**First-Generation College Student (FGCS) Success:**

**A Report from the Office of Undergraduate Retention and the FGCS Committee**

2014

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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## I. ABOUT THE REPORT

This report was compiled during the 2013-2014 academic year by members of the Office of Undergraduate Retention and the FGCS Committee at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Staff members in the Office of Undergraduate Retention conducted a literature review on FGCS and completed an analysis of academic appeal letters submitted by FGCS during the 2012-2013 academic year. In particular, Carmen Huerta, the Graduate Assistant for Retention, played a significant role in the analysis of appeal letters as well as editing and organizing the report.

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided the data on FGCS enrolled at UNC-Chapel Hill and the analysis of retention and graduation rates.

The FGCS Committee provided direction and feedback for the study and wrote the study recommendations. The charge of the committee is provided below as well as the roster of 2013-2014 committee members.

**CHARGE:** The committee will encourage FGCS retention and graduation by recognizing, supporting and implementing collaborative initiatives designed to enhance students success including academic success, wellness and engagement.

2013-2014 **Committee members:**

| **NAME** | **DEPT** | **EMAIL** |
|---|---|---|
| Desirèe Rieckenberg | Dean of Students | desireer@unc.edu |
| Fred Clark | Scholarships & Student Aid | fclark@email.unc.edu |
| Marcus Collins | Center for Student Success and Academic Counseling | collinsm@email.unc.edu |
| Cynthia Demetriou (co-chair) | Undergraduate Education | cyndem@email.unc.edu |
| Annice Fisher | Undergraduate Education | fisherae@email.unc.edu |
| Deborah Jones | Psychology | djjones@email.unc.edu |
| Theresa Maitland | Learning Center | tmaitlan@email.unc.edu |
| April Mann (co-chair) | New Student & Carolina Parent Programs | asmann@email.unc.edu |
| Sharon Palsha | School of Education | spalsha@email.unc.edu |
| Lara Taylor<br><br>Shannon Smith | Carolina Firsts Student Organization Co-Presidents | lara.taylor@unc.edu<br><br>shannosh@live.unc.edu |
| Josmell Perez | Diversity & Multicultural Affairs | josmell@email.unc.edu |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Candice Powell | Undergraduate Education | candicef@email.unc.edu |
| DeVetta Holman Nash | Counseling & Wellness Services | dholman@email.unc.edu |
| Damon Toone/<br>Patty Baum | Admissions | dtoone@admissions.unc.edu<br>pbaum@admissions.unc.edu |
| Marilyn Wyrick<br>Dexter Robinson | Academic Advising | wyrick@email.unc.edu<br>dexrob@email.unc.edu |

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction and Demographic Characteristics

To appreciate the characteristics of FGCS attending colleges and universities in the U.S., it is first critical to recognize that there is not one universally accepted definition of FGCS. Scholars, practitioners as well as individual colleges and universities define FGCS differently. A series of non-ascribed attributes are utilized to describe whether a student is considered to be a first generation college student or not. For example, researchers have defined FGCS as:

- Students from families in which neither parent has earned a college degree (Saenz et al., 2007);
- Students whose parents never enrolled in postsecondary education (Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998);
- Students whose families have no college or university experience (Choy, 2001).

In practice, definitions of FGCS vary by institution. At UNC, a first generation college student is a student from a family in which neither parent has earned a four-year undergraduate degree. The identification of this key characteristic allows for a better understanding of the composition of this heterogenous group. Consequently, it allows universities to be better equipped with the necessary programs that will ultimate enhance retention and graduation rates.

*Demographic Characteristics*

It has been estimated that approximately one in six first-year college students in the U.S. fit the definition of FGCS. In terms of demographics, several studies identify that FGCS are more likely to be students of color and/or non-traditional-aged (Choy, 2001; Hurtado, 2007). Of students identified as FGCS in the United States, 38.2% are Hispanic, 22.6% are African American, 16.8% are Native American, 19% are Asian, and 13.2% are Caucasian (Saenz et al., 2007). Many students identified as FGCS, further speak a language other than English at home (Warburton, Bugarin, & Nuñez, 2001).

*Socio-economic characteristics*

Empirical studies demonstrate that FGCS are more likely than non-FGCS to come from low-income families (Hurtado, 2007; Choy, 2001; Thayer, 2000). Nearly 30% of FGCS are from families with an annual income less than $25,000 (Pryor et al., 2006). The experience of FGCS may vary greatly depending on income and ethnicity. Research suggests that FGCS from middle-income backgrounds are less likely to have a difficult adjustment to college than FGCS from low-income families or from ethnic minorities (Thayer, 2000). This study further demonstrates that students who are both first generation and from low income families are among the least likely of all undergraduates to complete a four year college degree (Thayer, 2000). Other studies demonstrate that African American and Latino FGCS are more likely than other FGCS to be heavily dependent on financial aid (Fischer, 2007). However, FGCS are more likely than non-FGCS to see higher education as an opportunity for upward mobility, to believe it is important to be well-off financially, and to give their children better opportunities than they had as children (Warburton et al., 2001). These students therefore appear to view a college education as a worthwhile investment.

## Overview of Issues: FGCS at Four-Year Colleges and Universities

| | |
|---|---|
| Barriers to Completion | Insufficient academic preparation |
| | Limited college knowledge |
| | Cultural conflict |
| | Limited familial support |
| | Financial constraints |
| Factors Linked to Persistence, and Completion | Academic rigor in high school |
| | Grant-based financial aid |
| | Positive and early parental involvement |
| | Early access to information |
| | Campus engagement |
| Features of Effective Programs and Supports | Begin before prior to college enrollment |
| | Continue for the duration of the college experience |
| | Multifaceted |
| | Develop students' academic competence |
| | Encourage campus engagement |
| Effective Programs and Supports | Transition programs (summer bridge, orientation, first year seminars, writing-intensive courses) |
| | Learning communities (common intellectual experiences, living-learning communities, collaborative assignments/projects) |
| | Academic advising (pre-college advising, early warning systems, faculty office hours) |
| | Experiential learning (service learning, undergraduate research, diversity and global learning) |

## Cultural Challenges for FGCS

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|---|---|
| Parental Involvement | Parental involvement varies by culture. FGCS are less likely than non-FGCS to receive help from parents in negotiating the college admissions process (Choy, 2001).<br><br>FGCS have reported receiving little support as well as discouragement from their parents to attend college (Billson, & Terry, 1982; Horn & Nunez, 2000; Terenzini et al., 1996).<br><br>Parents of FGCS may lack pertinent information about the process of going to college, especially in the realms of financial aid and college costs, which may lead to discouraging their children to pursue higher education (Vargas, 2004).<br><br>FGCS' parents who are unfamiliar with postsecondary education may not be aware of the social and economic benefits of higher education (Volle & Frederico, 1997).<br><br>Once enrolled in college, FGCS often report strained familial and personal relationships in their home community. FGCS sometimes find relationships with family and friends who did not attend college are difficult to maintain once enrolled in college. FGCS may be perceived by their family or home community as changing and separating. This separation and individuation can cause personal as well as academic stress for FGCS (Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Terenzini et al., 1996). |
| Lower Levels of Social Capital | FGCS are less likely to have relatives, acquaintances, and members of their community who have attended college and subsequently less likely to be familiar with the social values and cultural norms of the college environment. |
| Non-Traditional Family Structures | There are fewer nuclear families among FGCS. Grandparents and extended family members often play a more significant role in the lives of FGCS.<br><br>FGCS are more likely than non-FGCS to come from single-parent households. |
| Conflicts With College Culture | FGCS report higher aspirations to attend college to increase career opportunities, and fewer aspirations to "party" in college or to find a mate in college, than non-FGCS (Martinez, Sher, Krull, & Wood, 2009).<br><br>FGCS are likely to perceive campus environments and faculty as less supportive or less concerned about them than other students (Pike & Kuh, 2005; Terenzini et al., 1996).<br><br>FGCS less likely than non-FGCS to live on-campus and interact with faculty members (Pike & Kuh, 2005).<br><br>FGCS frequently delay entry to college after high school and choose to attend an institution based on its proximity to their home, the ability to live at home while attending school, and the ability to work and go to school simultaneously (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). |

## Institutional Challenges for FGCS

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| Insufficient Academic Preparation | High school students whose parents did not attend college are less likely than non-FGCS to be prepared academically for the rigor of postsecondary education (Thayer, 2000). College degree completion for FGCS is influenced by the quality and academic intensity of the high school curriculum regardless of ethnic or socioeconomic status (Adelman, 1999). In particular, FGCS frequently lack sufficient academic preparation in mathematics. Parents' level of education has been related to whether or not students will enroll in advanced mathematics courses during high school (Choy, 2001). Students whose parents did not attend college are less likely than other students to enroll in advanced math courses during high school. The likelihood that a FGCS will take advanced math courses in high school is restricted by the limited course offerings in high schools which have large populations of FGCS. There is limited availability of advanced placement, honors, and international baccalaureate programs in schools serving large numbers of FGCS (Horn & Nunez, 2000). |
| Limited College Knowledge | Many FGCS lack "college knowledge" meaning that they are not aware of the steps required to apply to college including how to apply for student aid, when to take required standardized tests, and how to make connections between desired career paths and required education (Vargas, 2004). FGCS are less likely than non-FGCS to receive college admissions guidance from their high school (Choy, 2001). Furthermore, many FGCS lack first-hand college experience, such as visiting colleges prior to applying (Thayer, 2000). FGCS are often not fully aware of, or take advantage of, the entire range of options available for them in higher education (Vargas, 2004). FGCS are more likely than non-FGCS to enroll in less-selective two-year or four-year institutions, even when they are qualified for more selective institutions (Choy, 2001; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak & Terenzini, 2004).<br><br>College knowledge can also include an appreciation of the behaviors expected of students once they are enrolled in college (Collier and Morgan, 2008). FGCS who overcome barriers to access and enroll in postsecondary education, remain at a disadvantage with respect to staying enrolled and attaining a degree (Choy, 2001). This may be related to the limited college knowledge of FGCS and the influence this has on their academic performance. The ability for FGCS to understand course material is necessary, but, alone, it is not sufficient for success (Collier and Morgan, 2008). University students must also master the college student role. FGCS have differences from non-FGCS regarding time management and appreciating specific aspects of coursework such as due dates and attendance policies. These differences have been demonstrated to |

