

Programs and partnerships: Meeting the needs of first-generation students

ACRL Conference
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#firstgenacrl

Dr. Africa S. Hands
@africahands
Assistant Professor, Library Science
East Carolina University

Agenda

- Why first-generation students?
 - Overview of first-generation students
 - What's happening at libraries
 - Group discussion
-

If we step back from the first-generation label and consider the central challenge these students face—that academia is its own culture, with its own language, norms, and expectations—we are left with a problem that we can seek to address that will help first-generation students but **should ultimately help all students**....Our goal, as recently suggested for higher education as a whole, should be to **make our library services “student-ready,” instead of expecting first-generation students (or any students) to be “college-ready.”**

(Arch & Gilman, 2019, p. 1008)

First-generation students defined

Several different levels of educational attainment that could be used to define FGCS:

- (1) parent(s) have, at most, a high school diploma;
- (2) parent(s) have, at most, started (but not completed) an associate's degree;
- (3) parent(s) have, at most, completed an associate's degree; or
- (4) parent(s) have, at most, completed an associate's degree or started (but not completed) a bachelor's degree.

The numbers

24%

Students whose parents did not have postsecondary education.

56%

Students whose parents did not have a bachelor's degree.

\$41,000

Median parental income of dependent students (compared to \$90,000 for continuing-generation students).

55%

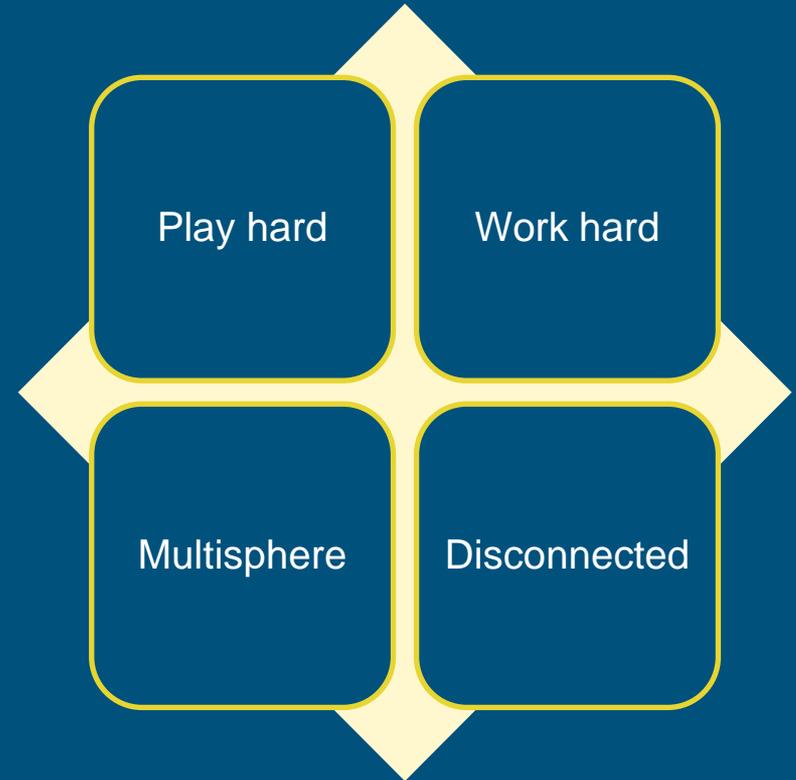
Made use of academic advising services (compared to 72% of continuing-generation students).

30%

Sought academic support services (compared to 37% of continuing-generation students).

More than one way to be first

- *Geographies of Campus Inequality* – Benson & Lee, 2020
 - Geographies illuminate the social embeddedness of college relationships and the resources they provide, and shapes student experiences, what they learn about college life, what is important, and how to obtain what is important.



First-gens and the library



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And then...

