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In Search of the Possible Dream: Attributes of First Generation College Students Contributing to Their Completion of a Baccalaureate Degree

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Introduction
First generation college students, those students whose parents have no post-secondary, baccalaureate degree, face many obstacles in the journey to completion of a baccalaureate degree. Among these obstacles are:

- They are not well prepared academically as their students whose parents attended college and may not have developed the study and analytical skills in high school that would have prepared them for college.
- They may lack the support from family members who are unfamiliar with the college experience to have difficulty finding and negotiating financial information, finding and making informed decisions about the selection process, and the general academic expectations required in college.
- Many hold full-time jobs to cover their college and living costs and often to support their family so that when a conflict arises, they often put the academic change off.

Findings


Conclusions

- Many different types of programs such as academic advising, tutoring, mentoring, peer instruction, and small learning group discussions have been found to be successful in engaging and retaining first generation college students. However, these programs are external to these students and come from the institutional environment, and are often not as engaging for students who are well prepared in their backgrounds.
- Consequently, these external influences do not address those characteristics and personality traits of students that come from within these students who help to either persist or drop out. These are the characteristics and personality traits that can help students to persist and ensure their completion of a four-year degree. Certain first generation college students bring to their higher education setting, specific attributes and personal assets that help to explore their ability to persist and thrive in. They include having high self-efficacy, self-worth, and self-esteem, these student are optimistic, independent, and able to recognize their strengths, and in so doing, achieve higher academic performance.

References