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| | negatively influence FGCS' ability to respond to faculty expectations (Collier and Morgan, 2008).<br><br>The college experience, including transitioning to postsecondary education, participating in co-curricular activities, and making the most of campus opportunities and resources, influences undergraduate student success. FGCS are likely to have more difficulty transitioning to college than non-FGCS (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora,1996). Non-FGCS tend to see college as a continuation of their academic and social experiences while FGCS often perceive college as disjointed from their family as well as their prior academic and social patterns. Overall, FGCS have more difficultly than non-FGCS acclimating to the college environment (Thayer, 2000). FGCS tend to have lower levels of social integration than non-FGCS; they are less likely to spend time with peers outside of the classroom or to participate in extracurricular activities. Their knowledge of the campus environment, including academic as well as administrative operations, is often more limited than non-FGCS (Thayer, 2000). Lower academic performance and persistence rates of FGCS are often attributed to FGCS being less likely than non-FGCS to engage in academic and social experiences related to college success including interacting with faculty, studying, participating in extracurricular activities, and utilizing on-campus student services (Lohfink & Paulsen, 2003; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Pascarella et al., 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2005). |
| Financial Constraints | FGCS often choose which institution of higher education to attend based on cost-related reasons including financial aid and anticipated time to degree completion (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). This means that FGCS may choose to attend less selective institutions due to financial constraints. Once enrolled, FGCS are more likely to work off-campus and work more hours than non-FGCS (Pike & Kuh, 2005; Terenzini et al., 1996). Pascarella (2004) found working while attending college has stronger negative implications on postsecondary outcomes for FGCS than for non-FGCS. Since FGCS frequently live and work off campus, they have fewer relationships with their peers and low levels of involvement in campus extracurricular activities (Billson & Terry, 1982; Pike & Kuh, 2005). Many FGCS attend college part-time, because their financial situation requires that they work full-time. FGCS are more likely than non-FGCS to be financially independent from parents, have dependent children, and be a single parent (Engle and Tinto, 2008). Because FGCS are more likely than non-first generation college students to live and work off campus, as well as to attend part-time while working full-time, the amount of time they spend on campus is limited. This negatively influences their engagement with the campus community (Richardson & Skinner, 1992). |

## Factors Linked to Persistence and Completion

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| Academic Rigor in High School | Taking a rigorous high school curriculum has been found to mitigate some gaps in access to four-year colleges and universities (Choy, 2001). This means ensuring that high school students are taking progressively more complex courses over the course of their high school career. These courses should be part of a curriculum with clearly defined standards and one that holds high expectations for all students. The curriculum should cumulatively build upon previously learned concepts and skills and promote in-depth analysis as well as student mastery of content. In particular, taking advanced math courses in high school has been associated with enrollment in a four-year institution (Horn and Nunez, 2000). Taking advance math courses in high school more than doubles the likelihood that a FGCS will enroll in a four-year college or university. |
| Grant-Based Financial Aid | Research has found that financial aid increases, in the form of grants, scholarships and work study, positively influence the likelihood that FGCS will persist in college. On the other hand, increases in student loans decrease the likelihood that students will persist (Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005). FGCS and their families are often reticent about taking on student loan debt to fund a college education. FGCS offered student loans instead of grant-based aid, are less likely to take the aid and remain enrolled in college. |
| Positive and Early Parental Involvement | FGCS and their families often lack access to information on how to prepare, apply, and pay for postsecondary education. College knowledge among parents of FGCS is limited by lack of experience as well as by limited access to information sources including university websites, parent-teacher conferences, and college information nights. There are often social, economic, and language barriers restricting access to these resources (Choy, 2001; Oliverez & Tierney, 2005; Vargas, 2004; York-Anderson & Bowman, 1991). As a result of these restrictions, FGCS are less likely than non-FGCS to complete the steps necessary to enroll in college even if they are well qualified and aspire to attend college.<br><br>Parental involvement and encouragement during high school increases the likelihood that students will take a rigorous high school curriculum and enroll in postsecondary education (Hossler, Schmidt, & Vesper, 1999). Providing outreach to parents early in the high school career has been linked with college access and persistence. In particular, outreach emphasizing the importance of selecting challenging coursework during high school can help improve a student's likelihood of enrolling in a four-year institution upon graduation from high school. |

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| | FGCS benefit from receiving information concerning college opportunities including student aid, college application processes, and the selection process early in their high school career (Choy, 2001). It helps students choose a college at an appropriate level of selectivity. FGCS often choose to attend less-selective institutions, even when they are qualified to attend more selective schools (Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). Research has found that the decision to attend a less-selective institution can negatively influence the likelihood that a FGCS will obtain a bachelor's degree (Pascarella et al., 2004; Vargas, 2004). Receiving early information concerning college opportunities helps FGCS choose a college well-aligned with their needs and abilities. |
| Early Access to Information | Whether or not FGCS apply or enroll in college is influenced by educational expectations communicated to students during and prior to high school. Research has shown that educational expectations differ based on parents' level of education as early as eighth grade (Choy, 2001). By eighth grade, only 55% of students whose parents did not go to college aim to earn a four-year college degree while 91% of students whose parents went to college aspire to earn a four-year college degree. By twelfth grade, 90% of non-FGCS expect to earn a bachelor's degree and only 53% of FGCS expect they will earn a bachelor's degree (Choy, 2001). Increasing early access to college information increases educational expectations. FGCS who receive early access to college information are more likely to see attending college as a reasonable expectation and an attainable goal. |
| Campus Engagement | Campus engagement in curricular and co-curricular activities, especially for students from historically underrepresented populations, increases the likelihood that students will persist in college (Fischer, 2007). FGCS frequently have limited time management skills, limited knowledge of college finances, limited budget management skills, and lack of experience negotiating the bureaucratic processes of higher education (Thayer, 2000). Increasing FGCS participation in activities and their use of university resources promotes campus engagement. Encouraging FGCS to be active in the campus environment positively influences the FGCS experience. |

## College Programs and Supports

### *Transition Programs*

For the purposes of this article, I define transition programs as initiatives designed to encourage the successful transition of FGCS from high school to college. These programs introduce FGCS to and prepare them for the academic and social expectations of college. Summer bridge programs are a type of transition program offered to students during the summer prior to enrollment in the first full-time academic semester (Barefoot, Griffin, & Koch, 2012). Summer bridge programs offer students the opportunity to move on campus early, make connections with faculty and campus resources, as well as take academic courses (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006). Nationally, summer bridge programs are offered most frequently to FGCS, students from low-income families, and students from historically underserved populations (Barefoot, Griffin, & Koch, 2012). These programs have demonstrated improved academic readiness for the first year of college as well as improved retention and graduation rates (Barefoot, Griffin, & Koch, 2012). For FGCS in particular, students found summer bridge programs most beneficial when they continued to have access to program support staff and resources throughout the school year (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006). Orientation programs and first-year seminars are additional transition programs that can positively influence the FGCS experience. The most effective orientation programs and first-year seminars frequently bring students and faculty together in small group settings (Kuh, 2008). FGCS have found that frequent and highly structured seminars with faculty helped them develop the structure and discipline requisite to be successful overall as a college student ((Darling & Smith, 2007; Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006). Writing-intensive courses have also been demonstrated to be a helpful part of transition programs (Kuh, 2008). These courses provide students with repeated writing practice and can be especially beneficial for FGCS who come from under-resourced K-12 school systems ((Darling & Smith, 2007; Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006).

### *Learning Communities*

Learning communities encourage intellectual investigation among a group of students within and beyond the classroom (Kuh, 2008). Offering common intellectual experiences, living-learning communities, and collaborative assignments to FGCS can help with transition and retention by situating students within a small community of learners. Common intellectual experiences can include a summer reading book for all new students or attending a lecture and discussion as a group. It also includes the common core of classes that all students must take to graduate (Kuh, 2008). Living-learning communities are learning communities with a residential component in which students engage in academic work together as well as live in the same residence hall (Barefoot, Griffin, & Koch, 2012). Residential living-learning programs have been demonstrated to help FGCS acclimate to the college environment (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006). Collaborative assignments and projects, whether offered through living-learning communities or through offer venues, can help students learn to work and solve problems among a group as well as appreciate the perspectives of others (Kuh, 2008). Working in a collaborative learning environment can help FGCS make connections with peers, appreciate academic expectations, and, subsequently, enhance their transition to college (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006).

### *Academic Advising*

Continuous academic advising from pre-college enrollment to graduation can help FGCS navigate institutional culture, academic expectations, degree requirements, academic choices, and opportunities (Darling & Smith, 2007). Pre-college advising has been especially helpful for FGCS as it prepares FGCS academically for college as well as involves parents in the college preparation process (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006). Early warning systems are a type of academic advising program in which students are provided early academic feedback from instructors and opportunities for academic advising. A primary goal of early warning systems is to the early identification of behaviors that may could lead to academic difficulty (Barefoot, Griffin, & Koch, 2012). Academic advisors and faculty work with early warning systems to guide FGCS to use academic support resources on campus (Darling & Smith, 2007). Faculty office hours are another critical part academic advising supports and programs. For FGCS in particular, it is important for students to perceive that professors want to meet with them during office hours (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006). Faculty office hours are most effective when FGCS perceive that professors care, want to meet with students, and that office hours are not limited or offered during inconvenient times (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006).

