



**MnSCU definition: neither parent has attended any college/university**

Laws of Minnesota 2003 CHAPTER 133-S.F.No. 675, ARTICLE 1; APPROPRIATIONS

Sec. 3: BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Sub. 3: Accountability

The board shall continue to submit the data and information enumerated in Laws 2001, First Special Session chapter 1, article 1 section 3, in the accountability report currently under development. For the purpose of those reports, a first generation student is a student neither of whose parents received any postsecondary education.

“Rather than having to juggle two or more definitions at the system level, we have continued to use this definition for other purposes including the allocation of funding for Access, Opportunity and Success money and for reporting by the System Diversity and Multiculturalism Office.”

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*Email correspondence January 30, 2012*

**Federal definition: neither parent has a 4-year bachelor's degree**

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics only 49.8% of first generation students complete a bachelor's degree within 6 years of enrollment at a 4-year institution compared to 65.6% of students whose parents have a bachelor's degree.

**First Generation Student Entering Characteristics**

- Tend to be from low-income families
- Tend to be members of racial or ethnic minority groups
- Tend to be female more often than male
- Tend to have lower college entrance exam scores
- Tend to be less academically prepared
- Tend to feel less supported by family and friends

Lohfink, M., & Paulson, H. (2005). Comparing the determinants of persistence for first-generation and continuing-generation students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46, 409-428.

**First Generation Student Enrolled Characteristics**

- Tend to have lower first-semester and first-year GPA's
- Tend to drop out at higher rates the first year
- Tend to attend class part-time and work full-time more often
- Tend to experience cultural differences at higher rates
- Tend to have lower self-esteem
- Tend to enroll in 2-year institutions more often
- Tend to leave without a degree

Chen, X., & Carroll, C. D. (2005). *First generation students in postsecondary education: A look at their college transcripts*. (U.S. Department of Education, NCES 2005-171). Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics.

“Faculty contributions and support are paramount to successful academically driven initiatives that target first-generation student achievement. Faculty members are students’ primary point of contact in the classroom, and they can provide a powerful connection between in-class and out-of-class learning experiences for students new to college life” (p. 9)

Tinto, V. (1999). Taking retention seriously: Rethinking the first year of college. *NACADA Journal*, 19, 5-9.

### **Please Consider...**

- Identifying existing or new opportunities for faculty to work collaboratively on teaching and supporting first-generation students
- Formalizing and reinforcing changes to faculty roles as related to student success
- Engaging faculty in disciplines and departments where first-generation students traditionally struggle
- Professional development sessions
- Collaborative learning communities
- Explicit language to support first generation students in faculty position descriptions
- Formal recognition as part of performance evaluations and incentives
- Identify high-enrollment, high-failure courses
- Allow faculty to determine the types of academic and social supports needed in their departments

### **Benefits...**

- ❖ Unique inter-and intra-disciplinary exchanges
- ❖ Greater cohesion around student success goals and learning outcomes
- ❖ Clearer expectations of faculty roles
- ❖ Stronger interest and ownership in participating in first generation student related success programs
- ❖ Stronger performance and pass rates
- ❖ Greater faculty ownership in creating a more engaging classroom environment

### **Simple Changes...Please Consider...**

- ✓ pedagogy
- ✓ resources
- ✓ active learning
- ✓ study strategies
- ✓ identify
- ✓ pre-test
- ✓ know your audience
- ✓ student learning outcomes
- ✓ connect the dots
- ✓ cultural relevance

Institute for Higher Education Policy (2012). *Supporting first-generation college students through classroom-based practices*. Retrieved from [www.ihep.org](http://www.ihep.org)

According to Tinto (1999), successful retention programs are those that take action to reach out to students, whether through academic advising, orientation programming, first year experience courses, mentors or other social engagement activities. Personal bonds **between faculty and students** are critical if institutions want to engage and retain students. Tinto (1999) states, “students are more likely to stay in schools that involved them as valued members of the institution and the frequency and quality of contact with faculty, staff and other students have repeatedly been shown to be independent predictors of student persistence” (p. 5).

Tinto, V. (1999). Taking retention seriously: Rethinking the first year of college. *NACADA Journal*, 19, 5-9.

