



First-Generation Students In The California Community College System

Being a first-generation college student - having parents with little or no college experience - is strongly associated with attendance and success in higher education (Davis, 2010; Nomi, 2005; Pascarella, et. al., 2003). First-generation students are more likely to be female (Nomi, 2005), older (Engle, et. al, 2006) and reliant on financial aid (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998) as compared to their nonfirst-generation peers. They are less academically prepared for college (U.S. Department of Education, 2008) and less likely to persist into the second year (Chen & Carroll, 2005). First-generation students complete fewer academic credits (Pascarella, et. al., 2003) and are less likely to successfully complete coursework (Davis, 2010).

There are a number of first-generation definitions in policy and research, ranging from parents with no college experience to parents without a baccalaureate degree. Most first-generation research findings are based on students from baccalaureate-granting institutions rather than community colleges. For this analysis, first-generation status is defined as a student whose parents have no college experience (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2008; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998).

This analysis examines characteristics of first-generation students in the California Community College (CCC) system. The California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) started collecting data for students’ parent education level in Summer of 2012. A student applying for college admission reports the highest level of education that their parents/guardians obtained. The options range from “Grade 9 or less” through “Graduate or professional degree beyond a BA/BS.” (More information on the Parent Education data element is available [here](#).) Since the reporting of parent educational level began recently, the data are incomplete and may not reflect the entire CCC system – these findings should be considered preliminary.

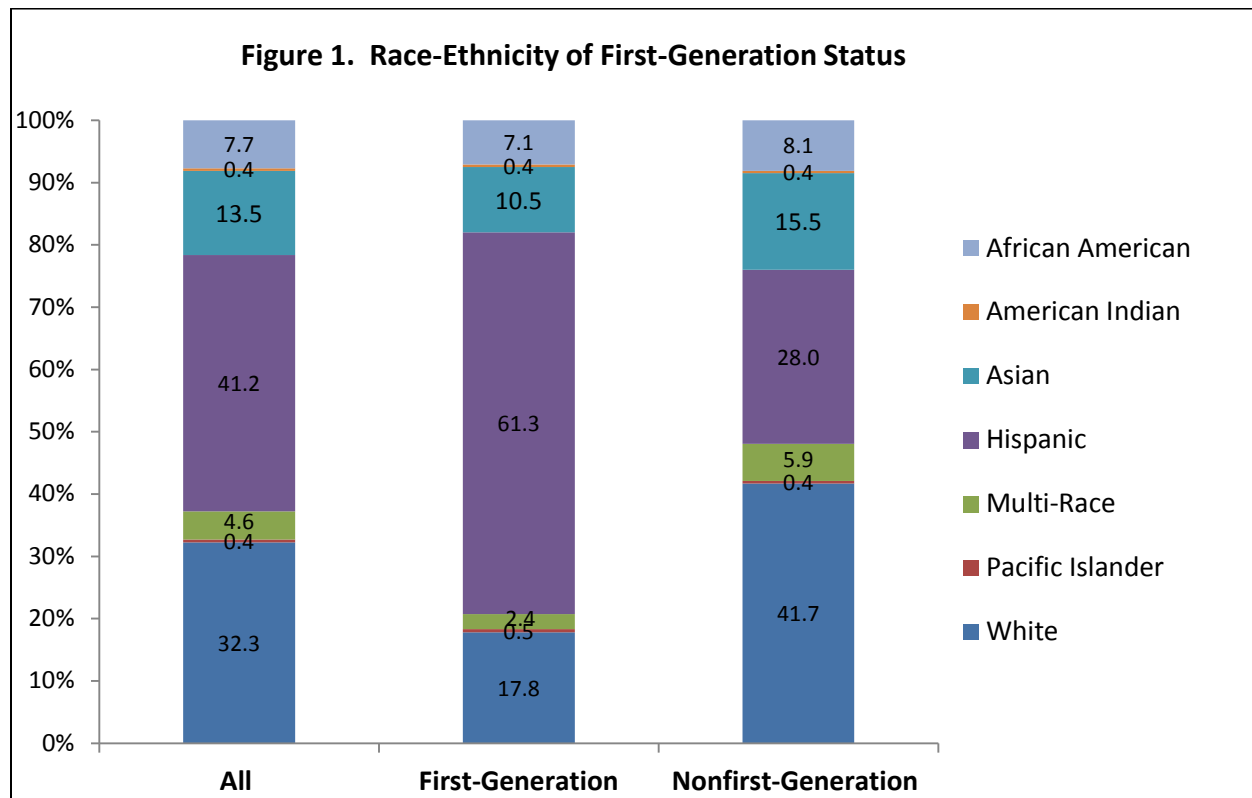
The study sample consists of all CCC students enrolled from Summer 2012 through Spring 2014 with valid information for parent education level, gender, race, and age. These criteria produced a sample of 789,708 students; 40% of these were first-generation.

Characteristics of CCC First-Generation Students. First-generation students were slightly more likely to be female than male as compared to the total student sample (Table One). On average, there was little difference in age between first-generation students and nonfirst-generation students (26.7 and 25.9 years, respectively).

