



First-Generation@Scripps

Scripps College

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We hope that you enjoy the inaugural issue of the First-Generation@Scripps Program Newsletter. A special thanks to everyone who volunteered their energies and voices into making this subscription possible.

In creating this newsletter, we hope to highlight areas of diversity and achievement in our community as well as in the larger community of First-Generation students in higher education. We are not often told how supported we are at Scripps, or how important we are to the discussions surrounding the landscape of the student body at Scripps. However, the truth is that there is an army of faculty, staff, and fellow students standing behind each and every one of us, and they are eager to hear what we have to say. You can always count us in your corner.

Our vision for the future is to bring you content that is relevant and engaging. We wish to foster constructive discourses between first-geners and allies alike: to reshape conversations at Scripps to be more inclusive, more aware, and open to the voices of those who have never been included in the conversation. Although we are the first in our families to attend colleges such as Scripps and are just arriving to the discussion table, we hope that we are fashionably late. We desire not only to be heard, but to listen, and hope that our fellows are up for the same.

We would finally like to thank Sonia De la Torre-Iniguez, *Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Academic Resources and Services*, Ashley Pallie, *Associate Director of Admission*, and Melissa Mesinas '12, *the original Mama Bear*, for...well everything, actually.

All the best,
Shane and Maria

Shane Zackery '14
Maria Ceja Rodriguez '14
Program Co-Interns



Left: Shane Zackery '14

Right: Maria Ceja Rodriguez '14

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We Want to Hear From You!

To inspire our readers and recognize your accomplishments, we would like to feature your story in one of our upcoming newsletters. Please send us a personal article or poem depicting your experience as a first-gener to:

firstgeneration@scrippscollege.edu

The Melting Pot:

Recognizing Diversity within Our Community

I'm sure that we've all at one time or another given someone a 10-second spiel about what First-Generation is and means. But what does it really look like? The truth is that our community is much more diverse than even we realize.

Some of us are the first in our families to attend a four-year college or university, but others are the first to graduate from such an institution.

Catherine Holcombe '14 is one of those First-gen scholars.

"Sometimes I'm a little bit self-conscious about calling myself a first-gen student because I think that the common

narrative is that college is something that wasn't available to a family, whereas both of my parents went to college for a very short period of time," says Catherine. "I'm also the youngest of three, so my brother and sister went to college."

While we do not want to discount the experiences that our parents and siblings have

had, we must admit that the difference between attending college and completing a degree can be substantial. Our family members may not understand the stress of thesis, the experience of Capstone Day, or the juggling that we do as students trying to finish our programs strong while also having one foot out the door and in the job market. They have not encountered the GRE, MCAT, or LSAT (or gawked at how expensive these exams are). Watson, Fulbright, and Davis are strangers. Majoring in

"I feel like I've had a chance to explore myself on an intellectual level, but there's also a lot of value in my family from working hard,"

-Catherine Holcombe '14

Economics at a liberal arts college sounds like an oxymoron. It truly is a different ball game.

As it turns out, however, that's okay. We learn other nuggets of wisdom from our families.

"I feel like I've had a chance to explore myself on an intellectual level, but there's also a lot of value in my



Catherine Holcombe '14

family from working hard," Catherine says.

Being First-generation isn't as easy to describe as it seems. Our experiences are varied. Some of us are the first to attend college in the United States. Others have siblings that graduated before them and some even have parents who went to college at the same time as they did.

"It's hard to generalize because it's not like 'I'm first-gen, so I'm this way'. Everyone is

different."

This is the beauty of our community. The First-Generation@Scripps Program is a human network of unconventional, yet equally valuable experiences. We each bring our own diverse histories, making our community one that thrives on, seeks, and embraces difference.

Scholars in Action:

Karen Castro-Ayala '14

The First-Generation program does not end at the border of Scripps College. Our scholars go on to do amazing things in other cities and abroad. This past summer, Karen Castro-Ayala '14 spent 10 weeks working with mostly monolingual Spanish-speaking housekeepers at the University of Maryland, College Park in Maryland. When the opportunity arose through the labor union The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (ASFCME), Karen got on a plane and flew to Baltimore.

"I didn't even know what I was going to be doing. I just knew that I'd be working with workers at the university."

Karen, along with fellow organizers, was commissioned to organize the workers of the labor union and provide eligible non-members with the opportunity to join and improve their workplace conditions.

Despite having been organized under an AFL-CIO¹ affiliated labor union for about 10 years, workers still faced a myriad of issues. Although a great number of workers had the desire to fight for dignity and respect in their

workplace, many were afraid of management retaliation or simply weren't able to communicate their needs across language and racial barriers. Karen's job as an organizer was to facilitate a space where people could share their

"It's okay to have a tutor. It's okay to feel homesick. Who do you go to when you need help navigating financial aid and college life versus home life?"

