

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE FIRST-GENERATION LABEL AND ITS EFFECT ON COLLEGE SUCCESS

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Abstract

This article reports on an exploratory study that investigated the effect the label “first generation college student” (FGCS) has on self-perceptions of identity and the ability to achieve college success. Nineteen first-generation undergraduate students participated in the study. Data were generated from a 10-question on-line survey. The survey included open-ended and rating scale questions. Content and thematic analysis were used to analyze responses to open-ended questions; descriptive analysis was employed to interpret rating scale question responses. Findings provide new understandings about designing and shaping experiences that may increase levels of student success among first-generation college students.

Keywords: first-generation college students, retention, labeling, support programs, well-being, identity

Introduction

First-generation students represent a large percentage of college enrollment (RTI International, 2023). Consequently, an increasing amount of research and attention focuses on this population of students. Many universities have staff and programs devoted to helping first-generation students succeed in college, placing these students in a group identified as needing additional guidance and support. At some institutions, first-generation college students (FGCSs) are recognized during National First-Generation College Student Day celebrations. This raises

the central questions for this study: How does labeling students as “first-generation” impact 1) the way these individuals see themselves as college students, and 2) the likelihood that they will complete their college degree? Gaining a deeper understanding of the effects of being labeled a “first-generation college student” is essential to the process of providing FGCSs with the support they need to achieve success in college and beyond.

Literature Review

The literature on FGCSs and student success provides an empirical and theoretical framework for the study. The term “first-generation college student,” as defined by the US Department of Education, refers to an individual for whom neither parent has earned a four-year college degree (Council for Opportunity in Education., n.d.). Not having a parent to guide and prepare them for college presents FGCSs with specific challenges including having a limited understanding of the policies and processes of higher education and a lack of preparedness for the academic demands of college (Havlik et al., 2020; Hérbert, 2018). FGCSs who come from limited income backgrounds often have to work while in school to support their families and help with other household responsibilities such as caring for siblings (Shine et al., 2021).

The unfamiliarity of the college environment can leave FGCSs feeling as though they do not fit in or belong in college, especially for ethnically diverse students attending a Predominantly White Institution (Azpeitia et al., 2025). Their perceptions of coming from different educational, economic, and cultural backgrounds can leave them feeling like outsiders, finding it difficult to connect with other members of the university community (Padgett et al., 2012). The relationship between sense of belonging and academic performance and retention is widely reported in the student success literature (see e.g., Koh et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2000;

Tinto, 2025). In addition to lacking a sense of belonging, FGCSs often experience imposter phenomenon, believing that they do not deserve to be in college (Canning et al., 2019; Whitehead & Wright, 2017; Wright et al., 2025). Imposter phenomenon can contribute to increased levels of stress (Holden et al., 2024). It can also prevent students from seeking academic help from faculty and other support staff, fearing that if they go for help, they will be found out as an “intellectual fraud” (Shin & Lytle, 2024, p. 2599). The power dynamic and limited understanding of how to interact with faculty may also contribute to FGCS’s reluctance to go for help when they need it (Kitchen et al., 2021). While much of the reporting on FGCSs comes from a deficit perspective, focusing on the disadvantages FGCSs face, some researchers argue for the need to adopt an assets perspective—one that recognizes and validates the strengths and life skills first-generation students bring to college (Kitchen et al., 2021; Macias, 2013; Smolarek, 2025).

Theoretical Framework

Bandura’s (1979) social cognitive theory and Ryan and Deci’s (2000) self-determination theory (SDT) provide a theoretical framework for understanding the role self-efficacy and motivation play in FGCS’s perceptions of self and their ability to succeed in college. Both theories underscore the significant relationship between perceived ability to successfully complete specific tasks and goal attainment. Key factors that contribute to high levels of self-efficacy and self-determination include having opportunities to build skills and confidence, being intrinsically motivated to succeed, having a sense of control over actions and outcomes, feeling a sense of support and connection to others, and receiving positive feedback (Bandura, 1977, 1979; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Together, these theories underscore the critical role self-efficacy and self-

determination play in helping FGCSs develop the attitude and behaviors needed to complete their college degrees.

