

First-Gen, Future-Ready: Bold, Just & Transformative Actions for Equitable Success

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Starting Point: Charting the Course

Definitions are vital starting points for the imagination. What we cannot imagine cannot come into being. A good definition marks our starting point and let us know where we want to end up.

As we move toward our desired destination we chart the journey, creating a map.

We need a map to guide us on our journey to love—starting with the place where we know what we mean when we speak of love.

- bell hooks (All About Love)



Definitions

Equitable/Equity-Minded: Perspective or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes. These are people who are willing to take personal and institutional responsibility for the success of their students and critically reassess their own practices. (USC, Center for Urban Ed).

Future-Thinking: engaging people in thinking deeply about complex issues, imagining new possibilities, connecting signals to larger patterns, connecting the past with the present, and the future. (Gorbis, 2019).

Definitions

Transformative Student Success: Shifts lens towards assets that are often hidden or taken for granted. Places necessity of change on the institution to harness students' assets and create an environment that fosters reproducible success. (Morrison, p.191. 2017)



**Collect, Collect
and then Select**

Lift as You Climb

**To Whom Much is
Given Much Is
Expected**

**Charting our paths, grounded by our roots,
to help us determine what forks in the road
to take.**

Kasabihan

Dichos

Sayings

Reflecting on Ways of Knowing

What is one saying that you remember that has stuck with you to this day?

Reflect and Share

1. Name

2. Share the Saying

3. What's the root of the saying? (who, when, where)

4. How has it helped you on your path today?

Why this matters



Lived experiences and knowledge of first-generation, college students are often overlooked, misunderstood, or exceptionalized.

Increasing research highlights cultural mismatch between higher education institutions and the interdependence norms common in diverse student populations.

There's a window of opportunity to center equity, post-secondary value, and futures thinking to lead to more effective solutions to support expansive and transformative student success.

Equity of Higher Education Opportunities Report

If the ladder of educational opportunity rises high at the doors of some youth and scarcely rises at the doors of others, while at the same time formal education is made a prerequisite to occupational and social advance, then education may become the means, not of eliminating race and class distinctions, but of deepening and solidifying them.

**President Truman, 1947
Commission on Higher Education**



Tracing First-Generation History

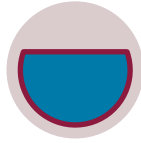


Higher Education Act of 1965

Reauthorizations over the years led to the creation of the Pell Grant, TRIO and other educational opportunity programs.

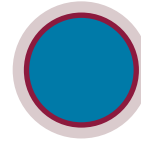
#trioworks

TRiO



H.R. 5192: Education Amendments of 1980

First-Generation introduced as part of the legislative lexicon to identify underserved students without referring to race or ethnicity.



Present Day

First-generation student support is more commonplace and institutionally funded, yet complexity of definition continues.

Historical Underpinnings of Equitable Student Success

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CENTER FOR
FIRST-GENERATION
STUDENT SUCCESS
AN AFFILIATE OF NASPA AND THE SUCCESS FOUNDATION

NASPA
Student Affairs Administrators
in Higher Education

INTERVIEW



How TRIO Sparked the Fire That Fuels the First-Generation Movement: An Interview With Arnold Mitchem and Maureen Hoyler



Dr. Arnold Mitchem speaks to students in the Education Opportunity Program in 1984. Photo courtesy of Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Raynor Memorial Libraries, Marquette University.

*TRIO Innovations
(Future Ready for that Time)*

Intrusive Advising

Strengths-Based Language

*Culturally Deprived /Culturally Disadvantaged
/Rurally Isolated*

Culturally Relevant and Identity Conscious Work

First-Gen Students: Common Literature

Academic Preparation and Expectations

First-Gen students less likely to be academically prepared and less likely to expect to go to college than continuing generation students.
- Choy, 2001

Transition Experiences

First-gen students experience challenging transitions to college, and are 4x more likely to leave in their first year than continuing generation students.
- Engle & Tinto, 2008

Persistence

Factors that help with first-gen persistence are improving preparation, increasing aid, early intervention programs & campus engagement.
- Engle & Tinto, 2008

First-Gen Students: Emerging Literature

Celebrating strengths

First-generation students report as much sources of strength than continuing generation students, particularly referring to family, aspirations, and navigational capital (Kouyumdjian et. al, 2017).

Familial Guilt

Family achievement guilt is the guilt students may feel for having more educational opportunities and college success than their family members

(Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015).

Impostor Syndrome

Constant feeling of alienation on campus, and perception of not being good enough or admitted to school by chance.

