

# 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

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