

THE EFFECTS OF POSITIVE SUPPORT ON  
FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

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FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

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## Preface/Acknowledgements

The University of Wisconsin System two-year and comprehensive universities are involved in several efforts to help first year students become successful students (see [www.uwsa.edu](http://www.uwsa.edu) - the first year experience for students). The purpose of this report is to highlight the work of one of the two-year universities, the University of Wisconsin-Rock County. The paper was written to provide the University of Wisconsin-Rock County and other two-year university professionals a readable and useful reference. Research and anecdotal evidence is provided.

I thank my family and the Student Services office staff at the University of Wisconsin-Rock County for making this possible, with a special thank you to Kristin Fillhouer, the Assistant Campus Dean for Student Services. The last person that I would like to say thank you to is Dr. Tom Lo Guidice for all of his guidance, wisdom and patience in helping me throughout this process.

Abstract

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Under the Supervision of Tom Lo Guidice, PhD

The lack of educational support received by first-generation college students especially from family that is unfamiliar with college/university experience explains why students may seem unprepared educationally when they begin college. Several different programs and services that can increase support to this population are also presented.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Consider the following scenario that is common for first generation, first year college students. Imagine being dropped off at a college by your family for the first time. They leave you to your studies and wish you well, but do not have much else to say. Throughout the whole pre-college decision-making process, they did not have much to contribute and only wondered about the cost of higher education. Your parents believe in your abilities but do not have much in the way of words to help you with the adjustment process that you will face dealing with your first semester of college. They may have joined the workforce right out of high school or even joined the military, but attending college is something that they have not experienced. Their lack of knowledge and educational support can cause you excess stress when navigating through your first semester of college.

First-generation college students (FGCS) tend to report higher levels of stress when they have less support from their families and experience higher levels of academic difficulties (Wang & Castaneda-Sound, 2008). They tend to take more remedial courses in math and English, have lower grade point averages (GPAs) and also have a higher drop out rate compared to students who are not first-generation college students. These same students are also more likely to start their higher educational experience at a two-year campus, take less credits per semester and are undecided for longer periods of time to choosing a major (Chen, 2005).

With the lack of well paying jobs available to high school graduates in Rock County, Wisconsin (Rock County, WI) the struggles of first-generation college students need to be examined more thoroughly. The University of Wisconsin-Rock County (UW-Rock County) is a two-year campus that is a part of the University of Wisconsin Colleges (UW-Colleges). In fall 2010, 68% of the student population at the UW-Rock County was FGCS (UW Rock County:

Campus at a Glance – fall 2010, institutional research, June 10, 2011). This coincides with the 2009 census report that only 19.6% of adults age 25 or older held a Bachelor’s degree or higher in Rock County compared to the state percentage of 25.5 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

New first-year students may become emotionally overwhelmed, lost, and unattached by everything that is happening in their life and believe that they are alone and that there is no one to turn to for help. This is when the campuses need to help the students seek out what is available on campus that can make them believe they belong and also facilitate contact with others who think the same way. There are services and connections on many campuses that students can seek out or be directed to such as TRIO offices, First-Year Seminar courses, Advising offices, jobs on campus, and student activity groups that can help ease their transition into higher education.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem to be addressed is, “to what extent does a positive connection to a college campus enhance the achievement of first-generation college students?”

### **Definition of Terms**

**Bridge Programs:** Short programs that help educationally disadvantaged students with skills needed to succeed in post-secondary education (Shifting Gears, 2009).

**Campus Life:** Students surroundings in all aspects that relate to their experience with higher education on the campus (My College Options, 2011).

**First-Generation College Students (FGCS):** Students whose parents have not attended college (My College Options, 2011).

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** Students can apply online with information from their family’s taxes to see if they qualify for federal and state money to help them cover the cost of higher education (My College Options, 2011).

Living-Learning Communities: Groups of college students with common backgrounds and goals that are placed in a single dorm to enhance their educational experiences (Housing & Residential Education, 2011).

Student Employment Services: Programs that help students obtain part-time positions on and off campus and can be subsidized through the Federal Work-Study (My College Options, 2011).

TRIO Programs: Eight Federal educational support programs that assist low income, first-generation and disabled student in middle school through post bachelor's education (ED.gov., 2011).

University of Wisconsin Colleges: Thirteen connected campuses that offer local communities the ability to complete their first two years of a liberal arts degree at a lower cost than the thirteen four year university campuses (University of Wisconsin Colleges, 2004).

