

# *Who Do First-Generation Students Turn To for Support?*

*Research Findings and a Practitioner Perspective*

# Session Overview

1. CCRC Presents Research and Findings
2. CSU Fullerton Presents *I Am First*
3. Small Group Discussion  
*Session 1: Engaging Families*  
*Session 2: Sustaining Programming*
4. Share Out and Conclusion



# Speakers



**Stephanie Reyes**  
Sr. Associate Director  
Employer Relations  
CSUF Career Center  
• [California State University at Fullerton \(CSUF\)](#)



**Hoori Kalamkarian**  
Senior Research  
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Assistant Director of  
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Research Associate • [CCRC](#)



# Partners

**CCRC** COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
RESEARCH CENTER

Teachers College, Columbia University

**MICHIGAN STATE**

**UNIVERSITY**



**CERRITOS  
COLLEGE**



Fresno City College

**FRESNO**  **STATE**®

**Cal State** Fullerton



# Understanding the Support Networks of First-Generation College Students



# About CCRC

CCRC studies community colleges because they provide critical access to postsecondary education and are uniquely positioned to promote equity and social mobility in the United States. Our mission is to conduct research that helps these institutions strengthen opportunities and improve outcomes for their students, particularly those from underserved populations.





# Objectives

- \* Describe the support networks and help-seeking behaviors of first-generation students at four public colleges in California
- \* Explore relations between support networks, help-seeking behaviors, and key postsecondary outcomes
- \* Generate insights that colleges may use to strengthen existing services or develop new approaches to supporting first-generation

# Research Strands

| Social Network Survey   | Qualitative Research   | Quantitative Research  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Longitudinal social network questionnaire administered to random sample of FTIC first-generation students in spring 2022 and spring 2023.</li><li>• Questions include two name generators and one resource generator.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interviews with subset of survey respondents in spring 2022 and spring 2023.</li><li>• Staff interviews for contextual information in spring 2022.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analyses of student unit record data to explore relationship between network properties and student outcomes.</li><li>• Primary dependent variable: year-to-year persistence in college.</li></ul> |



# Who do first-generation college students turn to for academic and non-academic support?

**Social  
Network  
Survey  
(n=2,079)**

**Qualitative  
Research  
(n=58)**

# Survey Network Generators

1. “Please think about and list up to 7 people you have turned to for **academic help or support** this year, including anyone you interacted with even if it was just one or two times or your interaction was brief.”

2. “Please think about and list up to 7 people you have turned to for **non-academic help or support** this year, including anyone you interacted with even if it was just one or two times or your interaction was brief.”



# Interview Questions

## Person #1

- \* Can you tell me a little more about your relationship with **[survey response]**?
- \* Why did you choose to go to **[survey response]** for help?
- \* Can you describe your last conversation with **[survey response]**?

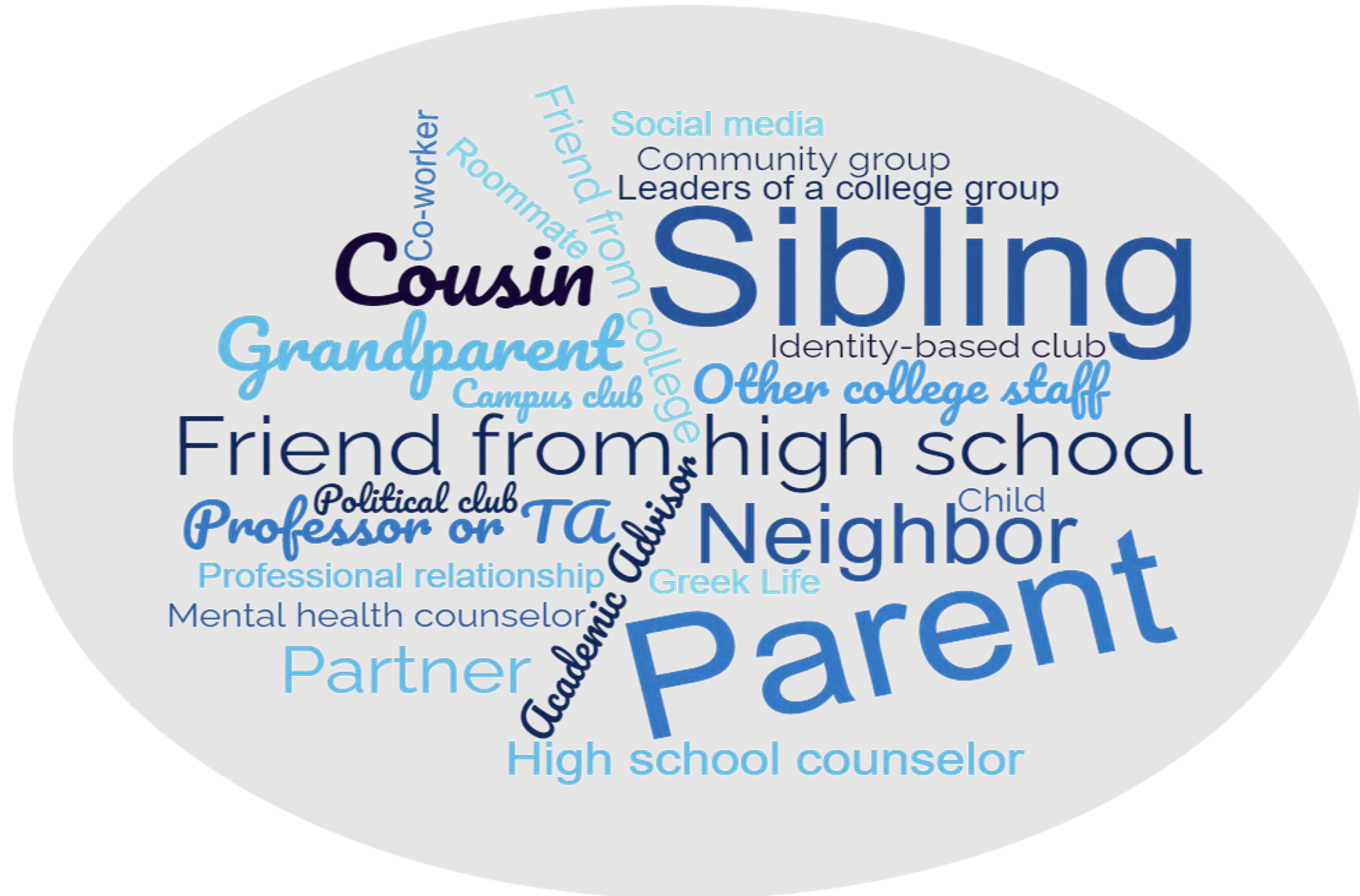
**Researchers took an asset-oriented approach to understand students' relationships with institutional and non-institutional actors.**

