Pathways to Success for First Generation Students

Executive Summary

PURPOSE

The 2016-2017 Undergraduate Research Partnership Initiative (URPI) study examines the ways first generation college Students of Color at UCLA leverage marginalized forms of cultural capital to achieve their educational and career goals. Fourteen semi-structured interviews and a document analysis of participant's college going maps were used to address the following research questions: *1) What mindsets, behaviors or strategies do first-generation college students draw upon in order to navigate the postsecondary institutional environment in pursuit of their educational and career goals? 2) What can higher education institutions do to support and strengthen these mindsets, behaviors and strategies?*

By grounding the analysis in both critical race theory (CRT) and the Community Cultural Wealth Model (CCW), this asset-based study aims to challenge, interrogate and disrupt normative constructions of first-generation students as unable or unwilling to maintain academic excellence within institutions of higher education. By centering the voices of first generation Students of Color, this research sheds light on organizational barriers to success for minoritized students. In doing so, this study calls into question the colorblind, meritocratic construction of higher education in hopes of inspiring systemic change that will improve access, experiences and outcomes for first generation students.

FINDINGS

Overall, four major themes emerged from the data:
1) Intersectional Barriers to Obtaining Career Goals
2) Limited Capacity, Transparency, and Diversity of First Generation Resources
3) Community Cultural Wealth as a Means of Augmenting Resource Gaps
4) The Connection between Identity, Community Cultural Wealth, and Career Aspirations

Overall, respondents expressed mounting concern over three broad areas of first generation services: the availability, the diversity, and the accessibility of resources.

IMPLICATIONS

While first generation students did acknowledge the efforts the campus has made to provide resources for them, there were still significant gaps in coverage. In order to address the concerns reported by students, UCLA should consider several institutional changes: 1) supporting and validating students' use of community cultural wealth to reach their goals; 2) addressing intersections of race, first generation status, and mental health that are particularly challenging for this group; and 3) increasing outreach to connect first-generation students to specific resources.

Introduction

The Undergraduate Research Partnership Initiative (URPI) is an ongoing research collaboration between Student Affairs Information and Research Office (SAIRO) researchers and current UCLA undergraduates. The program engages UCLA students in qualitative research on student experiences that informs the work of Student Affairs practitioners and other campus stakeholders. The 2016-2017 URPI team consisted of 5 undergraduate researchers and one graduate researcher. The undergraduate researchers represented a range of student demographics, varying by major, race/ethnicity, gender, and international/domestic student status.

The 2016-2017 Undergraduate Research Partnership Initiative (URPI) study examined the ways first generation college students at UCLA leverage marginalized forms of cultural capital to achieve their educational and career goals. Fourteen semi-structured interviews and a critical race oriented document analysis of participant's college going maps were used to address the following research questions:

1) What mindsets, behaviors or strategies do first-generation college students draw upon in order to navigate the postsecondary institutional environment in pursuit of their educational and career goals?
2) What can higher education institutions do to support and strengthen these mindsets, behaviors and strategies?

By grounding the analysis in both critical race theory (CRT) & Community Cultural Wealth Model (CCW), this asset-based study aims to challenge, interrogate and intervene upon normative constructions of first-generation students as unable or unwilling to maintain academic excellence within institutions of higher education. By centering the voices of historically marginalized and oft-overlooked students, this research sheds light on organizational barriers to success for minoritized students. In doing so, this study calls into question the colorblind, meritocratic construction of higher education in hopes of inspiring systemic change that will improve access, experiences and outcomes for first generation students.

Method

This project employed a mixed-method approach. First, semi-structured interviews with 14 participants were conducted at the start of winter quarter. Members of the undergraduate research team conducted interviews after completing three months of extensive training designed to enhance their understanding and ability to conduct qualitative research. In recognizing the prevalent role of social media in the lives of college-age youth (Invoking Agency Brief, 2016), this study elected to disseminate information about the study via major social media outlets that have high user traffic for UCLA students. Drawing upon campus data from previous URPI studies, the undergraduate researchers elected to post study descriptions and online fliers on UCLA-affiliated Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages, including the Bruin Transfer Page and the First Generation Bruin page. Importantly, having undergraduate student conduct interviews potentially allowed participants to express their views about the campus climate as it relates to first-generation students of color in ways they might not have expressed to a campus administrator.