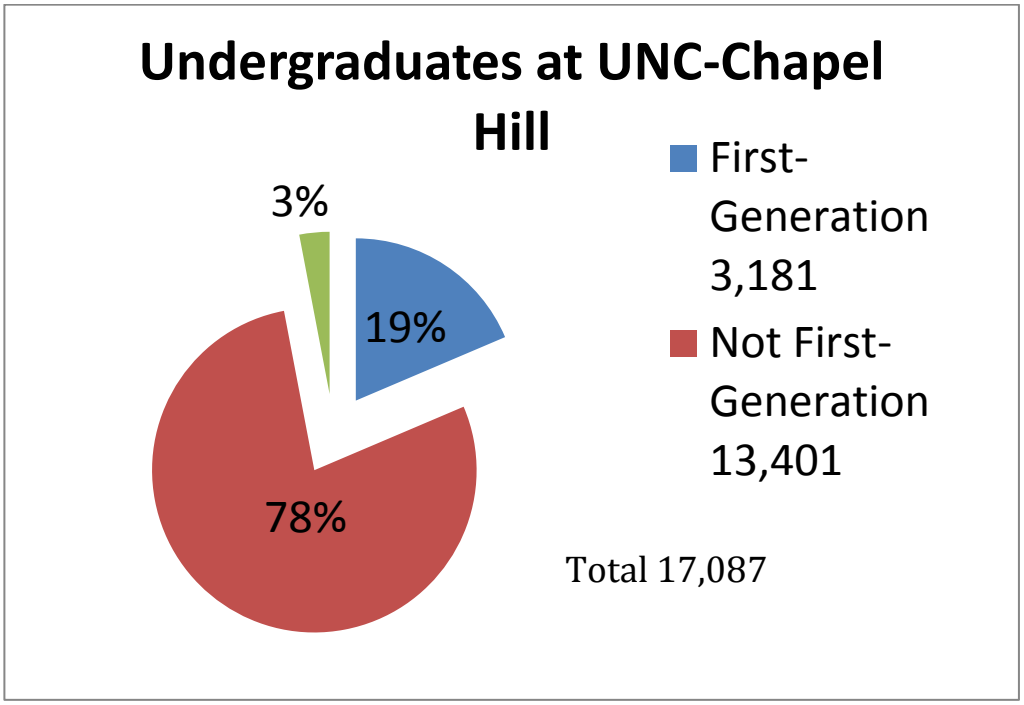
### *Experiential Learning*

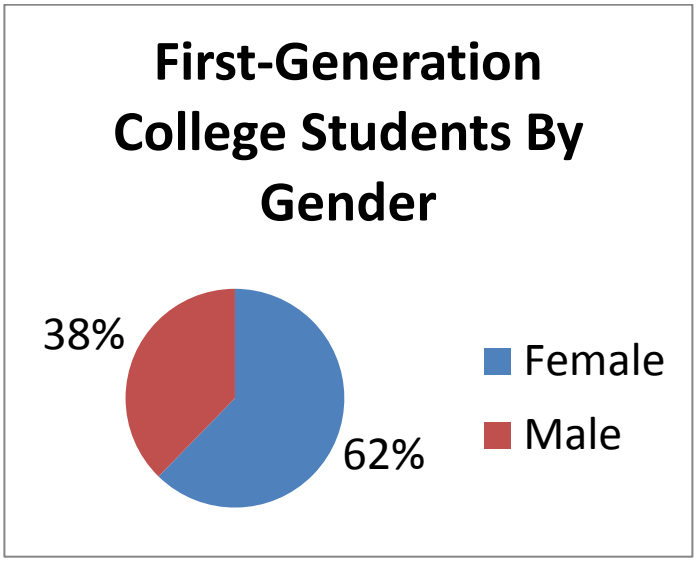
Experiential learning programs and supports can be especially beneficial to FGCS. For the purposes of this article, I classify service learning, undergraduate research, and diversity and global learning as experiential learning. These learning opportunities encourage FGCS to learn through activities and experiences inside and outside of the traditional classroom environment. Service learning involves field-based activities, community partnerships, and students applying what they have learned to a real-life setting (Kuh, 2008). It can be especially beneficial to students as it encourages a heightened sense of community and civic awareness as well as peer and faculty interactions (Barefoot, Griffin, & Koch, 2012). Undergraduate research also promotes student-faculty interaction (Barefoot, Griffin, & Koch, 2012). I believe undergraduate research opportunities are especially beneficial for FGCS as it conveys to FGCS that can make a contribution to scholarly activity. I believe this reinforces students' sense of belonging at college. Finally, diversity and global learning can help FGCS, especially FGCS from rural communities, interact with diverse student bodies on college campuses (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006). Diversity and global learning encourages students to explore perspectives, cultures, and life experiences different than their own (Kuh, 2008).

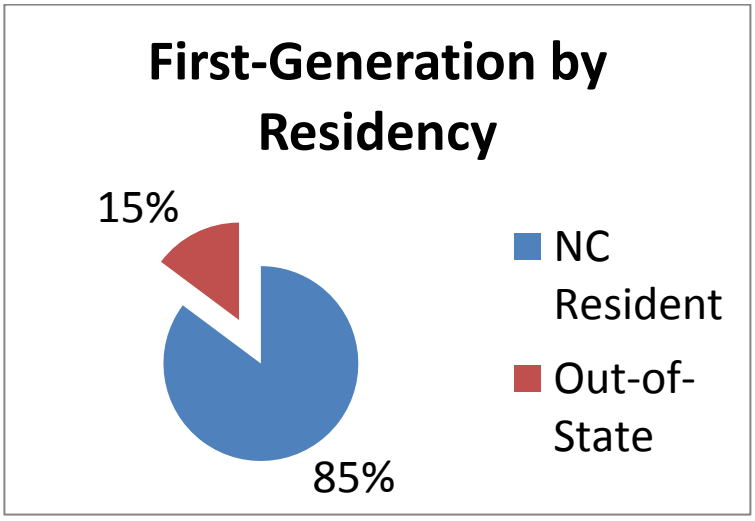
## Summary

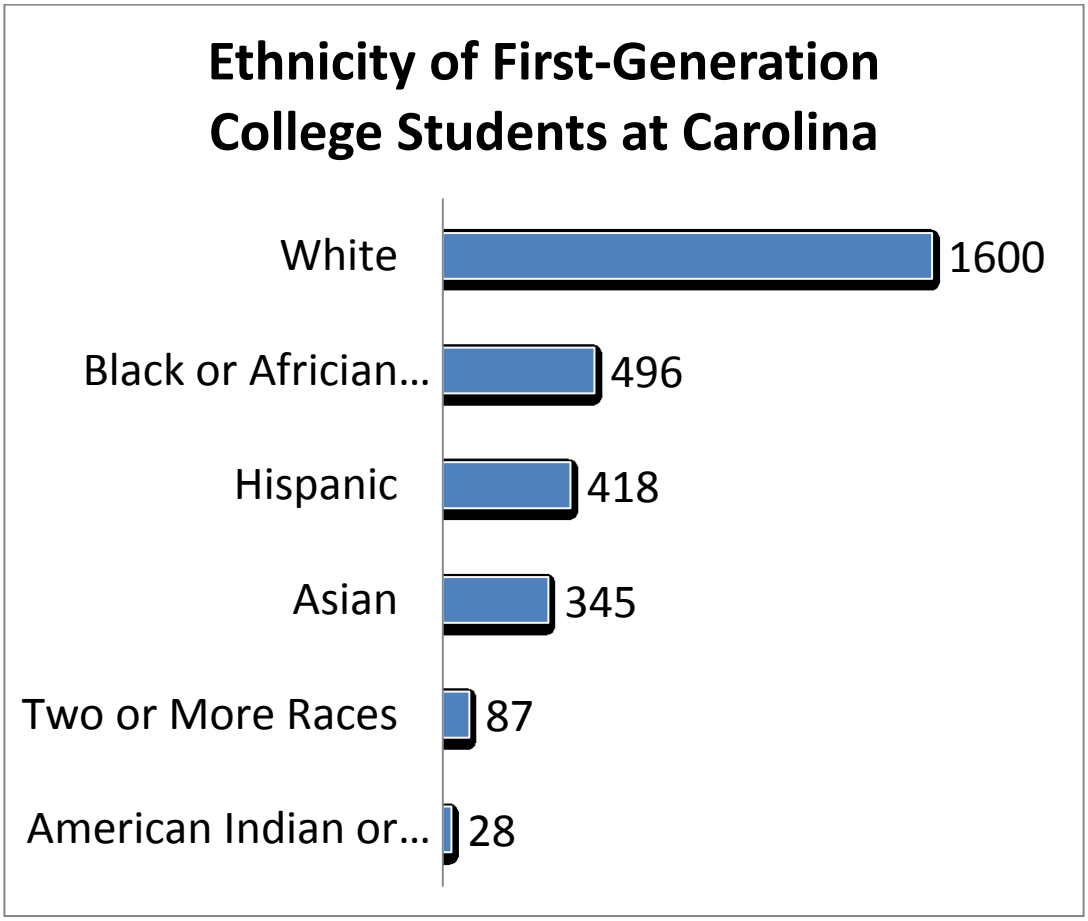
Merely increasing access to higher education for FGCS does not guarantee degree attainment. Intentionally designed programs and supports are needed to enhance the enrollment, persistence, and completion rates of FGCS at four-year colleges and universities. According to the literature on FGCS success, these programs and supports should: begin before prior to college enrollment, continue throughout the duration of the college experience, be multifaceted, strive to develop students' academic competence, and encourage campus engagement (Thayer, 2000). Examples of effective college programs and supports for FGCS include transition programs, learning communities, academic advising, and experiential education. In addition to implementing these types of programs and supports to enhance the enrollment, persistence, and completion rates of FGCS, higher education researchers and practitioners could benefit from more research on specific subsamples or settings of FGCS. The term first-generation is commonly used to refer to a very broad group of students in the United States. The FGCS experience can vary significantly depending on the socioeconomic status and ethnicity of individual students. The FGCS experience can also be quite different for students enrolled in four-year institutions than for those enrolled in community colleges. It can be different for students who are first-time, first-year students and for those who are transfer students. The factors influencing college persistence and completion are likely to vary among these, as well as other, groups and settings. More research on subgroups of FGCS, including FGCS at community colleges, transfer students, and ethnic and economic subgroups of FGCS is necessary. For example, the factors described in this article come from research on students at four-year institutions in the United States. It is important to note that these factors cannot necessarily be applied to all FGCS. As access to higher education increases globally, there are FGCS in other cultures experiencing unique challenges and opportunities in higher education. Similarly, as the number of international students at American colleges and universities increases, it is likely that first-generation international students will have their own set of unique needs and challenges. To gain a better understanding of the FGCS experiences, research on subgroups and settings of FGCS is necessary. Furthermore, institutions should strive to understand the local FGCS experience on their campus. It is critical for institutions to appreciate the FGCS at their institution, to be aware of their distinct contributions and challenges, before implementing programs and support services.

## III. PROFILE OF FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS AT UNC-CHAPEL HILL




First-Generation by Residency
15%
85%
NC Resident
Out-of-State

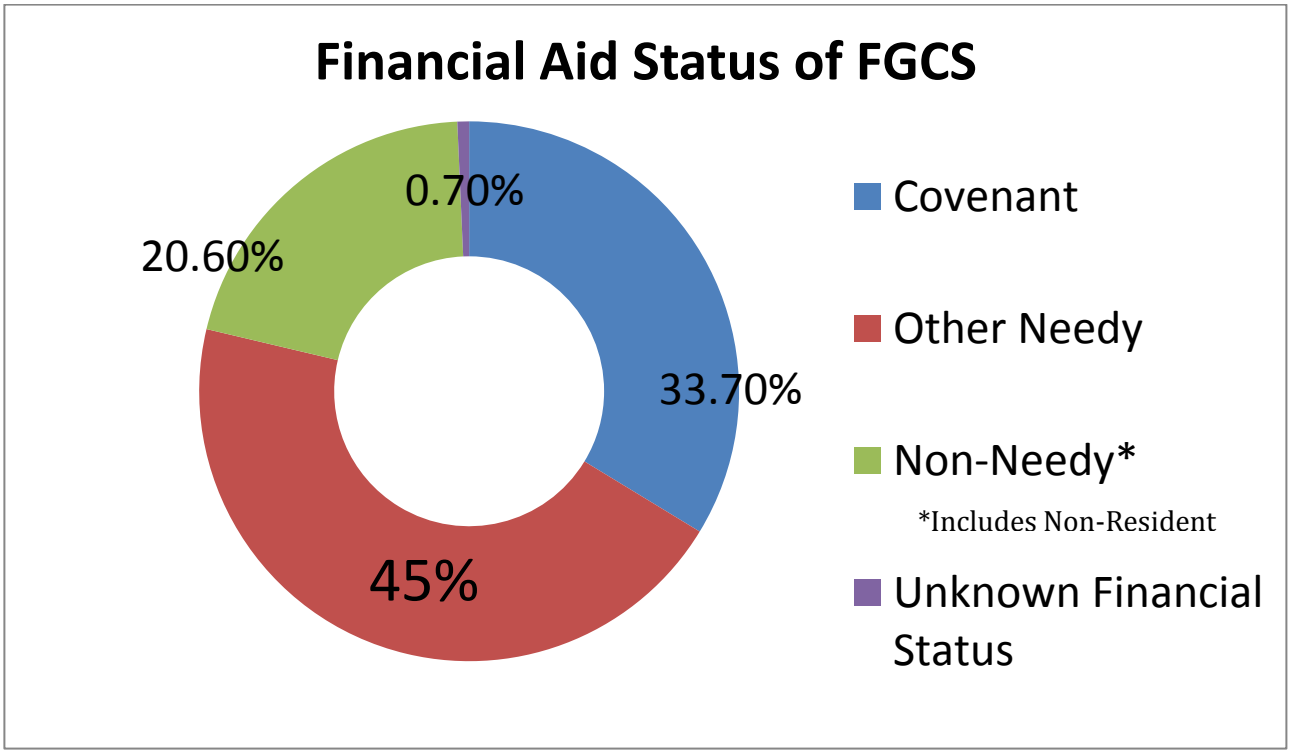

Ethnicity of First-Generation College Students at Carolina
White
1600
Black or African...
496
Hispanic
418
Asian
345
Two or More Races
87
American Indian or...
28

