



Hello,

We wanted to send this letter to tell you to celebrate the new year, a new semester, and we also wanted to tell you a little bit about what it means to be a First Generation college student (if you are first gen yourself or even if you are not first gen, you still may find yourself in a similar position to many first gen students)!

A first gen student is someone whose parents/guardians did not have the opportunity to complete a 4-year college degree. The First Gen Student Organization at the University of Michigan-Dearborn connects, informs, supports, and celebrates first gen students as they prepare for and navigate higher education. We celebrate first gen students because of their determination and commitment to going to college despite challenges that they might face.

Many first gen students may experience a lot of stress, work part time or full time jobs to help support their families, or may have extra responsibilities on top of all that like caring for siblings and other family members. However, despite all this, these students still push themselves towards success and to their degree. They don't give up in the midst of all the stress and, for that, we are so proud of them and have every reason to celebrate first gen students (and future first gen students) and their accomplishments!

We hope that you will continue to work hard when it comes to your education and soon will be an outstanding college student yourself. Best of luck in the future and keep up the great work!

**Sincerely,
The First Gen Student Organization at the University of Michigan-Dearborn**

Dear Franchesca,

A first gen student is someone whose parents/guardians did not have the opportunity to complete a 4-year college degree. The First Gen Student Organization at the University of Michigan-Dearborn connects, informs, supports, and celebrates first gen students as they prepare for and navigate higher education. We celebrate first gen students because of their determination and commitment to going to college despite challenges that they might face. Many first gen students may experience a lot of stress, work part time or full time jobs to help support their families, or may have extra responsibilities on top of all that like caring for siblings and other family members. However, despite all this, these students still push themselves towards success and to their degree. They don't give up in the midst of all the stress and, for that, we are so proud of them and have every reason to celebrate first gen students (and future first gen students) and their accomplishments!

Sincerely,
First Gen Student Organization at the University of Michigan-Dearborn

Your Questions and Answers from University of Michigan-Dearborn First Gen Students:

1. Is freshman year hard?

- My first year was pretty difficult. I came from a school that didn't have a lot of resources. I didn't know how to reach out for help - and I thought asking for help was shameful (it is not!). I had to learn how to ask for help and how to utilize the resources that were free to me on campus.

- After I was able to adjust and learn how to "college", I LOVED my experience. I made so many new friends, hobbies, and got several jobs on campus. I also found my passion for my career, too.

2. Is college overwhelming?

- College can be overwhelming at first, things will seem too far out of reach and you may feel like you don't know what to do. Joining student organizations can be so helpful in finding peers who empathize with your situation and help you navigate through your college experience. Things do get easier, give it time!

- It can be! I think if you can keep yourself organized, know how to reach out for help, use the free resources offered, and take time to have fun - you should be alright :)

3. Is college fun?

- College may seem stressful on the outside, but it can be very exciting and fun once you start participating in clubs and different communities. You'll be surprised how many like minded people there are on your campus, it's the reason why lots of people make their life long friends in college!!

- There are also so many ways to get involved and have fun. College isn't always just academics. I met so many new friends and found my passion through everything I was involved in.

Dear Student,

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Sincerely,
First Gen Student Organization at the University of Michigan-Dearborn

Your Questions and Answers from University of Michigan-Dearborn First Gen Students:

1. Is the nursing program challenging?

- U of M-Dearborn does not have a nursing program, but U of M-Ann Arbor and U of M-Flint have nursing programs.

2. Is college life fun or exciting?

- College may seem stressful on the outside, but it can be very exciting and fun once you start participating in clubs and different communities. You'll be surprised how many like minded people there are on your campus, it's the reason why lots of people make their life long friends in college!!

- There are also so many ways to get involved and have fun. College isn't always just academics. I met so many new friends and found my passion through everything I was involved in.

3. Is it best to take morning or afternoon classes?

- In my opinion, morning classes are better. They are usually much emptier and you can have the rest of the day to do other stuff once you are done with them.

