

2023



COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING®  
CONFERENCE

# Supporting First Generation Students from High School to **College Completion**

Rockford University

Regents First Program

Dr. Karen P. Walker, Dean of Academic Support

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Proud to be  
First  
Generation

## Role at RU: Dean of Academic Support

**Email:**

Kwalker@rockford.edu

**Phone:**

815-226-4088

**Favorite Fun Food:**

Mint chocolate chip ice cream

Dr. Karen P. Walker, Dean of Academic Support, Rockford University

### Dr. Karen Walker



**Interesting Fact:**

Dr. Walker is the youngest of 6 children, an avid reader, and moving from good to great with her gardening skills.

ROCKFORD  
UNIVERSITY



**REGENTS  
FIRST**

ROCKFORD  
UNIVERSITY



**REGENTS  
FIRST**

# ROCKFORD UNIVERSITY



**REGENTS  
FIRST**

Dr. Karen P. Walker, Dean of Academic Support, Rockford University

# Effective Support for First Gens

SMOOTH TRANSITION INTO COLLEGE

+

CONTINUED STRUCTURED SUPPORT

=

INCREASED RETENTION & COMPLETION RATES

# Regents First Retention Facts

<p><b>Summer/Fall 21 Inaugural Cohorts</b></p>	<p>Total Participants = 12</p>	<p>Fall21 to Fall22 retention rate = <b>92%</b></p> <p>Fall22 to SP23 retention rate = <b>83%</b></p> <p><u>Current Fall22 to Fall23 = 83%</u></p> <p>WD = 2 student</p>
<p><b>Summer/Fall 22 Cohorts</b></p>	<p>Total Participants = 16</p>	<p>Fall21 to SP23 retention rate = <b>100%</b></p> <p><b>Current</b> Fall22 to Fall23 retention rate = <b>100%</b></p> <p><b>Possible</b> AD = 1 student</p>
<p><b>Summer/Fall 23 Cohorts</b></p>	<p>GOAL = 25 participants</p>	



**Summer/Fall 2021 Inaugural Cohort**

**83% Retention Rate**



# Summer/Fall 2022 Cohort =

## 100% Retention Rate

- Summer Retreat

- Fall Retreat





# Regents First Program Overview



# WRAP AROUND

# STUDENT SUPPORT



CAREER



SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL



ACADEMIC



FINANCIAL

# Regents First Program Staff for 2023-24 Academic Year

- **Dean of Academic Support**
- **College Life Skills Coach (currently part-time)**
- **Graduate Assistant (10 hours/week)**
- **1 Peer Mentor (rising Senior)**
- **2 Peer Mentors (rising Juniors)**
- **2 Peer Mentors (rising Sophomores)**

# Participant Requirements

GOAL = 25 PARTICIPANTS

10 = Summer 2023 Start

15=Fall 2023 Start

Pell Eligible/MAP Eligible

First Generation

Regular or Committee Admit

Complete **Application** & **Interview** for Program Participation

Summer or Fall Retreat

# Non-Negotiable Requirements Can Foster a Sense of Belonging on Campus

## Orientation

Must attend  
Welcome  
Week

## Success Workshops 75%

3 sessions  
each AY

## Leadership & Cultural Events

2 events  
each  
semester  
(minimum)

## Meet with Coaches & Advisors

Academic  
Advisor

**College Life  
Skills Coach**

Financial Aid  
Coach

## Meet with Peer Mentors

Weekly  
contact

Study Group

# Structured Support for First Gens

## Encouraging **Self** Care

- Professor office hours
- Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction (SI)
- Meet with counselor at Lang Health Center
- Exercise
- Christian Fellowship Group

## Facilitating **Community** Care

- Recognition and celebration of growth and accomplishments
- Mentor led study groups
- Time and space to be “real” with others who can relate
- Physical space to gather and have a “campus home”
- Group pages on social media and chat platforms

# Executive Leadership Team Support for First Generation Students





# Commencement 2023 Volunteers: We are NEXT!





# Proud to Be First!

July 2021 Inaugural Cohort

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Rockford University