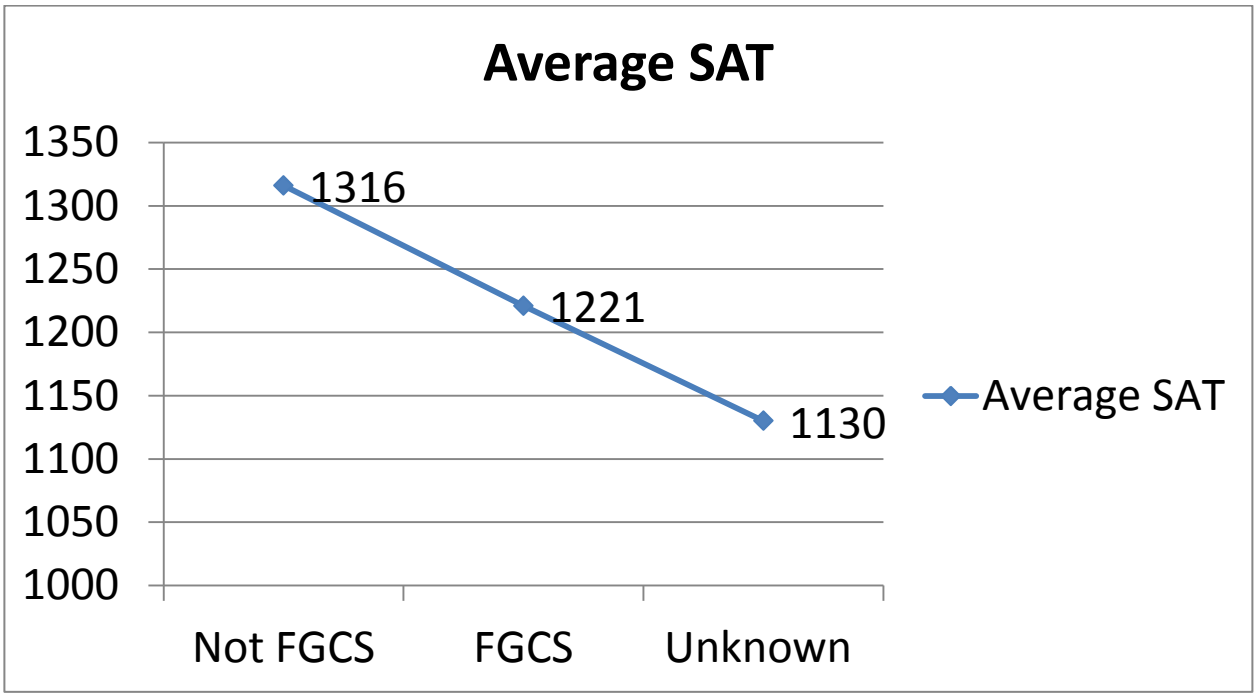
## Percentage of Students at Carolina who are FGCS

| | |
|---|---|
| 34% | • Of Black or African American Students |
| 30% | • Of Hispanic Students |
| 30% | • Of American Indian Students |
| 25% | • Of Asian Students |
| 25% | • Of Students of Two or More Races |
| 14% | • Of White Students |

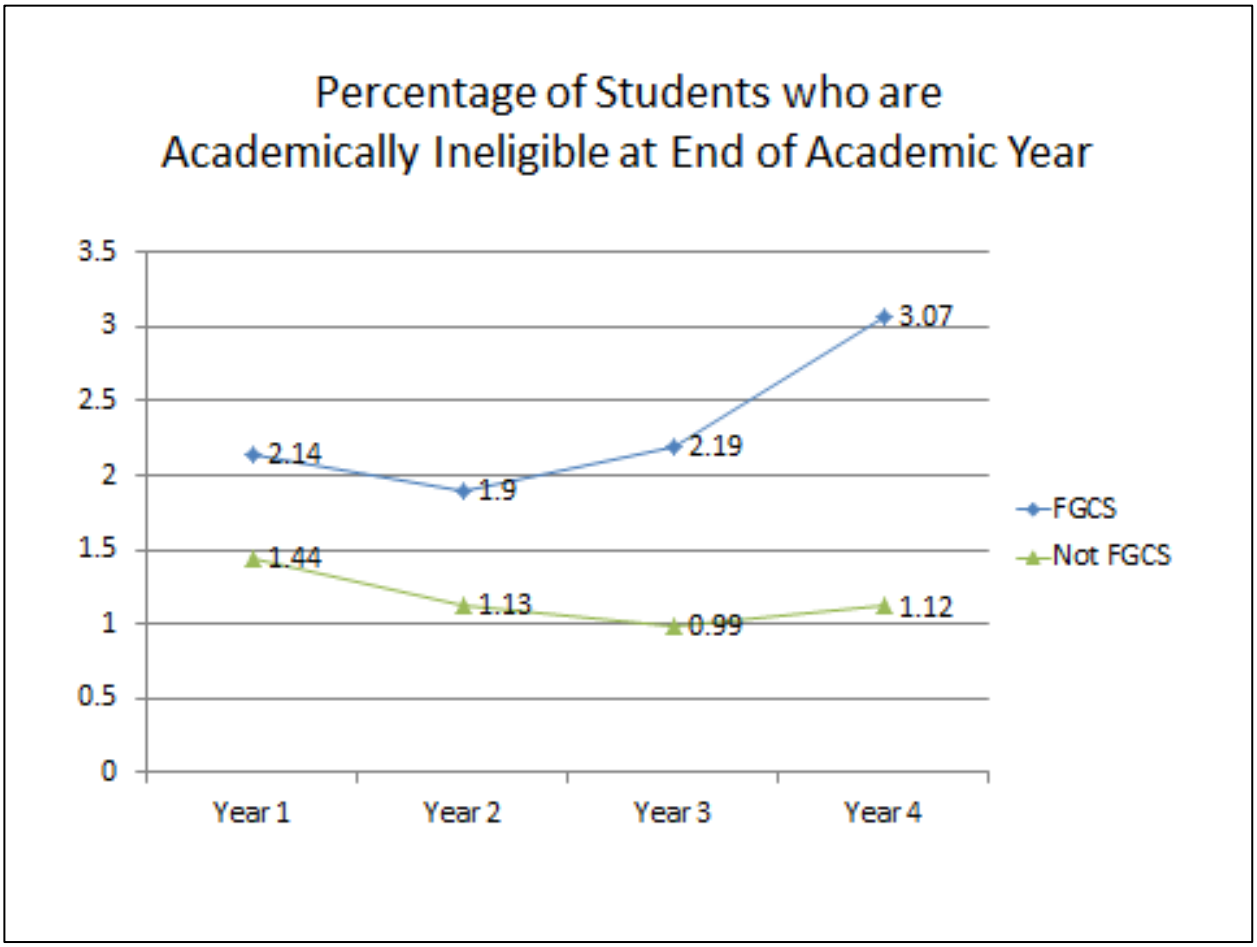
## Percentage of Students at Carolina who are FGCS

| | |
|---|---|
| 55% | • Of Covenant Scholars |
| 46% | • Of Summer Bridge Participants |
| 26% | • Of Transfer Students |
| 19% | • Of Females |
| 17% | • Of Males |
| 16% | • Of Student Athletes |


Financial Aid Status of FGCS
0.70%
20.60%
33.70%
45%
Covenant
Other Needy
Non-Needy*
*Includes Non-Resident
Unknown Financial Status

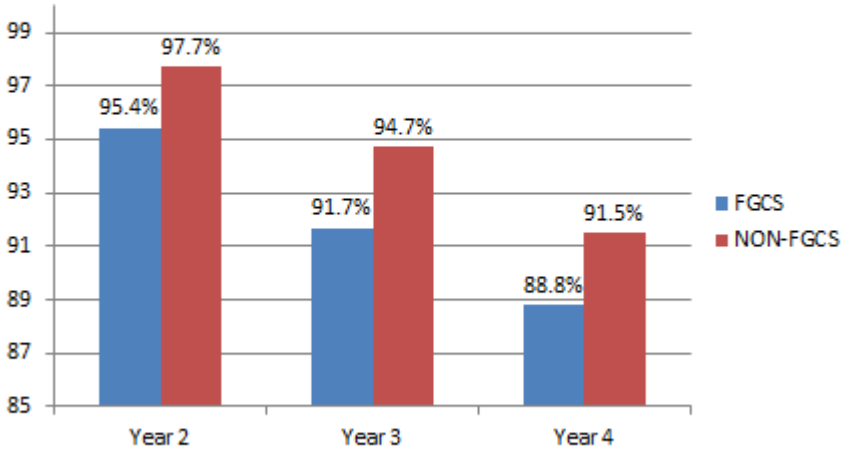

Average SAT
1350
1300
1250
1200
1150
1100
1050
1000
1316
1221
1130
Not FGCS
FGCS
Unknown
Average SAT

## IV. RETENTION AND GRADUATION TRENDS

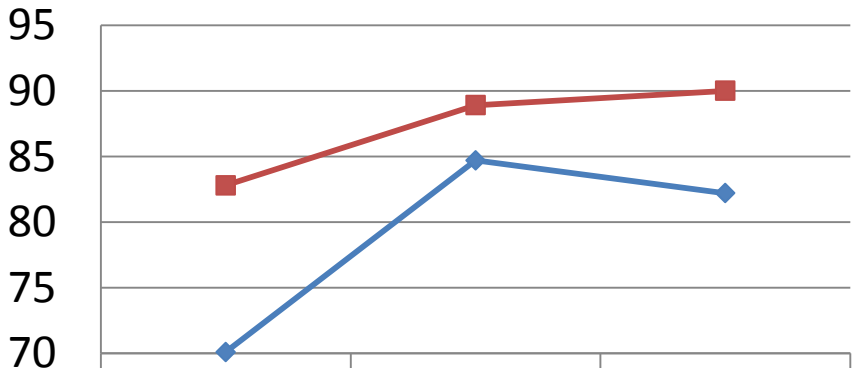



The percentage of FGCS declared academically ineligible increases by 61.6% from year 2 to Year 4. By contrast, the percentage of non-FGCS declared ineligible is essentially unchanged, with a marginal decrease of 1%.