### **Delimitations of Research**

The research was conducted through the University of Wisconsin-Platteville's Karmann library over a period of 61 days. Primary searches were conducted through EBSCOhost along with censuses data and internal reports from the University of Wisconsin-Rock County.

Keywords used during the searches were "first-generation college students and support".

### **Method of Approach**

A brief review of research on FGCS throughout the United States (US) and Rock County, Wisconsin (WI) was conducted. A review of literature, studies, Censuses statistics, data from the University of Wisconsin-Rock County, and anecdotal evidence on the limited support for first generation students in the Rock County, WI area was conducted. Findings from these sources are summarized; including recommendations how to better serve FGCS.



## **Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature**

This chapter reviews literature about FGCS' first year struggles along with a comparison between FGCS and non first-generation college students' first year transitional periods. It also reviews the effectiveness of student support services and the services that help with retention for FGCS. The ending summarizes the literature that has been reviewed.

### **First-generation College Students' First Year Struggles**

FGCS often face many struggles in their first year of college. They tend to have higher dropout rates, start college at an older age and generally believe they unprepared for their college experience. Non first-generation college students tend to transition into college life much smoother than FGCS and are more likely to navigate and use services offered on campus to help make the transition easier (Chen, 2005). FGCS are more likely to hold in their thoughts because they are not able to discuss the change of culture with their families and this is when they need the support of others the most in their college careers (Wang & Castaneda-Sound, 2008). Student support services can help them ease their transition into this new world by teaching them study and coping skills and getting them connected to others who can understand their frustrations. The sooner students are connected to a college campus the better chance they have of achieving their educational goals.

FGCS and current Director of Scholar Support Programs at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (Johnson 2009) believe that FGCS can have unconscious thoughts that inhibit their ability to be successful in the college setting. These students report that it is easier to get into college versus staying in college. Expectations in high school and lack of advanced course work make this transition very difficult (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien). FGCS are less prepared academically and take more remedial courses in college. This leads them to take fewer

credits their first year and have lower grade point averages (GPA) (Chen, 2005). The less credits earned, the lower the GPA, the more remedial classes a student takes, the longer it will take them to get through college and the less likely they are to complete their degrees (McCormick, 1999).

Due to FGCSs' lack of preparation prior to starting college they tend to have lower levels of confidence in their own abilities to be successful college students. With their lack of confidence, they tend to suffer more stress-related symptoms. FGCS may carry more stress about being the first in their family to enter into higher education. Lack of family support or support perceived as negative by these students can increase their stress levels (Wang et al, 2008). The transition may be even more difficult because FGCS tend to talk less about their college experiences to their parents. They tend not to seek out college services to help them through this transition and help them cope with the sense of frustration. Those that do report talking to their parents about their experiences, tend to report lower levels of helpful support because of their parents' lack of knowledge about the college setting (Barry, Hudley, Cho, & Kelly, 2008).

Learning on a college campus is representative of the middle-class culture. Many FGCS are generally either from the working class or lower economic backgrounds and do not have the learning experience of middle-class students. Their communication skills are different and these skills often clash with this new culture (Arajuo & Anastasiou, 2009). In college students are encouraged to question and not just agree with everything they learn, this type of behavior is perceived as unacceptable for many FGCS in their prior academic experiences (Oldfield, 2009). They are often taught to follow and not to think creatively or expand their knowledge beyond the minimum required research. This learning style can be a barrier to FGCS, leading them to think they are outsiders and increase their sense of self-doubt with their own abilities (Heinz House &

Harvey, 2009). Critical and analytical thinking are often lacking in students who are taught to pass state mandated tests and not think beyond the details that are needed.

### **First-generation Versus Non First-generation**

Starting college can be a difficult transition to both first-generation and non first-generation college students. Lawyer, former first lady and currently Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (2003), who grew up in a middle-class neighborhood and was a non-first-generation college student, called her parents after one month of college to tell them she was not smart enough for college. Her father told her that she could go home but her mother told her to stay and not quit. She took her mother's advice and soon after volunteered to shake off tree branches with the President of the college when she came to her dorm to ask for volunteers. From that night forward she decided that college was where she belonged. This is an example of a non first-generation college student and how one experience made her believe she belonged.

