

Assisting First-Generation Graduate Students through Campus Collaborations

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Graduate School
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

First-Generation Definition

University of Georgia:

*Student with a parent or guardian **who did not attended any college**, technical school, or other post-secondary institution regardless of whether the parent or guardian completed a degree*



Timeline

2018: Division of Academic Enhancement (DAE) celebrates **National First-Generation Student Day** (November 8) for undergraduates

2019: DAE, Student Affairs, Grad School, Law School create a cross-campus committee to grow this celebration from one day to a **week-long celebration** with a focus on all students, staff, and faculty

2020: To continue this new tradition amidst a global pandemic, in 2020 the Committee celebrated via week-long virtual events.

2021:

- Spring 2021: added dedicated webpage on **Graduate School website**, workshops for grad students (in-person & Zoom), **Tri-Alpha Induction** (via Zoom), and **First-Gen Graduation** (via Zoom)
- Fall 2021: National First-Gen Week was mostly in person; Launch inaugural **UGA First Awards** (undergraduate, graduate, professional student as well as faculty member and staff)

2022:

- Spring 2022: Tri-Alpha Induction (in-person) and First-Gen Graduation (in-person)



National First-Generation Student Week

- November 8
- Inaugural Event (2019, 75 students attended)
 - For faculty / staff: Research presentation by a faculty member
 - For students, Resource Fair (food, t-shirt, stickers giveaways at the Student Center)
- Awarded NASPA First-Forward Grant (\$500)
- Marketing: Social media blitz, press release, campus newspaper interviews
- Grad School event: A Chat with First-Gen Scholars
 - 71 registrations; 33 attendees
 - Mix of undergrad and grad
 - Series of questions and small group discussions

“Hearing the testimonies and experiences from other graduate students and comparing their first-generation status to mine . . . It was also helpful finding out that being first-generation isn’t a curse because it comes with life-long skills that distinguish you from everyone one else.” – participant, 2019



Spring 2021

Graduate School dedicated webpage (resources and useful links)

Offered Workshops specifically for First-Gen Graduate Students (via Zoom)

- (w/ University Health Center): “Managing Social Isolation in Graduate School” (two sessions)
- (w/ UGA Mentor Program): Learn more about the UGA Mentor Program
 - Able to identify first-gen mentors
- (w/ DAE): “Building a #SupportSquad”

Tri-Alpha Induction Ceremony (w/ DAE): use broader definition

First-Gen Graduation (w/DAE)



Fall 2021

Fall, National First-Gen Week (mostly in-person)

- (New) Added a workshop for faculty on mentoring first-gen grad students
- (New) #FirstGenDocs Panel Discussion
- Replaced “Candid Conversations” with “Bringing TED talks to First Gen Stories”

First-Gen Workshop Series: “Candid Conversations”

- Welcome to Grad School “Fun with First-Gens” (August, in-person)
- Safe Space for Sensitive Topics (September; panel discussion, via Zoom)
- Wellbeing and Workout (October; yoga and volleyball; in-person)
- Effective Strategies for Self-Advocacy (November; panel discussion; via Zoom)



Spring 2022

Preparing Diverse Populations for Graduate Success launch

- (w/ DAE) A First Generation Student's Guide to Graduate School (in person)
- Demystifying the IRB (via Zoom)
- Publishing in Academic Journals (via Zoom)
- Setting Short-term and Long-term Goals (via Zoom)

First-Gen Tri-Alpha Induction Ceremony (in-person)

First-Gen Graduation (in-person)



Summer 2022 / Next Steps

- Glossary of Terms
- First-Gen Handbook (*Prospective Students*)
- First-Gen Handbook (*Current Students*)
- Build out offerings on other UGA campuses and for UGA Online graduate programs
- Create a list of first-generation faculty and staff (panelists, mentors, speakers)



Why Collaborate?

- Budget constraints
- Staffing constraints
- Break academic silos
- Current context (focus is on the undergrads!)
- Create campus traditions



Useful Step: Embed in Strategic Plans

Graduate School Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025

- Unit Goal 2: Endorse equity and justice in graduate education by promoting access and retention, particularly for underserved students.
 - Strategy 2.A.: Ensure access to graduate education by recruiting historically underrepresented and first-generation graduate students.
 - Strategy 2.B.: Promote retention of historically underrepresented and first-generation graduate students.

Graduate School Diversity Strategic Plan 2022 – 2027 (*coming soon*)