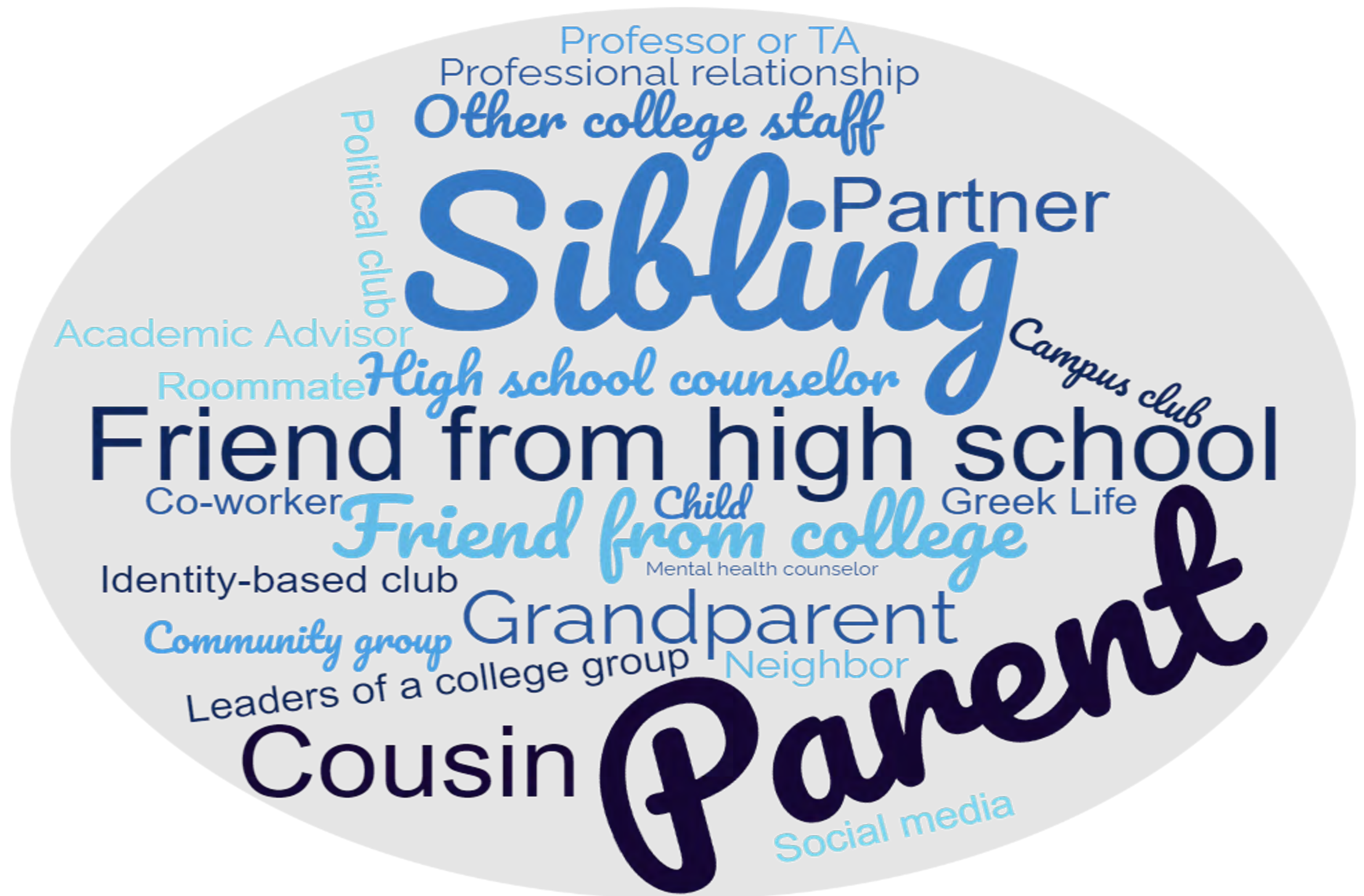


Source: Yosso (2005)



Who do first-generation college students turn to for academic support?





