



Supporting First- Generation Students

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Who They Are

Students whose parents or caregivers did not complete a 4-year university or college degree

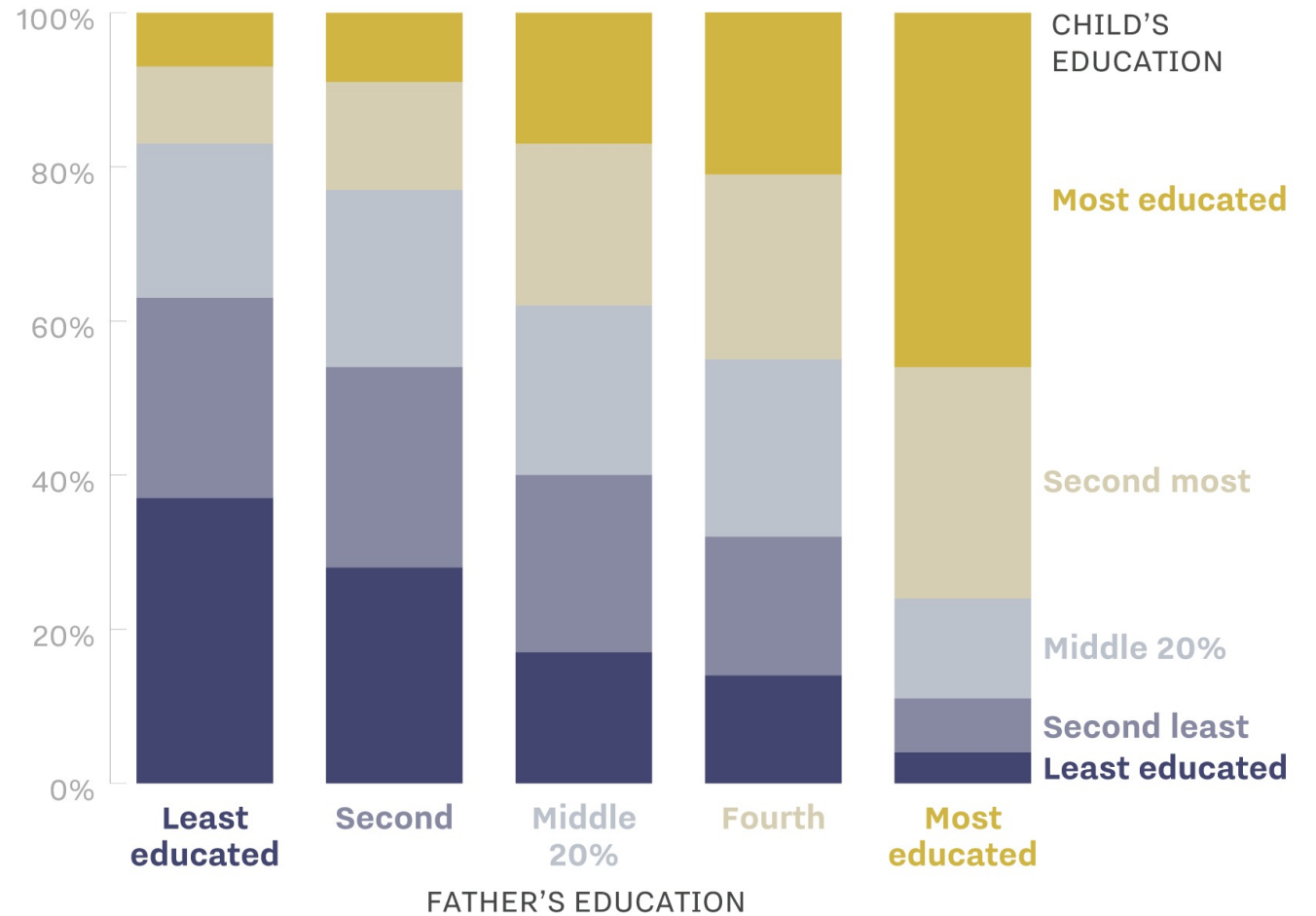
- Their parents can't guide them through the process of decision-making
- They lack mentors or examples of how to succeed in the scholarly program



Parental History Matters

<https://www.vox.com/2017/9/11/16270316/college-mobility-culture>

Educational attainment, by father's education level



Data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, as analyzed by the Brookings Institution's Richard Reeves

What They Lack

"Cultural Capital": knowledge of university life and norms

Confidence: imposter syndrome

Time: often overcommitted to family and work relative to other students

What They Have in Abundance

Life skills & experiences

Interdependence

Family and community connections

> [J Pers Soc Psychol](#). 2012 Jun;102(6):1178-97. doi: 10.1037/a0027143. Epub 2012 Mar 5.