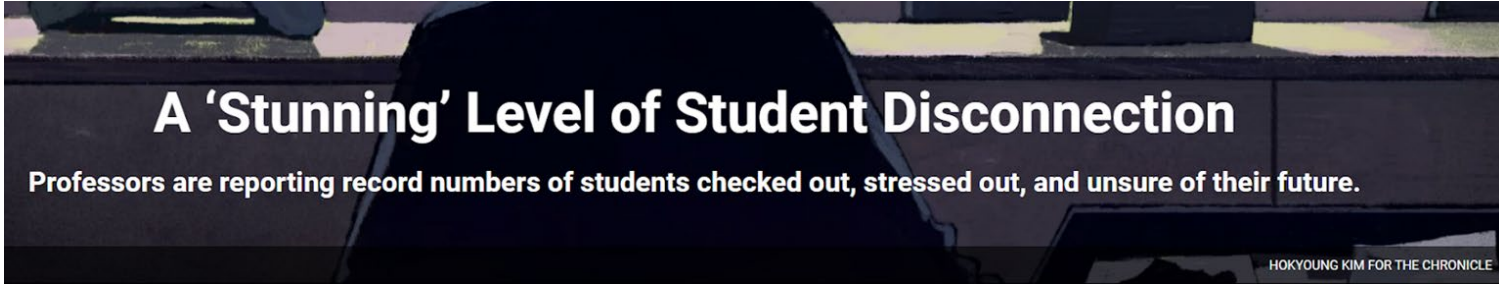
(Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Jensen, 2004; Megivern, 2003)

Our Current Reality: Equity of Higher Education Opportunities Report

	USA	New Jersey
Percentage of 18-24 year olds enrolled in post-secondary education (2017)	43%	46%
Percent of population 25 and older with a bachelor's degree or higher (2016)	32%	39%
College participation rates by low-income families (2016)	34%	56%
College participation rates by ethnicity (Hispanic/Latinx, 2017)	36%	40%
College participation rates by ethnicity (Black/African American, 2017)	36%	35%
College participation rates by ethnicity (White, 2017)	45%	48%

Source: 2019 Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States

Our Current Reality: Is college worth it?

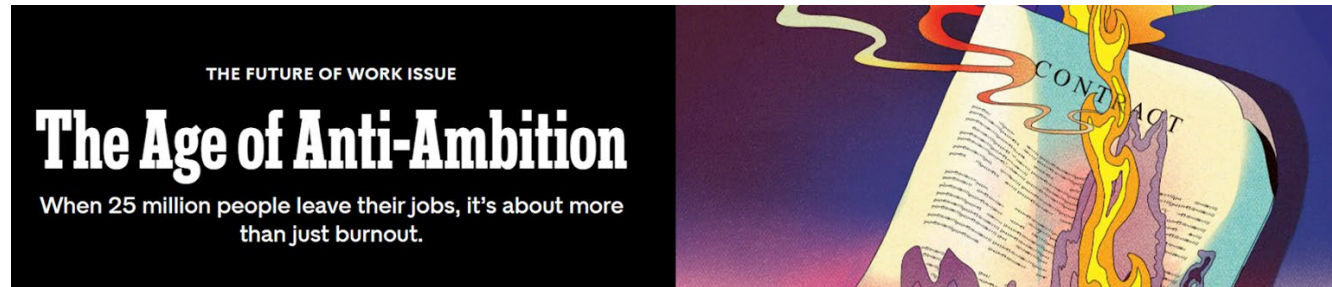


Tide of Exits Without Degrees Still Rising

The number of students who left college before earning a credential continued to rise during the last two years.



