

The next theme I want to cover for [#CelebrateFirstGen](#) Day is what professors can do to mentor [#FirstGen](#) students. Drawing on my personal background, readings, and experience mentoring undergrads, I came up with

Top Ten list of ways to support [#FirstGen](#) Students:

1. Memorize these words: You belong here. College is hard, but worth it. I want to help you succeed. What can I do? Listen to what comes next and ask follow up questions. Apply as needed in advising and office hour situations.
2. Once you know a student is [#FirstGen](#), help them SEE themselves as belonging in the academy. Share your own story, if applicable (see my earlier tweets). Or connect them with faculty who may share their experience. Representation matters.
3. Practice Proactive Advising: <https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/2016/01/proactive-advising-first-generation-students/> Reach out to struggling students. Build a trusting relationship so they feel comfortable using you as a resource. Also, understand where [#Firstgen](#) students are coming from by reading up on their experience & challenges.
4. Tell them about the Financial Aid help ([@kuaffordability](#)), counseling resources (KU CAPS), Writing and Math Centers ([@KUWritingCenter](#)), Career Centers ([@kucareer](#)), and food access (<http://www.cco.ku.edu/food/>).
5. If your university doesn't have support resources specifically for [#FirstGen](#) students, advocate for one. Colleges are getting better at getting FirstGens through admissions, but still lack support for students once they are on campus.
6. Explain that classes are important in college, but so much of the experience is what happens outside of the lecture hall. Encourage them to get into research, leadership, or service learning. Share campus resources for these programs ([@ugresearchKU](#) [@KUMcNair](#) [@HERSInternship](#)).
7. While encouraging [#FirstGen](#) students to engage in college, be cognizant that they may be supporting themselves and others. If you can show or provide paid opportunities to build skills, do it. Show them where to find paid opportunities. Don't ask students to do unpaid work.
8. Talking with students about career options should be the work of professors as well as the Career Center. Most [#firstgen](#) students are focused on pragmatic, established paths because that's what they know. Tell them about pathways that they may not know. Open doors.
9. Explain the importance of networking and introduce them to your network. Most [#FirstGen](#) students think that their work ethic will get them where they need to go, because it has so far. They may not understand professional circles, where who you know matters for opening doors.
10. If you have a research group, engage undergrads in the group. Help them understand how grad school is different from undergrad. Give them responsibility and autonomy. It won't click for all of them, but for those [#FirstGen](#) students who take to it, it is life changing.

Tweets by Amy Burgin ([@burginam](#)) for Celebrate First Generation Student Day (11/8/18)