

Nationwide College & Alumni Group FGLI Survey

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Overview

This report is the culmination of researching over 240 universities and the resources they offer First-generation and/or Low-income students. The majority of institutions surveyed received recognition from the Center for First-Generation Student Success' [First-Gen Forward Initiative](#), which celebrates colleges for their commitment to first-generation student success. The remaining institutions were selected based on similar admissions selectivity to Yale. The resulting recommendations are by no means exhaustive; we recognize that there are likely other resources not mentioned, either from institutions not surveyed or because they were not publicly advertised.

Recommendations

Foster Greater Accessibility and Community with First-Generation Faculty and Staff

❑ **Permanize Faculty Mentorship Program.** Under the leadership of former Co-President, Karen Li, and with the help of Dean Marvin Chun, YFAM put together a Faculty Tea that brought together FGLI students and faculty to discuss the first-generation, low-income college experience. A main goal of the event was to foster community and mentorship with FGLI faculty. Making a formal faculty mentorship can further solidify this community. The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), under its [First-Gen Forward Mentorship Program](#), matches first-generation students with first-generation faculty members to provide one-on-one mentorship. Similarly, the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC), through its [Panther Partners Program](#), first-generation students are paired with a first-generation faculty or staff member. Together, they navigate workshops on finances, goal setting, asking for help, and academic success. Offering a formal program like that of UAF, through either the Deans office or the Community Initiative, would offer another crucial form of institutional support as FGLI students navigate faculty relationships at Yale.

❑ **Publish FGLI Staff Directory and Allies.** During the same FGLI Faculty Tea initiative, the Dean's office shared a survey with YFAM that listed FGLI faculty. Another survey should be sent out across all departments, to reflect updated faculty composition, and then published as a directory for student access. Harvard University's Academic Advising page contains a "[First Generation Advising Faculty Directory](#)" with a list of faculty who identify as a first-generation college student. Colby College published a guide for FGLI students, "[The Complete Guide to College for First Generation to College Students](#)," that included a list of faculty, administration, and staff who committed to "help [FGLI students] navigate the FGCS experience"—many of whom are first-generation students themselves. Ferris State University generated a [First-Gen Ally](#) page that divides frequently asked questions into topics and provides links to resources and contact information for a First-Gen ally who can help.

❑ **Implement FGLI Competency Training for Faculty.** While many professors have committed to making their classroom more accessible to FGLI students, others might not recognize how their syllabus disadvantages FGLI students. To remedy this, all faculty should undergo a FGLI Competency Training as part of their yearly onboarding. The training curriculum should be written in collaboration with a committee of FGLI students to most comprehensively detail best practices. The University of Arizona provides faculty a free [First-Gen Intro Training](#) as part of professional development that equips "faculty and staff with knowledge, tools and ideas for how they can center the experience of first-generation college students in their work." Colorado State University offers a [page dedicated to tips](#) on how to best support FGLI students, including for professors on how to best mentor and construct a syllabus to ensure FGLI students do not get left behind.

❑ **Organize a FGLI Psychology and Counseling Team.** FGLI students often face unique adversity prior to and during their time at Yale. These same students, due to

financial barriers, may not have received mental health care. In order to best treat and ensure a mentally-healthy time at Yale, Yale Mental Health should assemble a team that is specifically trained and equipped to help FGLI students navigate struggles specific to their background. Columbia University [offers a six-member team](#) through its Mental Health Department that specializes in helping students navigate the First-generation and/or low-income experience.

Strengthen FGLI Undergraduate Community:

❑ **Establish Peer Mentorship Program:** Given that peer liaison programs are usually run through the cultural houses, Yale should establish a peer liaison program through residential colleges. This program would pair a second-, third-, or fourth- year FGLI student mentor with an incoming first-year, to help them navigate the transition to Yale, provide an introduction to the FGLI community and resources available to them, and create space to discuss challenges unique to their shared identity. Many institutions throughout the country offer this mentorship program. Through the Pugh Center, Colby College offers the First Generation to College/Low Income Program for Student Success ([FLI Program](#)), which includes a mentorship program that matches first-year FGLI students with FGLI students in their second through fourth year. Georgetown offers a similar program through its Georgetown Scholars Program. Other universities like [Metropolitan State University of Denver](#) pair multiple first-year students with a cohort of other first- years, led by an upper class FGLI student. This “family” meets once a week to discuss topics such as time management, study skills, and leadership cultivation.

❑ **Designate an FGLI Campus Space** where FGLI student can gather in community and where the Community Initiative could house its workshops and events. Brown University provides the U-FLi Center, “a communal, learning, and advocacy center for members of the Brown community who identify with the undocumented, first-generation college and/or low-income student experience.” Through the U-FLi Center, Brown also runs the FLi program for first-year U-FLi students, which puts on bi-weekly events, offers advising, and helps students access campus resources and build a network of peers, faculty, and staff. Tufts University offers several cultural centers including the [FIRST Resource Center](#), a space dedicated solely for first-generation, low-income, and undocumented students. Several programming goals for the Center include a first generation retreat, leadership program, and workshops on financial literacy, career development, and accessing resources at Tufts. Purdue University, through its [Horizon Student Support Services program](#), provides a designated work space for FGLI students, including free printing.