**Who do first-generation college students turn to for non-academic support?**



# 70%

of respondents indicated that they had siblings and/or extended family members who either attend or have attended college.

# 60%

of respondents with siblings and/or extended family who either attend or have attended college indicated that these family members advise them on college-related issues.



24.5%

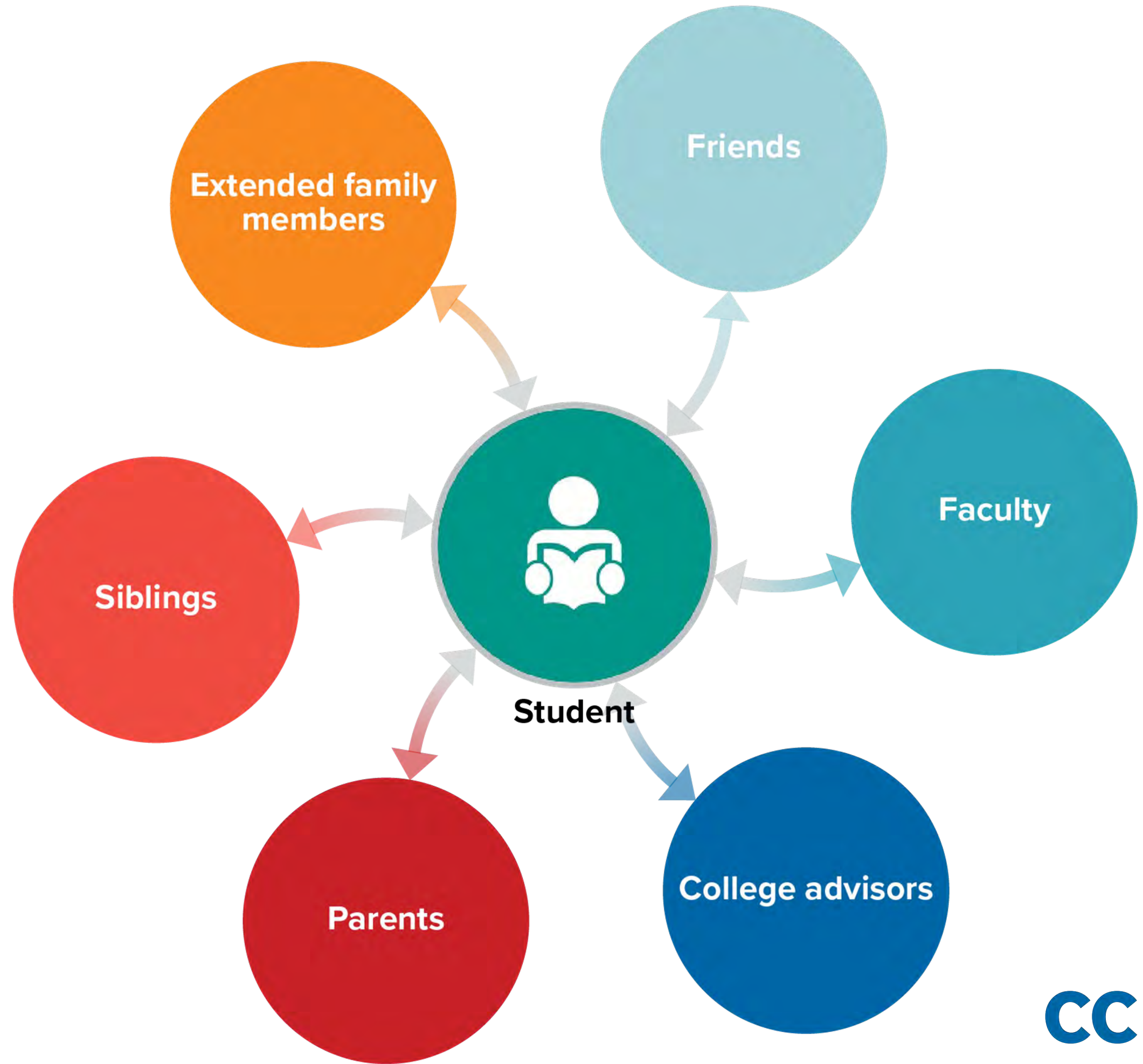
Of respondents indicated that they were “not sure” or “did not” identify as a first-generation college student.



# Common Connections

| Type of Connection                | Academic Support | Non-Academic Support |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Parent / Step-parent / Guardian   | 28.2%            | 48.9%                |
| Sibling                           | 31%              | 38.2%                |
| Cousins                           | 17.2%            | 18%                  |
| Friend from college               | 33%              | 28.6%                |
| Friend from high school/childhood | 38.6%            | 48%                  |
| Academic advisor at college       | 29%              | 12.2%                |
| Faculty                           | 21.1%            | 5.9%                 |

# Common Connections





**Relationships**

# Parents & Guardians

Parents and guardians encouraged students to pursue a degree by sharing their personal stories and were key sources of emotional support.



