

The First Generation Scholars Network

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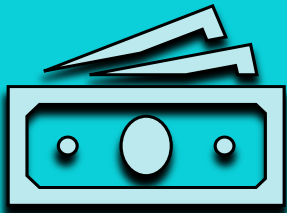
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About ISAC



Our Mission Statement

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



We are the college access and financial aid agency in the State of Illinois that administers scholarship, grant, prepaid tuition, and student loan repayment/forgiveness programs.



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

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 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

First Generation Scholars Network

- Meet other first generation students attending their college
- Provide support over summer to help combat summer melt
- One-on-one assistance from ISACorps members
- Connect students to first gen and near peer programs at colleges in Illinois
- Outreach events specifically for first-generation students
- Hear stories from current first generation college students and first generation college graduates

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

Building Community

- ISAC & ISACorps work with high school students across the state and know where they plan to go to college
- FGSN extends this college going work after high school graduation to help students develop a sense of belonging as they transition to college
- A sense of belonging can improve persistence through first term and first year of college



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 the "Going to College" YouTube Summer Series](#)
- [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

			
Denisse Diaz	Michael Emerson	Catherine Throm	Kristen Latham
Assigned district: JOUET JUNIOR COLLEGE	Assigned district: KANKAKEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE	Assigned district: LEWIS AND CLARK COMMUNITY COLLEGE	Assigned district: OLIVE-HARVEY COLLEGE
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Additional Language: Spanish			

Join the Network

Ready to join?

You can join using our online form

[JOIN NOW!](#)

Have questions? Email us at ISAC.FirstGen@illinois.gov



Check out more First Generation Scholars Network videos



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

Ways Students Can Join the FGSN

Options include:

1. Complete online information form on FGSN webpage
2. Provides contact information to an ISACorps member

FGSN Outreach Events

Students will be invited to events customized outreach events:

- “Headed to College Celebration” in May
- “Going to College Series” hosted by ISACorps, topics include:
 - “How to Have a Good College Experience on a Budget”
 - “Being Away from Home for the First Time”
 - “Keeping Sane: Balancing School, Work, and Family”
 - “Commuting: Perks & Challenges”
- On campus meet & greet
- FAFSA/Alternative App completion in the fall

Partnering With Colleges

- One point of contact at college needed to work with ISAC corps member assigned to college
- Work together to support and connect students with campus resources and supports
- ISAC will assist students with completing their FAFSA or Alternative Application in the fall