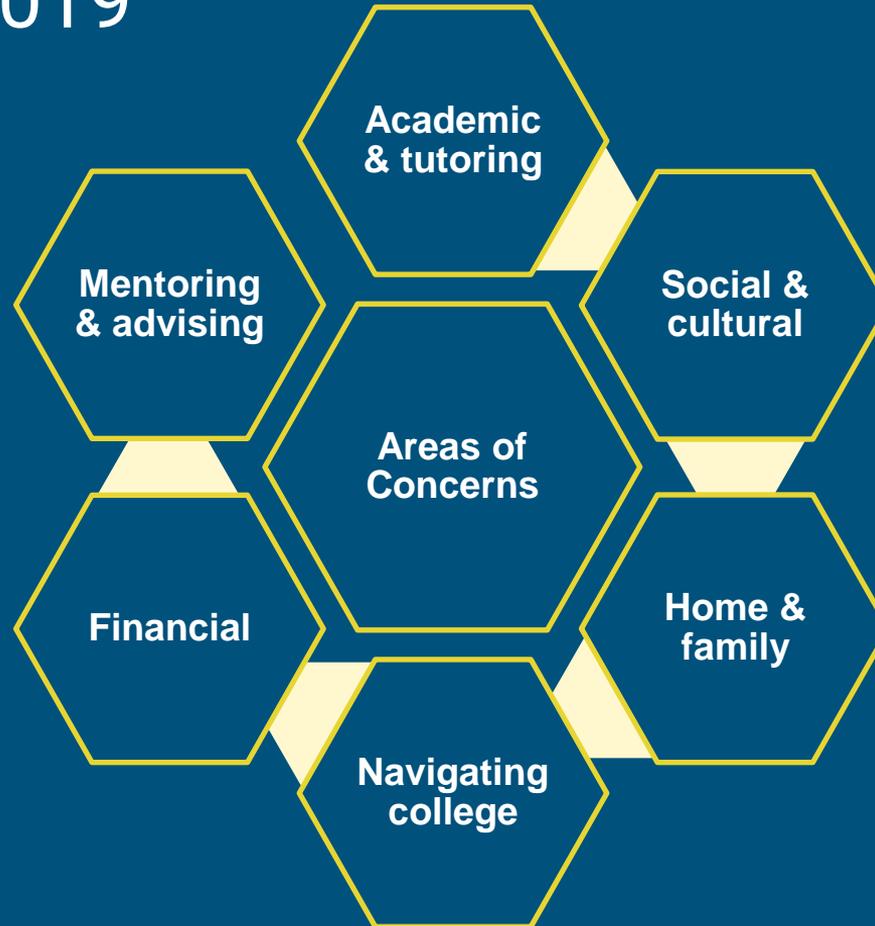
First-gens and the academic library

- Overwhelming and intimidating
- Books are hard to locate
- Multi-library systems are complicated

