



5 WAYS TO SUPPORT FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

For additional resources and more information on how to support first-generation college students, visit the 1stGen@Iowa website at firstgen.uiowa.edu.

"I value being able to communicate with other students and my professor. Having a conversation is the easiest way to clear up misunderstandings, get information, or just build connections."

"Being able to meet for a discussion and engage in back and forth dialogue made a huge difference in what I learned."

ONE: CREATE CONNECTIONS

Begin classes with ice breakers or other community building activities, help students build relationships with you and with each other through small group activities, partner with students to set community guidelines for your class at the beginning of each semester.

"One thing that helped me learn was for instructors to send out a to-do list every week. The to-do list kept me organized and up to date. Sending to-do lists every week can ease overwhelming stress and anxiety."

"Receiving constant feedback from my instructors...on what went well and what I could improve on."

TWO: COMMUNICATE CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Be explicit in communicating the goals, tasks, and expectations of every assignment, regularly check in with students and ask what questions they have or if clarification is needed, provide learning objectives for assignments and lectures or discussion sessions.

"Individual office hours for students, instead of a normal Zoom call. Students may not feel comfortable asking [for help] in front of others."

"Unfortunately [with] online instruction, it is difficult to reach out for help."

THREE: BE ACCESSIBLE

Encourage students to ask for help, explain what office hours are and how to prepare for them, set routines for responding to students' emails and share this schedule with your students. If portions of your class or office hours are online, develop specific plans that increase your accessibility.

"Professors that are willing to adapt...and understand that [this] is a very stressful time for all of us, including students, made the biggest difference for me. This showed that professors truly cared about our education."

FOUR: BE FLEXIBLE

Show empathy and concern for your students' well-being and design coursework and projects that allows space for flexibility when students need it, recognize that differences exist in students' access to resources.

"I think encouragement should play a bigger role. We are in college so we should be able to have the motivation to do our coursework, but it's hard to stay focused on school... Having professors that are encouraging and positive would make a huge difference."

"I have internet troubles with most places like the library...I can't get easy access to the internet. My home internet is very unstable, and I have gotten kicked out of 2 exams."

"I enjoyed and benefited from online lectures, but I think technology in general and access to it has been a hurdle for many of my peers."

FIVE: ACKNOWLEDGE STUDENTS' PERSONAL CHALLENGES

Check in with students to assess technological and academic resources, be aware of campus resources (academic and personal) and share these with students, be supportive of students' personal situations as these can profoundly impact their ability to be academically successful.