❑ **Offer an FGLI-Specific Course.** While FSJ serves as an excellent bridge for many FGLI students, it only serves a small portion of our community. In order to ensure all FGLI students receive a proper foundation, Yale should offer a formal course. Georgetown University offers FGLI first-years a Pass/Fail Course, “Mastering the Hidden Curriculum,” which arms students with the necessary understanding of the academic terrain and the corresponding resources to navigate it. The curriculum was informed by upper class FGLI students and team-taught by four Georgetown professors. Georgetown, however, only offers two sections of 16 students each. In

order to avoid further stratification—of only some FGLI students getting access to key knowledge—Yale should offer an uncapped lecture course, or one with multiple sections.

Support and Resources

❑ **Establish FGLI Textbook Library.** A major financial barrier FGLI students face once getting on campus is affording required class materials. The University of Pennsylvania has an entire [FGLI Textbook Library](#) of over 3,500 donated books. Through its First Gen United Program, George Washington University provides a [Textbook Resource Bank](#) from which first-generation students can access free textbook rentals.

❑ **Offer Break Housing and Improve Support:** Break times can be especially stressful for FGLI students, who often either cannot afford to return home or do not have a stable place to which they can go. Georgetown offers housing for independent students over winter break and provides [dinner and events](#) for FGLI students in its Georgetown Scholars Program. UPenn ensures that FGLI students can remain on campus over breaks and receive holiday meals or added dining swipes through their college.

❑ **Expand Safety Net.** Stanford University's Opportunity Fund, which serves the same emergency funding role as Safety Net, allows for "expenses associated with parent/guardian/family attendance at major campus events" and "expenses associated with preparation for graduate or professional school admissions and preparation." Graduation is already a special occasion and even more so for those who are first in their family to graduate. It is a day to honor not just the FGLI student's accomplishment, but also the support and sacrifices their loved ones made to make it possible. Yale should expand Safety Net or provide financial support through other avenues to ensure families have their transportation and housing covered for this once in a lifetime celebration.

Areas for Partnership with 1stGenYale

❑ **First-Generation Celebration Week:** November 8th is nationally recognized as a day to celebrate First-Generation College students, coinciding with the anniversary of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Universities around the country have used this day to throw formal, week-long celebrations for their first-generation students. Northeastern University, for example, hosted a [First Gen week](#) that included over 20 different events and workshops—how to lead, networking with FGLI alumni, financial aid information, and more. Ferris State University also hosts [a week-long celebration](#) for its first-generation students. Celebration not only honors the immense work it took for First-generation students to make it Yale; it also shows that the university sees us, hears us, and is willing to do what it takes to support us.

❑ **Financial Wellness Counseling.** Yale provides strong financial aid for FGLI students during their time at Yale. Many in the community, however, are uncertain how to structure their finances after graduation. The University of Washington offers a [Financial Wellness Cohort](#) that students can apply to for one-on-one financial coaching. Given its application base, many students will again be left out. A partnerships between Yale—potentially through the Office of Career Strategies— and 1stGenYale can help bring together both FGLI alumni and financial coaches to help FGLI students prepare their financial future.

❑ **Alternative Break Trips.** Often due to financial circumstances, FGLI students are unable to participate in extravagant break plans like their more privileged counterparts. Affinity groups at [Claremont McKenna College](#) plan alternative break trips specifically for FGLI students. Potentially, the Yale Administration, 1stGenYale and YFAM could partner, with 1stGenYale helping to provide potential opportunities with alumni, YFAM with planning and infrastructure, and Yale securing funding.

Additional Recommendations for 1stGenYale

❑ **Publish a 1stGen Alumni Directory:** Dartmouth published a [first generation alumni list](#), broken down by career category. 1stGenYale including a similar directory would allow FGLI students to self-initiate mentorship opportunities with alumni who wish to help undergraduates.

❑ **Initiate Formal Mentorship Program:** First Generation Harvard Alumni offers a [formal mentorship program](#) that pairs FGLI students with mentors in their field of interest. With such a vast network available, 1stGenYale has the personnel to launch a similar program. This would be especially crucial for first-year FGLI students as they navigate applying for summer opportunities.

❑ **Establish Summer Opportunity Fellowships:** One of the ways [UCLA's FirstGen Alumni Network](#) supports students is through offering scholarships. Yale's financial aid is robust but they lack need-based fellowships for career opportunities. Establishing grants for FGLI students would pair nicely with the Summer Experience Award and International Study Award, potentially ensuring funding for each of the students' three summers. This is especially important for areas not traditionally supported from these grants such as campaign work.

❑ **Organize Events for Prospective FGLI students:** Most universities organize recruitment programming to attract students, typically in the form of informational sessions and college fairs. To continue expanding the FGLI community at Yale, 1stGenYale could rely on regional networks to provide similar informational sessions and application tips for prospective FGLI applicants.

Conclusion

With each resource included in this report, we have made recommendations on how Yale can offer similar support for its FGLI community. Yale already offers the FGLI students a solid foundation of support—from robust financial aid to Community Initiative programming. In order to avoid falling behind its peers, however, it should work to adopt these measures and continue finding innovative ways to support its FGLI students.