In addition to interviewing, the research team also performed a critical document analysis of participants' hand drawn college-going maps. Prior to the interview, participants were asked to visually represent their pathway to, through and beyond college on a blank sheet of white paper. Leaving the requirements of the visual aid open-ended allowed participants to be creative in the ways they characterized their college experience thus far. Participants were then asked to bring their maps to the interview, where they were allowed to edit and revise their maps as they recalled new and relevant information during the semi-structured dialogue. In order to maintain a sense of privacy and confidentiality, participants' college maps were entrusted to the respective team members who interviewed them. Following the interview, the researchers examined the participants' revised college going maps and compared them to not only what they said in the interview, but also to the original college map they created before the said interview.

Analysis of interview data began with analytic memos in which research team members reflected not only on the content of individual interviews, but also on the changes observed between what was stated in the interview and what was observed on the participants' college going maps. The team reviewed transcripts and collectively developed a coding schema that captured trends and themes across interviews and documents that was used to code all transcripts and college going maps. Transcripts and maps were coded more than once to ensure inter-rater reliability among team members. Researchers made a concerted effort to interview a diverse group of students, both in terms of academic major, year in school, and gender. All demographic information was self-reported. Names of participants were removed from study transcripts and reports, as was any other potentially identifying information, to protect participants' privacy. **Table 1** displays participant demographics

Table 1. Participant Demographics (n=14)

Race/Ethnicity	Laotian (1) Latino/Hispanic (13)	**Gender**	Female (7) Male (7)
Academic Major	Biology (1) Geography and Environmental Science (1) History (1) Mathematics for Teaching (1) Molecular, Cell, and Developmental Biology (2) Political Science (4) Psychology (1) Psychobiology (1) Sociology (2)	**Academic Minor(s)**	Biomedical Research (1) Education Studies (3) GIS (1) Global Health (1)

Findings

Overall, four major themes emerged from the interview data: 1) intersectional barriers to obtaining career goals 2) limited capacity, transparency, and diversity of first generation resources, 3) community cultural wealth as a means of augmenting resource gaps and 4) the connection between identity, community cultural wealth, and career aspirations.

Intersectional Barriers for First Generation Students

When asked to discuss their experiences as a student at UCLA, all of the students indicated that there were unique barriers to maintaining academic excellence and achieving their career goals for first generation students. Comparing his experience to those of non-first generation students, Jacob[1] said,

> "They have an advantage financially more so than academically just because a lot of them don't have to worry about debt, or most of them, actually. I feel like most of them are just sticking with school, while there are others who are working a job and trying to pay off school and housing and student loans."

Mateo provided additional insight by adding that non-first generation students "have someone they could go ask immediately, by having family members or siblings that have been to college." This difference was particularly salient for the study participants and several of them distinguished their experiences from non-first generation students by the amount of familial knowledge they could draw upon to better navigate the college going process. For instance, Dante added,

> "because [non-first generation students] had family members who went to universities, it's easier. They were told about the processes of applying, getting into, and staying at the college that they got

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[1] All names in this brief are pseudonyms to maintain participant confidentiality.

into. I didn't have that. Nobody went to school in my family, so I was on my own throughout that whole process."

The notion of being "all alone" in the higher education process was a prevalent theme across all of the interviews. Reflecting back on his freshman year experiences, Mateo stated, "I came in here blind, and I had to learn everything on my own." Marco echoed Mateo's sentiments, confessing that being the first in his family to attend college left him feeling "really lost and trying to just trying to figure out how classes worked, how financial aid works, scholarships, everything." Students repeatedly referred to themselves as academic "pioneers" while explaining how they had to forge a path through academe for themselves. Arianna explained, "As a first –gen student, I have to be the pioneer for many things. I had to figure out how to get to college, how to apply, how to enroll in classes, what classes I should take, how to succeed in college by staying on top of things and involved."

