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The First-Generation Student Experience; Why Building Solidarity is Vital

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Ohio Wesleyan University

The First-Gen Student Experience

Why Building Solidarity is Vital



Objectives



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- 1 Understand and identify the first-gen identity and experience.

 - 2 Analyze how the identity is shaped through social inequality.

 - 3 Identify unique challenges and strengths first-gen students possess

 - 4 Solidarity and why it is vital for First-Gen student success

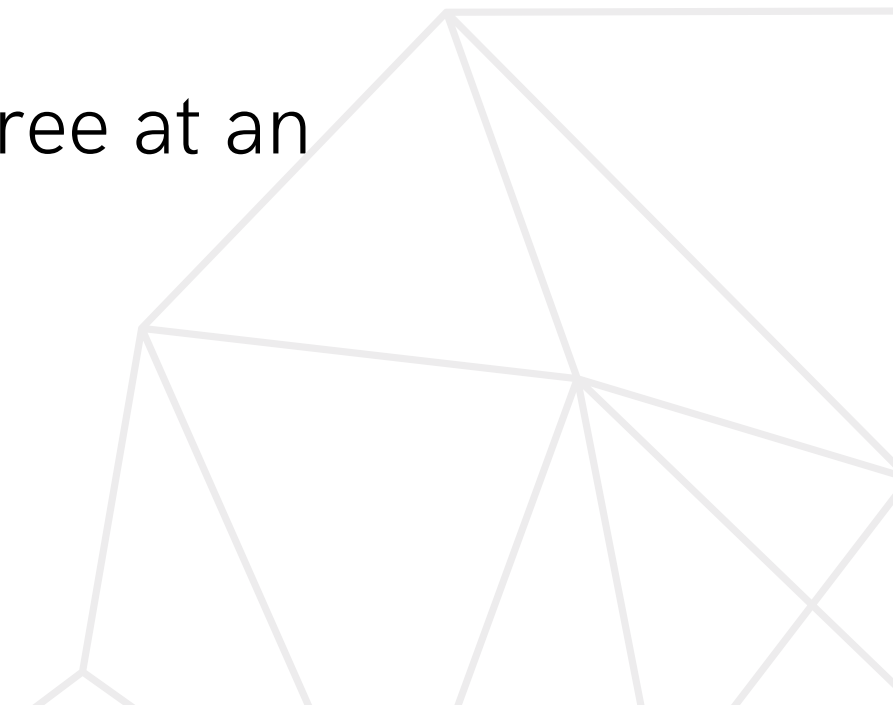
 - 5 Explore campus reforms; what role YOU can play to build solidarity

 - 6 Questions!
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What is First-Gen?

- While there are multiple interpretations and definitions that different colleges/universities use, in Laymen's terms, a first-gen student is one whose parents did not complete a 4-year degree within the United States.
- But since OWU acknowledges the unique intersection each individual holds, it also includes single parents, guardians or caretakers who do not have a degree
 - Including the hypothetical situations where the student only receives support from one parent who does not have a four-year degree
 - International students who are the first in their families to get a degree at an American institution