One factor identified as affecting student self-perceptions and self-efficacy is labeling. Labeling theory, grounded in the field of sociology, traditionally emphasizes the negative implications of social categorization, particularly its role in promoting deviant behavior (Thompson, 2014). In the context of higher education, college students are assigned labels that carry both positive and negative connotations including honors, high-achieving, at-risk, low-income, and neurodivergent learners. Many of these labels frequently fail to account for the intersectionality of student identities, which encompass race, socioeconomic class, gender, religion, and sexual orientation (Means & Pyne 2017).

While the intention may be to provide specific groups of students with a tailored set of resources, labeling students may have detrimental effects on student self-esteem, ability to engage with peers, and academic performance (Dix et al., 2020; Feng & Wang, 2018; Hartwick et al., 2014). Given the potential influence labeling may have on factors that affect student success, it is important to investigate the role the FGCS label may play in shaping college experiences and outcomes. This study seeks to understand the ways in which students' perceptions of this label may impact their academic path. Insights gained from this research aim to inform programs and strategies designed to enhance success among first-generation college students.

Description of the Study

This study was conducted at a medium-size, four-year private research university located in the Midwestern region of the US during the spring 2025 semester. Potential participants were

first-generation students who are part of a program that provides FGCSs and students from limited income backgrounds with academic and social support. Students typically enter the support program as incoming first-year students; they continue in the program until they graduate from the institution with a bachelor's degree. They are provided with a range of services including advising, tutoring, mentoring, and programming, including a 4-day orientation program for incoming first-year students held the week before classes start. In addition to services, the program further supports students with a designated student lounge—a space where participants socialize, relax, meet with mentors and tutors, and study.

After the study received IRB approval, first-generation students in the program received an email inviting them to participate in the research. A total of 19 FGCSs took part in the study: 8 first-year students; 4 Sophomores; 3 Juniors; and 4 Seniors. Sixteen participants (84.21%) indicated that they were from limited income backgrounds. Participation required completing an anonymous survey administered via the Qualtrics academic survey platform. The survey consisted of 10 questions. Open-ended questions asked students to reflect on the experience of having the label of first-generation college student: how they first became aware of the label, if the label affected their decision to attend college, how the label shapes their identity, to share perceptions of “pluses” and “minuses” of being labeled a FGCS, to describe how being part of a program that supports FGCSs has affected their college experience, and to provide advice for helping other FGCSs succeed in college.

Qualitative research methods were employed to analyze data generated from open-ended questions. Responses to each open-ended survey question were read and re-read. Content analysis was used to code individual responses and identify emergent themes (Patton, 2002). While the study was primarily qualitative and exploratory in nature, a single 3-point Likert rating

scale question (more likely, less likely, does not affect) was included in the survey to gauge the effect the FGCS label has on a student's likelihood of engaging in behaviors and attitudes that foster student success and degree completion. The ranking question included the following 9-items: 1) speaking in class, 2) visiting a professor during office hours, 3) feeling comfortable engaging with classmates, 4) using tutoring services, 5) asking support staff for help, 6) feeling like you belong in college, 7) feeling motivated to do well in college, 8) feeling confident that you will be successful in college, and 9) persisting through to graduation. Given the sample size (N=19), this question was used to understand participants' perceptions of the influence the FGCS label may have on behaviors related to student success, rather than to facilitate statistical generalization.

Findings

Study findings are presented by the themes that emerged from responses to open-ended questions and results from the rating-scale question. The first survey question explored when and how participants first became aware of the FGCS label. The majority (73.68%) of study participants first learned about the FGCS label in high school during the process of applying for college and college financial aid, or when an older sibling was applying to college.

In response to the question asking if being a FGCS was discussed with family and/or friends or influenced their decision to attend college, many students said it was not part of pre-college discussions. In the instances where it was discussed, conversations focused on parents wanting their children to have a "brighter future." For some students, the label did affect their decision to attend college, expressing that being a FGCS served as a motivational factor, wanting to make their family proud as a way of "paying them back for everything they've done." The

cost of college and the financial burden it would place on their families was also reported. Knowing that they were FGCSs and that their parents were unfamiliar with the financial aid process meant that they would need to rely on themselves and others outside the family to help them complete and submit financial aid forms. Conversations with friends whose parents attended college left them feeling different and at a disadvantage due to the absence of family guidance.

