

# 10 Things to Talk About with First Generation College Students

Working with students who will be the “first in the family” to attend college is a reality for many guidance counselors and GEAR UP Liaisons. Planning for life after high school and navigating the college system can be overwhelming for a family without prior college experience. Here are some suggestions for working with first generation college students and their families.

1. Ask about the family's academic history. Find out if you are working with a student who will be the “first in the family” to attend college.
2. Help the student find out about programs and scholarships specifically designed for first generation students. (Center for Student Opportunity, [www.esocollegecenter.org](http://www.esocollegecenter.org); First In The Family, [www.firstinthefamily.org](http://www.firstinthefamily.org)).
3. Advise the student to participate in first year orientation programs on campus. This is a good way for students to learn about the school, find their way around and meet new people.
4. Encourage the student to speak to their advisor if they have questions. Faculty and staff may have useful information that the student's friends may not.
5. Urge the student to join at least one student organization once on campus. Feeling like a part of the school is an important factor in staying in college.
6. Suggest that making friends with an upper classman creates an opportunity to have a mentor who can show them how they made it through their first year.
7. Encourage the student to ask for family support. Family members may not fully understand the pressures of college life or know how much their support can help.
8. Suggest that the student share information about daily activities with family members so they can get an idea of what college life is like.
9. Discuss the feelings that may arise after the student attends college. Many first generation students feel distant from their family and culture after going through experiences that no one else in the family has had.
10. Be available often, not just when it is time to fill out a college application. Connect with the student several times and make sure they have the information they need. Bring up college even if they don't!



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