished there were more meeting and events that had a better meeting time than mid-afternoon and possibly more events that focused	I'm not sure	No	Finishing my degree. Life has definitely set in and it was much harder to get through school while balancing a full time job and two children.	Yes, better money management. I wish I'd worked to pay for college out of pocket as opposed to taking out any student loans. I also wished I had better study habits because some classes I did retake due to lack of time management	Stay focused and if you need help ...ask.	No

		on Adult learners.				t and tutoring.		
I agree	No	Weird but new	I believe so, it just a matter of knowing and asking	I had experience from community college(CTC)	I feel like I have to succeed not just for me but my family	To be prepared for a lot of work and doing that work	Don't start slacking off at any point or you'll lose focus on your goals	
I agree	No	Very good with quality instructors.	I think so, but am only in my 1st semester here at CSU.	CSU graduate.	I'm 49 years old attempting a new degree and in the final decade of my career. Time management has been tough.	Only wish I had gone to college right out of high school.	Knock out your core, then focus on your major.	N/A
I agree	No	Pretty good.	I'm not sure, I don't think I have ever been offered any.	No.	Not knowing what to expect and having to be the parent and do parent things because my parents don't know any better.	Overall, I just wish somebody could of told me what to expect from the college experience.	Step out of your comfort zone. Join organizations . Attend events on campus. Don't stay in your room.	

I agree	No	Overall, my experience at CSU has been great. I did have certain obstacles come my way through registration and financial aid, but my overall experience would have to surpass those obstacles.	I do not know honestly. I say that because I do not think I have ever seen any resources that specifically reaches first generation students at CSU. This is the first thing that I have seen reach out to first generation students.	I received little support or guidance from my brother, but mainly did everything on my own.	I did not know how to navigate everything at first like registration and how to navigate campus life.	I wish I would have known what college life could be before coming to college. I say that because I feel there should be more engagement in high schools to help students better understand what it will be like not just in the classroom, but also campus life, res life and everything.	Evaluate your peers going into college as well as the ones you encounter in the first few weeks on campus. If you have a good and healthy community supporting you and around you, you will find navigating college will be much more exciting and worth it.	
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Appendix D

Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Ashley Mayer and I'm a current senior at CSU. I'm reaching out to you because I am conducting surveys with first generation students as part of my Honors Alternative to Thesis Project. The project will be centered around creating resources to help first generation students feel more prepared when beginning college at CSU. The survey will help identify the areas of need. This survey is completely optional, but if you do want to participate, the survey and consent form can be found [here](#). In order to access this survey, you must be logged into your CSU email account.

Thank you in advance for your time,

Ashley Mayer