Students were asked to identify the “pluses” and “minuses” of having the FGCS label; key themes are presented in Tables 1 and 2 below. The primary advantages reported were access to additional support, the opportunity to form a community, and personal pride and motivation derived from being the first member of the family to attend college.

Table 1

Student Perceptions of the Advantages of the FGCS Label

Emergent Themes	Illustrative Quotes
Opportunities for Additional Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The benefit of being labeled a first-generation college student was that I could receive additional support to navigate the university process and learn methods to achieve success. ○ You get a lot of support and possibly more opportunities. ○ Being a first-generation student gives me more scholarship opportunities.
Finding Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identifying with other students who are first gen creates community. ○ I can find a community of people from the same background as me. ○ I have also found a community of other first-generation students both outside and inside my college.

Sense of Pride and Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I think that being a first-generation college student is very motivating because my family believes in me and supports me throughout my journey. ○ Opportunity, breaking barriers, new experiences, improve life for future family. ○ The pluses are that I get to experience something new, something I can share with my family and be proud to be called the first in my family. ○ That you are a pioneer.
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Perceived negative effects of the FGCS label focus on having to navigate the complexities of higher education on their own, encountering a lack of understanding and negative perceptions held by others, difficulty relating to people from different backgrounds, and experiencing added pressure to be successful.

Table 2

Student Perceptions of the Disadvantages of the FGCS Label

Emergent Themes	Illustrative Quotes
Lack of Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I feel like the only real thing I see as a minus is that people who aren't first generation usually have it easier when going to college because they have people who have gone to college. ○ Not having someone to ask about college culture. ○ One big minus was figuring out my way into college because I did not have a parent who could give me advice on what to prepare for.
Negative Perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Labeling someone as inexperienced, being perceived as low income or less fortunate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People think of you as less because you don't have a solid history and background here in America and in college. ○ Being labeled a first generation sometimes gives off the idea that I don't know what I'm doing and that not having a parent or other family member with a similar experience may label me as an amateur. ○ I think that people disregard us much more because our parents are not doctors but meat cutters. We don't have the same money to go on vacation in the Bahamas.
<p>Relating to Individuals from Different Backgrounds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Isolation from peers who don't go through the same struggles. ○ People from wealthier backgrounds don't understand and can't relate to this and it is sometimes uncomfortable. ○ Being labeled a first generation college student [at an affluent institution] can place social pressure on low income students. ○ I feel that it's been a little harder to connect with people, especially those who come from wealthier, college educated families.
<p>Additional Stress / Pressure to Succeed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Having to choose a challenging career such as a nurse or a lawyer because it is a well respected career. ○ There are a lot of stressors that may be caused by being a first gen student. I feel a great deal of pressure from both myself and my family to succeed because there are people in my family who did not have the same opportunities as I do, and I need to capitalize on them to feel successful. If I don't succeed, in a class or on an assignment, I feel a great deal of stress, and like my opportunities will be blown.

The study also explored student perceptions of the effect the FGCS label has on specific behaviors, feelings, and their potential to be successful and persist in college. Table 3 presents

student ratings of the label's influence on key factors related to college student success and retention. The majority of students indicated that being labeled a FGCS does not influence the likelihood of engaging in behaviors related to student success, including asking questions and / or speaking in class, visiting a professor during office hours, using tutoring services, or asking staff for help when they need it (items 1, 2, 4 & 5). While over half (52.63%) of the participants reported that the FGCS label did not affect comfort levels when engaging with classmates, an overwhelming majority of students who reported an impact (eight of nine), indicated the label made them less likely to feel comfortable (item 4).

