



UVU

***The First-Generation
Student Success Center***

Case for Support

uvu.edu/evergreen





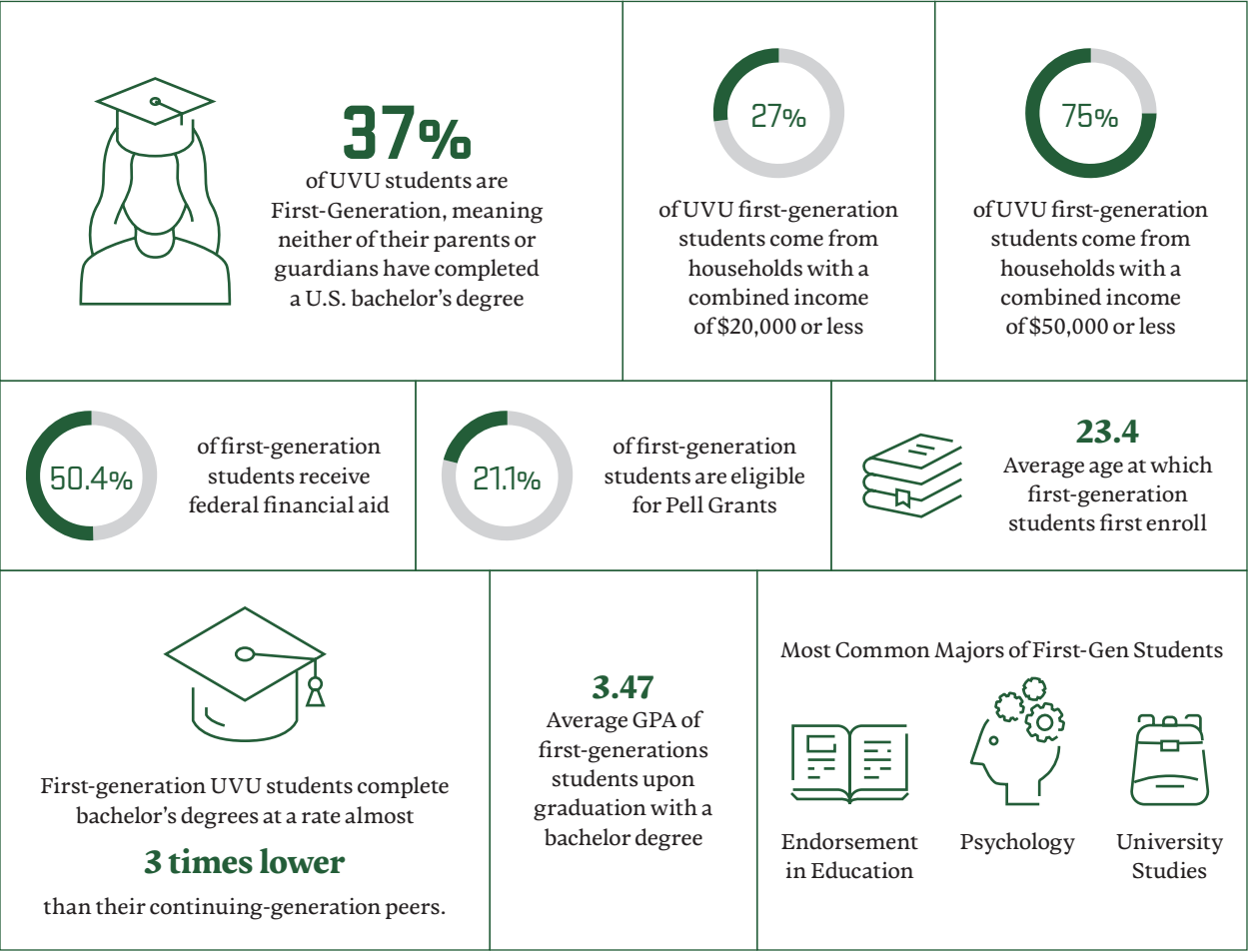
*Ever***TRAILBLAZING.**
*Ever***ACHIEVING.**
*Ever***FIRST.**

The First-Generation Student Success Center is a community of students, staff, faculty, and other key stakeholders that seeks to provide first-generation students with the evidence-based support they need to thrive in their university experience. The center is focused on providing opportunities for leadership development, peer and faculty mentoring, scholarships, access to resources, events, and more. At the First-Generation Student Success Center, first-generation students are empowered to pursue and complete postsecondary degrees, enabling them to achieve their dreams and inspire future generations.