- Personally, I think morning classes are the best. Especially if you play sports, having morning classes lets you have free time in the afternoon for homework/studying/practice or just relaxing in general.

- Take afternoon classes! Allow yourself some time to eat and sleep in a little, the mornings are hectic and traffic is crazy. I am not a morning person at all so I avoid those classes. UNLESS, you are a morning person then take them! You get to finish classes earlier and be the first to find good parking spots.

Dear Harvard,

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Sincerely,
First Gen Student Organization at the University of Michigan-Dearborn

Your Questions and Answers from University of Michigan-Dearborn First Gen Students:

1. Is college really hard or easy?

- The hardest part is balancing work and school but making sure to leave time for yourself. College is rigorous and requires heavy responsibilities. Don't procrastinate!
- As a first generation student who started college during prime COVID time, college was very stressful at first. Trying to navigate our online learning platform was difficult at first, but after the first week or so things got so much easier. Finding a good schedule and giving myself time to relax helped tremendously with the stress of due dates!
- I think what makes college hard is the amount of effort you give. If you don't take the time to study or ask questions, college life can get pretty hard.

2. How many classes do you attend?

- I had anywhere from 4-5 classes that I was taking at a time. Every class is different - at U of M-Dearborn, you can meet twice a week for 1.5 hours or once a week for 3 hours. I worked on campus, so I tried to schedule my classes around my work schedule and vice versa.

3. Do you think I will pass easily or not?

- Yes, I think you will pass! Sometimes things may be a bit challenging, but as long as you work hard and are not afraid to ask for help when you need it you will be just fine. There are a lot of people on campus (especially) professors who are willing to do whatever it takes to help you succeed, you just have to be self-motivated and take advantage of the opportunities.

Dear Student,

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First Gen Student Organization at the University of Michigan-Dearborn

Your Questions and Answers from University of Michigan-Dearborn First Gen Students:

1. How has your experience been?

- My college experience was rocky at first because I was afraid to get involved and ask for help when I needed it. Once I was able to push myself out of the comfort zone, I was able to make the most out of my experience and have a lot of fun! I also didn't have a major, so I didn't know what I wanted to do after college. I struggled a long time to figure it out, but I was guided by awesome people on campus and finally found my passion.

2. What opportunities are offered in the surrounding community?

- At U of M-Dearborn, there are a few offices that you can go to about learning about careers - the career services office can help you with your resume, mock interviews, identifying your interests/passions, and more. The internship/co-op offices help you get an internship or job while you are in school. Both of these offices work together to do career fairs and such as well. Many other schools have similar programs. There are lots of opportunities to get involved and learn more, so always be sure to take advantage of those!

3. Is college for everyone? What is dorm life/college life really like?

- College is for anyone who is willing to put in some time and brain power and also allows you to network, build experience, and helps you discover who you are and who you want to be! There are other options for learning too like trade school/apprenticeships which can be good for people who work better with "hands on" experiences. It really just depends on what your goals are.

- Dorm life is freeing - but with additional responsibilities. It's nice to be able to say that you were able to live on your own. You learn how to take care of yourself - laundry, dishes, cooking, etc. It's also nice because you meet so many new people.

Dear Jakayla,

A first gen student is someone whose parents/guardians did not have the opportunity to complete a 4-year college degree. The First Gen Student Organization at the University of Michigan-Dearborn connects, informs, supports, and celebrates first gen students as they prepare for and navigate higher education. We celebrate first gen students because of their determination and commitment to going to college despite challenges that they might face. Many first gen students may experience a lot of stress, work part time or full time jobs to help support their families, or may have extra responsibilities on top of all that like caring for siblings and other family members. However, despite all this, these students still push themselves towards success and to their degree. They don't give up in the midst of all the stress and, for that, we are so proud of them and have every reason to celebrate first gen students (and future first gen students) and their accomplishments!

