

# FIRST-GENERATION LEARNINGS FROM THE FRONT LINES

First-generation students make up a third of all college students<sup>1</sup>, but only 27% will attain their degrees within four years. Below are practical insights and recommendations four-year institutions can implement to improve first-generation student success and completion.

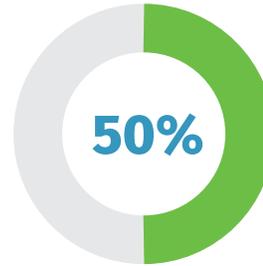


## Approaches to Address Common Challenges



### APPOINT A PRIMARY ADVOCATE

Identifying an advocate with visibility and influence to convene stakeholders and advance concerns to leadership is a key early step. This person is critical in convening colleagues to advance institutional support and commitment.

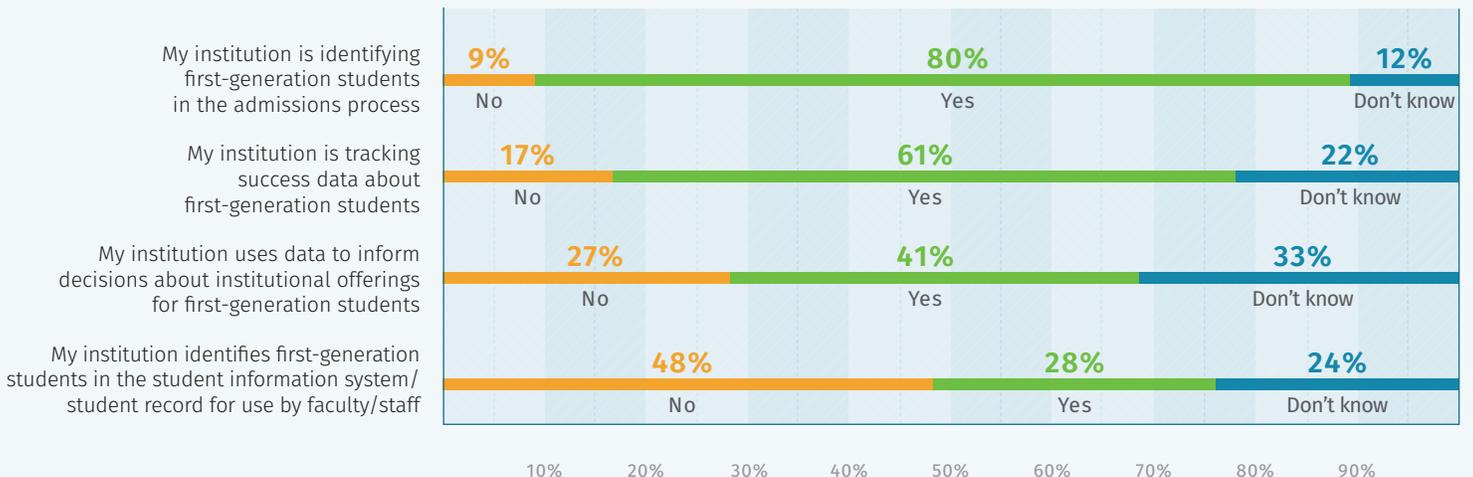


Across surveyed institutions, 50 percent report identifying a “point person” to coordinate first-generation efforts, and 48 percent have designated a particular office on campus as the primary support for first-generation students.



### TRACK PRE-MATRICULATION THROUGH POST-COMPLETION STUDENT DATA

Many institutions lack consistent processes to collect, analyze, and share data which can foster reporting deficits, confound institutional comparisons, and lead to programs and services that lack informed basis.

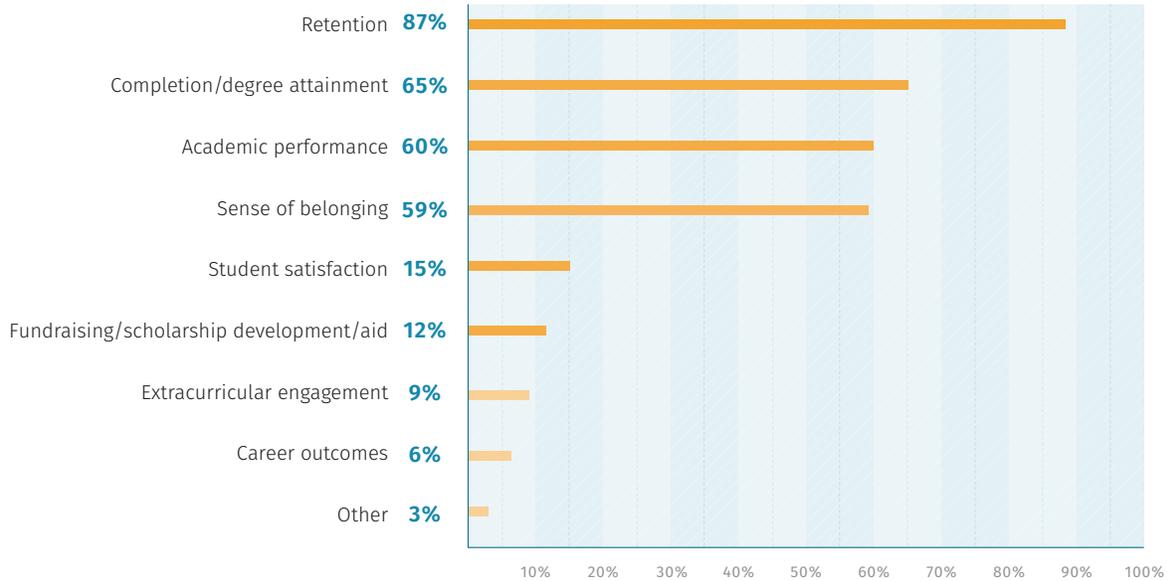


Figures add to 101% due to rounding



## PROACTIVELY SET THE INSTITUTION AND PROGRAM VISION AND OBJECTIVES

To avoid launching first-generation programs with tight timelines, limited support, and minimal planning, institutions must first align on how success is defined (beyond a singular focus on retention) and the resources required.



## UNDERSTAND THE REACH AND GAPS OF EXISTING RESOURCES

Housing programs within different offices makes it challenging for students to navigate. Surfacing existing resources enables practitioners to glean a better understanding of service gaps, and prioritizing data-tracking enables them to put evidence-based practices to use.



## CONSIDER FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND INCREASE ROI

To overcome financial and human resource constraints, institutions can reduce the cost of advising through alternative programs (e.g. peer and alumni mentoring), source additional funding (e.g. first-generation donors), share costs through partnerships, and leverage technology. This enables them to put evidence-based practices to use.



## BUILD AND SUSTAIN AN ENGAGED COMMUNITY

Bringing together faculty, staff, students, university leaders, families, first-generation alumni, community members, and stakeholders creates a community that can be leveraged to advocate for first-generation students and connect them to resources.

Visit [firstgen.naspa.org](https://firstgen.naspa.org) to download our Landscape Analysis of First-generation Programs and Services at Four-Year Institutions.

1 Cataldi, Bennett, & Chen, 2018; Skomsvold, 2015