THE FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER

At-a-glance



Source: UVU Institutional Research, UVU 2518 Initiative

Utah Valley University (UVU) began first-generation student programming in 2016, and the First-Generation Student Success Center was founded in June 2020. Also in 2020, UVU was recognized as a First-Generation Forward Advisory Institution. This designation recognizes institutions of higher education that have demonstrated leadership in their commitment to improving the experiences and educational outcomes of first-generation college students.

Because of UVU's open admissions policy and unique dual-mission approach to higher education, many students who attend are the first members of their families to pursue higher education. First-generation students account for more than 1/3 of all students at UVU during any given term. Because of this high percentage, UVU is dedicated to providing the resources and knowledge these students need to successfully navigate and excel in their pursuit of higher education.

Financial difficulties are the top reason first-generation students fail to complete their degrees. Support for this initiative directly helps students complete their degrees through scholarships and program support. The First-Generation Student Success Center accomplishes its mission to support first-generation students by connecting them to campus resources, increasing access to financial aid, and providing opportunities for retention-focused student employment.



The First-Generation Student Success Center Goals

1

Name New First-Generation Student Success Center

2

Increase Student Scholarship Funding

3

Support Student Programming



How you can
MAKE AN IMPACT



Goal 1: Name New First-Generation Student Success Center

Completing a college degree program can be difficult, especially if a student is trying to do it alone. The First-Generation Student Success Center connects first-generation students with a community of like-minded friends, mentors, and crucial resources to help students graduate.

The center opened in June 2020, and it has since been the hub for all first-generation programming and supports the I Am First initiative.

I Am First is a community of students, staff, faculty, and other key stakeholders that seeks to provide first-generation students with the crucial support they need to thrive in their university experience. By engaging with students through evidence-based opportunities for community, mentorship, and scholarship, I Am First builds a foundation upon which first-generation students can build success in college and beyond.

By donating and attaching your name to the First-Generation Student Success Center, you'll not only be increasing the programming and support that UVU is able to provide to first-generation students, but you'll also have the opportunity to leave a legacy that will continue for generations.





Investment:

\$4 million



Finding My Path at UVU



From a young age, my parents always instilled in me and my siblings the importance of education. My dad is a fourth-generation concrete contractor, and he and my mom run our family business. Neither one of them were able to attend college, and they made it very clear that college is something we should strive for. I worked hard in high school to get good grades, and I was fortunate enough to receive a full academic scholarship to UVU. I was also offered the Wolverine Ambassador housing scholarship, and I was able to give campus tours to prospective students.

I remember the very first day that I walked on campus I knew that I didn't just have my family cheering me on, I had an entire university believing in me and campaigning for my success. The support system that UVU has for its students is one that I had never experienced before. I had professors, advisors, leaders, and administrators actively participating in my journey at UVU. It was so special.

The biggest struggle I had as a first-generation student, though, was feeling that I wasn't good enough to be here. How could I be successful in college when I didn't know what I was doing, what I should study, or how I was going to get to graduation? Thankfully I had wonderful mentors and friends that believed in me and saw my potential, especially when I couldn't see it myself.

The most rewarding thing about being the first in my family to attend college was knowing that I was setting an example for my siblings. When I talked to them about college, I knew that they could see themselves in my shoes. I wanted to show them that we are worthy and capable of coming to college and graduating. Now, both of my siblings are attending UVU, and I know that we are making our parents proud.

The one word I would use to describe how it felt to graduate from UVU is "gratitude." I will forever be grateful for the support that I received while trying to complete my degree. Without the scholarships I received, I wouldn't have been able to come to school. I am forever grateful to UVU for making me feel like I was invaluable, that my dreams could be achieved, and that I mattered. I felt loved, supported, and heard every single day for four years. UVU is truly a place for anyone who wants to better themselves. I love this school, my roots are forever planted here, and I am so proud to be a first-generation graduate of Utah Valley University.

