

*First Gen
Symposium*

Monday, March 11, 2024

First Generation Scholars Network: How you can be a part

Abel Montoya

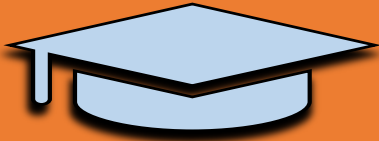
Director of Outreach Operations
Illinois Student Assistance Commission



First Gen Symposium

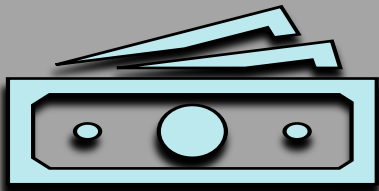


ISAC's Mission



Our Mission Statement

“Providing Illinois students with information and assistance to help make education beyond high school accessible and affordable”



We are the college access and financial aid agency in the State of Illinois that administers scholarship, grant, prepaid tuition, and student loan repayment/forgiveness programs.

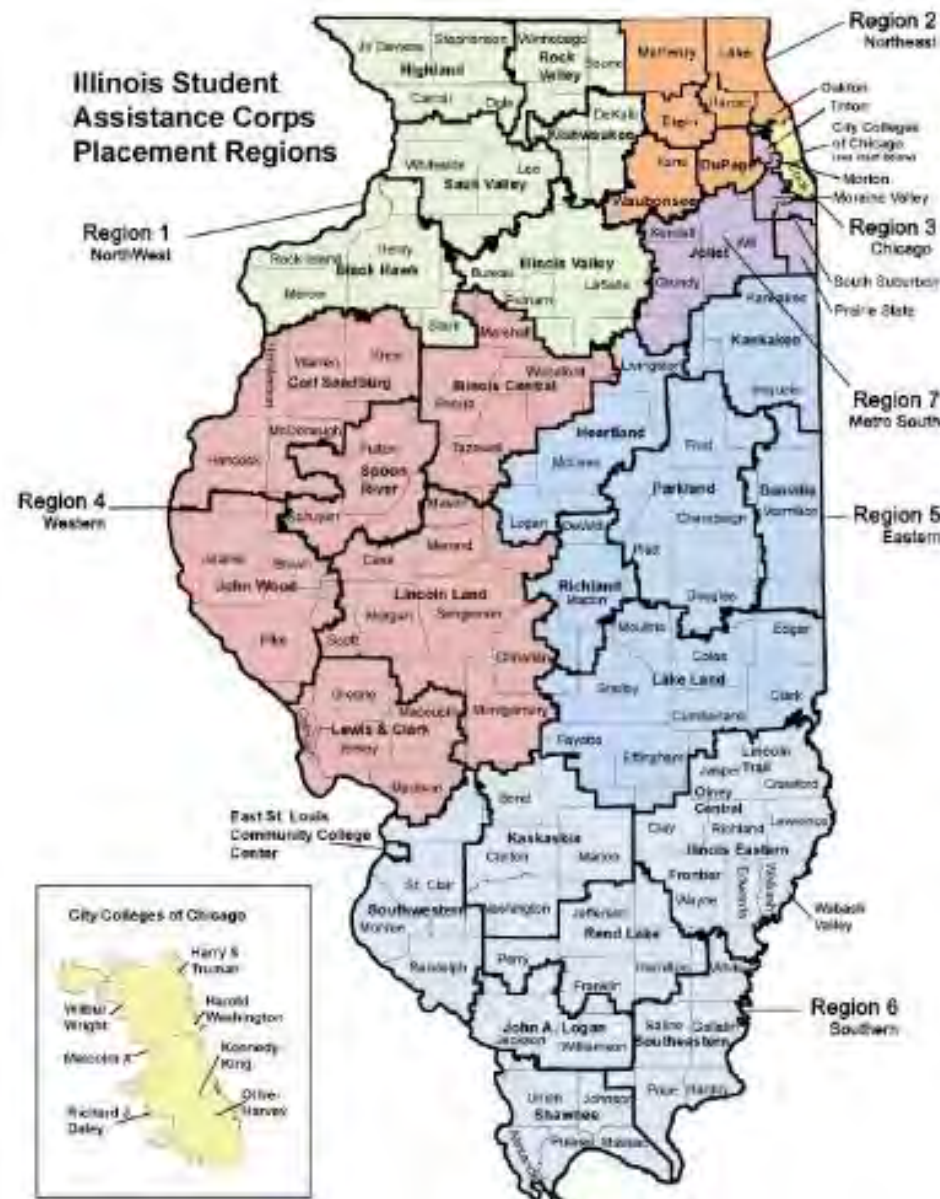


Near-peer model began in 2009

- Approximately 85 college grads of diverse backgrounds
- Work in the communities in which they live
- Majority are first-gen and/or MAP recipients

Serving the State of Illinois

- 1 – 3 Corps members per community college district
- 6 – 8 community college districts per ISACorps Region
- 7 ISACorps Regions in Illinois



ISACorps Outreach

- Assist students (and families) overcome academic, financial, and social barriers to higher education through presentations, workshops, and one-on-one meetings
- Represent ISAC at college fairs, financial aid nights, conferences, and related outreach events
- Foster college-going culture in communities throughout Illinois
- Proactively reach out to students who may be low-income and/or will be first generation college students

Who is Considered a First Gen Student

- Definitions vary
 - 4-year degree versus postsecondary credential
 - 4-year degree earned in the US vs earned in another country
 - What if parent(s) with the degree is no longer in the picture?
- ISAC welcomes all and assists all
 - Student who does not have a parent with a 4-year degree from a college in the US (starting point)

First Generation College Student Experience

What's yours?

