

TOWARD A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS AND WAYS TO ENHANCE OUR INTERACTIONS WITH THEM IN AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

PRESENTERS: LIZ ATWOOD, GAYE DIGREGORIO, MALCOLM SCOTT, HEATHER NOVAK, JENNIFER SCHNEIDER, AND MARILYN THAYER

Abstract: One of every four students at CSU is “first generation college.” This presentation will provide a revealing look at student characteristics and educational outcomes of first generation students at CSU. Additionally, the presentation of recent research-based findings will help to provide new understandings of the dynamics of the interaction between first generation students and the university environment. The majority of traditional research on first generation students focuses on deficiencies; however, this session will focus on research outlining both the challenges and assets of being a first generation student, as well as the ways faculty, staff, and the institution can facilitate the students’ learning and success. Discussion on how this research informs our efforts to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for first generation students at CSU will be generated by group participants.

Participants will gain knowledge about: The educational outcomes of first generation students at CSU; both the challenges and assets of being a first generation student; and Participants will be inspired to brainstorm ways of working with first generation students.

Bios:

Liz Atwood works as the Assistant to the Associate Provost for Educational Attainment and as Assistant to the Executive Director for the Reinvention Center, a national consortium of research universities dedicated to advancing undergraduate education. She has her MA in sociology from the University of Wyoming, and her research interests include student success, particularly focusing on first generation students; co-curricular engagement and high impact practices; and student binge drinking behaviors.

Gaye DiGregorio, is the Executive Director of the Center for Advising and Student Achievement (CASA), which empowers students to create and achieve their personal and educational goals at Colorado State University. Her background in academic advising has broadened to overseeing student success programs such as providing orientation and transition programs, coordinating living learning communities, mentoring and supporting opportunity scholars, and coordinating university wide retention programs. She has a B.S. Human Development and Family Studies at Colorado State University, a M. A. in College Student Personnel at Bowling Green University.

Heather Novak is the Research Manager in the Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness office at CSU. She has been part of the CSU community since the 1998 and is passionate about understanding the institutional factors influencing undergraduate student success, especially for low-income and first-generation students. Her academic training focused on research methods and her expertise is in

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multivariate analyses and quasi-experimental research design. Outside of work Heather enjoys spending time outdoors with her family.

Dr. Malcolm Scott is currently an assistant professor in the School of Social work and Director of the Human Services Assessment Project (HSAP). Dr. Scott has recently been working in the areas of community-engaged scholarship and service-learning. He has worked in the areas of youth and community research, diversity, and organizational culture and development. In addition, Dr. Scott has worked as a trainer for the Department of Health and Human Services, developing strategies for serving families with co-occurring needs in substance abuse and child welfare. His research interests also include higher education access and opportunities for historically underrepresented and first generation students.

Dr. Jennifer Schneider, Learning Research Analyst, has over a decade of experience related to higher education research with specializations in quantitative research, survey design, and scale construction. Prior to CSU, she worked as a statistical consultant, gender and diversity researcher, and bias educator. As IR's Learning Research Analyst, Jennifer's primary responsibilities include providing institutional leaders and educators learning analytics to support and inform student success on campus. This includes research design, evaluating learning outcomes, and learning analytics. She maintains research interests in learning theories, diversity, campus climate assessment, first generation students, women in STEM, scale construction, and faculty development.

Marilyn Thayer has been a long-time supporter and friend to TRIO, and has been the Director of the TRIO Student Support Services / Academic Advancement Center at Colorado State University since August 2013. As an educator at heart, she has a life-long commitment to providing increased educational opportunities for students from underrepresented and under-served backgrounds. She currently serves as a key player on various University-wide committees for initiatives that support the persistence, academic success, and graduation of TRIO students and TRIO eligible students. As a first generation college student, she earned her Bachelor's Degree in Special Education from the University of Hawai'i and Master's Degree in Education and Human Resources from Colorado State University