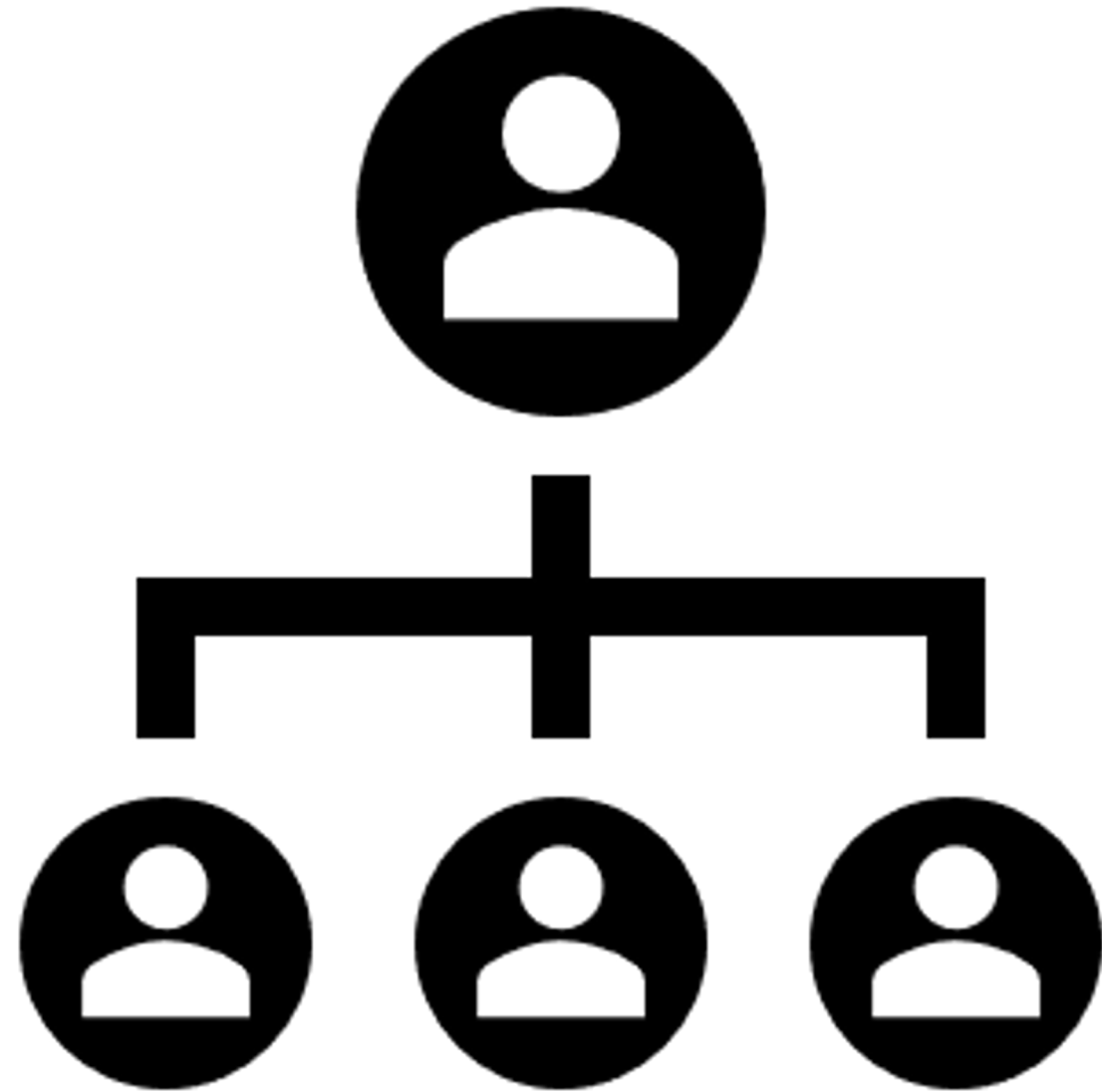


“

*My mom, in terms of... She doesn't understand what's really what's going on, but she's there to motivate me, make sure I'm still on track. Conversations like that, where she's trying to understand and be there for me and make sure that I keep going.”*

# Siblings & Cousins

Siblings, cousins and other extended family with college experience brokered connections to on-campus activities and services.





“

*She told me a lot to join the Latino programs at school. She's like, 'You don't know how much those help. Trust me. You're going to create a good friend group and all that, and obviously don't be afraid to reach out. There're connections there for you.'”*



Students  
turned to  
**friends from  
childhood  
and high  
school for  
advice.**





“

*He's encouraging me to go to events that the college offers. He's encouraging me to talk to people, talk to teachers and all that...overall having a positive influence.”*

# Academic Advisors

Students were more willing to share personal information with advisors they had interacted with previously, positioning these advisors to connect students to other resources.





“

*This semester, she helped me a lot. She helped me determine when I would graduate and she helped me determine what courses I should take... And she introduced me to the [the program], which I am currently in the process of getting hired.”*

# Faculty

Professors brokered campus connections by embedding campus resources into course materials and content.