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First Gen Student Organization at the University of Michigan-Dearborn

Your Questions and Answers from University of Michigan-Dearborn First Gen Students:

1. What are the best HBCU to go to?

- There are lots of great HBCUs out there, but the "best" one for you depends on your interests and goals (e.g. what field do you want to go into, do you want to live in-state or out-of-state, etc.). I recommend researching this (e.g. try a Google search for "best HBCUs for engineering" or "best HBCUs in Michigan") and even contacting the schools you are interested in for more information!

2. Is college really as hard as people make it seem?

- The hardest part is balancing work and school but making sure to leave time for yourself. College is rigorous and requires heavy responsibilities. Don't procrastinate!

- As a first gen student who started college during COVID, college was stressful at first. Trying to navigate online learning was difficult at first, but after the first week or so things got so much easier. Finding a good schedule and giving myself time to relax helped with the stress of due dates!

- I think what makes college hard is the amount of effort you give. If you don't take the time to study or ask questions, college life can get pretty hard.

3. What is the hardest and easiest thing about college?

- College may seem stressful at first (and learning how to manage your time well can be a real challenge), but it can be very exciting and fun once you start participating in clubs and different communities. You'll be surprised how many like minded people there are on your campus, it's the reason why lots of people make their life long friends in college!

Dear Student,

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Sincerely,
First Gen Student Organization at the University of Michigan-Dearborn

Your Questions and Answers from University of Michigan-Dearborn First Gen Students:

1. How was your first year?

- My first year was pretty difficult. I came from a school that didn't have a lot of resources. I didn't know how to reach out for help - and I thought asking for help was shameful (it is not!). I had to learn how to ask for help and how to utilize the resources that were free to me on campus.

- My Freshman Year was very difficult for me, but it was mostly because I had a hard time adjusting at first. College is way different from high school and there is a huge chance that you will go to a college that none of your friends or family go to. Campus can also be a bit scary too, as loads of people from all around the state, country, and world can study there and there will be a massive culture shock because of it. Don't let that slow you down though, because after a while I was able to meet lots of wonderful people and got to be a part of many different cool communities that helped me adjust and gave me all sorts of help to get me through my first year. Just do your best to meet new people and just keep swimming, if you can do that, college will be a breeze.

Dear Student,

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Sincerely,
First Gen Student Organization at the University of Michigan-Dearborn

Your Questions and Answers from University of Michigan-Dearborn First Gen Students:

1. Do you think you need college?

- College is for anyone who is willing to put in some time and brain power and also allows you to network, build experience, and helps you discover who you are and who you want to be! There are other options for learning too like trade school/apprenticeships which can be good for people who work better with "hands on" experiences. It really just depends on what your goals are.

2. Do you think you've grown in college?

- Definitely, college has changed me a lot and has taught me so many things aside from academics. I used to be a very quiet person and have such a difficult time talking to people, so much so I was too shy to talk to anyone the first month I started school. Once I got used to it, I realized the world wasn't such a scary place and that meeting new people as well as networking was very fun. I also feel like I've become much more responsible with money and time management, something I could not do for the life of me in High school. Trust me, the person you are when you walk into college will be completely different from the person you will be once you graduate.

- I have 110% grown while in college. I transformed into a leader and person that I never could have imagined. I love how my knowledge has expanded and being able to reflect on everything I've done.

3. What is your favorite thing about college?

- Definitely the people, college is a safe space where everyone is welcome and when you enter college, there are so many communities so excited to welcome you and get to know you. You learn a lot of things about the people around you and about your school. Befriending people from many different majors can help you decide if you are undecided!

- Being involved! You get to meet so many people and have fun while doing it!

