

How First-Generation Students Spend Their Time:  
Clues to Academic and Social Integration

by

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Abstract

This study explored the activities in which first-generation students engage that might promote academic and social integration. Additionally, differences in activities by race were examined. Participants included fifteen Caucasian and fifteen Multicultural first-generation, first-year students. Respondents maintained logs of their daily academic and social activities for a two-week period during their first semester on campus. The logs yielded both quantitative and qualitative data.

The results revealed several interesting findings. First, first-generation students engaged in a number of academic behaviors that often contribute to academic integration and success. Although they were not always confident in their abilities as a student, first-generation participants attended most of their classes, completed assignments, participated in class discussions, and visited their professors to seek assistance. Second, although informants seemed to devote more time to academic pursuits, they did take time to enjoy conversations and activities with peers and attend meetings and events on campus. Third, Caucasian and Multicultural first-generation students were nearly equally involved in academic pursuits. However, Caucasian students focused on developing personal relationships with those who support their success, while Multicultural students focused more on results and achievement. Fourth, both Caucasian and Multicultural students found ways to be involved socially on campus, but Caucasian students were more comfortable describing their time spent out of the classroom.

In general, the students in this study were not as much at risk as results from prior research on first-generation students has suggested they might be. In their first semester, they found ways to participate successfully in the academic and social environments of college.

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