

{ THE HWS UPDATE }



Life as a First-Generation College Student

By Mary Warner '21 on March 18th, 2020

On the *I'm First!* blog, an initiative of the national nonprofit Strive for College, Gianella Marciniak '21 writes about her experience as a first-generation college student. The blog space is designed to encourage, inform and support first generation students across the country.

"I write for *I'm First!* because when I was applying to colleges I had no idea what was going on," Marciniak writes. "It was difficult to find people who knew exactly how my family and I felt... So, I hope that with my blog posts, other first-generation college students can receive guidance or comfort as they tackle this new and crazy process."

Marciniak's blog post topics range from how to get letters of recommendation to her favorite things about college. Along with offering advice to students, many of her posts discuss her connection to the HWS First Generation Initiative and the importance of giving first-generation students a voice and community. [Learn More.](#)

“The First-Generation Initiative community here at HWS has been instrumental in helping me transition into college,” Marciniak says. During Orientation, Marciniak was a part of the First-Generation Initiative pre-orientation program. At the event, families have the opportunity to meet staff, faculty and students at the Colleges – many of whom are also first-gen.

Marciniak is a double major in economics and philosophy with a minor in Latin. She has been inducted into Eta Sigma Phi, Laurel and Tri-Alfa honors societies. She serves as a catechist for Our Lady of Peace Parish in Geneva. On campus, Marciniak is a part of the Chorale, Cantori and Three Miles Lost singing groups. She works as a residential assistant and next semester will serve as a housing operations assistant in the Office of Residential Education. She also works in the First-Generation Initiative office.

In her blog post “How I Chose My School,” Marciniak writes to high school students, “The biggest advice I can give to those seniors who are making those final decisions is to go where it feels like home.”

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