Corps Member Experience

Survey results of corps members:

- Feeling alone in their journey
- Lack of knowledge of campus resources
- Difficulty navigating college terminology
- Difficulty with financial aid process
- Experiencing culture shock once on campus

Lexi & Celeste

Lexi - "I came from a **small town** of about 1,750 and graduated from a class of 88. Transitioning to a school of 20,000+ people was difficult, especially because I didn't really know anyone else there besides my brother, but I had a lot of encouragement from family to go to college." - St. Bede Academy

Celeste - "I struggled with **being away from my family**. I struggled with **deciding what to pursue**, and school in general, but I decided to pursue a degree because of how much higher education was stressed to me. I always had it in my head that I needed to go." - Thornton Fractional South HS

Anayeli & Emberly

Anayeli - "My **parents are immigrants** and they always pushed me to pursue a higher education as a way to have a better life and have access to mobility. I also value higher education because knowledge is something that can't be taken away from you and has value." - Morton East HS & Morton College

Emberly- "I struggled to connect with other students and make friends. I was a **commuter student**, and I would typically describe myself as introverted, so I struggled to make friends when I was in college. I always knew I wanted to do something in education, and I knew that to do that, I needed to go to college. I am now pursuing a graduate degree." - Mt. Zion HS

Leah & Iris

Leah - "It was hard for me to transition from a **large city** like Chicago to a small town. Honestly, the moment I stepped foot on campus, it was a complete **culture shock**. My transition to college was a struggle in itself, but when I entered my senior year, I also struggled with not knowing what I wanted to do with my life after college. I felt so much internal pressure from myself and external pressure from others to figure out what I wanted to do with the rest of my life, and I had no idea." - George Westinghouse College Prep

Iris - "Acclimating to the culture of being at a PWI (**predominately white institution**), along with finding a 'home away from home,' finding support systems, and dealing with **imposter syndrome** was a challenge." - Jones College Prep

First Generation Scholars Network (FGSN)

FGSN Goals

- Officially started with '22 high school graduating class
- Provide support over the summer to combat summer melt
- Help ensure a smooth & successful transition to college
- Connect students with other first gen students
- Connect students with campus resources
- Provide additional support in that first year in college



FGSN Activities & Engagement

- Students receive updates & reminders on when the FAFSA & Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid are available
- Students can text questions directly to ISAC
- *First Up* podcasts
- Events customized for first gen students:
 - “Headed to College Celebration” in May
 - “Going to College Summer YouTube Series” hosted by ISACorps, topics include:
 - “How to Have a Good College Experience on a Budget”
 - “Being Away from Home for the First Time”
 - “Keeping Sane: Balancing School, Work, and Family”
 - “Commuting: Perks & Challenges”
- On campus meet & greet
- FAFSA/Alternative Application completion workshop in their first year in college

First Up Podcasts

- Stories from and conversations with first gen students and professionals
- 15 episodes and counting
- Available via most major podcast channels

<https://firstuppodcast.buzzsprout.com/share>



YouTube Going to College Summer Series

www.youtube.com/@ISACvid/playlists

Illinois Student Assistance Commission
@ISACvid 168 subscribers 103 videos
ISAC is the Illinois college access and financial aid agency, helping student...
isac.org and 4 more links

HOME VIDEOS LIVE **PLAYLISTS** COMMUNITY CHANNELS ABOUT

Created playlists

- Going to College Summer Series (9 videos)
- ISAC College Minute™ First Generation Scholars Network... (5 videos)
- #ISACCollegeMinute: First Generation Scholars Network (5 videos)
- #ISACCollegeMinute: College Planning and College-Going (13 videos)
- #ISACCollegeMinute: Financial Aid (11 videos)
- ISAC Facebook Live (32 videos)



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Commuting: Perks & Challenges
Illinois Student Assistance Commission • 32 views • Streamed 2 months ago

Student Clubs & Organizations: How Do I Choose?
Illinois Student Assistance Commission • 27 views • Streamed 3 months ago

Keeping Sane: Balancing School, Work, and Family
Illinois Student Assistance Commission • 22 views • Streamed 3 months ago

Tips for Apartment Hunting
Illinois Student Assistance Commission • 38 views • Streamed 3 months ago

Essential Items to Bring to College!
Illinois Student Assistance Commission • 42 views • Streamed 2 months ago

Money Talk: How to Have a Good College Experience on a Budget
Illinois Student Assistance Commission • 52 views • Streamed 3 months ago

Remembering to Take Care of You: Self-care for Your Body, Emotions, and Mind
Illinois Student Assistance Commission • 48 views • Streamed 3 months ago