The Demographic Cliff: Surviving Enrollment Challenges



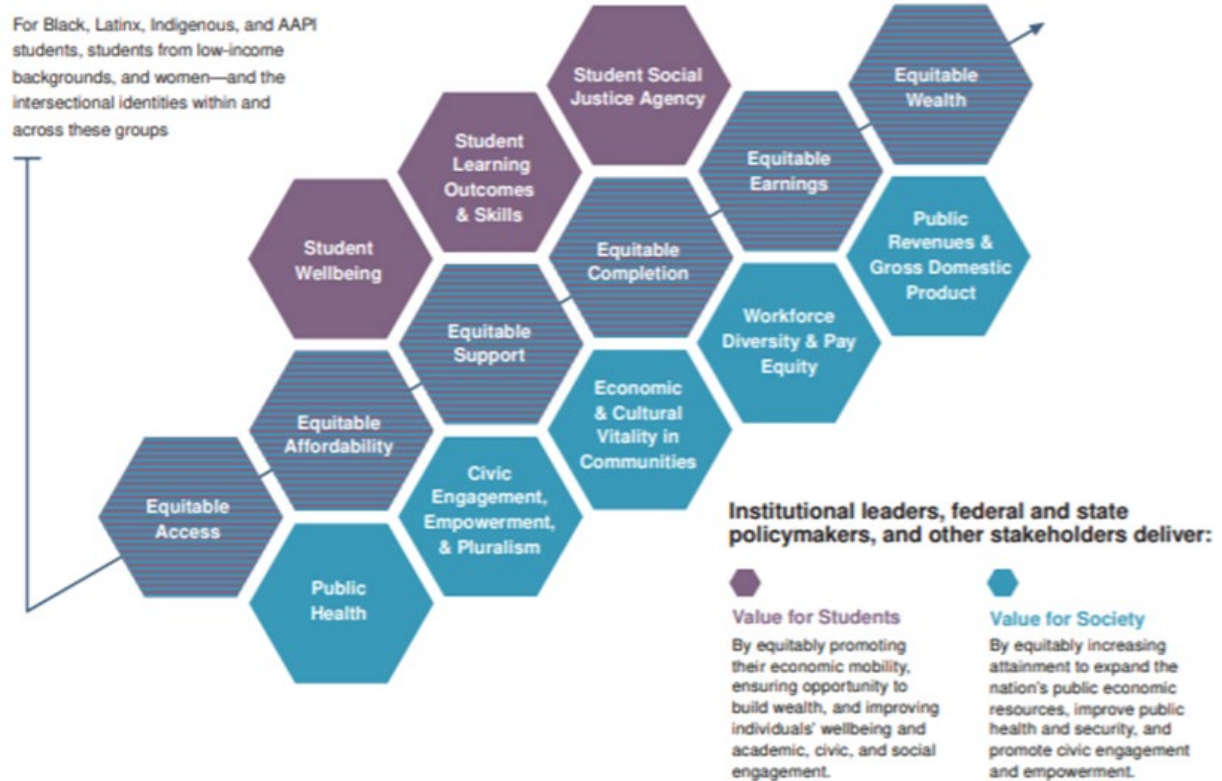
Beyond Access and Completion: Post-Secondary Value

Students experience postsecondary value when provided equitable access and support to complete quality, affordable credentials that offer economic mobility and prepare them to advance racial and economic justice in our society.

Figure 2. The Postsecondary Value Framework

Pipeline to Equitable Value

For Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and AAPI students, students from low-income backgrounds, and women—and the intersectional identities within and across these groups



**What does the future hold?
Let's get ready for it.**

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.
Eleanor Roosevelt

Think, Pair, Share

Colleague Discussion: Future Thinking, Future Ready

What trends do you see?

What's causing changes in higher education?