The compounded impact of minoritized race and first generation status on students' experiences should not be understated. In analyzing their experiences, study participants shed light on the pervasive presence of intersectional systems of oppression in their day-to-day college experience. Javier captured the subtleties of intersectional race and first generation status, noting, "There are a lot of first generation college students that don't have mentors... Comparing myself to my peers who are mostly Caucasians, they'll have parents that are lawyers and will do [things to help them]. I didn't have any of that." In addition to encountering challenges related to racial identity, students simultaneously endured hardship related to class, gender, language and documentation status. After discussing the difficulty he faced filling out FAFSA as a first generation student, Dante went on to say, "I can imagine if I had the opportunity to apply to something like FAFSA and how discouraging it would be if I were undocumented...it would suck to want to attain a higher education and know that the system is not designed to help you." As an undocumented student himself, Mateo provided more insight to this unique experience for first generation students by explaining,

> There are a lot of first generation college students that don't have mentors.
>
> –Javier

> "My legal status has been something I have done all of the research for. I have called immigration people and been on the phone with them for hours asking what is needed for certain applications. I have had to fill out multiple more forms just to get the same place were some of my peers are at. It's been a struggle because there have been times when I asked an adult that is supposed to know but they don't really know. Being a young person, I didn't know what to do. If an adult doesn't know what to do what am I supposed to do?"

Battling compounded systems of power and oppression created mental and emotional strain for first generation students in this study. As an undocumented first generation student of color, Mateo admitted, "Sometimes it gets hard, having to do everything on your own. It's stressful and sometimes you feel overwhelmed." Lizeth echoed Mateo's sentiments, explaining that having to work, go to school and support herself in the higher education process can be "overwhelming at times. You always have something to do. It's fatiguing." Jacob's experiences also triggered feelings of stress, and he explains, "If you're not careful, you can get down about it. You can be really hard on yourself. Like everyone else has it easier and is doing better, why don't I have the same?"

Although they were acutely aware of the various barriers to success for first generation students, the first generation scholars in this study continued to persist in academia. By accessing critical resources on campus aimed at first generation students, the students in this study were able to foster academic resilience, gain professional development and strive towards their career goals.

Limited Capacity, Transparency, and Diversity of First Generation Resources

Overall, participants had positive perspectives about the resources made available to first generation college students at UCLA. When asked to describe the resources available to first generation students, Jacob said, "I do think that UCLA does a good job in supporting first generation college students. UCLA has AAP which is something I hear not a lot of other campuses having." Javier added, "There are specific programs that help students that are not represented in STEM like PEERS. Without these [resources] I think I would be lost at UCLA and would not have navigated it or known about as many resources." Mya, a first generation transfer student, added an additional layer of insight when she shared, "The transfer center was super helpful for me. They had a booklet that showed you an idea of what colleges are looking for. They had transferring workshops on different colleges. They also bussed us out to the STOMP conference here at UCLA." Similarly Marco noted, "UCLA offers a lot of resources for first-generation college students.... They provide class about education for first generation college students, they also have workshops throughout the hill, like if you're a first-generation college student, they recommend you attend these workshops." After describing the plethora of resources the University offers for first-generation students, Javier sad, "The resources are there. You just have to look for them."

The notion of having to actively look for resources on campus was a common theme throughout the interviews. While they were grateful for the academic resources that were available to first generation students, study participants simultaneously cited a lack of transparency around resources that could help them better address academic, career and personal hardships. When asked to discuss resources available to first generation students, some participants admitted that they hadn't used any while others noted that they weren't aware of such resources. For instance, Juliana explained,

> **It was a struggle navigating 'where do I go for this, where do I go for that.'**
>
> –Juliana

> "Being a first generation college student, but also being middle class was hard for me because I wasn't pointed to the scholarship center until last quarter, my second year here. I feel like there are so many resources here on campus, but I wouldn't have known about them unless I lived in the dorms or heard from someone who lived in the dorms. I think that it was a struggle navigating 'where do I go for this, where do I go for that.'"