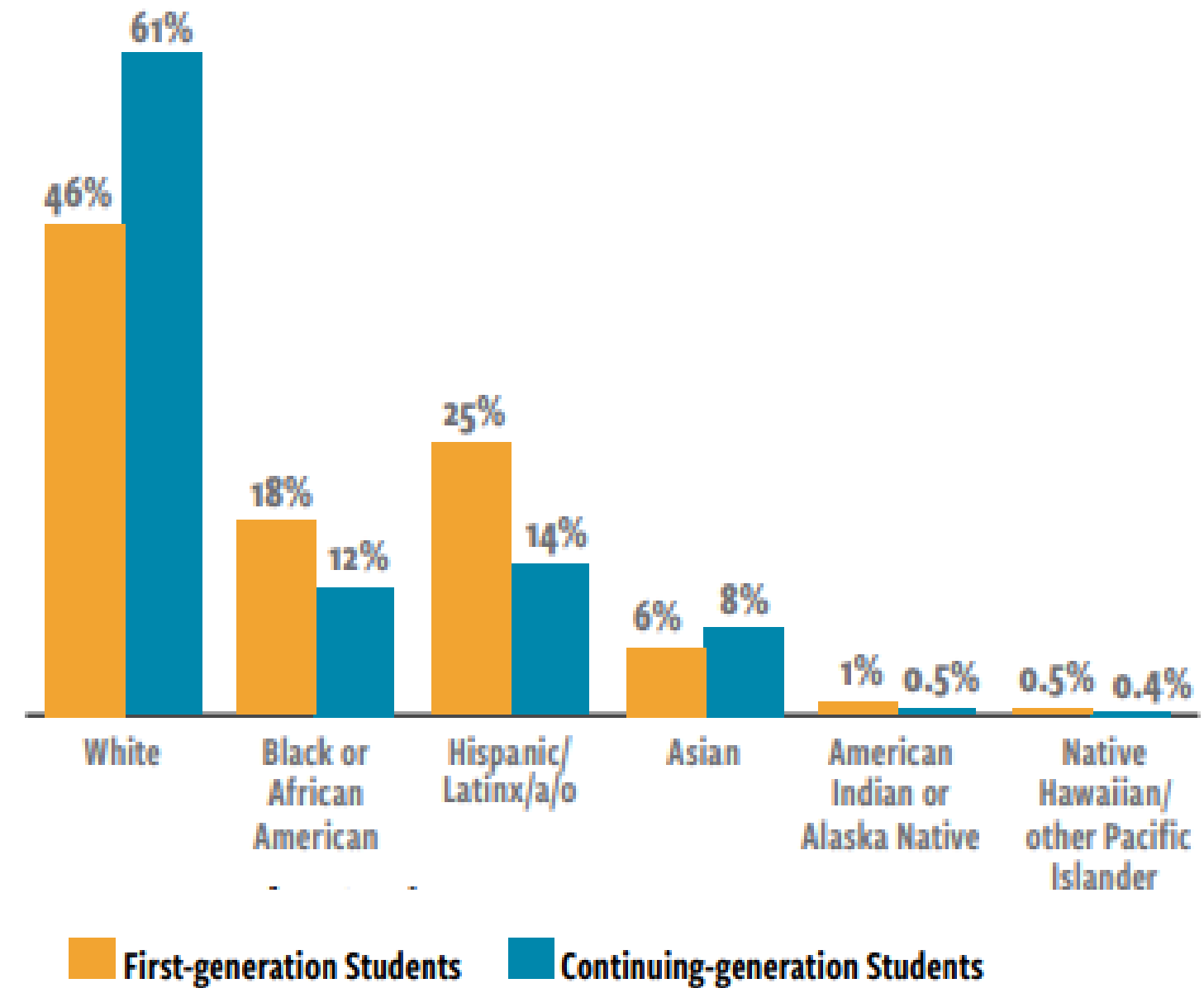


Demographics; Who is First-Gen?

- The working class predominately makes up the First-Gen community
- 1/3 of all college students are first-gen but, only 27% of those First-Gen students will graduate
- With 1 in 3 (30%) First-Gen college students being a BIPOC

