

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL
EFFECTIVENESS & STUDENT SUCCESS

SPOTLIGHT

CHARTING STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH DATA & RESEARCH

ACCESS & SUCCESS: FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS



What are the
challenges
**FIRST GEN
STUDENTS
FACE?**



Who are
First Gen
**STUDENTS
AT NOVA?**



What are
the success
**METRICS OF
FIRST GEN
STUDENTS?**

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NOVA
Northern Virginia
Community College

THE PATH OF A FIRST GEN STUDENT

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO ACCESS & SUCCESS

A first generation student is a student who is the first in their immediate family to pursue a college degree or credential. As such, enrolling in college and completing a degree is a huge accomplishment—one that can lead to social and economic mobility for both a first generation student and their family. However, first generation students face significant barriers to access and success in college. Without parents who attended college, these students may be less familiar with admissions processes and financial aid applications. Once enrolled, they are often less academically prepared than their peers, which can lead to delays in their path to graduation.

At NOVA, over 10,000 students identify as a first generation student. Each one of these students is more at risk of not graduating than their continuing generation peers. In the 2017–2023 Strategic Plan, NOVA commits to having a positive impact on the social and economic mobility of all students. Therefore, understanding the characteristics of this at-risk student population will be critical to meeting the institution's goals of helping every student to succeed.

¹ (2014). *Profile of Undergraduate Students: 2011–2012*. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

² Cataldi, E.F., Bennett, C., and Chen, X. (2018). *First-Generation Students: College Access, Persistence, and Postbachelor's Outcomes*. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

³ Redford, J. and Hoyer, K.M. (2017). *First-Generation and Continuing-Generation College Students: A Comparison of High School and Postsecondary Experiences*. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

⁴ (2018). *First-Generation Students at NOVA: Fall 2013 through Fall 2017*. Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success, Northern Virginia Community College.

NATIONWIDE NUMBERS



34%

of all college students are first generation.¹

38%

of all community college students are first generation.¹

54%

of first generation students who left college without a degree cited financial constraints as the reason.³



56%

of first generation students earned a degree or were still enrolled after six years.²

74%

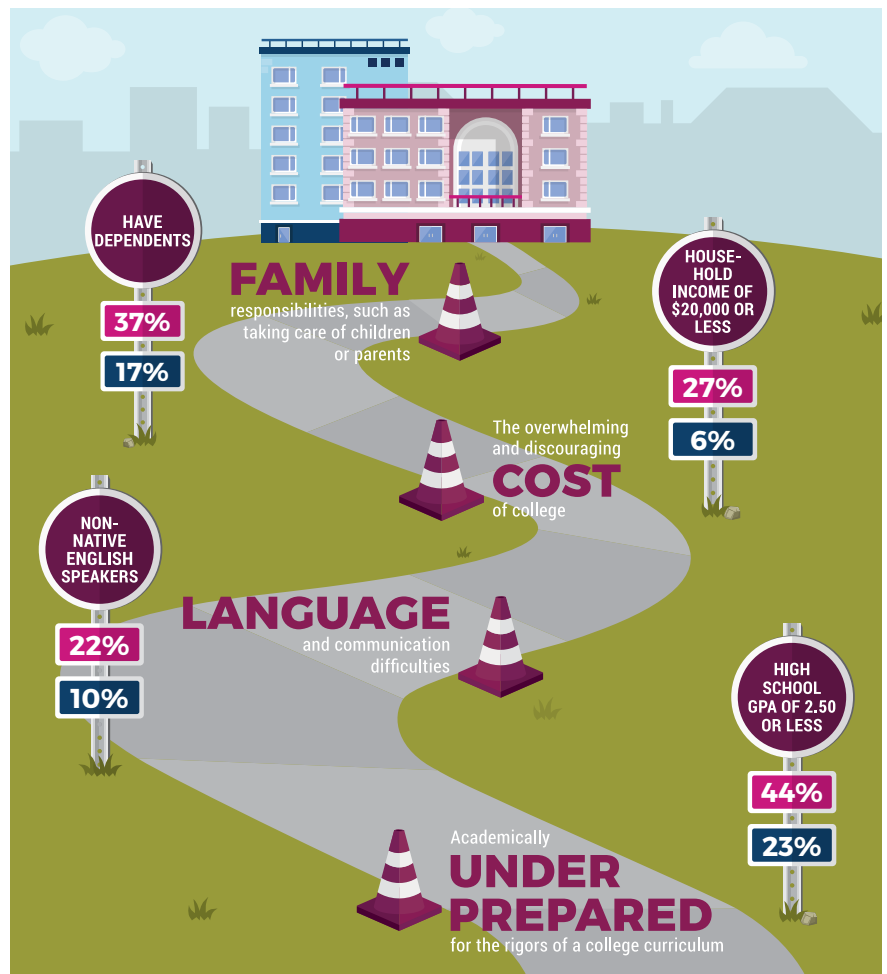
of continuing generation students earned a degree or were still enrolled after six years.²