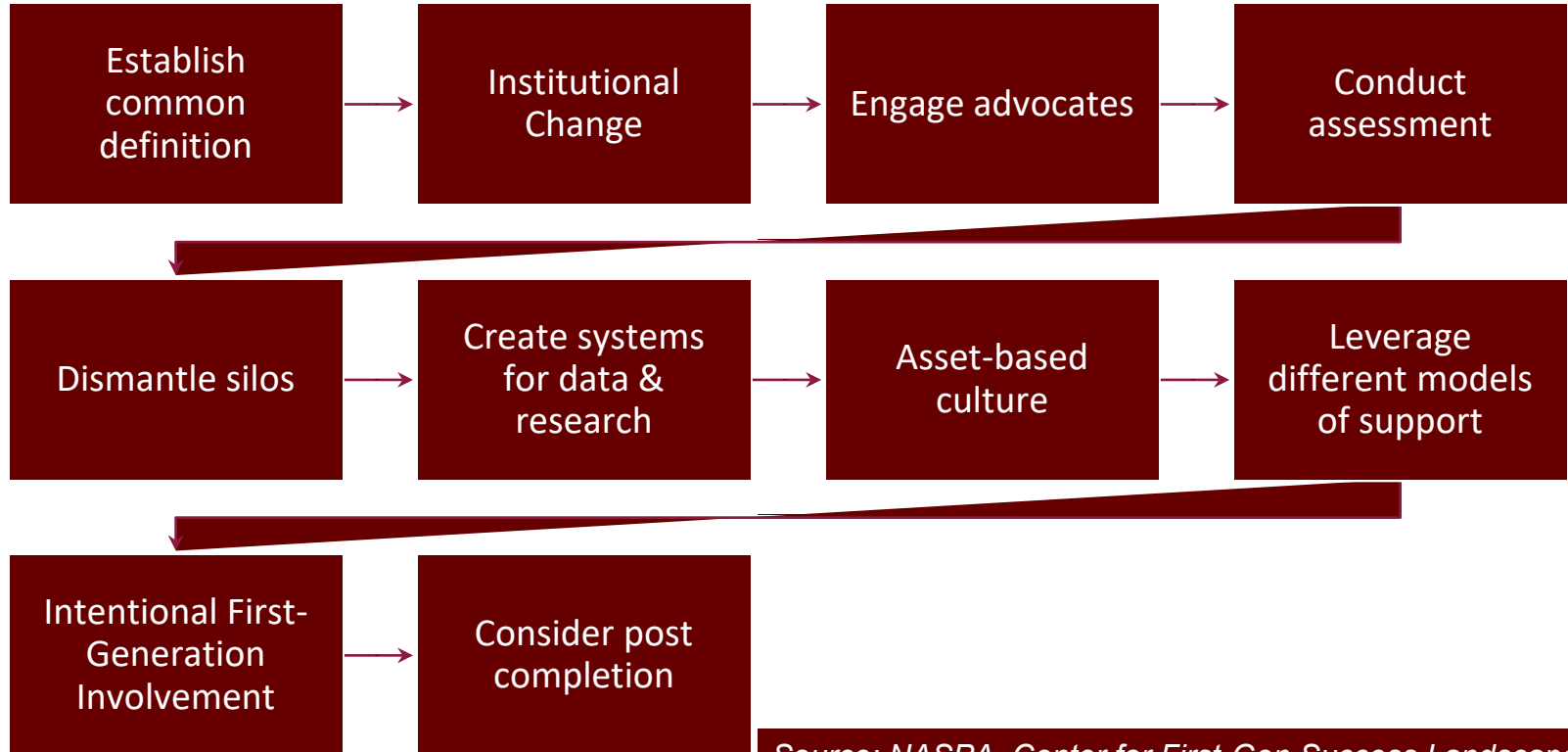
- We will split up into new pairs.
- Introduce yourselves!
- In your pairs, please use a phone and google “The Future of Higher Education”
- Choose a link, read it and discuss it with your partner.
- How could the future of higher education impact first-gen students at Rowan University?

What is possible for Rowan?

What should student success at Rowan look like in the future?

Recap:
**Possible Futures for a
Transformative, First-Gen and
Future Ready Campus**

Transformative Practices: What works for First-Gen Students?



Source: NASPA, Center for First-Gen Success Landscape Analysis Report

Practice 1:

Promoting an institutional interdependent learning culture.

Practice 2:

Providing explicit support for achieving academic learning.

Practice 3:

Creating learning experiences that center communal goals.

(Castillo-Montoya & Ives, 2021)

What does the literature tell us?

How we communicate matters



University Administrators-
Independent Values



Working Class & First-Gen Students-
Interdependent Values

Research Article:

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

(Stephens, et.al, 2012)

**What they Did:
Welcome Letter with Independent
Values vs Welcome Letter with
Interdependent Values**

**Which resonated with first-gen
students?**



What do interdependent learning opportunities look like?

- Offering cooperative independent studies so students can work collaboratively with faculty or peers.
- Incorporating knowledge students have from their lived experiences as valuable knowledge in their learning, which entails expanding what counts as knowledge.

What does offering explicit support for academic learning look like?



- Developing learning strategies and academic confidence through creating multiple opportunities beyond standardized measurements for students to display knowledge and skills.
- Scholars recommend instructors communicate clear expectations that are co-established with students.
- Reframing the way we think about students preparedness and engagement- i.e. first-generation students think they have to work harder on their own and often do not seek help until it is too late to improve their grade.

What do learning experiences which center communal goals look like?