Racial Demographics of First-Gen Students

Fact Sheet 1 provided by NASPA



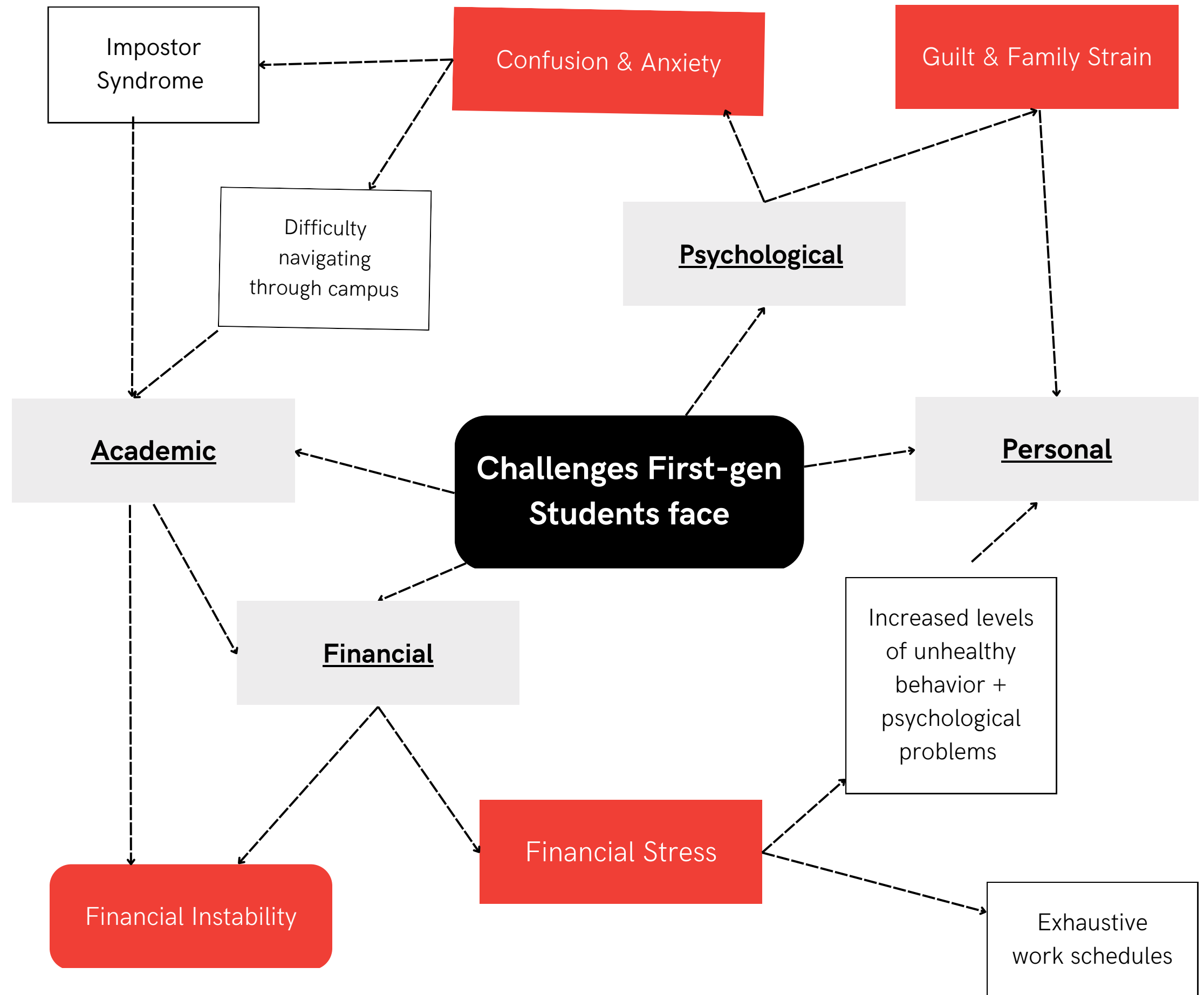
MEDIAN PARENTAL INCOME AMONG DEPENDENT STUDENTS

\$41,000 for first-generation students	\$90,000 for continuing-generation students
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Challenges First-Gen Students Face

While not all first-Gen student experiences are the same, many First-Gen students experience similar adversities that fall under these four distinct categories; Academic, Financial, Personal, and Psychological.

These challenges stem from a lack of education regarding the navigation of specific institutions and concepts such as the hidden curriculum and social capital. As you can see each of these categories tends to overlap one another and can create overwhelming barriers to a first-gen student's success.



Why solidarity matters

- First-Gen students are catalysts of change that are not only changing the trajectories of their lives, families, and communities but also the education system.
 - Through their unique perspectives and experiences of the education system and real-world scenarios, they break down barriers for other-low income and marginalized students. They also reveal the hidden inequalities that remain within our education system.
- Through spreading awareness and building solidarity within our campus community, we will not only dismantle forms of institutional inequalities but ensure that students not only succeed but thrive on campus.



Amarily Torres-Nuñez '25 (left) collaborates with Ohio Wesleyan faculty and staff, including Sa in the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, to support OWU's first-generation students. (Photo of Amarily Torres-Nuñez)

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Ohio Wesleyan Student Helps Create a Positive Environment for First-Gen Bishops

