Engaging Your First-Generation Students From Orientation to Graduation
Introductions

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Agenda

• Programming Best Practices
  – On-boarding/Orientation
  – Ongoing Support
  – Graduation
• Support During COVID-19
• Q&A
PROGRAMMING
BEST PRACTICES
Onboarding and Orientation

• Collaborate with Admissions colleagues
• Scrutinize new student website and other materials
• Develop and share “law school lingo” document
• Consider separate pre-orientation/orientation programs
Ongoing Support

• Cultivate a sense of belonging

• Help students acclimate to law school:
  – Time constraints
  – Financial management
  – Bar preparation
  – Summer clerkships

• Establish peer and alumni mentoring opportunities

• Schedule family and friends events
Intersectionality of First-Gen Students

![Bar graph showing the percentage of women and men in different racial groups.]

- **Asian American**: 28% Women, 26% Men
- **Black**: 38% Women, 37% Men
- **Latinx**: 60% Women, 50% Men
- **White**: 25% Women, 22% Men
Working with Faculty: “Look for the Helpers”

- Identify, highlight and strengthen relationships with faculty allies and leaders
  - First Generation Professors
  - DEI Faculty Experts
  - First-Year Faculty

“"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'”

-MISTER ROGERS
Mental Health and Wellness

Suffering in Silence: The Survey of Law Student Well-Being and the Reluctance of Law Students to Seek Help for Substance Use and Mental Health Concerns


“Although many students will only rarely see the dean of students, every student interacts with faculty. Students look up to faculty and meet with them regularly for academic and career development support. Faculty, if properly educated and willing to play this role, can spot potential issues before they become a crisis.”
Mental Health and Wellness

- Prioritize first generation students’ mental health and wellness throughout their law school career.
- Develop and/or strengthen partnerships with mental health providers in order to expand campus access and resources.

**MA Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers and New England Law | Boston**

- Create and strengthen peer-support communities and meet regularly with first-generation students.
Working with Staff

• Identify systemic and institutional needs/opportunities
• Build dynamic partnerships beyond the Dean of Students Office
  – Admissions
  – Alumni Relations
  – Communications/Marketing

https://www.nesl.edu/blog/detail/how-a-first-gen-program-will-shape-your-law-school-career
Starting a Program on Your Campus

Take that first step!

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Starting a Program on Your Campus

• Work with students to define “first gen” and embrace intersectionality

• Allow for independence and safe spaces, while also understanding what students won’t always know

• Offer first-gen contacts (faculty and staff)

• Check in during pivotal law school moments

• Find special ways to honor graduation
Graduation and Bar Admission

- Start sharing bar admission details early including application process, timeline, steps, and post-grad financial planning
- Schedule special informal event for first-gen graduates
- Identify alumni mentors to check in with graduates during bar study
SUPPORT DURING COVID-19
Support During COVID-19

• Cultivating a sense of belonging is essential
  – Zoom Fatigue
  – Repository of Resources
  – Individual Check-ins
• Caregiving responsibilities
Q&A