

## NATIONAL FIRST-GEN DAY CELEBRATION

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On November 8, 2018, a team of Smathers Libraries volunteers, all dressed in green, set up a table on the Plaza of the Americas to participate in National First-Gen Day and the First-Generation College Celebration. For over two hours, hundreds of first generation UF students spun a wheel to learn about resources that the Libraries have to support undergraduates as they pursue their education and to win prizes. Libraries staff shared information about reference assistance, Special Collections, study spaces, 3D printing, and other key library resources. For their time, students also got to collect door prizes such as Smathers Libraries branded sunglasses and 3D printed gators donated by Marston and Library West staff.



UF are a more ethnically diverse group than our student body overall, but also have lower four- and six-year graduation rates. The University's Office of First-Generation Student Success is heavily invested in supporting our students from before admission to after graduation through the development of academic success strategies, understanding and supporting distinct first generation identities, connecting students to peer mentors, and offering guidance to campus resources. Through the work of the Office's First-Generation Academy, Life Coaching, Gator Law Mentoring Program, and First-Gen Advocate Program, UF has been selected by NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education as a First Forward Institution to receive additional support and resources to grow our programs.

The First-Generation College Celebration was started by the Council for Opportunity in Education and the Center for First-Generation Student Success in 2017 as part of the 53rd anniversary of the signing of the 1965 Higher Education Act, which strengthened Federal support and funding for student financial aid programs in order to increase enrollment among under-privileged populations in higher education. The purpose of the day is to celebrate our many First-Gen students; to increase awareness of the growing number of First-Gen students, faculty, and staff on campus; and to recognize the contributions that First-Gen students and graduates make to our communities.

UF is also home to the Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars Program, which offers financial support to 300 academically talented First-Gen students in every entering undergraduate class. Over the past 12 years, 1,924 Opportunity Scholars have earned UF degrees, with one out of six continuing on to pursue graduate or professional degrees.

Here at UF, over 20% of our enrolled students are first-generation college students. First-Gen students at

*Photos of First-Gen Employees in the Libraries Celebrating with Students*



**AS WE PLAN FOR THE NEXT ROUND OF THE LIBRARIES' ACTIVITIES FOR NATIONAL FIRST-GEN DAY ON NOVEMBER 8, 2019, WE HOPE TO EXPAND OUR OFFERINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE WITH STUDENTS AND SHARE ALL THAT THE LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIES STAFF HAVE TO OFFER.**

## UF LIBRARIES ARE A FIRST-GEN'S BEST FRIEND

CHECK OUT MORE AT:  
**#FIRSTGENUF**

When the Office of First-Generation Student Success announced their plans to host a National First-Gen Day picnic celebration in front of Library West, staff were excited for the opportunity to connect directly with students and to share information about the many ways that the Libraries can support our undergraduates' academic success and the University's commitment to supporting talented students regardless of their background or needs. The students, too, were excited to learn about what the Libraries have to offer beyond books and study spaces. Many students were surprised to learn about our 3D printers and amazed by the M3D printers that are free to checkout and use for community members. Other students raved about the One Button Studio in West, whether they had used it for class assignments or personal use. Tabling at the picnic provided an opportunity to connect with students who may not know what services to expect from a large academic library, and teaching students, many of whom were freshmen, about the Libraries allows them to engage with us over the course of their careers at UF.

The Libraries' support for our First-Gen students also goes beyond a single afternoon's engagement. Many of our librarians and staff volunteer as First-Gen Advocates, offering 1-on-1 advice sessions on career planning, including:

- **STEPHANIE BIRCH**, *African American Studies Librarian*
- **JEAN BOSSERT**, *Engineering Librarian*
- **LISA CAMPBELL**, *Instruction and Outreach Librarian*
- **MEGAN DALY**, *Librarian of Classics, Philosophy, and Religion*
- **SARA GONZALEZ**, *Associate Chair for Marston Science Library*
- **MICHELLE NOLAN**, *Chemical Sciences Librarian*
- **MELODY ROYSTER**, *Agricultural Sciences Librarian*
- **ASHLEY VAUGHT**, *Library West Stacks Manager*

## First-Gen stories from our very own UF Libraries

I NOW REALIZE I MISSED OUT ON OPPORTUNITIES BECAUSE I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THEY EXISTED. I WANT OTHER FIRST-GEN STUDENTS TO KNOW LIBRARIANS ARE FAMILIAR WITH CAMPUS AND CAN HELP CONNECT STUDENTS TO THE RESOURCES THEY NEED.

DR. SARA GONZALEZ  
LIBRARIAN  
MARSTON SCIENCE LIBRARY



AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT I LEARNED HOW COLLEGE WAS NOT DESIGNED TO SUPPORT PEOPLE LIKE ME. LIBRARIES HAVE BEEN ALWAYS A SHORTCUT WITHIN THAT SYSTEM. THEY'RE A WELCOMING PLACE, NOT JUST SOMEWHERE YOU GO TO DO WORK OR STUDY BECAUSE IT IS LIKELY TO BE QUIET.

DR. FRANCESC MORALES  
FORMER GRADUATE INTERN  
GEORGE A. SMATHERS LIBRARIES



IF I HAD ONE TIP TO OFFER TO FELLOW 1ST GENERATION STUDENTS, IT WOULD BE TO GET COMFORTABLE ASKING FOR HELP. FACULTY AND FELLOW STUDENTS POSSESS THE KNOWLEDGE THAT BENEFITS YOU...TAKE ADVANTAGE!

KIERRA KAYMORE  
ACCESS & RESOURCE SHARING  
SHIPPING COORDINATOR  
LIBRARY WEST



BEING A FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT- AND THE FIRST TO MOVE AWAY- NO ONE WAS ABLE TO REALLY PREP ME FOR WHAT LIFE WAS GOING TO BE LIKE AT COLLEGE. IT WAS ALL WORTH IT THOUGH! AS AN UNDERGRAD, WORKING IN THE LIBRARIES REALLY OPENED MY EYES TO ALL THE RESOURCES THE LIBRARIES HAVE TO OFFER STUDENTS.

MELISSA JEROME  
PROJECT COORDINATOR FPRDNP  
LIBRARY WEST



WORKING IN MARSTON HAS EXPOSED ME TO EQUIPMENT LIKE THE 3D PRINTERS, PODCASTING EQUIPMENT AND OTHER TECHNOLOGIES THAT I DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO BEFORE. I THINK MAKING THIS EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE WITH NO COST IS A GREAT BENEFIT TO FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS.

BRIAN FERNANDEZ  
STUDENT EMPLOYEE  
MARSTON SCIENCE LIBRARY



AS A FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT I DESPERATELY NEEDED GUIDANCE, BUT THOUGHT PROFESSORS ONLY HAD TIME FOR THE "STAR STUDENTS." IT WAS THROUGH A WORK-STUDY JOB IN THE UF LIBRARIES THAT I FOUND A WHOLE TEAM OF AMAZING MENTORS. THE LIBRARY STAFF WERE ALWAYS THERE FOR ME, AND CONNECTED ME WITH SO MANY RESOURCES THAT CARRIED ME THROUGH UNTIL GRADUATION.

APRIL HINES  
LIBRARIAN  
LIBRARY WEST