BARRIERS TO ACCESS

First generation students face a multitude of challenges before they even step foot on campus. In comparison to their continuing generation peers, first generation students are more likely to have family caretaking responsibilities and low incomes. Many of these students are English learners and academically underprepared for college.³

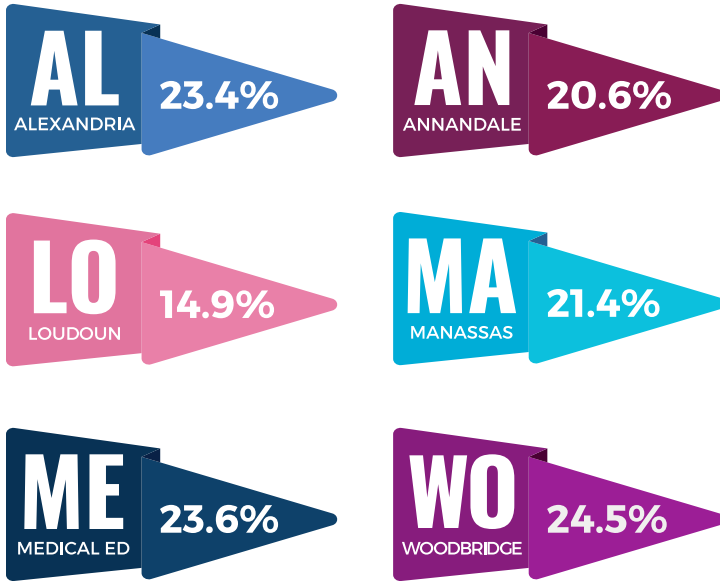
■ First Generation

■ Continuing Generation



FIRST GEN STUDENTS AT NOVA

At NOVA, over one-fifth of students report they are the first in their family to attend college. This proportion varies on each campus, with the Woodbridge Campus having the largest percentage of first generation students.



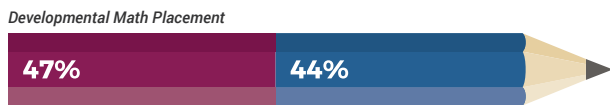
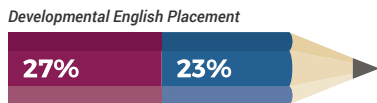
EDUCATION OUTLOOK

One of the biggest challenges a first generation student faces is acclimating to the rigors of a college-level curriculum. As a result, first generation students often struggle to achieve the same academic outcomes as their continuing generation peers.⁴



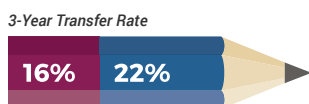
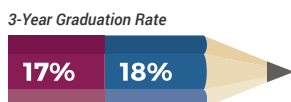
REMEDIAL COURSES

Many first generation students will require remedial coursework when they first enroll in college. At NOVA, first generation students are placed into developmental courses at a slightly higher rate than continuing generation students.