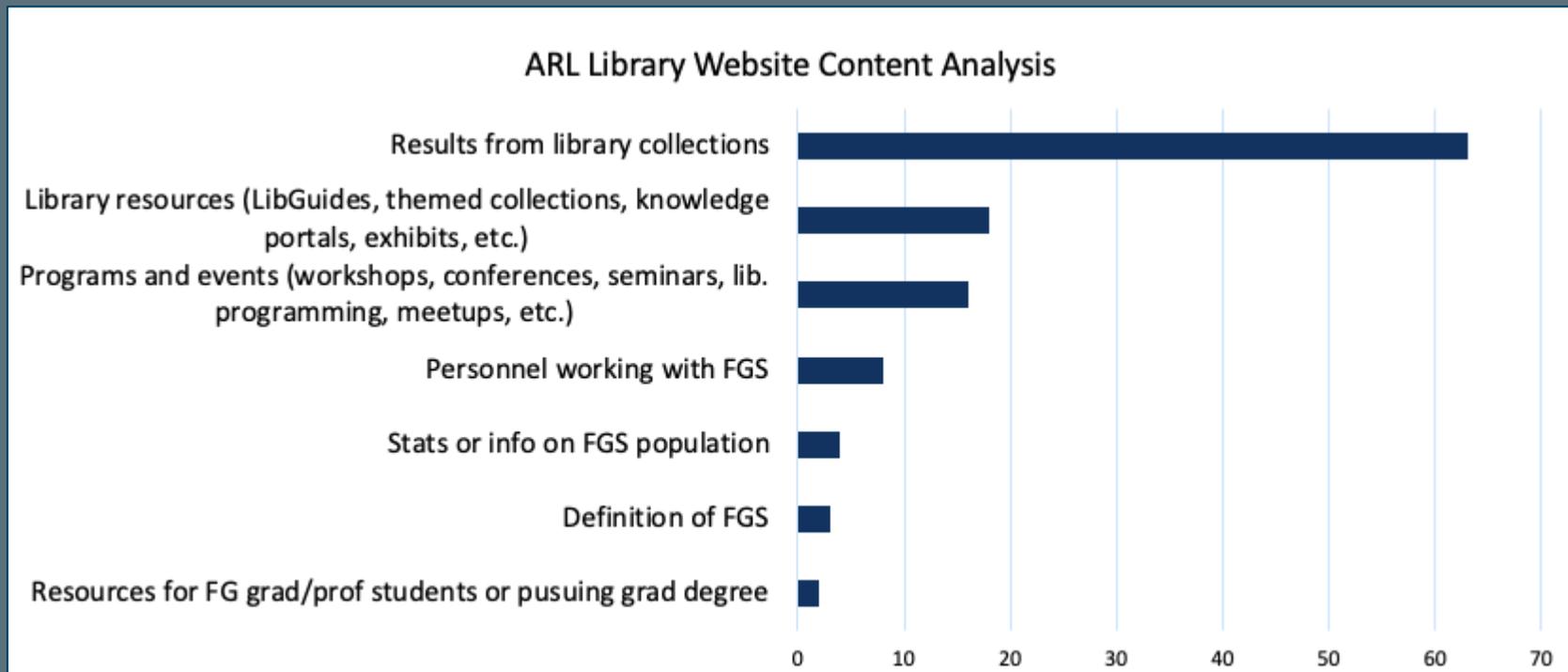


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Arch & Gilman, 2019



What are academic libraries doing now?



Wellesley College - SpeedShare

- Partnered with the director of Wellesley First
- Planning sessions with forward-facing staff
 - Library collections
 - Research and instructional services
 - Special collections and archives
- Took place during regularly schedule meeting
- Staff rotate and share info
- Positive feedback from students

ABOUT FIRST-GEN FORWARD

The Center for First-generation Student Success launched in June 2017, with the mission of being the premier source of evidence-based practices, professional development, and knowledge creation for the higher education community to advance the success of first-generation students. In continuing this mission, the Center launched First-gen Forward, **the nation's first recognition program acknowledging higher education institutions for their commitment to first-generation student success.**

The 2021-22 First-gen Forward cohort can be viewed [here](#)! These 58 diverse institutions join the 157 First-gen Forward Institutions from the 2019-20 and 2020-21 cohorts. Collectively, they represent a community of professionals prepared to share evidence-based practices and resources, troubleshoot challenges, generate knowledge, and continue to advance the success of first-generation students across the United States.

<https://firstgen.naspa.org/programs-and-services/first-forward/first-forward>

Discussion Questions

What services or programs are provided or marketed by your library specifically to first-generation students?

Discussion Questions

What campus offices or partners has your library worked with to support and/or conduct outreach to first-generation students?

Discussion Questions

What barriers exist when serving this specific population?

Discussion Questions

In what ways can libraries strengthen support of first-generation students?

Selected Resources

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- Brinkman, S., Gibson, K., and Presnell, J. (2013). When the helicopters are silent: The information seeking strategies of first-generation college students. *ACRL 2013*.
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Selected Resources

- Couture, J., Bretón, J., Dommermuth, E., Floersch, N., Ilett, D., Nowak, K., Roberts, L. and Watson, R. (2020). “We’re gonna figure this out”: First-generation students and academic libraries. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 21(1), 127-147.
- Hands, A. (2020). Tapping into the assets of first-generation students during times of transition. *Information and Learning Sciences*, 121(7/8), 611-618.
- Ilett, D. (2019). A critical review of LIS literature on first-generation students. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 19(1), 177-196.
- Pollard, D. (2021). Supporting first-generation students. LIS Pedagogy Chat, March 26. <https://www.lispedagogychat.org/archive>
- Toutkoushian, R., Stollberg, R., and Slaton, K. (2018). Talking ‘bout my generation: Defining “first-generation college students” in higher education research. *Teachers College Record*, 120, 1-38.
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