Table 3

FGCS Label's Influence on Key Factors Related to Student Success and Retention (n=19)

Item #		More Likely		Less Likely		Does Not Affect	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
1	Ask questions and/or speak in class	3	15.79	5	26.32	11	57.89
2	Visit a professor during office hours	4	21.05	5	26.32	10	52.66
3	Feel comfortable engaging with classmates	1	5.26	8	42.11	10	52.63
4	Use tutoring services	5	26.32	4	21.05	10	52.63
5	Ask staff for help when you need it	5	26.32	3	15.79	11	57.89
6	Feel like you belong in college	6	31.58	9	47.37	4	21.05
7	Feel motivated to do well in college	15	78.95	2	10.53	2	10.53
8	Feel confident that you will be successful in college	11	57.89	6	31.58	2	10.53
9	Persist through to graduation	16	84.21	3	15.79	0	0.00

In contrast to behaviors related to student success, the FGCS label did appear to influence students' sense of belonging in college, motivation, confidence, and persistence (items 6-9). Student views on the FGCS label's impact on belonging were divided. Nearly half (47.37%) of the study participants reported that the FGCS label made them less likely to feel like they belong in college, 31.58% said the label served to increase their sense of belonging in college, 21.05 % indicated that it had no effect. Responses to the label's effect on motivation, confidence, and persistence indicate that having the FGCS label greatly increases the likelihood that they 1) feel motivated to do well in college (78.95%), 2) feel confident that they will be successful in college (57.89%), and 3) persist through to graduation (84.21%).

In response to the question asking students if their identity as a FGCS has changed over time, many students reported a significant shift in their FGCS identity, moving from initial negative self-perceptions characterized by nervousness and doubt to embracing it with pride, and using it as motivation to succeed.

“[I’m] more confident in my abilities and feel more comfortable stepping out of my comfort zone. Over time, I’ve felt more empowered to openly identify as a FGCS because I see how much of a positive impact it can make on myself and others.”

“I believe I just got a more positive look at the word and understand how powerful and brave a first generation student is to attend college and put yourself out there.”

“I think I was more nervous about being first-gen. Now I am proud of how far I’ve come as a first-generation student.”

“My identity as a FGCS has changed how I perceived myself. There are moments when I doubt myself or feel like I’m not good enough, which I felt since I was applying to

colleges. However, throughout my undergraduate years, I have learned to perceive myself as being capable of achieving what I want as long as I have the resilience and the will to do so, no matter what challenges and difficulties I face.”

To understand the role the FGCS support program played in helping students navigate challenges, participants were asked to share their thoughts on how being part of the program affected their college experience. Key themes expressed, presented in Table 4, include a strengthened sense of belonging, enhanced support, and improved personal well-being. This strengthened sense of belonging emerged from opportunities the program offers to connect with peers and staff who share and understand the specific challenges FGCSs face and to be part of a community. Enhanced support was primarily viewed in terms of services and resources the program provides with a particular focus on academic and social support. Improved well-being was gained from the overall support the program provides by increasing motivation, enjoyment, confidence, and reducing levels of stress. Student perceptions of the program’s impact also reveal how the program served to shape identity, providing students with a sense of pride about being a FGCS and a desire to help others by sharing their experiences.

Table 4

Student Perceptions of the Impact of FGCS Program

Emergent Themes	Illustrative Quotes
Strengthened Sense of Belonging / Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ [The program] has given me people who I can relate to on many levels without feeling judged. ○ [The program] connected me to people from the same background who can understand me and my struggles. I felt welcomed by [the program and its] members, and they helped me not be so scared of college.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ [It] was my first family on campus. [The summer program] made me feel very comfortable and knowledgeable about the ins and outs of the campus... ○ It was hard making friends outside of class as a commuter student. The people I've met in [the program] have impacted my entire experience. I made friends, went to fun events and was academically supported my first year. Thanks to other [students in the program], I have been able to work 4 different on-campus jobs. It has helped me more than I could ever think. ○ [The program] is the only way that I was able to find a community with other first generation students. [It] has provided a space for me to meet other students who have similar identities as me.
<hr/> <p>Enhanced Support / Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is incredibly helpful to have access to such great advisors that understand and are specialized in assisting me in my somewhat unique case of being a first-generation student. ○ The opportunities it brings for first generation students and the resources provided encourage me to do well in every aspect. It gives me a reminder of who I am doing this for and why. ○ Being part of the program that serves first generation college students has affected my [college] experience by supporting my academic choices and really pushing me towards all the resources I need to succeed academically. ○ [The program] has supported me by providing answers to questions I have like, what the process of applying to grad school looks like or how to fill out the FAFSA form. ○ I've come to appreciate the [university] community more because of this program and it seeks to motivate and support me a lot.
<hr/> <p>Improved Well-being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It helps me realize that I can do so much more than what I thought because there are others that are doing it too.