How to Make New Friends in College
Illinois Student Assistance Commission • 83 views • Streamed 3 months ago

Going to College Summer Series
Illinois Student Assistance Commission
Public
9 videos 70 views Last updated on Aug 4, 2023

Play all Shuffle

No description

Challenges & Victories

- Having up to date contact information for students
- Students not responding to communication efforts
 - Text works best
 - Emails – some expire (i.e. school), some have storage limits, multiple email accounts that are not always checked
- Word is spreading
- Core group of students is building

Start Browsing



Juan Martinez Herrada



Ashley Juarez



Sofia Martinez



Kamryn Rowe



Aaron Cendejas



Gladys Ramirez Mata



Brittany Kane



Serena Tripp



Corazon Rivera



TeKavin Russell



Samantha Bott



Sakura Boone



FGSN Yearbook



First Gen Symposium

Where Are FGSN Students Attending?

When they* told us where . . .

- 48.5% - Community College
- 24.3% - Illinois Public 4-year University
- 15.4% - Illinois Private 4-Year College
- 9.3% - Out of State

*246 students out of 561 FGSN students (43.9%)

Joining First Gen Scholars Network

It's easy!!



studentportal.isac.org/FirstGen



First Gen Symposium

First Generation Scholars Network

ISACORPS EVENTS **FIRST GENERATION SCHOLARS NETWORK**

Welcome to the First Generation Scholars Network!





If you will be the first in your family to earn a college degree, join our network to get support and resources from ISAC, your peers at your college, and colleges across the state! If you are heading to your first year of college this fall, we've got events and programs that can give you tools, resources, mentoring, and a great network of connections to make your transition and first year of college a whole lot easier—and successful.

- [Connect with a First Generation Scholars Network Mentor](#)
- [Find the First Generation Network or Mentoring Program on Your Campus](#)
- [Join us for the "Going to College" YouTube Summer Series](#)
- [Join us for a "Check-in" Event](#)

Connect with a First Generation Scholars Network Mentor

Our team of recent college graduates is your resource for all your questions and concerns about transitioning to college. We've been where you are, had a lot of the same questions, fears, and experiences you might be having. We are here to listen, answer questions, offer suggestions, connect you with the places on your campus that can assist you, and connect you with a network of peers like you.

First Generation Scholars Network Mentors

 Denzise Diaz Assigned district: JOUET JUNIOR COLLEGE Denzise.Diaz@illinois.gov (815) 641-7586	 Michael Emerson Assigned district: KANKAKEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE Michael.Emerson@illinois.gov (815) 384-0375	 Catherine Throm Assigned district: LEWIS AND CLARK COMMUNITY COLLEGE Catherine.Throm@illinois.gov (815) 425-0002	 Kristen Latham Assigned district: OLIVE-HARVEY COLLEGE Kristen.Latham@illinois.gov (773) 805-0282
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Additional Language: Spanish

Join the Network

Ready to join?
You can join using our online form

[JOIN NOW!](#)

Have questions? Email us at ISAC-FirstGen@illinois.gov



Check out more First Generation Scholars Network videos



Working Together

It takes a village . . .



First Gen Symposium

It's a Collective Effort

- Too many stages in transitioning to college where students can get overwhelmed
- Working together we can provide a clearer path
- Students are made aware of the resources and people able to assist with questions
- Together we can demystify the process for students and families

Partnering with High Schools

- Share information on FGSN webpage
- Distribute FGSN postcard to students
- Host presentations/discussion on being a first gen student and going to college
- Potentially create a first gen student group at school
- ISACorps members can work with students one-on-one or in group settings

Partnering with Colleges

- A point of contact at college to work with assigned ISAC corps member
- Provide space for ISAC to hold a financial aid application completion workshop (FAFSA & Alternative Application)
- Work together to connect students with campus resources and supports
- Share information on support programs aimed at first gen students

College Campus Programs

- Connecting students to first gen, mentoring, and/or campus support programs in Illinois via the FGSN landing page
- Let us know if the link to your program needs to be updated

Find the First Generation Network or Mentoring Program on Your Campus

Many colleges have their own mentoring or first generation student programming.

Search by the name of the college/university to connect with one of their first generation student programs.

Search by

Moraine Valley Community College

TRIO Student Support Center

Checklist

ISACorps N

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include:

- Knox College
- Lake Forest College
- Lake Land College
- Lewis and Clark Community College
- Lewis University
- Lincoln Land College
- Lincoln Trail College
- Loyola University
- McHenry County College
- McKendree University
- Millikin University
- Monmouth College
- **Moraine Valley Community College**
- National Louis University - Wheeling Campus
- North Central College
- North Park University
- Northeastern Illinois University
- Northern Illinois University
- Northwestern University
- Oakton Community College

"e" Summer YouTube Series

- ...g a first-time
- ...st. Topics
- ...emotions, and mind.
- ...udget.
- Keeping Sane: Balancing School, Work, and Family.
- Tips for Apartment Hunting.
- Essential items to bring to college!
- Commuting: Perks & Challenges.
- Being away from home for the first time.

We look forward
to working
together!

Thank you!