“

*It's usually when they're explicitly told to me. So, learning center, I found out about it because my communications teacher actually gave us a tour of the library, which I thought was super cool...So, I knew about everything in the library, to tech support, the learning center in the basement...”*

# Implications

- \* Parents, siblings, and other family may be asset-rich connections, brokers to services broadening definition of first-generation
- \* Intake questionnaires, family outreach can go beyond parental units
- \* High school – college connections partnerships can leverage peer relationships
- \* Removing barriers to accessing targeted programs can further empower advising staff from these resources to reach students
- \* Embedding structures connecting students to resources in course materials, programming can increase faculty in networks



# I Am First Program

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*Stephanie Reyes, M.S.  
Sr. Associate Director, Employer Relations*

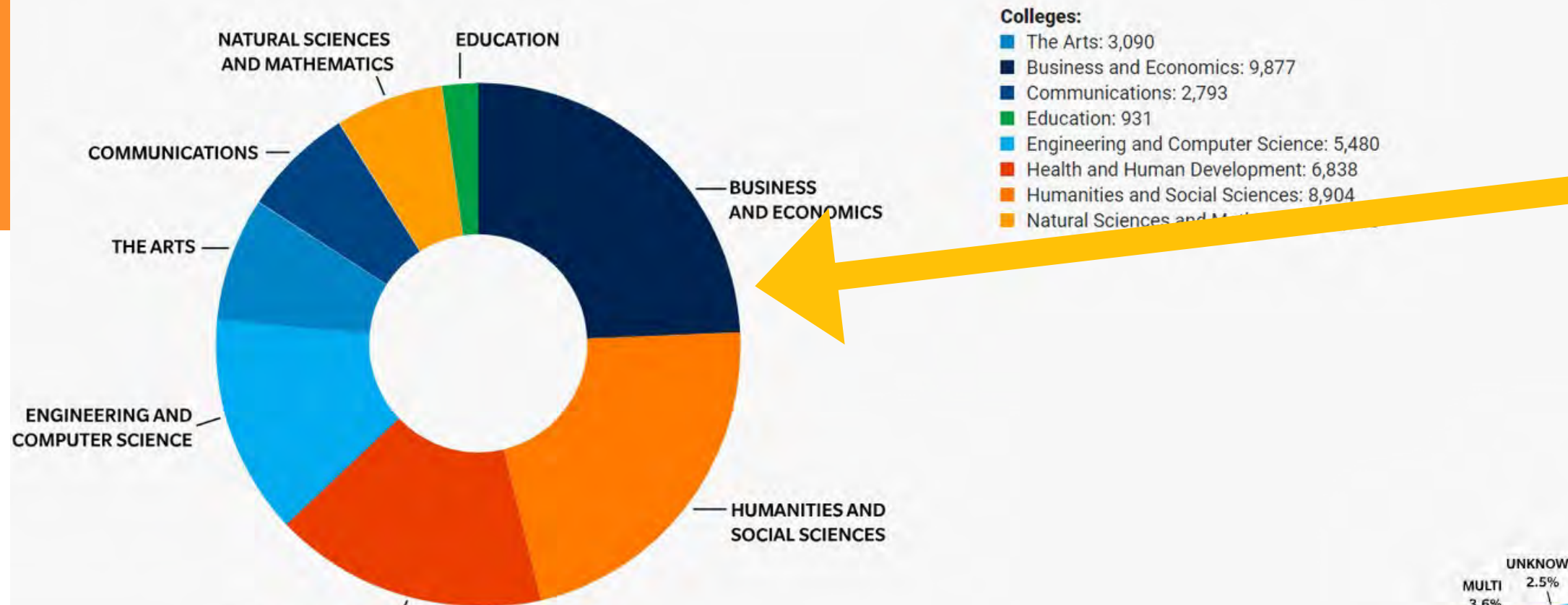
*Susel Robledo, M.B.A., M.S.  
Assistant Director of Career  
Development & Campus Partnerships*