- I don't think I would have enjoyed my time at [the university] without [the program].
 - Being part of [the program] has relieved the weight of my shoulders because it is a place I know where I can go for guidance.
 - Being a part of the program has made me find a deeper appreciation for being a first generation college student. I embrace being the first person in my family to graduate with a college degree, and I feel more comfortable sharing my experiences, especially with those who are considering if college is worth it.
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The final survey question invited students to provide suggestions for helping other FGCSs feel empowered to succeed in college. Their responses offered the following words of encouragement:

“You have already made it this far, don't give up now.”

“Know that you can and WILL succeed.”

“Don't lose hope, patience, or love for what makes you happy, learning is something no one can take from you.”

“It will get better. Find the people that make you feel supported, get rest, build good study habits, and have a direction.”

“Trust yourself, you're stronger than what you think. Remember who you are doing this for. Take everything one day at a time.”

“Ask for help. Talk to other people. Don't think you're the only one going through hardships and that you're alone in this.”

“It may be hard, but in the end it will all be worth it. Don't let other people define you or determine your worth. Take advantage and utilize as many resources as you can; they are in place to help you succeed and set yourself up for the future that you dream of!”

“No matter what, you have the power to shape your future.”

Discussion and Implications

This research advances our understanding of how the first-generation label shapes students' self-perceptions and their perceived ability to succeed in college. The findings illustrate the duality of the FGCS label, reveal how student perceptions of having the FGCS label change over time, and underscore the critically important role FGCS support programs play in helping these students adjust to and thrive in college.

Duality of the FGCS Label

Findings from this study illustrate the influence student labels may have on academic performance and student success—both positive and negative (Feng & Wang, 2018; Green-Eneix, 2016; Parsons, 2024). While study participants view the label as providing opportunities for additional support and resources, they acknowledge that it can also increase social pressures and the pressure to be successful.

Positive Effects

A key positive effect is feeling connected to peers who share the first-generation label and recognizing that they are not the only student facing a similar set of challenges (Murphy &

Destin, 2016). Bringing together students under the first-generation label can also foster feelings of being valued members of the university community (Tinto, 2025). Another benefit derived from the label is having access to additional support. Students appreciate the opportunity to use services and resources designed to address their specific needs. Importantly, the study documents how the label can serve as a powerful motivator, inspiring students to excel academically and persist through graduation to make their families proud.

Negative Effects

The findings also demonstrate how the FGCS label can serve as a detriment to student success. Many study participants learned about the label during the college admission process. Awareness of the label can lead FGCSs to enter college with a deficit mindset, feeling at a disadvantage because they do not have a parent to guide them through the process (Dix et al., 2020). This in turn can increase levels of fear that may stem from not knowing what to expect. It can also make them feel less capable and ill-equipped to perform well academically, entering college with lower self-efficacy than other incoming students and questioning their ability to be successful (Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007). Feeling different from other students can promote imposter phenomenon, believing that they may not have what it takes to be successful and that they may not even belong in college (Shin & Lytle, 2024; Whitehead & Wright, 2017). The feeling of being different can also make it more difficult for these students to relate and interact with peers who do not share the FGCS label—students who have college educated parents and come from higher socio-economic backgrounds, students who do not have the added pressure to succeed because they are the first in the family to pursue a college degree, and do not have the constant worry of securing the financial means to stay enrolled in college (Azpeitia et al., 2025; Padgett et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the label can cultivate a perception among first-generation students that other members of the university community—peers, staff, and faculty—may underestimate their capabilities and hold misconceptions about their potential to be successful in college (Murphy & Destin, 2016). This is important given the effect student perceptions can have on academic performance and persistence (Thompson, 2014; Tinto, 2025). It suggests the need to raise awareness of the negative impact false narratives about FGCSs can have on these students and to actively work to inform and shift these perceptions (Green-Eneix, 2016).