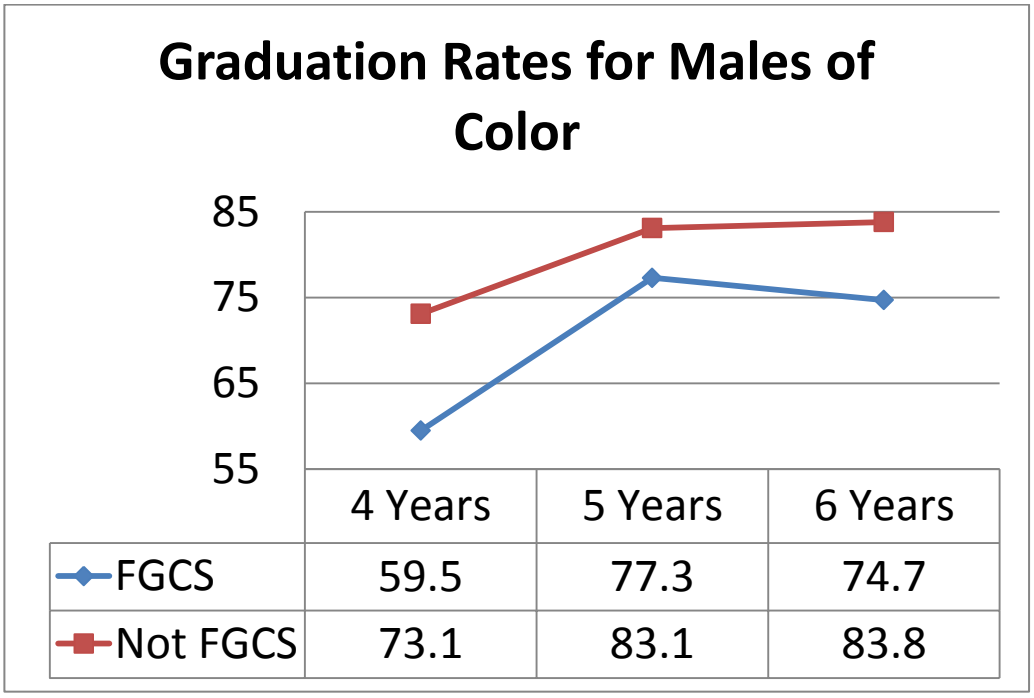
## Retention Rates

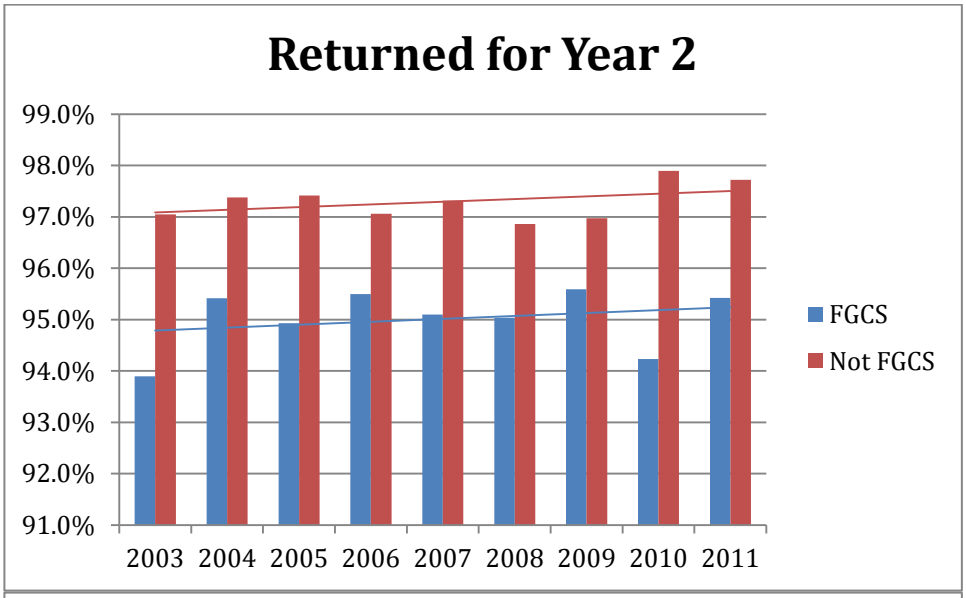


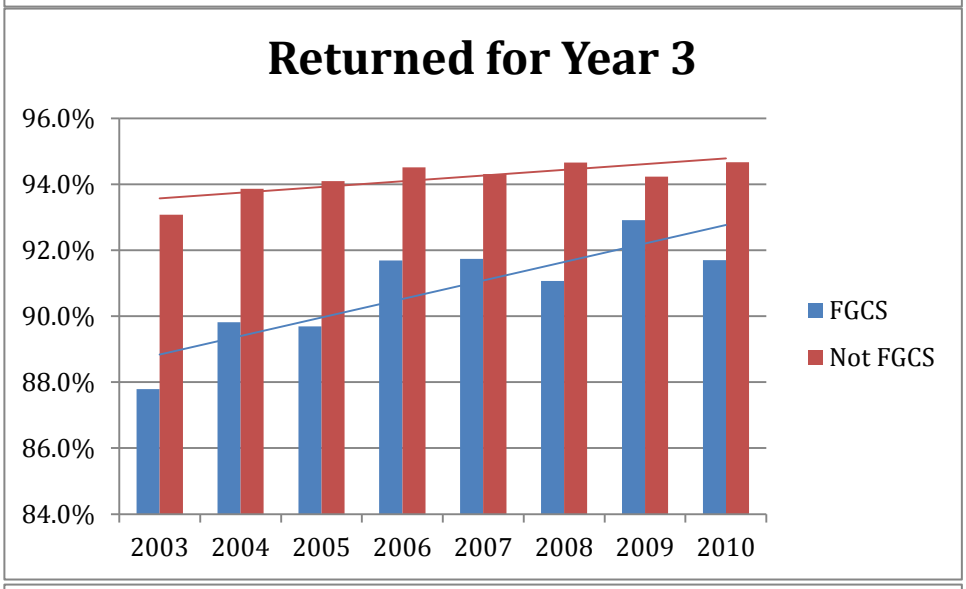

## Graduation Rates for Females of Color

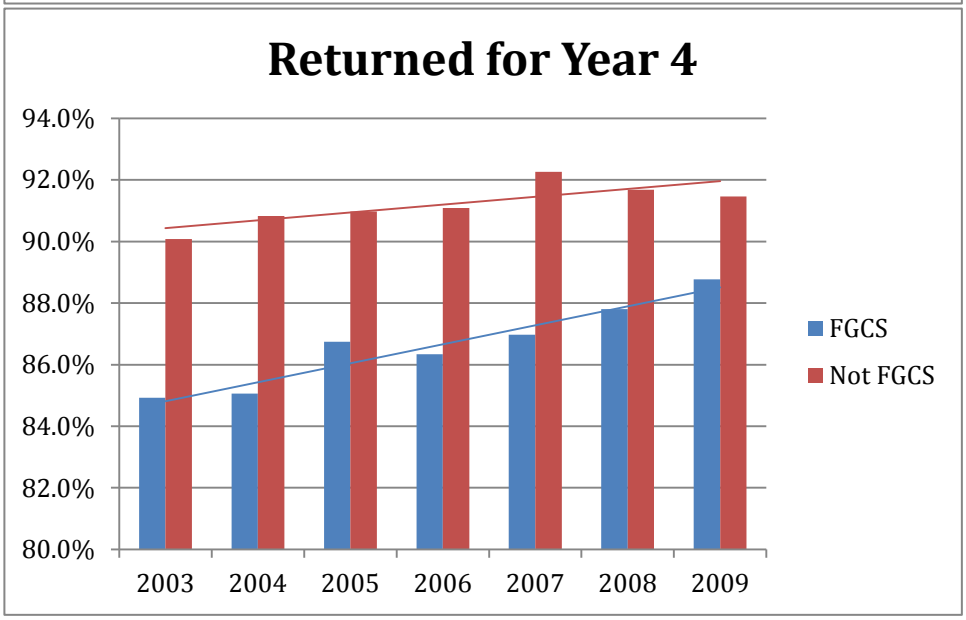


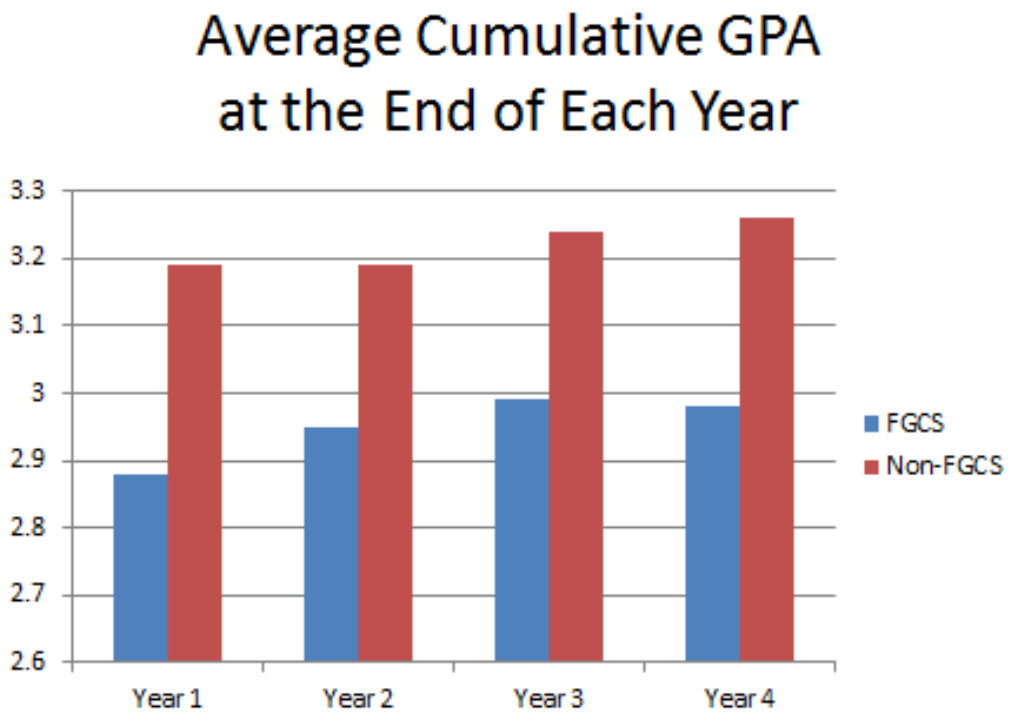

| | 4 Years | 5 Years | 6 Years |
|---|---|---|---|
| FGCS | 70.1 | 84.7 | 82.2 |
| Not FGCS | 82.8 | 88.9 | 90 |

