

JAMIE MANZANARES

I am Jamie Manzanares and I am an academic advising professional in the College of Business. When I think about my experiences as a first generation student, I remember wondering when the bell would ring to tell me to go to my next class, going to the bookstore for the first time and debating on new or used books, and learning the value of an already highlighted book. The challenge for me in the beginning was adjusting, feeling like I want it, thinking about if I belong or not. I recently read an article about the pressures to perform as a first generation college student, because there is such a big celebration of just attending college and that can lead to the overwhelming fear of failure. I think this is especially true with students who come from minority families.

I felt the most successful when I was doing it all for myself and not for the recognition from others. I was all by myself, eight hours from home, figuring out how to study from friends, and doing what I knew to survive in college. After my freshman year **I was more successful because I began forming study groups with classmates, going to tutoring, and losing the fear of asking for help.** Still, I wish I would have gone to more tutoring nada skied for help more often, but I used my freshman year experiences to form better habits the following years.

The struggles first generation students face both freshman year and beyond, I think, are a multifaceted problem of finding belonging in a new environment. The first part of that is shedding the belief that you have to be exactly who you were in high school. Finding a group of people who I could relate to was comforting, and letting go of the idea that I would not of been friends with the same people if we were all back in a high school setting. The other part of that problem is the pressure first generation students feel from their parents or families or belong. This problem can be exacerbated if a student is not as successful as they had hoped. The finally prong could be finding a support system, because many times parents of first generation college students are unsure how to be supportive to their student. I have noticed that many first generation student parents' so not attend parent's weekend or events of this sort, partially because they do not understand the impact their attendance has on the student or because of financial reasons preventing their attendance. The remedy for this struggle, again in my opinion, is to keep an open line of communication with everyone. Asking questions can help put a student and ease, but can also help reassure the student in the support available to them.

A piece of parting advice I would like to give to first year, first generation students would be to try and visit campus multiple times, talk to people who go to the school, and try to find a group of people who will be in your class before you start your freshman year. All of that would prepare and help students because knowing is half the battle.