Exploring the Emerging Niche of First-Generation College Students
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Learning Objectives
- Interpret the available literature regarding the needs of first-generation college students and the current best practices to support them.
- Understand occupational therapy’s role on an interdisciplinary team within a college campus setting to improve student’s health and wellness
- Learn specific strategies to improve the health, wellness and academic functioning of first-generation college students.

Introduction
USC Kortschak Center for Learning and Creativity
- Helping individuals with diverse learning needs (i.e. ADHD, LD, ASD) reach their fullest academic and creative potential.

OT’s Role on a College Campus
- To support student engagement and participation through the holistic treatment of lifestyle, psychosocial and academic needs.

First-Generation College Students
- Definition: students who are the first in their immediate families to attend a postsecondary educational institution
- 32% of students at four-year institutions
- Urgent need for increased research and implementation of retention strategies, in order to improve academic success, retention and graduation

Literature Review: Needs
Themes
- Psychological
- Social
- Lifestyle
- Academic

Psychological Needs
- Managing family achievement guilt
- Lower levels of self-efficacy
- Imposter phenomenon
- Higher levels of self-reported stress
- Less likely to report seeking counseling services

Social Needs
- Difficulty adapting to culture shock
- Difficulty integrating into the campus community
  - Less apt to joining clubs and student organizations
• More prone to live off campus due to financial limitations
• At greater risk of experiencing social isolation
• Navigating resources with a lack of cultural capital

Lifestyle Needs
• Balancing school, work, and familial responsibilities
• Financially supporting themselves and their families

Academic Needs
• Poor academic performance
• Rigorous academic demands
• Less intensive training
• Lower retention
• Lower graduation rates

Strengths!
• Higher levels of perseverance, resiliency and grit
• Bilingual, multi-cultural
• Passionate in serving disadvantaged populations
• Creative in their approaches to learning

Literature Review: Best Practices
Types
• Formal peer mentoring programs
• Informal mentoring relationships workshops
• Groups
• Tutoring
• Counseling
• Student clubs

Outcomes of Best Practices
• Self-efficacy, grade point average, perceived enhanced learning, university satisfaction, sense of belonging, adjustment, skill attainment, and knowledge acquirement

Success Factors
• Internal
  • Self-esteem
  • Perceived academic control
  • Confidence in academic ability
  • Personality factors
• External
  • Forming relationships with university staff and faculty
  • Family
  • Housing & roommate support
  • Attaining peer mentors
  • Joining a small community
  • Quality friendships
• Behavioral
  • Active engagement in coursework
• Maintaining a part-time job
• Utilizing campus resources
• Participation in extracurricular activities
• Decreased engagement in risky behaviors

OT Group Logistics
• Goal
• Population
• Size
• Recruitment
• Intake

Theoretical Framework
• Ecology of Human Performance (EHP)
• Chickering’s Model of Identity Development

Group Components
• Time management
• Stress management
• Identity exploration
• Assertive communication
• Self-care
• Social engagement & support acquisition
• Post-graduate planning

OT’s Value
• Emphasis on daily self-care routines, productive habits and overall health and wellness
• Client-centered interventions
• OT Pioneer: Self-Assessment

OTAC References


Rullan, LaShelle Rena; Vasquez, Jovita; and Wong, Julia, "The Effectiveness of Peer Mentoring in Helping First Year Students Develop Occupational Adaptation Skills" (2014). Master's Theses and Capstone Projects.