Unseen disadvantage: how American universities' focus on independence undermines the academic performance of first-generation college students

Nicole M Stephens ¹, Stephanie A Fryberg, Hazel Rose Markus, Camille S Johnson, Rebecca Covarrubias

*Independent vs
Interdependent Traits*

Colleges emphasize independent traits

Which items top college administrators selected

INDEPENDENT ITEMS	ADMINS SELECTING
Learn to express oneself	74%
Learn to be a leader	68%
Learn to solve problems on one's own	60%
Learn to do independent research	55%
Learn to work independently	46%
Learn to influence others	17%
INTERDEPENDENT ITEMS	ADMINS SELECTING
Learn to work together with others	58%
Learn to do collaborative research	46%
Learn to listen to others	36%
Learn to be a team player	25%
Learn to ask others for help	12%
Learn to adjust to others' expectations	2%

Ways to Support Them in Class

- Give them credit for showing up
- Be very clear about expectations in syllabi and in reminders
- Give lots of notice and remind them that developing expertise takes time and effort
- Explain what office hours are, and give examples of the kinds of things they can ask

More Ways to Support Them in Class

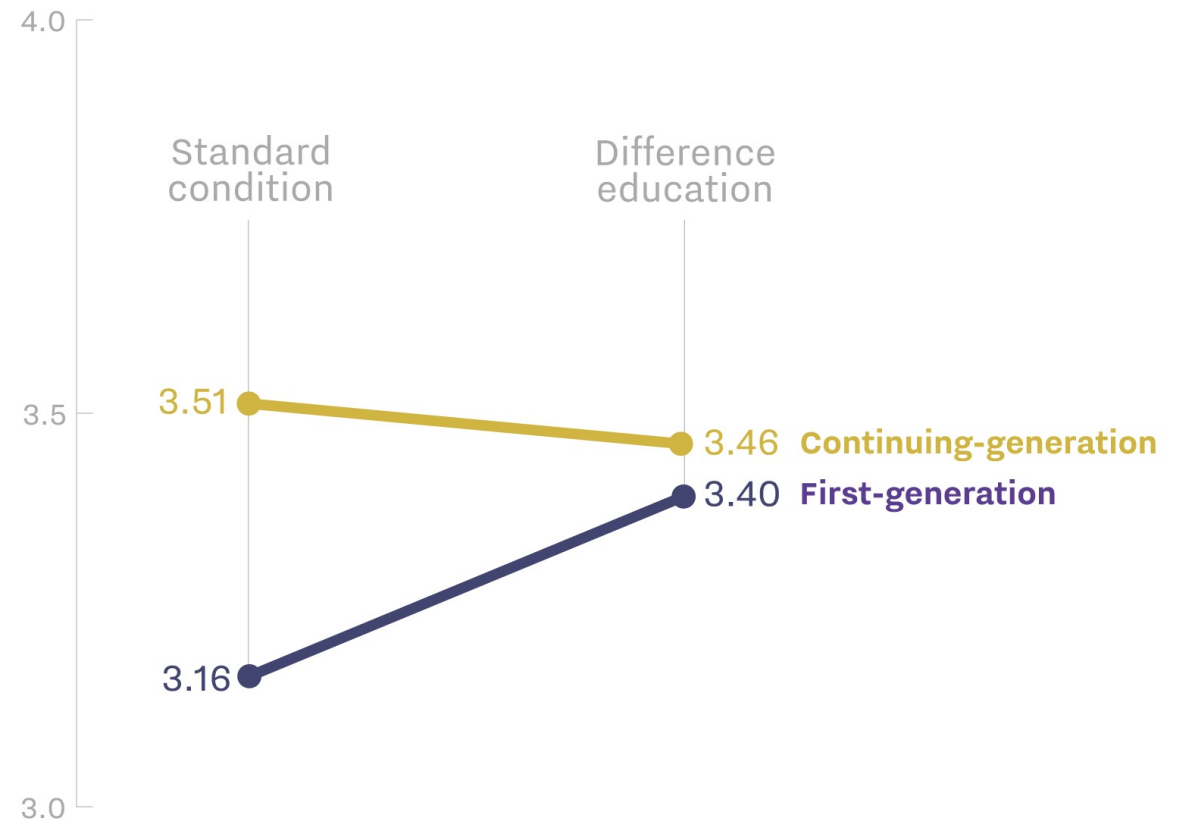
- Design group assignments and allow working in pairs if they want
- Explicitly point to the benefits of interdependent work and skills
- Be compassionate
- Be an example, if you are one, and bring studies of first-gen students into the course when possible

Difference education

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0956797613518349?journalCode=pss>

a

GPA of students, depending on session they attended at the beginning of the year



Data from the paper "Closing the Social-Class Achievement Gap" by Nicole Stephens, MarYam G. Hamedani, and Mesmin Destin

Ways to Support Them Out of Class

- Set up study groups they can use if they want
- Explain how to read a syllabus, an article, how to take notes....or offer guides online
- Know about tutoring options or other guides around campus
- Talk to them about skills for career or life goals (or point them to someone)

<https://excel.ucmerced.edu/tools-resources>

<https://firstgen.naspa.org/>

Jessica McCrory Calarco

A FIELD GUIDE TO GRAD SCHOOL

Uncovering
the Hidden
Curriculum

Mentoring First- Gen Grad Students

- No hidden curriculum!
- Assign mentors starting early summer
 - If first-gen, pair with first-gen, if possible
- Actively connect frequently, one-on-one and with groups
- Encourage interdependent work
- Make it affordable to be in school
- Don't tell them they can't hack it in the first semester
- Be considerate in discussing your own background