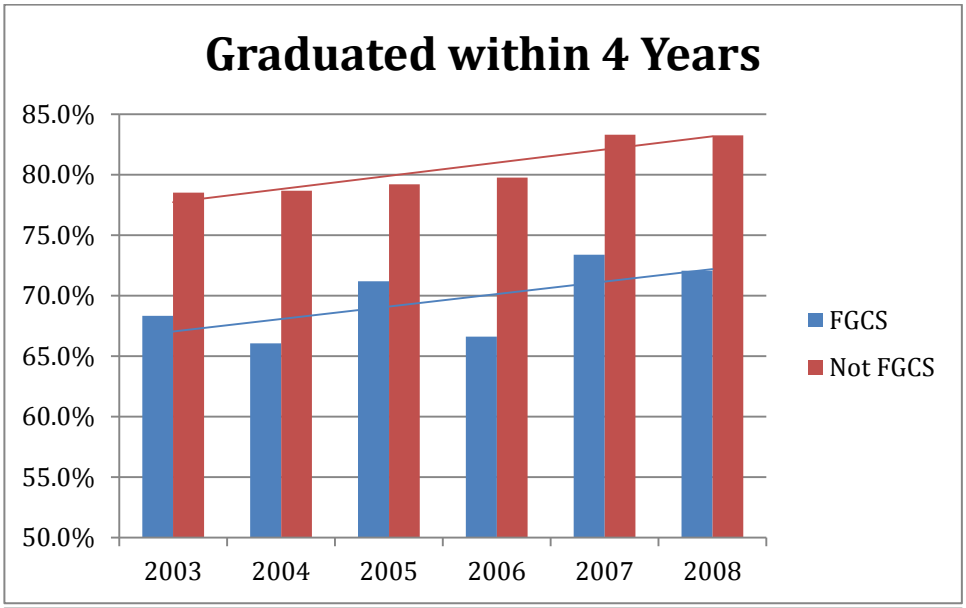

Graduation Rates for Males of Color
85
75
65
55
4 Years
5 Years
6 Years
FGCS
59.5
77.3
74.7
Not FGCS
73.1
83.1
83.8

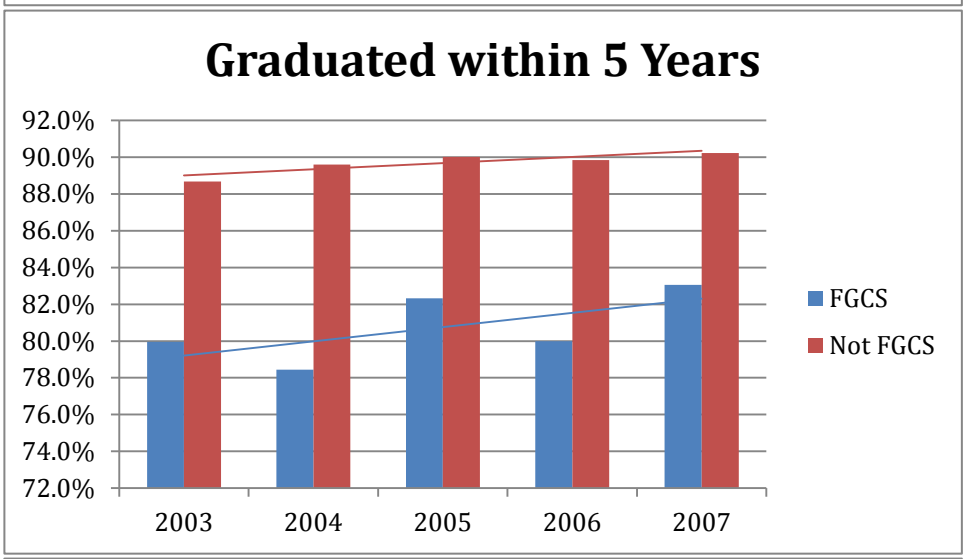

Returned for Year 2
99.0%
98.0%
97.0%
96.0%
95.0%
94.0%
93.0%
92.0%
91.0%
2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011
FGCS
Not FGCS

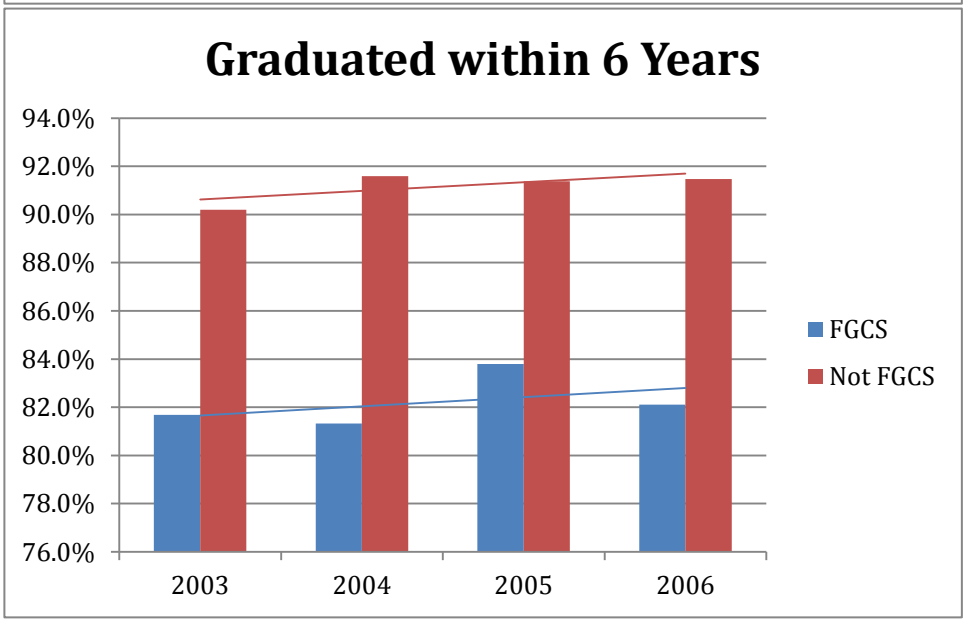

Returned for Year 3
96.0%
94.0%
92.0%
90.0%
88.0%
86.0%
84.0%
2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010
FGCS
Not FGCS


Returned for Year 4
94.0%
92.0%
90.0%
88.0%
86.0%
84.0%
82.0%
80.0%
2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009
FGCS
Not FGCS


Average Cumulative GPA
at the End of Each Year
3.3
3.2
3.1
3
2.9
2.8
2.7
2.6
Year 1
Year 2
Year 3
Year 4
FGCS
Non-FGCS


Graduated within 4 Years
85.0%
80.0%
75.0%
70.0%
65.0%
60.0%
55.0%
50.0%
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
FGCS
Not FGCS


Graduated within 5 Years
92.0%
90.0%
88.0%
86.0%
84.0%
82.0%
80.0%
78.0%
76.0%
74.0%
72.0%
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
FGCS
Not FGCS


Graduated within 6 Years
94.0%
92.0%
90.0%
88.0%
86.0%
84.0%
82.0%
80.0%
78.0%
76.0%
2003
2004
2005
2006
FGCS
Not FGCS

## Summary

The data demonstrate that over the course of four academic years, a greater percentage of FGCS are declared academically ineligible than their Non FGCS counterparts. Although the actual percentages appear similar, it is worth noting that in Year 1, the percentage of FGCS that are declared academically ineligible 48.6% than the group of Non FGCS. Both groups see similar decreases in Year 2. However, we see a considerable divergence in Year 3, when 2.19% of FGCS are declared ineligible versus .99% of Non FGCS. This indicates that there is a 121% increase in the percentage of FGCS declared ineligible when compared to their counterparts in Year 3. The gap widens in Year 4, when this increase grows to 174%. While it is clear that the percentages of students declared ineligible are small, it is also clear that a significantly larger percentage of the group of students that are FGCS are declared ineligible versus their Non FGCS counterparts.

In examining retention rates, we see that there is only a 2% difference in retention rates between the two groups in Year 2. However, this gap widens in Year 3 to 3.2% and falls again to approximately 3% in Year 4. This is somewhat encouraging in that there appears to be a marginal difference between FGCS and Non FGCS. Further, the data indicate that FGCS have a 13% lower graduation rate after four years, an 8% lower graduation rate after five years, and a 10% lower graduation rate after six years. These numbers do demonstrate that FGCS consistently have lower graduation rates. The difference is most pronounced after four years, which suggests that FGCS may take longer to graduate, if they are able to complete their degree.

The trend appears to be that FGCS take longer than four years to graduate, appear to narrow the difference in Year 5, and then become less likely to graduate by Year 6. If we break the effect down by gender and identification as a minority, we surprisingly see that this effect is more pronounced for FGCS males of color than for females of color. Female FGCS of color have a 15% lower graduation rate than non-FGCS females of color in Year 4, a 5% lower rate in Year 5, and an 8.6% lower graduation rate in Year 6 than their non-FGCS counterparts. Males, on the other hand, have an 18.6% lower graduation rate in Year 4, a 7% lower graduation rate in Year 5, and a 10.9% lower graduation rate in Year 6 than their FGCS counterparts. It is also worth noting that in general, male students of color have lower graduation rates than their female counterparts.

We are able to see a few interesting trends in retention from 2003-2010. First, it is fairly clear that retention among non-FGCS steadily increases at a slow rate throughout his period for each year. This is certainly a positive, but it is also clear that retention rates for non-FGCS remain high throughout the period. Retention among FGCS is stable in Year 2, with the exception being 2010, where retention was lower. Retention among FGCS appears to be increasing in Year 3 and Year 4 from 2003-2010. In 2003, the percentage of FGCS that returned for Year 4 was only 85%, compared to 90% for non-FGCS. This number increases to slightly over 88%. This rate of increase is more rapid than the rate of increase among non-FGCS. To some extent, this indicates some success in encouraging FGCS to complete their degrees, though it is clear that fewer FGCS return than their non-FGCS counterparts.

Unfortunately, the results are nowhere near as positive when examining GPAs between FGCS and non-FGCS. Here, we see that FGCS average cumulative GPAs that are 10% lower in Year 1, 7.5% lower in Year 2, 7.4% and lower in Year 3, and 8% lower in Year 4. These differences do not appear significant, but if we consider current market conditions, the difference between an average of a GPA that is over 3.2 (non FGCS) versus one that is lower than 3.00 (FGCS) is quite stark.

In the last set of data, we see some encouraging results. Overall, there is a general increase in the number of students that graduate within four years from 2003-2008. Unfortunately, FGCS are less likely to graduate within four years than their non-FGCS counterparts. We also see that the rate of increase in FGCS simply parallels the rate of non-FGCS, meaning that the difference between the two student categories is persistent. Additionally, we see that the percentage of FGCS graduating in four years has only marginally improved from 2003 – 2008 by about

4%. Similarly, the percentage of FGCS graduating in five years improved by only 3.8%, and the percentage in six years was unchanged from 2003.

Overall, it appears that some progress has been made in retaining FGCS, though these rates are lower than the group of non-FGCS. The problem appears to be in the differences in GPAs between the two categories and the time to graduation, as well as the overall lower graduation rates of FGCS.

## V. AN ANALYSIS OF ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY APPEAL LETTERS FOR FGCS

To examine how the FGCS at UNC-Chapel Hill navigate these various cultural and institutional obstacles, and how the various recommendations work to ameliorate some of the difficulties FGCS experience, we present a list of themes from a qualitative analysis of the 2012-2013 appeal letters. The themes reflect some of the main circumstances affecting the academic performance of a group of first generation college students at UNC-Chapel Hill. The names of the students are changed to maintain anonymity but the situations are real and reflective of their ongoing struggles.