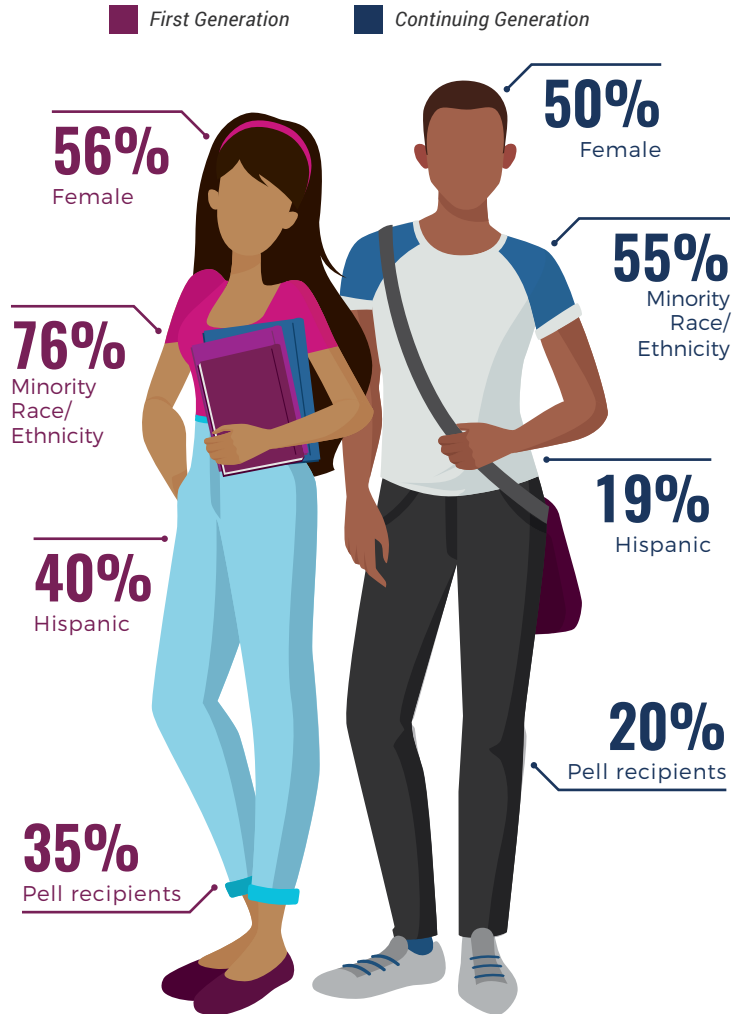
GRADUATION & TRANSFER

Many first generation students will never graduate or transfer to a four-year institution. At NOVA, first generation students graduate and/or transfer at a rate slightly lower than continuing generation students.



NOVA STUDENT PROFILE

In Virginia, underserved student populations (USPs) include students who are first generation, of a minority race or ethnicity, from an underserved geographic location, or eligible for a Pell grant. At NOVA, a higher proportion of first generation students exhibit additional characteristics that define USPs—such as belonging to a racial or ethnic minority or receiving a Pell grant—in comparison to their continuing generation peers.⁴



BEYOND NOVA

On-campus services are some of the first opportunities first generation students have to receive advice about career prospects and the job market. By enhancing career service offerings, such as those mentioned below, NOVA can play a critical role in helping first generation students to find employment after graduation.



Virtual and on-campus job fairs



Resume and cover letter workshops



Employer visits to campus



Practice interviews

LEARN MORE

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF

First generation students face many unique challenges as the first in their families to navigate the college experience. They are often more unfamiliar with admissions processes, financial aid applications, and enrollment procedures. These students may find it difficult to navigate program and course offerings, and may need additional support understanding the types of jobs available to them upon earning a credential. Each of these challenges can result in delays in graduation and/or transfer to a four-year institution.

NOVA offers a variety of support services and programs to help all students to succeed, many of which can be particularly beneficial for first generation students.



PAYING FOR COLLEGE

The **Financial Aid Office** provides financial assistance and advising to help students understand how they can cover the cost of college. Students are encouraged to apply for federal, state, and NOVA-specific scholarships, grants, and loans, including need-based financial aid.

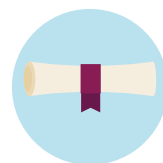
Learn more about financial aid and how to apply at:
<http://www.nvcc.edu/financialaid/index.html>



CHOOSING A PROGRAM OF STUDY

Counselors and advisors are available on all campuses to assist students with course selection and career advice. Exploring academic programs and choosing a major early can help students stay on track. By meeting regularly with an advisor, students can discuss their academic and career goals and learn more about their options.

Learn more or speak with a virtual counselor through live chat at: <http://www.nvcc.edu/advising/index.html>



PATHWAY TO THE BACCALAUREATE

The **Pathway to the Baccalaureate** program is a partnership between NOVA, K-12 public schools, and George Mason University. The program serves students who need additional guidance as they navigate their educational goals, including first generation students.

Learn more about the Pathway program at:
<https://www.nvcc.edu/pathway>



CAREER SERVICES

Career Services offers a variety of resources to help students to explore career paths and reach their academic and career goals. Students can participate in career assessments, receive feedback on resumes and cover letters, practice interview techniques, and attend on-campus job fairs and career events.

Find the nearest Career Services office and see upcoming events at: <http://www.nvcc.edu/careers/index.html>

VISIT SPOTLIGHT ONLINE AT BLOGS.NVCC.EDU/SPOTLIGHT

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS & STUDENT SUCCESS

George E. Gabriel, Ph.D., VP of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success

Elizabeth (Lisa) Hill, Associate Professor Graphic Design, Alexandria

Designers: Jennifer Knotts | John Shea