FGCS tend to disclose less of their thoughts to their family, friends from home and friends at college about their thoughts related to their education (Barry, Hudley, Kelly, & Cho, 2009). They also tend to become involved in extracurricular activities, athletics and volunteer at much lower levels than their peers with parents that graduated from four-year campuses. A reason for this could be that more FGCS live off campus and work more hours while they are in college (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004). They also take out less in loans and put more pressure on themselves to cover the extra costs associated with education that grants do not cover (Engle et al, 2005).

FGCS also choose two-year campuses versus four-year campuses to begin their higher education in much higher numbers compared to their peers whose parents have a bachelor's degree or higher. They are also less academically prepared than their peers and generally take

more non-credited courses. These same students also take part-time course loads more often, attend school later in life, and are less likely to obtain a bachelor's degree. Many FGCS, about 33%, tend to choose a major later in their college careers versus only 13% of non first-generation college student who entered without a major. When FGCS do pick a major they tend to choose more technical or vocational fields of study (Chen, 2005).

A good example of the vocational concept is expressed in the life of award-winning author and emeritus professor at the University of Illinois at Springfield, Kenneth Oldfield (2009). He believed college was for job training. He did not understand what the other courses outside of his major were going to do for him. He then took a class in which the professor challenged him and even told the class that they were there to enrich their lives in a more enjoyable way. The class was then told to attend a technical school if they only wanted to learn about their major. This is the thought of many FGCS and their families alike. FGCS and Instruction-Study Skills Dean at Oberlin College (Ballard, 2009) wrote that she wondered if her father, a member of the working class, believed her liberal arts degree was worth the time and money spent. Working class parents tend to think college is a way for their children to obtain and keep a job in the current economic state. Fewer jobs are available to people with just a high school education and much less that give people a decent wage to meet daily living expenses. This is why many people who are unemployed that worked in factory jobs are returning to school to continue their education (Heinz House et al, 2009).

Non first-generation students and their parents may have the assumption that liberal arts degrees and general education courses do not have any value. In truth, liberal arts degrees help prepare students for life experiences, give them a broad base of knowledge and help them to find out what they really enjoy doing. These degrees help student in all aspects such as in their

reading and writing abilities, their cognitive thinking and their curiosity for learning (H. R. Greene & M. W. Greene, 2010). General education courses touch on these aspects to give students a well-rounded experience in education.

### **Student Support Services and How They Help**

College is supposed to be a life enhancing experience, but first-generation college students who are only interested in obtaining a degree can miss out on this experience entirely. Often these students are only looking for a good stable job and the income that goes along with it, and see college as a painful but necessary step to achieving these goals. They tend to not know all the steps they need to complete prior to starting college and get lost in the transition. Thus there is a need for programs to be in place to help ease the transition from high school to college (see discussion of “Summer Bridge” programs below).

FGCS oftentimes work to support themselves while they are in college. Work-study programs on campuses offer the students paid jobs that also give them a sense of connection to the campus (Engle et al, 2005). These jobs not only keep them on the campus for longer periods of time but it also gives them the opportunity to meet other students, faculty and staff that they generally would not have contact with. Work-study jobs can look very good on a resume, help the students become more connected to the campus and also help to financial support them while in college.

FGCS get better benefits from participating in extracurricular college activities on campus. These activities not only give them a stronger connection to their peers but it also gives them better time management skills. They tend to be more interested in doing well in their studies and set education degree plans to complete their degree in a timely manner (Pascarella et

al, 2004). The sooner the students can become involved in the campus the better chance they have to complete their degrees.

One way to offer services earlier to FGCS is by offering “Summer Bridge” programs that help students become more integrated into college in a shorter period of time. These programs have students take college courses with small class sizes that teach them study skills. Sometimes they live on campus in the dorms in living-learning communities with students who are similar to them. With these programs they are able to navigate the campus and utilize services like tutoring centers, advising centers and campus bookstores (Engle et al, 2005). They also have more confidence about their upcoming college experience and are able to better deal with hectic times, like the beginning of the fall semester. The sooner a student is comfortable on a campus the better chance they have at succeeding.

In 2009 a study was conducted on the effectiveness of Summer Bridge programs at eight different colleges in Texas. The short outcome of this study has found that the students who participated in these programs took slightly more college level credit-bearing courses versus students who did not participate in the Summer Bridge programs (Wathington, Pretlow, & Mitchel, 2011). At Columbia College in Chicago, IL more data has been compiled because their Summer Bridge program started in the summer of 2000. In 2006 they have made changes to enhance their program to represent the level of academics the student will receive during the fall and spring semesters. Although their program in the past has helped half its enrolled students complete a college level writing course in their first semester, these students were still having problems with retention. The program was reevaluated because it did not give a realistic college level experience to the students. In 2006 they made changes in their program, which gave the students a better experience of college academics and what is to be expected of them. Although

their retention rate only went up seven percent the students reported that they felt more academically prepared and were able to make an educationally informed decision on continuing with college or halting their experience without the financial burden attached (McCurrie, 2009).