The study demonstrates that first generation students place a large premium on education, evidenced by the following statement, "the pursuit of higher education has always been a dream of mine, not simply for a bigger salary in my future career, but for the joy of learning as well." Despite this, some first generation college students encounter a series of obstacles that often prevent them from achieving their dream of obtaining a college degree. The qualitative studies reveal numerous themes that identify the obstacles, which we divide into several categories. These themes include the need to be a caregiver to a family member(s), lack of awareness of University resources, limited adult or parental guidance, pressure related to sense of obligation to family and others, lack of academic preparation/high school rigor, depression/anxiety, financial stress, identity and social connections.

One of the more frequent themes to emerge from the analysis is that generation students are often assuming the role of caregivers to their family members. Several students reported to have to take care of their ailing grandparents. The list of responsibilities associated with this task ranges from grandparents to doctor appointments and buying medication to caring for them after a hospitalization. For example, one student name Markus stated, "my grandmother who I grew up with and lived with for the majority of my childhood was in the hospital. I felt guilty for leaving her and spent many of my weekends and free time back home visiting her in the hospital'.

Sociological research on family dynamics provides a more general explanation for how the caregiver role affects first generation students. For example, family scholars explore the continued impact of slavery on the composition of current African American families. One argument is that slavery destroyed the creation of nuclear families by forcibly separating existing families and further preventing the emergence of new ones. Consequently, African American families are more prone to matriarchal structures that include a strong grandmother figure. This might explain the significant role that grandmothers have played in the life of some the students in the study. A different line of research explores the impact that poverty and discrimination has had in African American families. Research suggests that poverty, lack of vocational opportunities, inadequate education, as well as other major structural conditions systematically decrease the ability of African Americans from forging strong families. As a result, a large percentage of African American children are living in single headed households, or in some circumstances reside in what is known as "skipped generation households". One FGCS at UNC, stated on his appeal for probation letter, "my legal mother is my paternal grandmother. As a child, she and my paternal grandfather, who is now deceased, realized that my younger sister and I were not being properly taken care of, so, out of the kindness of their hearts, they took us in, adopted us and raised us as their own."

This deep sense of familialism previously discussed in the literature review prevents many students from ceasing their care for family members once starting college. Instead, students claimed to feel a deep sense of responsibility for their family members and even feeling "guilty for leaving". The

students' reported activities reflect their constant involvement with the daily routines of their families back at home. For example, Justin, mentioned that he is currently having to attend court hearings since his step-father is seeking to gain full custody of his step-siblings. It is not surprising to see how his heavy involvement with those back at home can have negative outcomes for his school performance. It is not surprising to see how a student whose mind is occupied with such life changing and formative events in a person's life such as a custody battle can be distracted and underperform in his schoolwork.

Research suggests that single parents are often times able to ward off the negative outcomes that are commonly associated for children who reside in single headed households by seeking the help of relatives. This is particularly the case in some racial and ethnic minority groups where families usually extend beyond the nuclear form and encompass other relatives. The deep connections forged between extended family members were often times very apparent in some of the students in the study. For example, Lakisha discussed in her appeals letter the devastating effect that her cousin's sudden dead had in her school performance. She reported in her appeal letter, "I never really recovered after that."

Professors who are unaware of the strong sense of familialism engrained in some of their students may not be sensitive to the impact that the death of relatives may have on students. While professors may be willing to grant extensions due to the death of a parent, they often deny requests for extensions due to the death of relatives. Professors appeared more likely to dismiss student requests for extensions due to the deaths of grandparents or distant relatives. Instead, professors appear prone to interpreting these requests as excuse making. However, since grandparents were responsible for raising many of these students, their deaths often result in a very deep impact for the students. Additionally, many professors appear unaware of key circumstances in the lives of their students. In particular professors are often times unaware of the fact that many FGCS have children of their own. One student in particular reported, "there was a lot going on back at home with my son and trying to help take care of him while I am at school and paying for daycare". FGCS, out of fear of being deemed irresponsible by their professors feel the need to hide their status as parents. The unpredictability associated with raising a child can at times prevent them from attending class and possibly missing an important exam. For example, if a child gets sick and needs to be rushed to the doctor, the student who has not made prior arrangements can ultimately miss an important exam. It is unfortunate to see how some FGCS are often time placed in situations where they need to choose between their children or their college education. While this is not the modal category and the majority of students do not have children, this situation affects a significant number of first generation students and should not be overlooked.

We therefore see that one of the critical negative consequences of students serving as caregivers for a family member or being heavily involved in the lives of family members at home is that it forces them to be away from school. School absenteeism produces negative repercussions for the personal as well as the academic development of the students. Students typically concurred with the experience of Jesse, who stated "I began going home every weekend…I was very distracted with the home situation, and was unable to focus on my schoolwork". These students' absences from the university affect both their social and academic lives. As stated in the previous section, FGCS start college with an initial disadvantage as they lack an important access for success social capital. FGCS are unaware of the huge advantage that their peers have over them in terms of knowledge of informal college norms, behaviors, and expectations. For example, the dorm room experience often serves as the main source of socialization for university students. Aside from the social opportunities that having a close group of friends can bring about to a student, there are other positive externalities. Socialization can help students better incorporate into the university environment as well as provide them with a feeling of

belonging. Students who are more integrated into the university system and feel a sense of belonging are more likely to be aware of the resources provided by the university and in turn enhance their academic performance. Participating in a last minute baseball game organized by those hanging out in the dorm, can potentially also serve to disseminate information about an upcoming academic activity. However, if a student is constantly going home for the weekend, they are less likely to be informed of upcoming events such as professionalization workshops that can potentially enhance their intellectual development.

This lack of information or awareness about university resources can negatively influence the performance of the students. To illustrate, consider the case of Sara, who after struggling all semester with a learning disability stated, "I [finally] realize[d] that in order to be successful in college I need[ed] to take full advantage of all of the support services available". Another student reported that she did not know any better and failed to maintain clear lines of communication with her professor. After being informed that she should have done this before, she stated, " I understand now that I should have communicated with my professors (instead of avoiding them) or even taken a leave of absence".

For first generation students, this socialization and professionalization that takes place on campus is very important to their academic achievement. As discussed in the literature review section, a large portion of first generation students do not have the social capital that non-first generation students have. First generation students cannot rely on parent's advice about college life, and often unknowingly create disadvantages by excluding themselves from campus life. The general consensus of FGCSF when writing their appeal letters was that their parents didn't know anything about college so they could not advice them and consequently had to learn things for themselves. "Discussing my academic struggles with my parents was impossible to do", was a common observation made by these students.

By contrast, non-first generation students arrive to school with information that prevents them from making the kinds of mistakes that first generation students are likely to make. One student (Darline) stated, "living in an empty apartment allowed me to discover that I need personal interaction with others to thrive at this university". A non-first generation student would most likely have been advised by his parent to not live off campus since he will be more likely to know that a student's social life is shaped by their dorm interactions. Additionally, a parent who attended college would know that communal life is an intricate part of the college experience and advice against living off campus, especially before a student has established a solid network.

It was disheartening to see how in their appeal letters, first generation college students blamed themselves for essentially not knowing better. More importantly, these students appeared to blame themselves for not making good choices when it is clear that their inability to make the "right' choice is often times driven by inherent structural constraints. One student cited "lack of smart planning" as an explanation for their negative experiences.

It is not surprising that these students dealing with such serious issues can experience severe problems with depression, stress and anxiety, which within it of itself can negatively influence their achievement. Their minds are often occupied with issues that in any other family would have been beyond their scope, which may result in the onset of severe depression and/or anxiety. The experience of Fahey Cassandra reflects that of a large segment of the students, "For the past couple of years, I've been struggling with symptoms of chronic depression" was seen commonly in the appeal letters.

Another important theme mentioned in their letters was economic instability. “My financial situation at home where my parents have three other children living and are having a hard time financially supporting us all leaving me having to work every extra hour I have”. “Despite my greatest efforts to manage money and work throughout the year, I have had a difficult time keeping money available for me at school”.

In addition to the heightened stress of their family situations, many first generation students are coping with the same stressors commonly confronted by other students during this period in their lives. Some students were questioning their sexuality and having to deal with the consequences of coming out to their family, which is a common occurrence across college campuses. Elizabeth, stated, “My aunt took it upon herself to tell my mother about my sexuality. My family is devout Roman Catholics, so even conversations about homosexuality used to be taboo in our house”. This provided enormous stress and undermined her performance in her college courses. Another tragic situation that often occurs in college campuses is rape. One student in particular reported experiencing a sexually assault, and consequently was unable to perform in her school-work.

The extreme pressure they feel as first generation college students to succeed and not disappoint those rooting for them back at home is also palpable and a main theme for students. It was common to read in the appeal letters statements such as “it would mean so much to graduate with a degree from this school, making me the first person in my family to complete a college degree at all!” “I also have the added pressure of being a first generation college student.” “All eyes were and continue to be on me”. This extreme pressure to succeed often produces debilitating effects. One student stated, “I was not accustomed to being in a situation where I needed help and was reluctant to admit to myself, my family, and everyone around me that I felt myself beginning to struggle.” Instead of asking for help immediately, these students waited until the semester was well under way and they had done poorly in most all assignments.

The first generation students’ lack of preparation for university life often compounds this debilitating effect. As the semester continued and the academic demands increased some students concurred with Jenny, “I came to the university with mind-set that no matter how hard this work would be, I would excel because that’s what got me into the university”, but eventually they felt that they just did not have the skills. Lance stated, “coming from such a small, very rural high school…I began to realize that I was not prepared to be in an institution as overwhelming in academics as this one”. Their lack of high school preparation, as well as their lack of understanding of the university system, also contributes to their academic struggles. It was common to hear students having trouble choosing majors and having difficulty selecting classes. These students would often register for classes that they believed were necessary, but were often uninteresting to them personally. Consequently, the students tended to underperform in these classes due to the lack of personal investment in the topic. The students also expressed that they were unaware that they could withdraw from these classes, and consequently received lower grades. This in turn led some of these students to face lower GPAs, registration holds, and less ability to enter into classes that were interesting. These students then needed to register for classes based on availability at certain times. These classes often had little to do with their major or overall interests, but they were what was available given their work schedule. Sadly, this problem perpetuates the cycle and the underlying problem.