Dear Jordan,

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Sincerely,
First Gen Student Organization at the University of Michigan-Dearborn

Your Questions and Answers from University of Michigan-Dearborn First Gen Students:

1. Is it hard to stay up on your work and do basketball at the same time (and what did you do to get recruited)?

- I didn't play basketball - but I did play soccer! My team went varsity in my senior year of college from being just a club team and I went through tryouts in the summer. We went through conditioning right before school started in the fall, and once the season started - I was sooo busy. I worked two on campus jobs, held 15 credit hours (5 classes), was the president of an org, and had everything to balance at home too. It sounds like a LOT, but I was in my senior year and had time to build up to that amount. I learned how to study while on the bus to/from games, listening to my audio texts in the car on the way to practice, and do homework during required study tables. It's definitely achievable - you just have to put in the work!

2. How's basketball going for you?

- Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UM-Dearborn Athletics will not be able to participate in intercollegiate competition until at least March 1, 2021. However, all athletic scholarships already earned will still be honored!

Dear Student,

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First Gen Student Organization at the University of Michigan-Dearborn

Your Questions and Answers from University of Michigan-Dearborn First Gen Students:

1. Why did you choose to go to college?

- I chose to go to college because I knew that in order to succeed as a biochemist, I would have to earn a bachelor's degree as well as a masters later on and also was excited to challenge myself to learn more! I actually didn't even know what I needed to study until I got here, but once I talked to an advisor, they helped me determine my course of study. I was also heavily encouraged by my sister to go to college, as we are both first generation college students!

2. Is it hard to get a scholarship (if you got one)?

- Merit-based scholarships often highly depend on your GPA, but there are many, many scholarships out there (that some don't even realize exist) so research them early and often! Try to narrow down what you want to study when searching for scholarships. Practice writing skills and learn how to write professional letters.

- It is so important to apply for scholarships - even if you think you don't need them. Scholarships can be very competitive depending on what ones you apply for, so do not be discouraged if you aren't awarded every one. It's important to remind yourself that if you're not picked, it isn't because you're not good enough. You are smart, you are talented, and you can succeed.

3. Is it hard to stay on top of all your work in college?

- I think what makes college easy or hard is the amount of effort you give. If you don't take the time to study or ask questions, college life can get pretty hard, but if you take advantage of the free resources and help available, have a good schedule and follow it, and take time to have fun - you should be just fine! :)

Dear Reuben,

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Your Questions and Answers from University of Michigan-Dearborn First Gen Students:

1. Is college a goal or a challenge?

- For me, college was a goal. Since I have started my college experience, I think my perspective of it has stayed the same. My next goal is to graduate now!

- I think it can be both a challenge and a goal. I think you set the goal of earning the degree, and the actual "doing college" is the challenge.

2. Can you do sports and classes at the same time?

- Yes - I played soccer while I was in college! My team went varsity in my senior year of college from being just a club team and I went through tryouts in the summer. We went through conditioning right before school started in the fall, and once the season started - I was sooo busy. I worked two on campus jobs, held 15 credit hours (5 classes), was the president of an org, and had everything to balance at home too. It sounds like a LOT, but I was in my senior year and had time to build up to that amount. I learned how to study while on the bus to/from games, listening to my audio texts in the car on the way to practice, and do homework during required study tables. It's definitely achievable - you just have to put in the work!

- Absolutely! Time management is everything.

3. How many years can you do at college?

- It depends on what you want to study, but normally it's around 4-6 years.

- A university usually takes four years, and they give you a bachelor's degree. A community college usually takes two years, and they give you a certificate or an associate's degree. If you take fewer classes or take school off, it will take longer. Some degrees or fields require more classes.

Dear Tomas,

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Your Questions and Answers from University of Michigan-Dearborn First Gen Students:

1. How does it feel to be a first generation graduate?

- It's insane, scary, exciting, and so many things that it's very difficult to put into words. It can be difficult because I'm entering college and my family doesn't understand what college is like (and can't answer all the questions I might have) and many times I feel like I start pushing myself too hard because most of my family is rooting for me and I feel pressured to make them proud. It can be exciting though, since you are entering a brand new territory, it almost feels like discovering a new planet. If you come from a low income school like I did, you'll be amazed at all the different equipment that is available for you to use and all the cool places you'll get to go to because of going to college. It's an experience, but it's something I'm glad I did and wouldn't trade for the world.