# About CSUF

## COLLEGE ENROLLMENT: FALL 2023

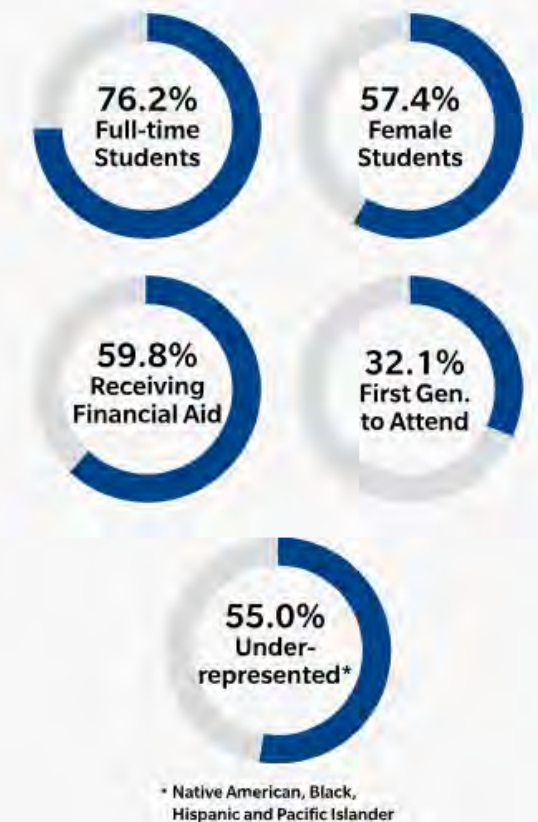
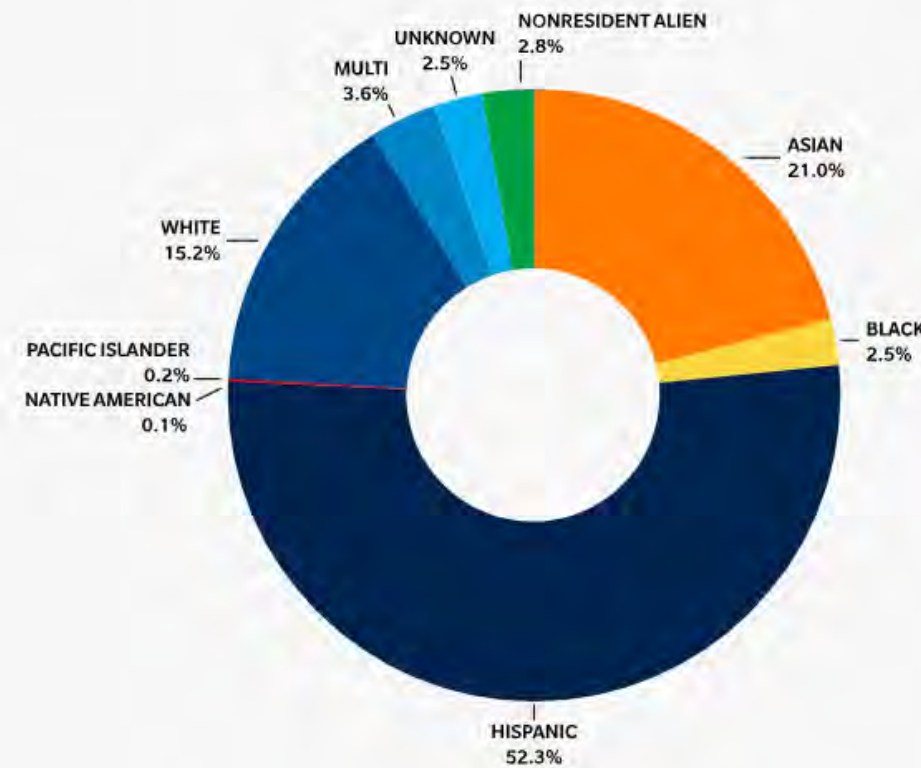