If a Summer Bridge program is not offered, students can also get help with their transition into college by taking First-Year Seminar courses. These courses are generally one-credit classes that help students by discussing issues such as time management, study skills and student engagement on campus (<http://www.uwc.edu/catalog/courses/>).

Pre-college programs such as Gaining Early Awareness & Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) and TRIO Programs such as Upward Bound are federal government-funded programs that help first-generation college bound students prepare for higher education in many different ways. GEAR UP starts working with students in the sixth grade and continues to work with them through high school, but is limited to target schools that have large numbers of low-income students. Its mission is to provide early intervention to students who are at risk of dropping out of school by providing them with the mentoring and assistance they need to successfully complete high school and beyond. These students are also given the opportunity to participate in workshops and pre-college activities such as field trips to visit different college campuses. This program also offers workshops for the parents of these students to help keep them involved in their child's education ([http://dpi.wi.gov/weop/fed\\_gearup.html](http://dpi.wi.gov/weop/fed_gearup.html)). A study on the Upward Bound program and its participants concluding in 2004 determined that its participants, versus a control group of non Upward Bound students, were more likely not only to enroll in college but were also 50% more likely to earn a bachelor's degree. These same students were also 22% more likely to apply for financial aid when they attended college (Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2009). While both of the programs offer many

similar services Upward Bound also provides tutoring services to its students, but the earliest they enroll students in their program is in the ninth grade ([http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/weop/fed\\_upward.html](http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/weop/fed_upward.html)). The earlier students become involved with services that support their academic achievement and the longer they continue to receive these services, the better chance these students have to be successful. Many college campuses continue the support of the TRIO programs on campus to help ease the transition into college life.

FGCS, elementary educator and current doctoral student Victoria Lefevre (made up name) believes that her educational success is because of many of these programs that she participated in throughout her education. Her reason for participating in these programs was because she felt like she could accomplish something better for herself than what her mother had done. Victoria lived with her mother and she was the oldest of seven children. Her first experience with a TRIO program came in the ninth grade when she was chosen to be part of the Upward Bound program. She continued with this program throughout high school and also participated in the Pre-College Summer programs at the local university in both the summers of her tenth and eleventh grade years. Victoria enjoyed these programs and they also gave her a boost of self-confidence in her educational abilities by making her believe she could accomplish the extra projects that were assigned. These programs also helped her with the preparation needed to start college right after high school. In college she earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees while she continued to participate in TRIO programs like Student Support Services (SSS) and the McNair Scholars Program. She believes that these programs helped her connect to the campus by offering educational mentors, understanding advisors, educational speakers, tutoring services and work-study jobs on campus. Victoria is very happy that she was



able to participate in these programs that helped her to succeed and states they “draw you in and keep you in if you were willing to listen” (personal communication, July 13, 2011).

Anastasia Smith (made up name), a former student at a small midwestern two-year Associates of Arts and Science degree campus, also believed like the TRIO program was a tremendous help. Anastasia was not always sure that she was going to attend college. She dropped out of high school her senior year due to family issues that resulted in a lack of a permanent home to live in and started working a fulltime job to help pay rent and living cost for herself. When she was 26 she decided to return to school to get her General Education Diploma (GED). This is when she decided that she would try college and see how she did. She said that she was very disconnected to the campus at first but after she became a TRIO student and was assigned to one advisor she had more of a connection to the campus and knew that she could make it. Anastasia did indeed complete her education at the small midwestern two-year campus with a grade point average of 3.86 and is currently attending a large well-known midwestern campus in hopes of earning her Bachelors of Science in the spring of 2013. Although Anastasia is not participating in the TRIO program on her new campus she credits her continued drive to move forward with having the connection she made with her former TRIO advisor. She still also has contact with her former advisor and is comfortable asking questions she may have about her new campus, which has helped her with her transition at very large campus (personal communication, August 4, 2011).