Kylee Parke '19, Communication



Goal 2: Increase Student Scholarship Funding

The top reason first-generation students drop out is financial difficulties. Supporting the First-Generation Student Success Center will directly help students complete their degrees through scholarships and program support.

The center provides many essential scholarships for first-generation students, including the First-Generation Tuition Waiver and the First-Generation Completion Scholarship. Resources at the First-Generation Student Success Center also ensure students are aware of all scholarship and financial aid opportunities.

The tuition waiver specifically aims to help students stay on track to graduate. This is a renewable scholarship, so students who receive the scholarship and complete all requirements may apply again the following academic year.

The completion scholarship provides financial assistance to students with 90 or more credits. Many students need financial assistance most urgently as they approach completion of their degree. With your generous help, the First-Generation Student Success Center will be able to fund more scholarships for more students and support them to the finish line!





Investment:
\$75,000



A Gift for Generations



Holli Saperstein remembers sitting in her high school guidance counselor’s office. It was decades ago, but she can still hear the words he said: “You’re just not meant for college.” That sentence felt suffocating, like the guidance counselor had sealed her fate. She believed him, too. Nobody in her family had attended college – why would it be any different for her?

Holli dropped out of high school. For the next decade, she worked as a server and a gas station cashier. As a single mother of four children, it seemed no matter how many hours she worked, she could not make enough to provide for her children.

She preached the importance of education to her children and decided to take her own advice. “I sold my living room furniture to fund my first semester at Utah Valley State College,” she said.

Despite how hard she worked during her first semester, she worried how she would afford tuition in the spring. A staff member at the Women’s Center encouraged her to apply for a scholarship. “When I found out I had received the scholarship, I cried,” she said. “I was relieved.”

Thanks to the funding she received, Holli was able to graduate from UVSC with an associate degree with honors. She went on to earn a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Business Administration.

She can now say that she broke the cycle of poverty in her family. All her children attended college, and her oldest grandson just entered his first year of college on a full-ride scholarship. “None of my success would have been possible if it weren’t for UVU and the donors who funded my scholarship,” she said. “You changed my life and the lives of generations to come.”

Holli Saperstein '95, Associate of Science



Goal 3: Support Student Programming

First-generation students are unique because this label only applies as they enter higher education. Connecting to students in the context of other identities they hold makes a more meaningful and sustained connection, so student programs are critical to supporting identities and connecting students with their first-generation peers.

Student programming builds on students' strengths and provides a strong network of resources to help them navigate their college experiences and increase their likelihood of success.

Supporting student programs such as the First-Gen Leadership Cohort, First-Gen Week, First-Gen Summit, networking events, and mentorship opportunities, will help the center optimize support for first-generation students.





Investment:

\$250,000



I AM FIRST

By Minera Morales Reyes

First to wake up early in the morning
To have or not have breakfast before a long day of work and school
To wake up and get things done

First to feel lost
To wonder where or who I will go to for help
To see unfamiliar all over campus

First to see my bank account drain
Will I have to pick up an extra shift?
How will I pay for school?

First to stay up late
To not sleep because of an assignment that is due
To drink caffeine and energy drinks to get me up for the hour

First to experience a great amount of stress
To cry over homework
To go on drives to calm me down

First to feel pressure
I have people proud of me, what if I fail?
I'm the first, I can't let my family down

I am first

First to feel accomplished
To reach my goals and make my dreams come true
Those sleepless nights will be worth it

First to try new things
To meet new people
To take risks

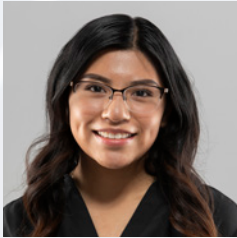
First to feel good
To know that I am trying my best
To feel good because I have family who supports me

I am first
To attend college
To know that it is okay to have setbacks

This what it is like being a first-generation student
To feel like you're drowning trying to balance work, school, and life

Though there are obstacles that come along with being first-generation
I can overcome these obstacles
Then I can proudly say
I am first.

The above poem by was published in volume four of UVU's first-generation journal PRIMIS.





*Ever*GRATEFUL.

Your generous gifts will have a direct impact on the lives of first-generation students. First-generation scholarships and programming make an unparalleled difference in the lives of these students. You can be that difference. Together, we can transform students' lives.

Thank you!

For more information, please contact:

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UVU