

UC Santa Cruz First Generation Initiative

October 1, 2020

Dear Campus Friends,

Classes begin today and while the classroom experience is dramatically different than when we first launched UC Santa Cruz's First Generation Initiative in 2017, the importance of being present and visible for our students remains critical.

The [First Generation Initiative](#) is part of a [UC system-wide effort](#) designed to welcome, connect, support, and engage with first-generation college students -- those whose parents/legal guardians have not obtained a four-year college or university degree. More than 5,700 first-generation undergraduate students are taking our classes this fall.



Let's continue our commitment to supporting them in this new instructional environment.

The Heightened Importance of Visibility



#FIRSTGENCOLLEGEGRAD

[Join our campaign](#). Research shows that students' sense of belonging and persistence increase when they see positive representation from others who are similar to them. In fact, Giselle Laiduc (psychology graduate student), and I found that visibility campaigns highlighting first-generation identity among UCSC campus educators, like faculty, boosts belonging and intentions to visit office hours. It works because students perceive first-gen educators as more relatable.

Help us create positive pathways of success by joining first-gen faculty, staff, and graduate students who are wearing #First Gen College Grad/UCSC T-shirts and supporter buttons. We invite you to wear your T-shirt and/or button to your Zoom classes and meetings this week as we welcome our incoming and returning students.

Small Meaningful Ways to Show Support

[Engage in inclusive practices](#). Even small things you do in your classroom and beyond can make a big difference. These suggestions stem from various research sources, many directly conducted with UCSC students (here's one [example](#)).

First and foremost, here are some concrete ways of engaging:

If you are first-gen, publicly identify yourself as such (typically on the first day of class or during a program event) and invite students (first-gen or otherwise) to attend your virtual office hours or programs to get connected. If you are a supporter, make a positive statement about the high percentage of first-gen students at UCSC (over 35%) and express your interest in supporting their success.



Other tips and suggestions:

- **Tell your story** about how you arrived at your position, including the challenges and pathways for overcoming such challenges. These stories make us more relatable and offer one roadmap to success.
- Familiarize yourself with **scholarly articles and research** on best practices for supporting first-gen and other students from minoritized backgrounds. We will do our part to keep this list relevant and up-to-date.
- Promote and normalize the use of the **many academic and support services for students**. Let's bring our resources to them! You can share on your syllabus or program materials or on a PPT slide during Zoom classroom breaks or event gatherings. Psychology graduate student and first-gen student, Paulette Garcia Peraza, developed a **new resource** specifically for first-generation graduate students!
- Share **tips** or **guides** for navigating college as a first-generation student to normalize and bring awareness to that experience.
- Reach out to the UC Santa Cruz **Center for Innovations in Teaching and Learning** (CITL) to learn more about resources that support all students.

Thank you for all you do,

Rebecca Covarrubias
Faculty Lead, First Generation Initiative
Associate Professor, Psychology
Faculty Director, Student Success Equity Research Center (SSERC)

Gwynn Benner
Staff Lead, First Generation Initiative
Assistant Vice Provost, Division of Student Success
Managing Director, Student Success Equity Research Center (SSERC)

Visit our **website** for more information. **Read the many profiles** of our first-gen faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Let us know if you want to add a profile! And, feel free to contact your first-gen team at **firstgen@ucsc.edu** with any questions or comments.