In the United State Department of Education report on Student Support Services (SSS) researchers found that participation in this program in college, helped increase the retention rate of students. They also found that more disadvantaged students used these services and these students experienced the greatest outcomes from this program. After conducting the six-year

study they found that 37% of the participants had completed their bachelor degree (<http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/student-support/final-report.pdf>). This percentage was greater than the average of 31% for all students who attend any institution of higher education and received a bachelor degree within their first six-years of college (Radford, A., Berkner, L., Wheelless, S. C., Shepherd, B., & National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). In 1997 another study concluded that students who participated in SSS programs were also 12% more likely to remain in college, earned 6% more credits per year and had a 7% higher GPA after their first year of college (Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2009). FGCS tend to enhance their college careers when they participate in college programs that help them with the adjustment to college life.

### **Retention of First-generation College Students**

Another factor that can help ease the transition of college and also help retain FGCS is by having approachable academic advisors available to the students. Appreciative Advising is a student-centered approach to advising. Academic advisors who use this style of advising become trustworthy to the student by showing an interest in them, while guiding them through their college experience. They not only greet the student personally in the waiting area, but they also show the student they are interested by leaning in when they are talking and paraphrasing what is being said. These advisors also take good notes, review earlier notes prior to appointments, help undecided students choose majors and challenge the students to do their best (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008).

FGCS are not only transitioning into becoming adults and being on their own for the first time, but they are also transitioning into a new culture. They can become lost in this transition right away by simply not knowing the correct words to say when they are navigating through

their orientation process. Colleges have many new words and terms that do not relate to anything but college. Faculty and staff can sometimes forget this and think that the student is not trying. If the faculty and staff could explain the definition of these terms while being respectful to all students, this could help the FGCS adapt to college quicker (Heinz Housel et al, 2009). The less confusion and perceptions of disrespect a student has, the more they are comfortable in their current setting.

FGCS are not as open when talking about the stresses they are having with college. They generally keep these thoughts in and need a place where they can talk openly. These thoughts can isolate them from the campus and college experiences. Interventions can help these students know that they are not alone and that others think or have gone through the same things as them (Barry et al, 2009). Interventions should include student mentors. These student mentors should be FGCS who are upperclassmen that have had the same experiences in college, as the new students are currently experiencing. These mentors should discuss how they felt isolated at college because they were unable to talk about the stresses they were having with their families and how their families did not completely understand how they viewed their new life. Giving the FGCS safe places such as these interventions will help ease their stress by letting them talk about their beliefs.

Another way to have FGCS open up about their thoughts towards college is to have their families involved in some of the pre-college experiences. When their families are able to experience some of the new changes their children will have during the beginning of their higher education they are able to reduce some their anxiety about their children's education. Pre-college programs help to take away some of the fears that family members have for their children. While these programs help to reduce their family's anxieties, many of these students still choose to

attend college close to home or stay at home to attend college to reduce the stress of transition on their families (Engle et al, 2005). When children see their parents under large amounts of stress they tend to hold in their own problems. By talking about their stress they believe that they are more of a burden and tend to act as though everything is going well for them. This type of excess stress can damage their college careers by having them avoid the truth about their situation and not reaching out for services. By educating the families early on some of these anxieties can be reduced, which can help the students to discuss problems they are having with adjusting to college.

### **Summary**

The first semester of college can be an especially stressful time for all students. FGCS need extra support throughout this experience. They often become lost and disconnected to the campus during this time and have less educational support from family and friends (Wang & Castaneda-Sound, 2008). They become lost in the middle-class culture of college, believe they are less academically prepared and take more remedial courses. FGCS tend to attend two-year college campuses and stay close to home in much larger numbers to ease the transition for their families than non first-generation college students (Chen, 2005).

Pre-college services should be available for these students' families to help not only their students' transition but also with their own anxieties because they do not understand the campus culture and what is available. FGCS often think they are alone and need to be guided to the services that are available to make them believe they belong on the campus. Caring and understanding faculty and staff can help these students not only understand college but also help them become successful in higher education (Heinz Housel et al, 2009). When these students

participate in campus activities they tend to have positive experiences that help give them a connection to the campus and enhance their educational goals (Pascarella et al, 2004).

### **Chapter Three: Conclusions and Recommendations**

Through the review of literature, it becomes apparent that most research conducted on FGCS indicates that stress and the lack of support they receive during their first semester of college reduces the probability of them obtaining a four-year degree. FGCS generally have lower self-confidence in their academic abilities. They are less prepared educationally and take more remedial courses, which extends the time it takes them to obtain a degree.