Evolution of FGCS Identity

The study also finds that over time, many of these students developed the attitudes and behaviors needed to be successful in college. The initial fears and insecurities associated with being a FGCS experienced early on, transformed into higher levels of self-efficacy and increased confidence in their ability to do well. Students' academic confidence grew from feeling comfortable seeking assistance and using resources to improve study skills and academic outcomes. Social support was strengthened by 1) developing positive relationships with advisors who provide guidance and encouragement, and 2) establishing friendships, getting involved, and attending events and programs with their FGCS peers. Through their experiences, students' feelings of being an impostor and not fitting in diminished and their sense of belonging increased. This is important given the role sense of belonging and self-efficacy play in helping students successfully progress through college (Choi, 2005; Gopalan & Brady, 2020; Koh et al., 2022; Means & Pyne, 2017; Vuong et al., 2010). Additionally, the FGCS label, first perceived as an impediment, later fostered a sense of pride and a desire to support other first-generation students. This finding demonstrates how initial negative self-perceptions and identity as a FGCS

can evolve into a positive influence on student success and suggests the need to employ interventions to encourage this transformation.

Role of FGCS Support Programs

A significant contribution this study makes is highlighting the crucial role FGCS support programs play in empowering first-generation college students to view their identity as an asset and providing the support needed for their success. The findings add to existing research by affirming the positive role FGCS programs can play in supporting degree completion for this population of students (Green-Eneix, 2016; Quinn et al., 2019; Schelbe et al., 2019). Key factors that contribute to the success of these programs include providing students with opportunities to establish meaningful connections, access resources, and receive holistic support that focuses on student well-being.

Fostering Community and Sense of Belonging

A major benefit derived from participating in the program was gaining a sense of community. Building community and fostering a sense of belonging early on can help alleviate some of the initial fears these students experience as they enter college (Craft Defreitas & Rinn, 2013; Weisen et al., 2024). For students in this study, the summer transition component of the program is designed to provide opportunities, before classes begin, to establish friendships with students facing similar challenges. A dedicated physical space, purposeful programming designed to foster engagement with peers, and mentoring are other program features that may have contributed to students' heightened sense of community and belonging (Azpeitia et al., 2025; Costello et al., 2018).

Providing Tailored Resources

Access to program resources tailored to the specific needs of first-generation students is another key program element. These resources include receiving additional academic guidance and services to enhance academic performance, and networking opportunities to secure part-time employment. Another vital program support is having staff trained to help students manage and resolve financial concerns.

Offering Holistic Support

The final, and perhaps most important factor in program success, is providing FGCSs with holistic support centered on well-being (Azpeitia et al., 2025; Clauss-Ehlers & Wibrowski, 2007; Garriott et al., 2015). This can be achieved by ensuring that program advisors and staff understand the complex interplay of the unique personal, social, cultural, financial, and academic factors affecting FGCS's path through college (Ko et al., 2025). Additionally, it means offering FGCSs consistent guidance, reassurance, and encouragement throughout their undergraduate experience. Programs and interventions that focus on developing skills, boosting confidence and motivation, fostering empowerment, nurturing supportive relationships, and promoting well-being can strengthen the self-efficacy and self-determination essential for students to successfully complete their degrees (Cárdenas Elliot, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Swanbrow Becker et al., 2017).

Limitations & Future Research

While this exploratory study offers valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Due to the study's sample size and its focus on students within a particular support program at a single institution, the findings are transferable, not intended to be generalizable to a

broader population. Recognizing that first-generation students are not a homogenous group (Ko et al., 2025; Murphy & Destin, 2016), additional research is needed to investigate potential differences in support needs within FGCS sub-groups. Furthermore, longitudinal studies could be employed to identify key factors that promote an asset-based mindset and increased self-efficacy among FGCSs and the effective strategies to facilitate this transformation.

Conclusion

This research offers novel insights into the effect the FGCS label can have on college success. Specifically, it reveals the label's impact on perceptions of self and one's ability to be successful in college, demonstrates how the label's influence on student success can change over time, and documents the critical role of FGCS support programs. While the label can facilitate access to vital support, the findings underscore the need for professionals who work with this population of students to understand how to help them counteract the potential negative effects.

Supporting first-generation students is essential to ensure that every student, regardless of their background, is provided with the support needed to reach their fullest potential and equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve their personal, academic, and career goals. Perhaps most importantly the study illustrates the power FGCS programs have to change lives, not only for students, but for the individuals who are dedicated to making a positive lasting impact on the students they serve.

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