By Marcos Crespo '23

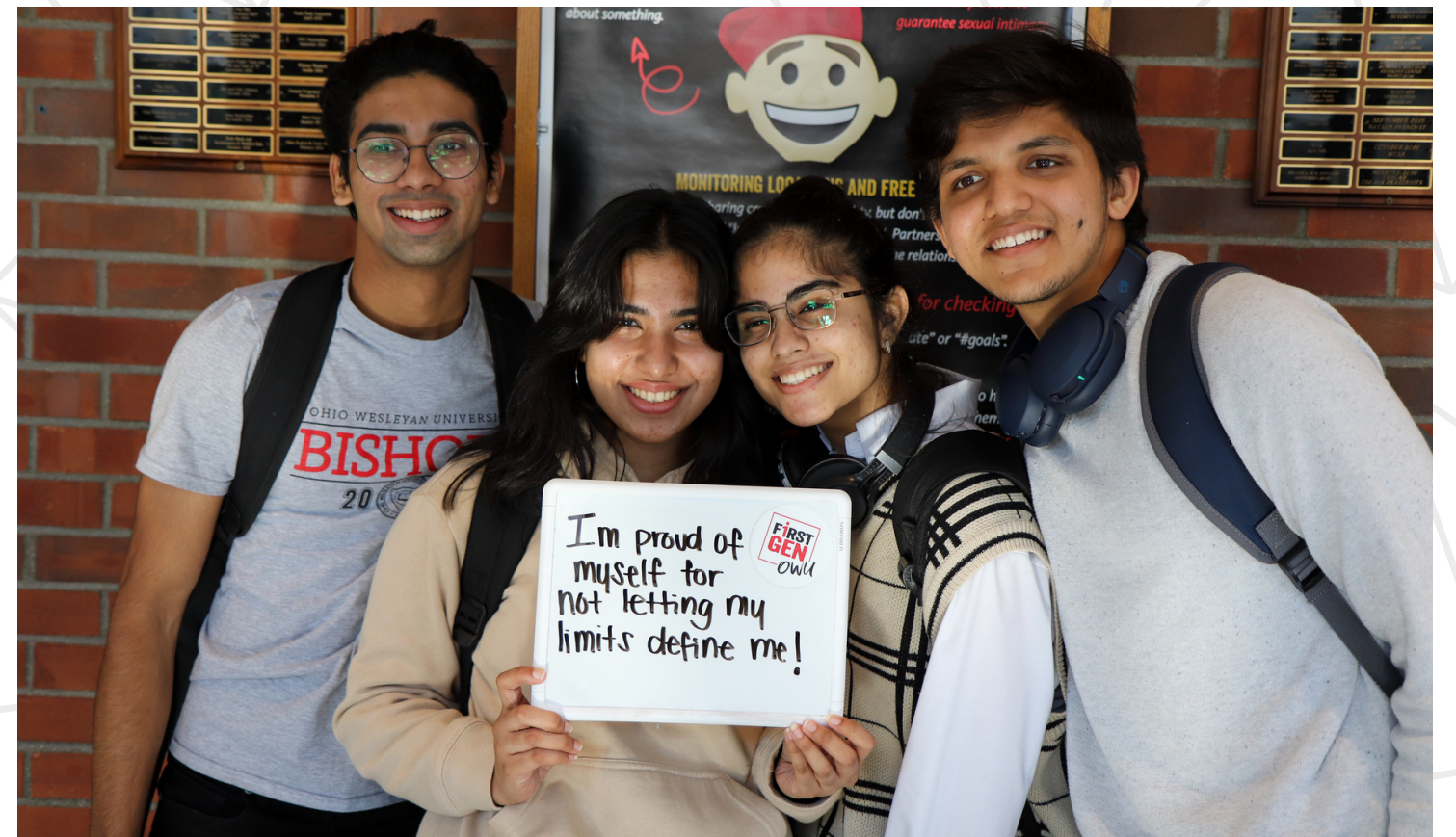
First-Gen Students

First-gen students not only make an impact on their campus communities but in society as well. Here are examples of three exceptional First-Gen students who have positively impacted society for the better but, also encouraged their first-gen community as well.



Previous Programming

Events dedicated to building community and educating.



How YOU can help

It is vital that universities better their understanding of these specific experiences, adversities, and needs in order to avoid further inequalities. But in order to do so, awareness needs to be brought to this social issue. That's where YOU come in! Advocate and spread awareness of the First-gen identity/adversities. Be mindful of their presence and continue to educate yourself on ways to help spread awareness. By doing this, we can help demystify college and prove that college CAN be for anyone.

- 1 Follow social media pages dedicated to the advocating of First-Gen students
 - 2 Create spaces to allow meaningful conversations about First-Gen experiences
 - 3 Help make resources more available
 - 4 Talk to your student representatives or advisors about ways to make campus more accessible
 - 5 Continue to educate yourself on the topic
 - 6 If you are a faculty or staff member, potentially mentoring a student
 - 7 Provide mentoring services to underclassmen
 - 8 Attend and involve yourself in campus programming!
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