| Analysis of academic appeal letters of FGCS | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Perceived Reason for Academic Distress* | *Challenges and Consequences* | *In Students' Own Words* |
| Lack of awareness of University resources | • Low use of support services<br>• Infrequent or no communication with faculty<br>• Lack of academic planning<br>• Unaware of important academic deadlines such as add/drop dates<br>• Low GPAs, registration holds, and late registration resulting in an inability to get into desired classes | After becoming academically ineligible, a FGCS stated, "I [finally] realize[d] that in order to be successful in college I need to take full advantage of all the support services available."<br><br>"I understand now that I should have communicated with my professors (instead of avoiding them)…" |
| Limited adult or parental guidance | • Parent's having a different concept of school involvement which prevents them from talking to and advising their children.<br>• Limited social capital<br>• Students blamed themselves for limited college knowledge<br>• Students not comfortable talking to faculty and/or staff about academic problems | "Discussing my academic struggles with my parents was impossible to do." |
| Need to be a caregiver to family member(s) | • Absenteeism due to caregiver role<br>• Increased time away from campus results in low participation in co-curricular activities<br>• Faculty unaware of caregiver role.<br>• Faculty unappreciative of caregiver role<br>• Sense of guilt for leaving or abandoning family<br>• Sense of family broader than traditional nuclear family | "…there was a lot going on back at home with my son and trying to take care of him while I am at school and paying for daycare."<br><br>"…my grandmother who I grew up with and lived with for the majority of my childhood was in the hospital. I felt guilty for leaving her and spent many of my weekends and free time back home visiting her in the hospital."<br><br>"my legal mother is my paternal grandmother" |
| Pressure related to sense of obligation to others/family | • Unwilling to ask for help<br>• Afraid of disappointing family members and home community | "All eyes were and continue to be on me." |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • Choosing majors and courses based on the expectations of other | "I was not accustomed to being in a situation where I needed help and was reluctant to admit to myself, my family, and everyone around me that I felt myself beginning to struggle." |
| Lack of academic preparation/high school rigor | • Trouble with writing assignments since they did not receive the appropriate training during high school. | "…coming from such a small, very rural high school…I began to realize that I was not prepared to be in an institution as overwhelming in academics as this one."<br><br>"...When I was in class, It felt like I was listening to a foreign language that I had never heard before...". |
| Depression/Anxiety | • Feeling overwhelmed with all of the extra responsibilities and ultimately have "breakdowns".<br>• Not feeling a sense of belonging in the university or feeling unwelcome, unappreciated and misunderstood.<br>• Unable to cope with extra pressure and suffer from anxiety and depression.<br>• | ..."My mother was hospitalized...and I can recall times after learning of her sickness whenever I tried to study, I couldn't bring myself to do it.<br><br>..."News struck that my 1st cousin had suffered an aortic rupture...This was very hard to bear and was honestly the true decline of my academic performance".<br><br>..."I tried my absolute best to keep my mind off of negative things in my life...I started drinking and smoking...That's when I finally realized that I had lost myself. I was so stressed about everything. |
| Financial Stress | • Work more hours than the average student<br>• Students pick courses around work schedule often resulting in classes that have little to do with students' majors or interests<br>• Low participation in co-curricular activities due to time spent at work | "My financial situation at home where my parents have three other children living and are having a hard time financially supporting us all leaving me having to work every extra hour I have."<br><br>"Despite my greatest efforts to manage money and work throughout the year, I have had a difficult time keeping money available for me at school." |
| Identity and Peer Relations | • Unhealthy peer-to-peer relationships<br>• Developing sense of self<br>• Coming-out/sexual identity | "My aunt took it upon herself to tell my mother about my sexuality. My family is devout Roman Catholics, so even conversations about homosexuality used to be taboo in |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | our house”.<br><br>"I was sexually assaulted and I regret that I find it hard to include details. I was informed that I had contracted a Sexually Transmitted Disease. All symptoms made it that much harder to be academically efficient, because when I did attend class, I couldn't efficiently perform, neither mentally, nor physically."<br><br>“Living in an empty apartment allowed me to discover that I need personal interaction with others to thrive at this university”. |

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FGCS COMMITTEE

**1) Hire a full-time coordinator for first generation college student (FGCS) retention initiatives.**

- Coordinate programming on campus targeting FGCS.
- Continue collaboration with campus units and external organizations that work with a significant number of FGCS along the education pipeline.
- Support and advise the Carolina Firsts student organization.
- Contribute to ongoing assessment regarding the academic experiences of FGCS at Carolina as well as assessment of Carolina Firsts academic success programs.

**2) Share and celebrate more stories of FGCS success in the form of videos and talks.**

- Showcase how FGCS benefit from on-campus resources and connecting with faculty.
- Showcase FGCS experiences with high-impact academic programs and opportunities.

**3) Increase opportunities for FGCS to build meaningful connections with faculty and staff early in their undergraduate career.**

- Expand the scope and capacity of the Carolina Firsts Advocate initiative to include specific opportunities for mentoring and/or learning opportunities between students, faculty and staff.
- Provide incentive and support for faculty and staff mentoring for FGCS on academic activities, especially in the first and second year.

**4) Centralize information and enhance communication about resources for college success.**

- Bolster programs and opportunities that promote resources and services for student success, such as Navigating the Research University (EDUC 130) and the Junior Transfer Seminar (IDST 130). Encourage enrollment and participation of FGCS.
- Continue building (and sharing) a hub of information about FGCS success within Undergraduate Retention.

**5) Enhance inclusivity and partnerships with FGCS families.**

- Continue working with students and staff across the university to be liaisons and translators to non-native English speaking families.
- Continue to develop strategies to intentionally include FGCS families as part of Carolina traditions and cultural opportunities, including mitigating financial and cultural barriers.
- Showcase stories of FGCS families' transition to college life with their student and strategies for helping their student succeed.

## VII. FGCS GRADUATION RATES AND GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

| Graduation Rate | Non-FGCS | FGCS | Goal for FGCS |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 years | 83.3% | 72.1% | 75% |
| 5 years | 90.2% | 82.1% | 85% |
| 6 years | 91.5% | 83.1% | 87% |

## VIII. CAROLINA FIRSTS COORDINATOR

*Draft Position Description*

Nearly 20% of undergraduates at UNC-Chapel Hill are first generation college students (FGCS). We proudly call our first generation college students "Carolina Firsts." FGCS contribute to the great diversity, cultural, and intellectual life of the University's vibrant undergraduate community. Nonetheless, the challenges for FGCS on the path to graduation are impressive. FGCS are less likely than their peers who are not FGCS to graduate from Carolina.

Undergraduate Retention seeks a coordinator who will support the office's efforts to promote the academic success of Carolina Firsts. The Carolina Firsts Coordinator will serve as a primary contact for FGCS at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and will provide support to encourage the persistence and graduation of FGCS students. The Carolina Firsts Coordinator will serve as an advocate for all FGCS, coordinate initiatives across campus designed to encourage FGCS success, assess and evaluate the effectiveness of FGCS initiatives, and make recommendations to improve FGCS student success.

**Principal Functions**

<u>30% Outreach and Programming</u>

- Coordinate college programs and supports for FGCS, including but not limited to: Summer Orientation outreach, Week of Welcome reception, Homecoming reception, Carolina Firsts Graduation Recognition & Pinning Ceremony
- Maintain firstgeneration.unc.edu - the website promoting FGCS student stories, programs, resources and literature at Carolina
- Edit and distribute the Carolina Firsts NewStories – a blog for FGCS at Carolina dedicated to promoting resources and opportunities for success
- Participate in recruitment and admissions events for Carolina Firsts
- Support and advise the Carolina Firsts student organization

<u>30% Advising and Academic Interventions</u>

- Work with new FGCS students who are struggling with their transition to the University;
- Advise FGCS who receive academic progress reports
- Connect FGCS to University resources and the campus community.
- Participate in the academic appeals process
- Offer individual student success consultations for FGCS

<u>30% Coordinate and Participate in FGCS Retention Efforts.</u>

- Chair the FGCS University-wide Committee
- Collaborate with partners across campus and external organizations to develop and maintain programming and initiatives to encourage FGCS student success along the education pipeline
- Serve on committees and attend meetings addressing the FGCS experience
- Coordinate programming and training for Carolina Firsts Advocates - a group of on-campus professionals dedicated to appreciating the experiences of first-generation college students and to supporting their path to graduation

<u>5% Benchmarking, Assessment, and Supervision</u>

- Contribute to ongoing assessment regarding the academic experiences of FGCS at Carolina, as well as assessment of Carolina Firsts academic success programs
- Update (online) bibliography of literature regarding FGCS
- Participate in office assessment efforts to enhance services for FGCS
- Supervise Student Interns for Carolina Firsts
- Manage student intern contributions to ad hoc administrative and FGCS event related tasks

5% Other Duties
As assigned by the Director for Retention and the Senior Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education

**SUPERVISION RECEIVED:** The Carolina Firsts Coordinator reports to the Director for Retention in the Office of Undergraduate Education.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** Master's degree required with three to five years of academic advising or related experience at a research-based institution of higher education or equivalent experience. Experience and knowledge preferred in the following areas:

1. Best practices in undergraduate student retention and FGCS experiences
2. Academic interventions and undergraduate academic advising
3. Working collaboratively with staff and colleagues
4. Building campus-wide partnerships that strategically and effectively serve undergraduate students
5. Coordinating student success programs and events
6. Using a student-centered approach to working in a university environment
7. Strong oral and written communication skills

## IX. REFERENCES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## X. MODEL FOR FGCS PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

Demetriou, C. & Mann, A. (2011). Encouraging first generation college student success. *Academic Advising Today, 34(2).*

| **Step** | **Process** | **Sample Activities** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Prior to Enrollment* | *For Enrolled FGCS* |
| Define | FGCS are defined in different ways by different individuals and in different contexts; Before creating programs and supports, colleges and universities should write and share clear definition of who a FGCS is at their institution | Share definition among students, faculty, and staff; Develop and brand a pseudonym that is a point of pride for the institution (i.e., "Carolina Firsts") | Share definition through orientation programs, welcome events, first-year seminars, and academic advising |
| Model | Identify FGCS who have mastered the college student role as well as faculty and staff who were FGCS | Include FGCS in recruitment events and communications; Share stories of successful FGCS who have succeeded at the institution with prospective students and families; Connect prospective students and families to families of current FGCS | Develop leadership opportunities (e.g. teaching assistants, residential advisors, student government positions) for FGCS who have mastered the college student role |
| Connect | Connect with prospective students prior to application; Once students are on campus, connect FGCS to other FGCS as well as to faculty and staff who were FGCS | Middle and high schools outreach; Encourage early familial involvement in the college selection process; Recommend rigorous high school curriculum including advanced math courses; Provide opportunities for FGCS and families to visit | Peer and faculty mentoring programs; Develop a student organization for all FGCS on campus; Develop a parent/family organization for FGCS families; Connect students to enriching academic opportunities (e.g., study abroad, |

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|---|---|---|---|
| | | campus | undergraduate research, service learning) |
| Support | Ensure students are aware of and utilize academic, social, and financial resources | Inclusive, direct guidance to prospective students and families on admissions and student aid application processes; Provide financial support in the form of grants; Provide guidance counselors college information and resources | Encourage help seeking behavior and frequent use of campus resources (e.g. Learning Center, Writing Center, Health Services); Model student use of resources; Academic advising workshops on "college knowledge" |
| Celebrate | Meaningfully celebrate the successes of FGCS in the community | Through admissions materials and connections with prospective students, acknowledge the work, dedication, and commitment exhibited by students, families, schools, and community organizations as they prepare to apply to college; Offer merit-based student-aid awards for FGCS; Acknowledge high schools and communities that increase the number of qualified college applicants from their area | Incorporate FGCS perspectives and accomplishments into college or university traditions and celebrations (e.g. convocation; commencement, symposiums on undergraduate research; homecoming; Greek life; alumni programming) |