Welcome Back!

We hope your summer was relaxing and rewarding. The past academic year was filled with meaningful First Generation Faculty Initiative endeavors. This update highlights our faculty, our receptions, and our students’ experiences.

Save the Date

Our First Generation Faculty Fall Reception is on Wednesday, November 19th from 4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. in the LSC Grey Rock Room. Refreshments will be provided.

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First Generation Faculty Initiative Committee Member Feature:
SAHE Professor Leads International Student Affairs Study Tour to the Arabian Gulf Region

Last summer, Colorado State University was selected by three national professional associations to serve as the academic partner for an international student affairs study tour to the Arabian Gulf-Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. First Generation Faculty Initiative committee member Dr. Oscar Felix (pictured) served as faculty leader providing the curriculum through the Global Perspectives in Student Affairs and Services course from the Student Affairs in Higher Education, or SAHE, Master’s Program.

Dr. Felix is an assistant professor in the SAHE Program, and is the executive director for the Access Center with a new appointment as associate vice president for Diversity and associate vice president for the Division of Enrollment and Access.

Twenty-two participants from Australia, South Africa, United Kingdom, Barbados, and the United States studied the uniqueness of higher education and student affairs approaches in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. These Arabian Gulf nations are seeking to transition from a carbon-based economy to a knowledge-based economy.

Qatar, in particular, plans to accomplish this goal by 2030, with higher education as a major area of focus. Student affairs and student services are recognized as a key component in student success and the need for professional development and credentials for student affairs staff.

Participants toured and engaged faculty and students at Hamad Bin Khalifa University and Qatar University in Qatar and Zayed University, United Arab Emirates University, New York University Abu Dhabi, and the Institute of Applied Technology (IAT) in the United Arab Emirates. Major topics covered on the study tour...
First Generation Faculty Initiative

First Generation Student Feature: Alberto “Orlando” Perez Cruz

So how did I get here? How did I become a dad and husband? How did I become the first one in my family to earn a bachelor's degree? Well let me tell you that I didn't do it alone. I always had people next to me, guiding me, pointing to the right direction, and keeping me away from doing bad stuff. Like you, I have been fortunate to be a part of a caring community.

My freshman year in college was hard. It was an exciting but scary at the same time. I didn't know a lot of people but Erin Pitts introduced me to people who worked at Talent Search in the Access Center. Then I met Barb Musslewhite at the First Generation Dinner, I met Demetrios Godenitz my academic advisor at CASA, and I became a member of the Academic Advancement Center where they offered me free tutoring and where I would meet with my retention specialist once a month.

Also, I was part of the Key Communities where I met my student mentor Itxel, I built a network of wonderful people that made everything a little easier. Being able to talk to so many friends and advisors about my grades, my professors, and my personal life made me feel like I was a part of a big family.

So this is how I got here. It wasn't easy but I learned to ask for help, to find shelter in my community and also I realized that I am never alone.

Career Counseling Best Practices for First Generation College Students

At the First Generation Faculty Reception last fall, staff and faculty engaged in a lively discussion on career counseling best practices for first generation students at Colorado State University. A panel featuring Jennifer Aberle, faculty member in the College of Health and Human Science, Rich Feller, professor emeritus in the School of Education, Kara Johnson, assistant director in the Career Center, and Miel McCarthy, retention coordinator for the Division of Student Affairs, explored the career needs of first generation college students.

Panelists shared their experiences with assisting students in their career exploration process. Rich Feller observed that how students and their families conceptualize the undergraduate experience has shifted over time. Historically, first generation students viewed college as a time to explore and develop personal and career passions. Today, students perceive college as a necessity that will ensure them work. Other panelists shared that some first generation students struggle with committing to a major and how to network effectively in their field.

Attendees discussed strategies that faculty and staff members can implement to assist students with their career process. Members of the College of Health and Human Sciences hold dinners with first generation college students to facilitate their connections and conversations about their experiences at CSU. Also, faculty members work with undergraduate students on research projects, supervise Federal Work Study students, and invite students to connect during office hours.
The importance of career sponsorship versus mentorship was another topic. For first generation students, having a career sponsor may be more beneficial than having a career mentor. A faculty attendee relayed his personal experience of seeking out and "adopting" a career sponsor during his undergraduate experience. It is important to recognize that first generation students may not know how to request mentorship from their professors, so it is important for faculty to share their stories and encourage personal connection with students.

Other attendees highlighted the importance of providing first generation students with guidance around the “language” of higher education and the need for students to easily identify first generation faculty and staff members within a department/college.

Spring 2014 Faculty Reception: Education Abroad

The spring First Generation Faculty Reception featured first generation undergraduate and graduate students who have participated in experiential learning abroad. Students panelists discussed the need for faculty and advisors to understand and respect the differences in financial background and status of student travelers.

"Featured: First generation CSU undergraduate and graduate student alumna Tiffani Kelly"

Also, panelists advised for other students to use a journal or submit blog postings during their study experience in order to better foster personal development. Lessons learned from our panelists include the importance of understanding and communicating cultural differences to student travelers before studying abroad as well as for American students to be humble and remain cognizant of the many privileges they experience relative to people in other countries.

HERE’S TO A SUCCESSFUL 2014 - 2015 ACADEMIC YEAR!