Table 1. Gender of First-Generation Status

Gender	First-Generation Status		Total
	First-Generation	Nonfirst-Generation	
Female	56%	52%	54%
Male	44%	48%	46%

There were notable differences in race-ethnicity associated with first-generation status (Figure One). Students self-identifying as Hispanic made up a much higher percentage of the first-generation students as compared to nonfirst-generation students. Asian, Multi-Race and White students had higher percentages in the nonfirst-generation group than in the first-generation group.



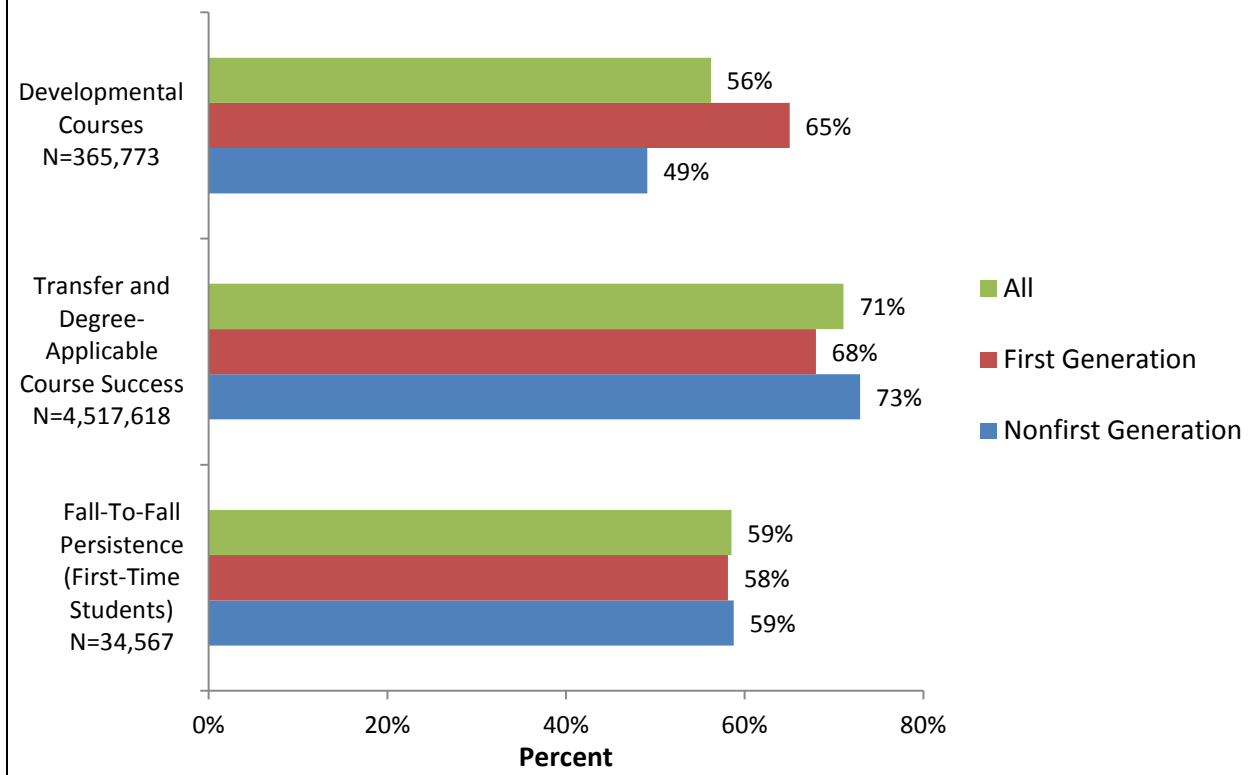
First-generation students were more likely to be recipients of a Pell Grant, a financial aid option based on economic need (Table Two).

Table 2. Pell Grant Award of First-Generation Status

Pell Grant	First-Generation Status		Total
	First-Generation	Nonfirst-Generation	
No	79%	88%	84%
Yes	21%	12%	16%

Course Placement, Success and Persistence of CCC First-Generation Students. First-generation status was associated with course placement and educational outcomes (Figure Two). First-generation students were more likely to enroll in a developmental course. They were slightly less likely to complete courses successfully. A group of first-time, first-generation students persisted from the Fall 2012 term to the Fall 2013 term at the same rate as nonfirst-generation students.

**Figure 2. Course Placement, Success and Persistence By First Generation Status
Summer 2012 Through Spring 2014**



In summary, first-generation students in the CCC system were slightly more likely to be female and of similar average age in comparison to nonfirst-generation students. First-generation students were far more likely to be Hispanic; Asian, Multi-Race and White students had higher proportions in the nonfirst-generation group. First-generation students were more likely to receive financial aid. They were more likely to enroll in developmental courses and slightly less likely to successfully complete courses than nonfirst-generation peers. Finally, first-time, first-generation students were as likely to persist from fall-to-fall as nonfirst-generation students.

The educational outcomes available for this analysis were limited due to the relatively short time period since parent education level reporting was instituted. Future analyses will also examine outcomes requiring longer measurement periods such as GPA, units completed, certificates and degrees, and transfer to baccalaureate-granting institutions.

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