-Karen Castro-Ayala '14

common experiences and, in the process, empower and organize each other.

"Some of the issues were easily resolved. The workers just needed to know that they had the power to change their situation."

The parallels between the challenges faced by immigrant worker communities and the First-Gen community at Scripps became very apparent through talking with Karen. While there is a difference between studying in classrooms at a university and cleaning them, our communities do share the basic struggle to understand our surroundings. Many First-Gen students don't know what they're coming into.

"Scripps is a new kind of space and First-Gen students are trying to figure it all out," says Karen. "The language used in the



Karen Castro-Ayala '14

classroom is very elite. A lot of the times, the workers were afraid because they didn't know the language or because they looked different from the other people around them."

Karen also spoke about the language of resources, which she refers to as "social capital." What does this social capital mean for First-Gen students at Scripps?

"It's okay to have a tutor. It's okay to feel homesick. Who do you go to when you need help navigating financial aid and college life versus home life?"

These are the questions for which the First-Generation@Scripps Program hopes to provide answers. The program seeks to expose students to the resources available to them through the many offices and services at Scripps and the consortium at large. By easing the transition to college, First-Gen hopes to make success attainable to its participants. We encourage one another to not only survive at a place like Scripps, but to thrive and inspire others to do the same.

¹ American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations.

The Bigger Picture: First-Generation News in Higher Education

It is vital that we frame the work done here at Scripps within the broader context of conversations surrounding first-generation issues, initiatives, and triumphs in higher-education. The following articles showcase the work being done in our community at universities all over the nation.



The Radcliffe Camera, part of the library system at Oxford University. Photograph: Oli Scarff/Getty Images

[Beyond mere talk: how to really help first-generation college students](#)

Julia James, the Guardian

I am the first in my family to graduate college and earn a doctorate. Getting to this point took guts, luck and some extra aid.



Cynthia Huggins, President of University of Maine at Machias

[The Danger of 'Efficiency': Don't Shut Out First-Generation College Students](#)

Cynthia Huggins, Huffington Post

As is often the case with first-generation college students, my family lived paycheck-to-paycheck and had never been able to save any money to help put me or my siblings through college.



Smith College's incoming President Kathleen McCartney spoke about her common experience as the first in her family to attend college. Photo: Kevin Gutting

[Editorial: First generation students are higher education pioneers](#)

Gazettenet

An estimated 50 percent of the college population is made up of people whose parents never attended college. In the parlance of higher education circles, this makes them first-generation college students. This is according to a 2010 study by the Department of Education.

Calendar of Events

OCTOBER

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1 Maria's Office Hours, 2:00-3:00pm, DOS	2 *Surviving Core Workshop and Panel, 7:00-8:30pm, Vita Nova 100, AASU *First SAS Senate Meeting, 8:00pm, Student Union	3 *Miley Cyrus: Cultural Appropriation, Racism, and Slut-Shaming in the Media, 3:00-4:30pm, The Motley, Wanawake and Scripps Advocates *Employer Panel, 6:15-8:00pm, Humanities Auditorium, Scripps CP&R	4 *DIY Cookie Ice Cream Sandwiches, 1:00-3:00pm, Bowling Green Lawn, A-Team *Not My Job Trivia Event, 6:00pm, The Motley, Claremont Socializing with Scientists	5
6	7	Maria's Office Hours, 2:00-3:00pm, DOS *Queer Stories Open Mic, 6:00-8:00pm, The Motley, QRC	9	10 Shane's Office Hours, 11:00am-12:00pm, DOS	11	12
13	14	15 Maria's Office Hours, 2:00-3:00pm, DOS	16 First-Gen Student/Faculty Lunch, 12:00pm, Malott Commons	17 Shane's Office Hours, 11:00am-12:00pm, DOS	18	19
20	21 FALL BREAK	22 FALL BREAK	23	24 Shane's Office Hours, 11:00am-12:00pm, DOS	25	26
27	28	29 Maria's Office Hours, 2:00-3:00pm, DOS	30 First-Gen Mixer, 7:00-8:30pm, location TBA	31 Shane's Office Hours, 11:00am-12:00pm, DOS HALLOWEEN		

*First-Gen Approved Events

Parting Words

We just wanted to share a couple of quick photos:



First-Generation@Scripps Program Inaugural Cohort at the Grammy Museum, 2010



First-Generation@Scripps Program Current Cohort at the K1 Speedway, 2013 (Notice that Shane and Maria decided to stick around!)

Love our Newsletter? [SUBSCRIBE HERE](#) to receive subsequent issues or email us at firstgeneration@scripps.edu