

First Generation Scholars Network

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ISAC's Mission Statement

Providing Illinois students with information and assistance to help make education beyond high school accessible and affordable.

First Gen Student Experience

- How many of you are first gen college students or have friends or family who were the first in their family to go to college?
- How do you think the first gen experience today is different or the same from when you were in college?
- How many first gen students are currently on your campus?



Illinois Student Assistance Corps

- Near-peer model began in 2009
- Approximately 85 college grads of diverse backgrounds
- Work in the communities in which they live
- Majority are first-gen and/or MAP recipients

ILASFAA Conference 2023

First Gen Student Experiences

Lexi - "I came from a small town of about 1,750 and graduated from a class of 88. Transitioning to a school of 20,000+ people was difficult, especially because I didn't really know anyone else there besides my brother, but I had a lot of encouragement from family to go to college." - St. Bede Academy

Celeste - "I struggled with being away from my family. I struggled with deciding what to pursue, and school in general, but I decided to pursue a degree because of how much higher education was stressed to me. I always had it in my head that I needed to go." - Thornton Fractional South HS

First Gen Student Experiences

Anayeli - "My parents are immigrants and they always pushed me to pursue a higher education as a way to have a better life and have access to mobility. I also value higher education because knowledge is something that can't be taken away from you and has value." - Morton East HS & Morton College

Emberly- "I struggled to connect with other students and make friends. I was a commuter student, and I would typically describe myself as introverted, so I struggled to make friends when I was in college. I always knew I wanted to do something in education, and I knew that to do that, I needed to go to college. I am now pursuing a graduate degree." - Mt. Zion HS

First Gen Student Experiences

Leah - "It was hard for me to transition from a large city like Chicago to a small town. Honestly, the moment I stepped foot on campus, it was a complete culture shock. My transition to college was a struggle in itself, but when I entered my senior year, I also struggled with not knowing what I wanted to do with my life after college. I felt so much internal pressure from myself and external pressure from others to figure out what I wanted to do with the rest of my life, and I had no idea." - George Westinghouse College Prep

Iris - "Acclimating to the culture of being at a PWI (predominately white campus), along with finding a 'home away from home,' finding support systems, and dealing with imposter syndrome was a challenge." - Jones College Prep

Commons Barriers of First Generation Students

- Feeling alone in their journey
- Lack of knowledge of campus resources
- Difficulty navigating college terminology
- Difficulty with financial aid process
- Experiencing culture shock
- What other barriers have you seen?

First Generation Scholars Network Website

- Contact information of First Generation Scholars Network Mentor who can provide one-on-one assistance
- Links to first gen and near peer programs at colleges in Illinois
- Events specifically for first-generation students



<https://studentportal.isac.org/FirstGen>

ILASFAA Conference 2023

Welcome to the First Generation Scholars Network!

If you will be the first in your family to earn a college degree, join our network to get support and resources from ISAC, your peers at your college, and colleges across the state! If you are heading to your first year of college this fall, we've got events and programs that can give you tools, resources, mentoring, and a great network of connections to make your transition and first year of college a whole lot easier—and successful.

- [Connect with a First Generation Scholars Network Mentor](#)
- [Find the First Generation Network or Mentoring Program on Your Campus](#)
- [Join us for a "Check-in" Event](#)

Connect with a First Generation Scholars Network Mentor

Our team of recent college graduates is your resource for all your questions and concerns about transitioning to college. We've been where you are, had a lot of the same questions, fears, and experiences you might be having. We are here to listen, answer questions, offer suggestions, connect you with the places on your campus that can assist you, and connect you with a network of peers like you.

First Generation Scholars Network Mentors



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Maria Amill
Assigned district: LAKE LAND



Leah Freeny
Assigned district: MALCOLM X



Lauren Waitt
Assigned district:



Jessica Diaz
Assigned district: WILBUR



Check out more First Generation Scholars Network videos

How do I join the Network?

It's easy! Just text your first and last name to the ISAC College Q&A number below that is in the area code closest to you, and you will be asked if you are a first generation college student. Answer yes, and you are in! You can also text us any college or financial aid question you have, and it will be answered by one of ISAC's college access experts.



- (773) 453-9520
- (630) 216-4910
- (847) 243-6470
- (815) 242-4630
- (217) 207-3265
- (309) 306-7066
- (708) 252-3890
- (618) 223-6450

[StudentPortal.isac.org/
FirstGen](https://StudentPortal.isac.org/FirstGen)

How to Join

Student's text their name to
ISAC College Q & A

Questions about
college planning and
financial aid?



**NOW YOU CAN GET
ANSWERS SENT DIRECTLY
TO YOUR PHONE!**



With the ISAC College Q&A free text messaging service, you can get your questions answered and receive important information about college planning events and deadlines — **all via text.**



Helping to make college accessible
and affordable for Illinois students.

www.isac.org

It's easy to get started!
Simply text your first and
last name to the phone
number in your area code.

217 207-3265
309 306-7066
618 223-6450
630 216-4910
708 252-3890
773 453-9520
815 242-4630
847 243-6470

Dedicated support for all
returning adult students:
872 395-4723

Servicio en español
para padres:
773 823-0570





Student Engagement

- Presentations to students during the senior year
- Check-ins during the summer
- Check-in at the beginning of the semester
- Check-in at the end of the semester

How Can We Collaborate?

- How can Corps members assist with, promote, or support your programs?
- What new initiatives do you have that we're not aware of?
- Do you have any programs specific to first gen students?