She ended by saying, "The transfer student page on Facebook was super helpful, but I feel like resources aren't advertised."

In addition to noting difficulties around resource transparency, students also cited some challenges with gaining entry into resource programs. Juliana suggested that some of the requirements for participation in programs like FSP or AAP may unintentionally exclude some minoritized students who really need their quality support. She explained,

> "A huge struggle I had was that I wanted to be a part of AAP because I fit most of the criteria in what they were looking for, like I was a first-gen, minority. But I didn't meet the 'demonstrates financial need' aspect of it and I kind of felt disempowered. I just felt set back like there is this resource on campus for people like me but I can't use it."

Overall, participants felt that the campus offered two main sources of support for first generation students: FSP and AAP. Thus, diversity of resources was another perceived limitation to the institutional resources offered at UCLA. Students cherished the invaluable tools, support and community they gained from participating in these programs, stating, "FSP really helped a lot. It helped me in transitioning" and "I probably would not have came back that first quarter I had to withdraw. Had it not been for AAP." In addition to providing accolades, students simultaneously expressed a need for more departments, services and programs that could address their needs as well as more diversity and scope in the types of resources offered.

Community Cultural Wealth as a Means of Augmenting Resource Gaps

Despite the difficulties students faced trying to access institutional resources, they nevertheless devised culturally relevant strategies of success and survival. The participants in this study admitted to feeling

isolated, stigmatized and at times undervalued by faculty, peers and organizations on campus. Reflecting on the campus climate for racial minorities, Javier said, "I'd go to the dorms in Hedrick Hall and there was no one that looked like me. I was not really comfortable speaking to anyone else because I'm from South LA. So you don't see any white people there." Marco had similarly isolating experiences in his classes, stating, "that was kind of a struggle, just interacting with other people that weren't at a disadvantage. Just other people that weren't first gen students." He went on to confess that he often feels "isolated. I don't know the word for it, not out-casted, but I wasn't fully included." Dante's reflection that, "it would suck to want to attain a higher education and know that the system is not designed to help you" rang true for many of the study participants. While participants recognized that institutions of higher education were not necessarily made with their particular race, class or first-generation identity in mind, they did not let these obstacles hinder their route to success. Instead, the first generation students in this study drew heavily upon various forms of cultural capital in order to navigate, survive, and thrive within difficult academic, professional and personal spaces on campus.

Navigational Capital

When confronted with institutional barriers to equity and access, many students in the study leveraged navigational capital to strategically maneuver through academic and professional spaces that initially denied them access. Alma captured the sentiment of navigational capital when she said, "I am very perseverant. If I know I want to get somewhere, I don't stop until I get there. I find ways and create opportunities for myself."

Faced with intersectional systems of oppression, the first generation students in this study refused to be defeated and instead forged new pathways for themselves in creative ways. Navigational capital, or the ability of students to maintain academic invulnerability in the face of racial hostility, manifested most prevalently in student responses to exclusion and rejection. When asked how he keeps on his path to career success, Javier said,

> **So I just keep trying and that persistence has paid off.**
>
> **–Alma**

> "Resilience is a big characteristic. The way I got into my current lab, I simply just didn't take no for an answer. I just kept on coming to [the professor's] lab meetings even after he told he didn't really have a project for me to work on…. I went week after week after week, after five weeks he finally saw that I wasn't giving up and that's when he decided to call me in to talk to one of his grad students…Ever since then I have been working in his lab. So I think resilience and that attitude of not taking no for an answer has really benefited me."

