

# Educational Attainment

Rebecca Suen, Elsa Mai, Stephanie Chung

## Background

First-gen students are first in their families to attend college. Challenges that first-gen students often face include issues with family support, which may lead to psychological, academic, financial, and social challenges; subsequently, “about one in three [first generation college students] leave college within the first three years” ([mghclaycenter.org](http://mghclaycenter.org)). Given that college has been historically barred by racial and economic factors, this issue also disproportionately affects students of color, and students facing financial difficulties.

## Objectives

The project aims to amplify the voices of first-generation college students. Through this project, we hope to highlight these students’ stories and concerns these students may have at UCLA.

## Community methods

We plan to work with programs that aim to provide various resources that are specific to the needs of first-generation college students. Samahang Pilipino Education and Retention (SPEAR) at UCLA and the Academic Advancement Program (AAP) at UCLA are programs we hope to partner with. We plan to ask SPEAR and AAP what resources they offer for first-gen students, as well as information about issues and concerns prevalent in the first-gen community.

We will also directly survey first-generation students at UCLA about their experiences in attaining higher education, and empower them by raising awareness of the unique community conditions they face through the promotion of resources and programs that aim to support the first-gen student community.

## User Stories

“As a first-gen student from a low-income community, financial support is my biggest concern in terms of achieving higher education. I want to share my experience with SPEAR and how their programs have increased my retention as a student and the Pilipinx community it serves.”

“As an employee of Samahang Pilipino Education and Retention (SPEAR) at UCLA, promoting various resources available to students is crucial to empowering the first-gen student community. First-gen students often navigate college alone, as their parents lack the knowledge

or understanding of the college process specific to the United States. SPEAR provides opportunities that help first-gen students apply for scholarships and grants, as well as academic and holistic counseling that gives them the ability to access resources typically more available for upper and middle-class students.”

## **Potential Survey Questions**

Background questions:

- What is your major?
- Where is your hometown?
- What is your race?
- What is your ethnicity?
- What is your nationality?
- Are you a transfer student?
- Are you a commuter student?

Open questions:

- What educational resources do you know of or use at UCLA?
- What resources do you wish were available to you at UCLA?
- What resources do you wish were available when you were applying for college?

Agree/Disagree: As a first-generation college student, do you face:

- Financial barriers? Financial aid/ debt?
- Social challenges?
- Academic challenges?
- Issues with mental health?

## **Long-term impact**

Our goal for this project is to raise awareness about the many barriers many first-generation students encounter when pursuing higher education. Our map could potentially be used to provide data and identify communities that could benefit from greater involvement from programs working towards educational attainment.