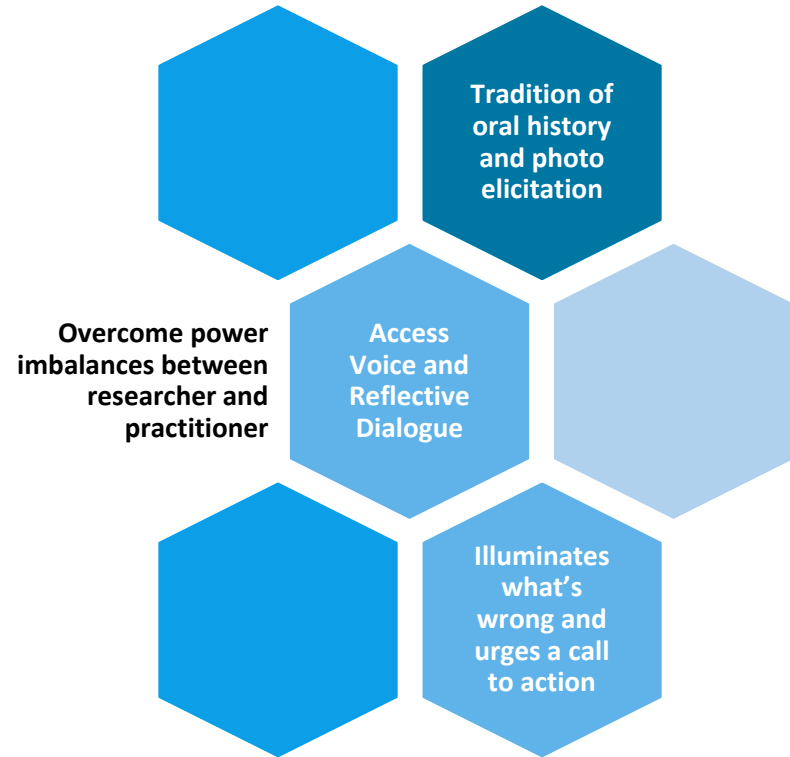


- Creating a sense of community and care in the classroom can increase first-generation college students sense of belonging and persistence.
- Peer interaction is crucial in helping first-generation college students build relationships.
- First-generation students are often motivated by pro-social learning- being able to give back to their communities.



**The First-Gen Distinction:
Centering Student Lived Experiences**

Photo-Testimonios



(Romasanta & Liou, 2018)

Dominant Narrative

Resilience

(Werner, 1993; Morales 2008).

Protective Factors

(Kitano and Lewis, 2005)

Risk Factors

(Morales & Trotman, 2004).

Resilient Resistance

(Yosso, 2000).

Community Cultural Wealth

(Yosso, 2005).

Hidden Curricula

(Jackson, 1968; Margolis 2001).

Counter narrative

Resilient Resistance: Surviving/Succeeding through the educational pipeline as a strategic response (Yosso, 2000).

Challenging the Dominant Narrative

Familial & Social Capital



This is a blanket I have on my bed. It reminds me of my family and reminds me that I'm never alone for when I'm feeling helpless.
– Anna (Industrial Eng., Soph)



Hummingbirds represent my family in Mexico, my heritage, and my drive to have a better life than they did, and to give them a better life as well. This keeps me going!
– Diana (Justice Studies, Junior)

(Romasanta, 2016)

Gratitude for College Opportunity



"While this is a blessing it helps me to remember how privileged I am and how I cannot give up on my dreams... dreams that I never thought would come true"

– Bella (Women & Gender Studies, Senior)



"I am motivated by knowing I was lucky enough to make it to 'El Norte,' and to made it back home to 'Merica'"

– Flora (Microbiology, Junior)

(Romasanta, 2016)

Work Ethic and Sacrifice



When it gets tough, I think about my parents, especially my dad. My dad has worked so hard throughout his life since he was four being a slave to the ranch life, to now, he busts his back working outside in the blazing Arizona sun. I've never heard my dad complain. I know that what I am going through would never compare to what my dad has been through.

- Flora, (Microbiology, Junior)

(Romasanta, 2016)

Pay it Forward



If we can support each other among the Latinas or among the other minorities and show each other that,

"No. All these other people did it. We're doing this, you guys can do it too."

On a micro level, it's going to start by helping ourselves and our community which will eventually become something bigger at a macro level. Not just helping our university, but it'll expand to different states and different universities and countries. That's why I think it starts with us.

- Serena (Sociology, Senior)

(Romasanta, 2016)

Consider

Consider the pivotal role you play in being relevant and responsive to equity-minded, future-ready, equitable student success support.



Centralize

Centralize student voices & visions in student success design.



Create

Create space for feedback, support, and connections.



QUESTIONS

ANSWERS

WITH *G*RATITUDE

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Resources

Milagros Castillo-Montoya & Jillian Ives (2021) Transformative Practices to Support First-Generation College Students as Academic Learners: Findings From a Systematic Literature Review, *Journal of First-generation Student Success*, 1:1, 20-31, DOI: [10.1080/26906015.2021.1890948](https://doi.org/10.1080/26906015.2021.1890948)

Stephens, N. M., Fryberg, S. A., Markus, H. R., Johnson, C. S., & Covarrubias, R. (2012). Unseen disadvantage: How American universities' focus on independence undermines the academic performance of first-generation college students. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(6), 1178–1197. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027143>

Tara J. Yosso * (2005) Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8:1, 69-91, DOI: [10.1080/1361332052000341006](https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006)

Center for First-Generation Student Success: <https://firstgen.naspa.org/journal-and-research>

Post-Secondary Value Commission: <https://postsecondaryvalue.org/>