Alma had a similar experience, explaining, "I once applied for a position to help in a campaign and didn't get the job, but I offered to volunteer because I really wanted the exposure. Soon after that, I was offered a position with them anyway. So I just keep trying and that persistence has paid off."

Mateo leveraged navigational capital when he remained persistent in the face of financial barriers and his undocumented status. He noted,

> "Ever since I was a sophomore in high school I have been struggling to attend college. My legal status has been something that no teacher or counselor has been able to help me with. My legal status has been something I have done all of the research for…. I have called immigration people and been on the phone with them for hours asking what is needed for certain applications. And ask if I wanted to do this can I get financial aid?"

After explaining how he remained resilient in the face of institutional barriers to access and equity, Mateo contextualized his resilience by comparing his experience to those of non-first generation students, stating,

> "Being a young person, I didn't know what to do [about my undocumented status] so like if an adult doesn't know what to do what am I supposed to do?…One of the differences that I see, is that non first generation college students have someone they could go ask immediately, by having family members or siblings [that attended college]."

Students' desire for professional development, academic excellence and career success inspired them to confront institutional barriers head on. More often than not, students' ability to forge their own pathways to success was fostered by deep-seated aspirations for success. These hopes and dreams fueled their resistance, despite there being no objective evidence that these aspirations would indeed come to fruition.

Aspirational Capital

Aspirational capital, or the ability to maintain hopes and dreams without having the means to achieve them, was regularly used by study participants. Javier confessed that,

> "There have been many times in my life where I'm not in the greatest circumstances, but despite that I applied to research programs when I was at working at a distribution center. This was a very low point in my life, but I did see the light on the other side of the tunnel. I decided to take a chance, and it ended up working out for me. I ended up getting a summer research internship despite not being in school for most of the year."

Ariana had a similar experience stating, "I got accepted into NYU and UCLA after community college and my parents didn't want me to go. They told me if I decided to go they wouldn't help me financially. I just told them fine, I can get a job." Since then, Ariana has worked over forty hours every week while being a full time student. She proudly notes, "I got promoted to manager within 3 months of working at my job." When asked how she is able to manage such a heavy work and school load, Ariana leverages her aspirational capital, noting, "I think just keeping my mind on what I want to do. Like this may be hard but it will be worth it one day."

Social Capital

While aspirational and navigational provide the internal resilience needed to forge new pathways and foster academic invulnerability, social capital is one of the tangible means by which students access scare resources at UCLA. Within institutions of higher education, social capital is generated, transferred and utilized by first generation students of color as a means of fostering resilience and academic excellence. Particularly at predominantly White and Asian institutions, where a majority of the students benefit from race or class privilege, the use of social capital becomes a vital tool of success and survival. As Maria put it, "Most of the things I'm involved in now are only because of the people I know introducing me to them. I would have never found out otherwise."

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>
> –Maria

Faced with institutional barriers to access and equity, participants relied heavily upon their peer groups and social networks, particularly social media interactions, to navigate UCLA in ways that would provide them with more successful and engaging experience on campus. Juliana explained, "The Transfer Student Groups and Facebook pages have helped for me to be in the know of things, like what is going on and what resources are available in SAC." Lizeth also uses social media to navigate campus, noting, "online I learn about a lot different events and things that are going on campus." Juliana commented on the importance of peer support for first generation students, saying, "My peers helped a lot. I did go to financial aid and the counseling center, but those were kind of like brief little moments that helped me a little bit. But otherwise it was mostly my peers." Jacob added, "I was part of a black male student cohort where they helped me navigate the college resources of the university. A lot of the older students that were in the sciences helped me how to pick classes. It was a really good support system." In addition to gathering information on social events, academic support and professional opportunities, students were also able to gain emotional and psychological support from their social networks. After explaining that her hardships were placing undue stress on her, Alma added, "I had a good support network within the transfer community, on the peer to peer level that helped out with a lot of my anxiety."