2. Is college stressful?

- As a first gen student who started college during COVID, college was stressful at first. Trying to navigate online learning was difficult at first, but after the first week or so things got so much easier. Finding a good schedule and giving myself time to relax helped with the stress of due dates!

- I think what makes college hard is the amount of effort you give. If you don't take the time to study or ask questions, college life can get pretty hard.

3. What do you plan to do in college or what do you recommend?

- I'm currently dual majoring in bio and mechanical engineering because I would like to go into something either in space exploration or environmental restoration. I can't really tell you what you should go into since that is all up to you. I will say though that it's ok to change your mind both now and in college (I've changed my major several times now!), but if you want to have a clear idea, start looking into different career opportunities in different fields or take an online personality quiz that will help guide you into things you might be interested in.

Dear Moises,

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Your Questions and Answers from University of Michigan-Dearborn First Gen Students:

1. Did your family support you with finances?

- Kind of, I come from a very low income background so I rely heavily on scholarship money as well as my job. Although I still live at home, tuition and costs of school material is up to me to cover. They do to help as much as they can though, and help motivate me to keep going in school! They do what they can, and that's all I need :)

- I was fortunate to have my parents to lend me the money to attend. However, most of my tuition is covered by grants and scholarships. I have to pay my parents back in a few years. I also saved up tuition by going to a community college for two years.

2. Did you go to college in-state or out of state?

- I went in-state because I was afraid to go away. I am a huge family person and didn't want to leave them. I moved 20 minutes away and cried the entire first day I was gone haha.

- I attended college in-state due to financial reasons.

3. How much school work do you have each day?

- It depends on how many classes you plan on taking. Most classes only require you to go once a week and will give you an assignment that's due at the end of the week. It might seem easy but keep in mind there is a new chapter every week and all the studying is up to you to do (For every 1 hour of class, there should be 3 hours of studying to go with it). This means you must get very good at time management which can be very difficult in the first semester of college. Don't let this scare you though, as long as you learn how to manage your time (planners, to do lists, reminders, etc), you should be fine! My advice is to never stop working towards next week's assignments - even if all your work for the week is done. Stay ahead!

Dear Joshuwa,

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Your Questions and Answers from University of Michigan-Dearborn First Gen Students:

1. Was it very difficult or somewhat easy?

- I think what makes college hard is the amount of effort you give. If you don't take the time to study or ask questions, college life can get pretty hard.

2. Was your family behind you the whole step of the way?

- I was lucky and was able to fund my school through scholarships/grants/work study. My family is super supportive emotionally! As a first-gen student, you will learn that the support that comes from your family might be encouragement to keep on keeping on - or even a hug after a long day. It varies!

3. How much work did you have to do per day to get where you are today?

- I would study for 3-5 hours a day at minimum.

4. What were some of the obstacles you had to overcome? How big were they?

- Imposter syndrome, which is the feeling that you don't belong. Although colleges are very welcoming, it can feel like you don't fit in. I come from a very large Latino community, so it was scary for me to enter a college that didn't have as many Latinos as I was used to. Don't let this intimidate you though, college is a marathon, not a sprint. Take your time and enjoy college. Comparing yourself to others is the worst thing you can do because in the end, you will still graduate and be successful.

- The biggest obstacle I had to overcome not wanting to ask questions - I thought I was dumb for not knowing. This is NOT the case - asking questions will put you AHEAD. Another obstacle I had to face was learning how to actually study. I didn't know how to study for my courses - I ended up asking my professors for their advice on how to study for their course. It really helped!