

What is a First-Generation College Student?

by Maria Andreina Fernandez

Being a first-generation college student means that you are the first person in your immediate family to attend college—ie: neither of your parents have a college degree. If your dad went to college and got an associate degree, you are not considered to be a first-generation college student, because your dad attended college before you. If both, your mom and dad, graduated high school and didn't keep pursuing an education after, then you can call yourself a "first-generation college student."

Being a first-generation college student represents progress for a family. Most people who decide not to go to college do so because they don't think they can afford it. Food, living expenses, textbooks, and tuition all represent a big amount of money. And is completely understandable that some families would be intimidated by the price tag. (Although it's important to remember that the "sticker price" aka the published price of tuition, is not necessarily what students will actually have to pay. The "net price" is what students and family will actually pay, after scholarships and financial aid are taken into consideration).

Being able to send a child to college represents hope for the family, as well as a guide for family members in younger generations. The younger ones will look up to that family member who did go to college and will want to follow their steps. Is a non-stop chain that sets a standard, one that shows going to college is a very good decision. Young siblings or cousins will want to do it too, and will fight harder to get there. They will be able to find alternatives to get to pay for it, such as start working a little earlier or getting good grades in school to be able to apply for scholarships later on.

The YouTube channel "[I'm First](#)" was created with the goal of inspiring those students who are first-generation to keep going and attend college. Sometimes first-generation students quit before completing their degree, partially because they don't have an example to show them how to deal with the stress or expectations. Students from all over the world send videos to this channel explaining what they went through and give advice to those who are in a similar position. Even Michelle Obama posted one!

A study at [Georgetown University](#) found these interesting statistics about first-generation college students:

- 32% of all undergraduate students are first-generation
- 1/3 of first-generation students are 30 years of age or older
- First-generation students tend to be enrolled part-time, more so than regular students (Which generally means first-generation students take more than 4 years to graduate)
- 2/3 of first-generation students attend a community college or for-profit institution

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