Linguistic Capital

Oftentimes, social capital was leveraged alongside linguistic capital to maximize both the quality and quantity of resources students could access. Marco captured this best when he said, "I think the fact that I am bilingual and there are clubs where I can meet other Mexican and Hispanic students and they speak Spanish, like my co-workers and stuff, that kind of helps." In addition to noting the ways linguistic capital can help build community, Maria shed light on the ways this capital can provide professional opportunities. She said, "Spanish helps me connect with a larger group of people and in the future I can speak with potential clients and community members. I have translated for other people before and they're grateful." Similar to Maria, Lizeth felt her linguistic capital was a useful tool in her professional development. She said, "I did a lot of mentoring and my high school was largely Hispanic. So whenever we got a new batch of kids, I would always interpret for the only Spanish-speaking parents. So it was very useful."

Unfortunately, she does not have similar feelings about her linguistic capital in college. At UCLA, Lizeth struggles to find the right avenue to leverage her linguistic capital. She notes, "I don't really get to speak Spanish at UCLA. I know that there are a lot of organizations geared towards Latinos and those of us who speak Spanish but to be honest those organizations seem very clique-y." Lizeth was not entirely alone in her struggle to fully leverage her funds of linguistic capital. When asked whether or not UCLA provides ample opportunities to leverage her linguistic capital, she responded, 'I speak Spanish, but that hasn't really made a huge difference in Westwood or UCLA. It will help me in the future for sure in my career, but not right now." With a bit of a heavy heart, Javier confessed, "I think I am losing my Spanish. I don't really get to use it, so it's slowly going away. I'm trying to become more articulate and focus on my English, but at the same time, I'm losing my Spanish. Language is like a culture, history, and tradition, so in a way I'm losing this to become more articulate in English and college." Ariana had a similar struggle when it came to using Spanish in college.

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>
> –Javier

Resistant Capital

Resistant capital refers to those skills that are developed through challenging inequality. The participants in this study described the oppression they endured while attempting to achieve their career goals, as well as the resistance they leveraged to overcome barriers such as negative stereotypes. Students enacted resistant capital in a myriad of ways, one of which was subverting dominant narratives of "success" in the academy. For instance, participants recognized that although their first generation status put them at a disadvantage, they were nevertheless able to reach success at the same level of education as non-first generation college students. Marco noted with pride that, "The fact that I am able to take the same classes at the same level of people that aren't first generation college students and knowing that I had to overcome a lot more obstacles, I feel like I've been successful." Redefining and deconstructing normative benchmarks of "success" was a prevalent means by which first generation students in this study operationalized their resistance capital.

While popular rhetoric positions first generation students as being academically unprepared for the professional world, the students in this study negated these majoritarian misunderstandings of their academic abilities. When asked whether or not they are "successful" students, each and every participant in the study answered in the affirmative. Contrary to traditional definitions of success, Ariana characterized success as "just a personal opinion. If you feel that you are constantly bettering as a person that is success. It's not how you compare to others, but how you compare to your old self, how much you have grown." Javier echoed these sentiments, stating, "I measure success by personal growth and know if I can't do something I'm going to measure my success by doing as much as I am capable of. As long as I'm constantly improving, and moving forward with my goals, I will be successful." Similar to his peers, Alejandro's notion of success incorporated his unique experiences with oppression. He said, "Given the circumstances that I have been handed in life, I do consider myself successful. I have had many successes despite my hardships."

Overall, the participants in this study leveraged oppositional behavior and mindsets in order to challenge the inequality they faced as first-generation college students and take full advantage of the resources available to them at UCLA. Marco mentioned that he uses resistant capital regularly, telling himself,

> "Nobody is going to do your work for you or tell you what to do. I told myself that only I could tell myself what to do. I realized that nobody else was going to be there and that UCLA would be like 'Alright, this minority student is out, let's bring the next one in.' I didn't want to be another statistic and I wanted to make people proud."

Challenging the status quo was an important benchmark of success for participants. Thus, it is not altogether surprising that the desire to disrupt and dismantle systems of oppression that maintain the status quo was and underlying theme in all of the participants' career goals.