FGCS tend to choose colleges closer to home or choose two-year colleges over four-year colleges to begin their educational careers. UW-Rock County is a two-year college that is known for being a campus of access. This means that the campus is centrally located in Rock County, has lower tuition than a four-year campus and will admit higher levels of disadvantaged students. With the increase in enrollment over the past few years and the increase of FGCS more academic and transition support services are needed on campus to enhance the learning abilities and experiences of these students.

One of the things that need to be examined is that FGCS tend to take a longer period of time to transition into college than non first-generation college students. They also participate less in campus activities and work more hours off campus to help cover the cost of education. These factors cause them to spend less time on campus and become less integrated with the campus culture.

College is based on a middle-class educational culture where discussion is normal in the classroom, whereas the working class and lower economic classes teach students in a traditional setting. These students are taught that the curriculum and materials supplied by the teacher must

be followed exactly in order to pass the class and any required State tests. They are often lost in the transition from high school to college because the level of participation and discussion expected of them in college courses intimidates them.

FGCS also tend not to discuss their sense of inadequacy with their families and friends. They hold in their emotions and struggle with this on their own. They also do not seek out services on campus that can help them during this stressful time and oftentimes fail to complete courses in a satisfactory way. Unsuccessfully completing the first semester to their own standards along with the lack of connection to the campus feeds their self-doubt. This doubt leads them to question their ability to learn at a college level and whether or not they are capable of earning a degree in higher education.

The existing literature on the topic leads to the following conclusions that support for FGCS is needed at UW-Rock County. The campus needs to have appropriate support programs and resources in place for these students to successfully complete their first semester. This support could come from just talking to an advisor about ways to improve study habits to regular appointments in the tutoring center to help with a class they are struggling with academically.

First-Year Seminar courses and Bridge Programs help students to navigate through their first semester of college. These are courses and programs that not only guide the students by integrating them into campus life but also give them the skills needed to complete college. Since these courses generally have smaller class sizes and the student populations in these courses and programs are similar, they also give FGCS a group of students to connect with while also connecting to the instructor. These students need to be comfortable with the campus staff to discuss their beliefs and to get the help they need.

Pre-college programs also help with the initial stresses related to college and involve families in this preparation. Students are able to visit campuses, get help with financial aid, learn study skills and have continued familiar support from high school to college. These students and their families are taught how to help support each other during this new experience.

Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that UW-Rock County needs look at ways to ease the transition of high school to college for all students. One way to ease this transition is to add more First-Year Seminar courses and make them mandatory to all students based on the area of study the student is struggling in based on their high school records and placement test results. If the student is not struggling in an academic area they should take a First-Year Seminar course that is otherwise related to the first year experience. These courses should be in topics like career exploration for students who are undecided in a major of study and study topics for those who test well but do not have strong study skills. These courses not only can help them educational, but can also help students socially because the students in these classes have common educational backgrounds. These classes will allow for more coherent collaboration among the students, which gives them a sense of trust in the class, and they are able to join in during discussions.

Currently students at UW-Rock County do not have an assigned advisor to work with unless they participate in the TRIO program. They oftentimes schedule appointments with any advisor who is available, and some of the students have met with every advisor. This can lead the student to frustration because they do not sense a connection with their advisors and are just there to pick out classes and nothing more. The advisor does not know the student and is unable to make the connection needed in the short 30-minute appointment. The students can also forget many different details that happened in prior appointments and the new advisor many not remind

them about the topics that were discussed or find out their progression. If the student tells them they want to pick out classes, then that is what they help the student do. The Assistant Dean of Student Services is currently looking into have the advisors trained in Appreciate Advising and I believe that this would greatly benefit the students.

Another area that would help FGCS is to have more Federal Work-Study jobs available. Since UW-Rock County is a small two-year campus they receive limited amounts of Federal Work-Study funds to hire students on campus. It becomes a frustration to the students, parents of students and staff when students are awarded work-study money through financial aid but are unable to find a job on campus because of limited funds. Having more jobs on campus funded through work-study money would benefit the students by giving them a connection to the campus. Generally the work-study students who have worked in the Student Services office have felt confident in their abilities and a few have even run for office in the Student Government Association and won.

Even though UW-Rock County thrives on working with students of all populations the campus culture could be improved to accept all educational experiences as the first step into higher education. All students have strengths and not just weaknesses and FGCS' strengths need to be addressed. When they are given positive messages about their educational abilities and made to believe they belong in their classes, their self-doubt will soon go away. When they are comfortable in their setting they will continue to strive to do the best they can.



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