41,962

32.1% First Gen. to Attend College

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS: FALL 2023

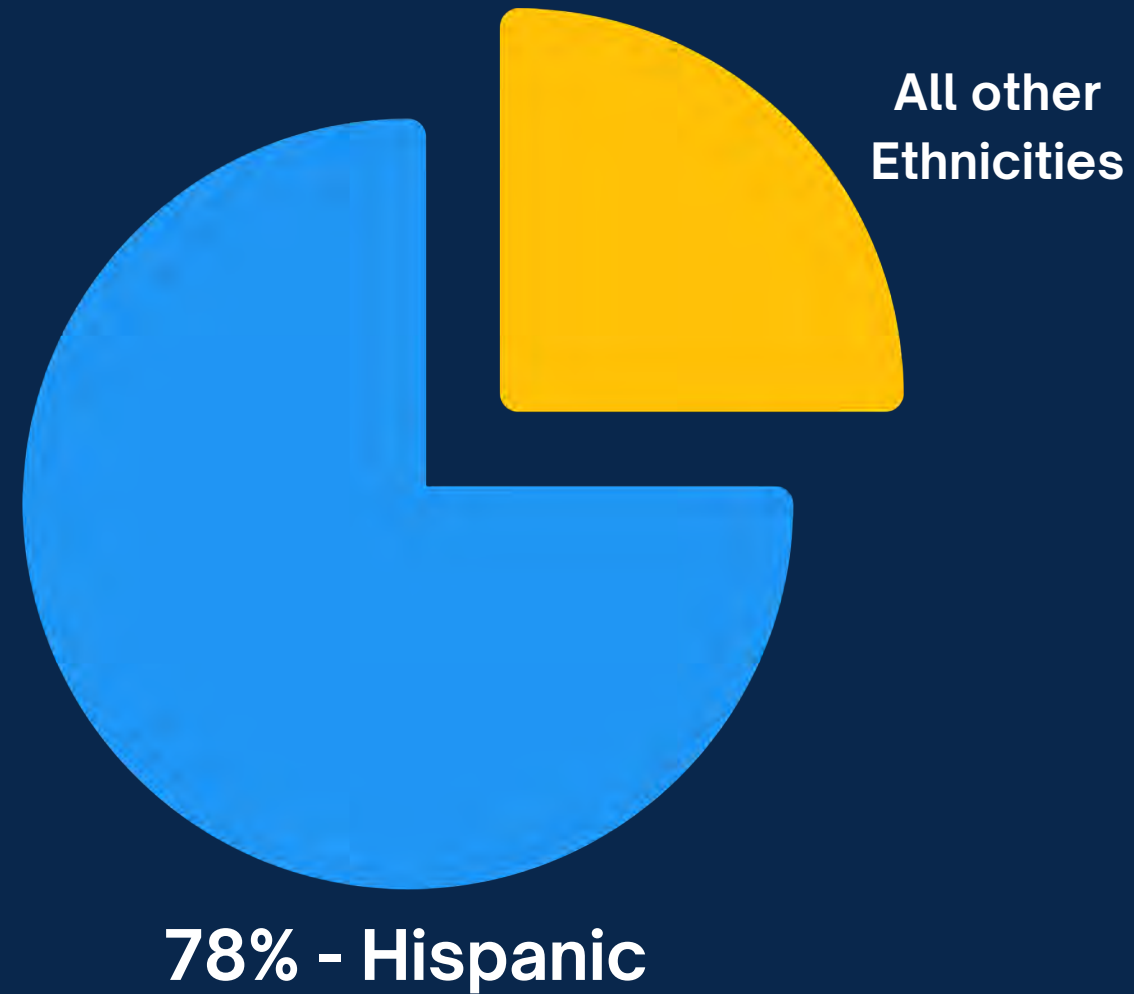
Total student enrollment: 41,962



# I Am First Demographics Data through Summer 2023

326  
Students

*Top 3  
Colleges*



*Humanities & Social Sciences*

*Business & Economics*

*Health & Human Development*





*A Career Readiness Program tailored to students who identify as a first-generation college undergraduate student from any major.*

*Overall goals are to provide a sense of belonging, address first-gen challenges with an asset-based mindset, and teach students the importance of social capital.*





# Program Overview

## I AM FIRST (GENERAL) PROGRAM

- Cohort-Based – Offered in the Fall, Spring and Summer (55 student max)
- (9) 2-hour sessions
- Receive an alumni mentor
- Collaboration with CEO Leadership Alliance of Orange County for priority access to micro-internships
- Receive a Career Readiness Certificate at completion of the program
- Opportunity to receive a \$250 scholarship

## I AM FIRST I AM AN ARTIST

- Same goals as the general program utilizing the Career Launch Academy curriculum targeted to first-gen Arts majors.
- 6 total sessions – includes an opening session for community building and a final session for scholarship presentations
- Does not currently include an alumni mentor since students are using the Career Launch method which encourages and teaches students how to reach out to professionals for informational interviews



# Program Overview (cont'd)

## Recruitment/Marketing

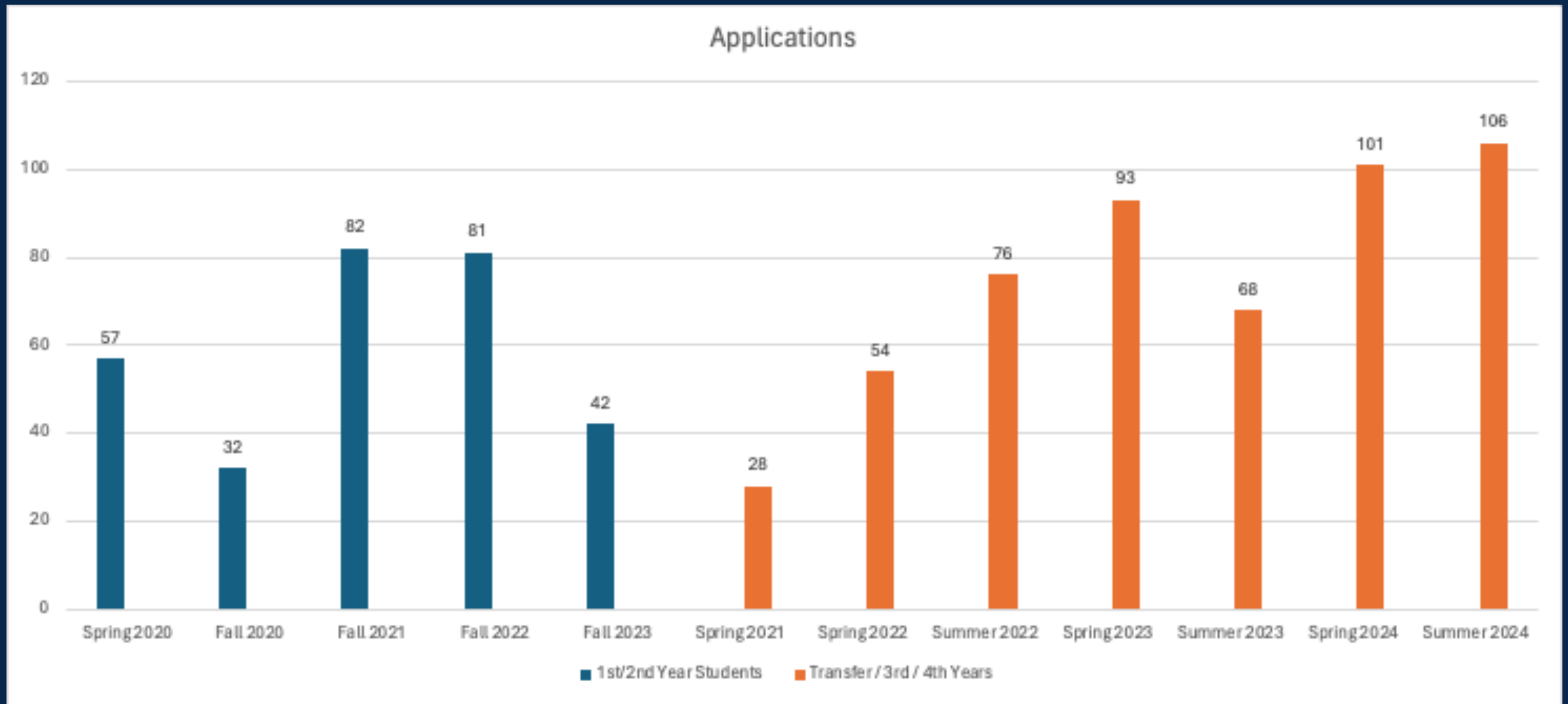
- Titan Advising Net to identify first-gen students
- First-Gen Definition provided
- Student Connections/Faculty and Staff Referrals