Connections between Minoritized Identity and Career Aspirations

Salient connections between identity, cultural capital, and career aspirations arose from the data. When discussing their career aspirations, a majority of the participants made explicit connections between their future careers, their community's cultural wealth and their minoritized identities. For instance, Javier explained, "I want to be a leader in my community as a doctor who can change the stigma of health and mental health in general. I understand that changing the healthcare industry is a national issue, but I want to start the change in the healthcare industry in my community first." Ariana has similar career goals, mentioning, "I want to be a lawyer to give people the representation they need and same goes for local office. Where I am from, the city council is mostly men, with only one woman being the only person of Latino descent. That's what motivates me." Maria's goals are to, "work in public policy to be able to help disadvantaged communities, people who come from low income backgrounds, and people of color." When asked what influenced these career aspirations, Maria explained that it was "my background and the way I grew up. Had I grown up more privileged, I would have had different experiences and maybe I wouldn't care so much about the disadvantaged community and perhaps I would have chosen a different major." For many of the students, minoritized identity and a profound love and respect for their home communities influenced their career aspirations. The desire to change the status quo and create transformative social justice change fueled students' determination to obtain their career goals despite the myriad of hardships they faced in college.

Conclusion & Implications

Though UCLA has made substantial advances in both the type and quality of first generation resources being offered on campus, it can draw from the student voices in this report to continue developing and expanding academic and career resources for first generation students. Overall, respondents expressed mounting concern over three broad areas of first generation services: the availability, the diversity, and the accessibility of resources.

Supporting Students' Use of Community Cultural Wealth

UCLA could better support the development of students' ability to use cultural capital in college in order to enhance their ability to obtain their academic and professional goals. For instance, departments and organizations on campus could provide innovative workshops that teach students how to leverage their community cultural wealth within educational and professional spaces in ways that foster resilience, empowerment and social mobility. The University could also host various student and faculty panels or guest lecturer series that invite leading scholars in critical theory, first generation studies and community cultural wealth to provide additional information, personal insight and tangible advice on how to navigate institutions of higher education. In addition to helping students learn more about their own cultural capitals, UCLA should simultaneously provide professional development opportunities for faculty and staff to learn more about the unique mindsets, behaviors, and strategies that first generation students use to navigate higher education so that they are better equipped to support first generation students in identifying and capitalizing on their

unique strengths. By training faculty and staff, UCLA could help address our participants' concerns about not having adequate access to a diversity of resources, services and support systems.

Addressing Intersections of Race, First Generation Status and Mental Health for Minoritized Students

The emotional and psychological impacts of navigating higher education as a first generation college student should not be understated. Students in our study reported enduring heightened levels of anxiety, depression, insomnia, and fatigue as a result of heavier workloads, familial responsibilities, financial burdens and academic struggles than non-first generation peers. Thus, in addition to increasing the availability of academic and professional resources to first generation students, UCLA should also devote resources to offering culturally relevant and identity-oriented mental health services to minoritized student populations.

Increased Outreach for First-Generation Resources

While it is important to acknowledge the ways first generation students access cultural capital to maintain academic and career success in the midst of hostile campus climate, it is imperative to recognize the limitations in campus culture and institutional structures that place the burden of success and resilience upon students in the first place. In order to help reduce students' hardship and help them access institutional resources more regularly, UCLA can increase outreach to connect first generation students to campus resources. A significant number of participants were unaware of various programs and services available for first generation students, particularly female and LGBTQ students. Thus, some of the outreach efforts can occur within departments, courses and services that cater to these particular student populations, such as the Women and Gender Studies Department or the LGBTQ Resource Center. In addition to increasing outreach, campus administration could also work with student organizations to find innovative and attention-grabbing ways to inform students about resources, including social media pushes, Bruin Walk fliers, announcements on UCLA radio and podcast channels, and placing informative posters around campus.

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