## Application Process

- In place to enforce commitment to the program



# Applications





# Session Themes

01

Approaching  
First-Gen  
Identity from  
an Asset-  
Based  
Mindset

02

Social Capital  
Empowerment

03

Career  
Readiness

04

Belonginess  
and  
Community

# Community/Family Engagement

## *Mentors*

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- Recruitment Process
- Orientation
- Mentee Preparation

## *IAF Family Inclusion*

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- Family Spanish Orientation
- Coming Soon - Family Celebration

## *Campus Family Inclusion*

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- National First Gen Week
- Parent & Family Orientation
- Experience CSUF
- Fall in Love with Fullerton



# Measuring Impact & Career Readiness

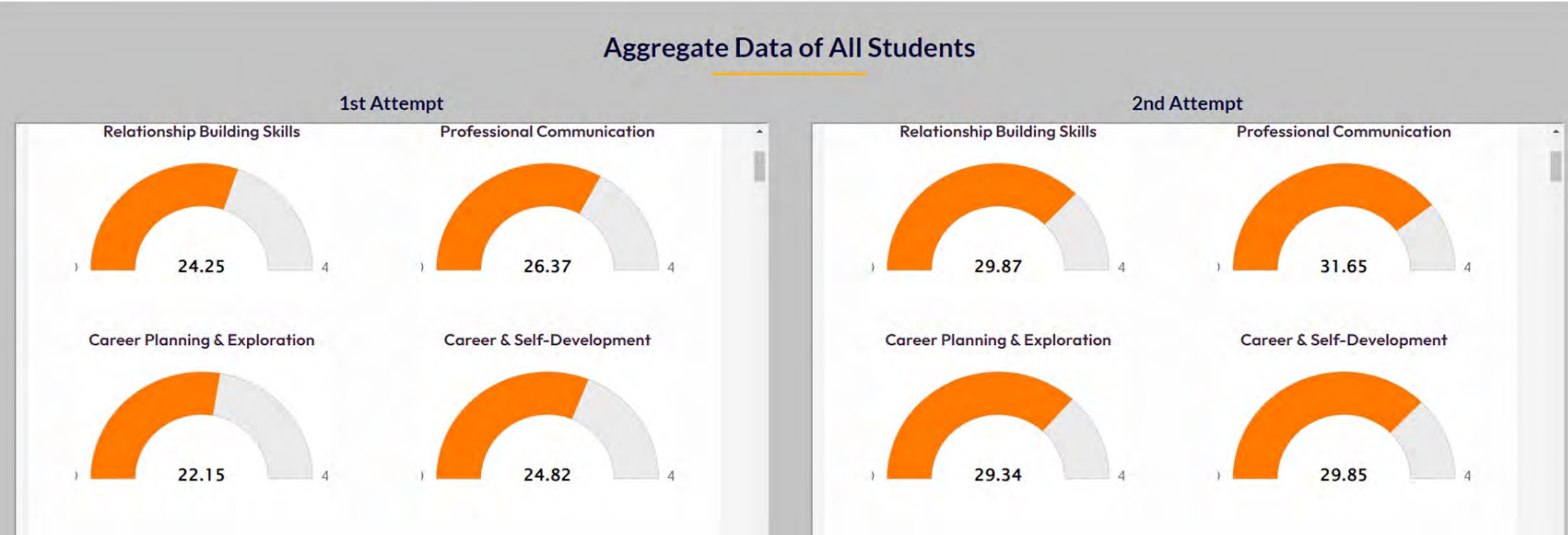
## Career Launch Readiness Assessment



# Measuring Impact & Career Readiness (cont'd)

**CAREER LAUNCH  
READINESS ASSESSMENT**

California State University, Fullerton  
Data Analytics Dashboard







# Funding & University Support

Be the FIR

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UNIVERSITY  
BERTON







# Small Group Session 1

1. How does your college engage families in programming for first-generation college students?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities you encounter in engaging families?



## Small Group Session 2

1. **What are the challenges and opportunities you encounter in sustaining programming for first-generation college students?**
2. **How do you sustain support among leadership and other staff for these services?**