



# FACES OF THE FUTURE



Parental Education & First Generation Students  
Office of Institutional Effectiveness

[www.jjc.edu/admin/ie](http://www.jjc.edu/admin/ie)

March 2006

This summary is part of a larger analysis related to the Faces of the Future Survey available on-line at <http://www.jjc.edu/admin/ie/information/Surveys/surveys.htm>

# PARENTAL EDUCATION & FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS

- Nearly 70% of JJC students are first-generation students. About 10% of JJC students' parents did not complete high school. The highest educational attainment for 45% of community college students' parents is a high school diploma. By contrast, only about 30% of students at four-year colleges and universities are first-generation college students.
- Higher percentages of students at other community colleges possess Bachelor's Degrees, but parents of JJC students are more likely to possess at least an Associate's Degree or have some college experience.

## **Information about first-generation students**

First-generation students are important to take note of because they are different from students whose parents attended or graduated college in a variety of ways.<sup>1</sup> First-generation students are motivated by a different set of goals, in particular upward mobility, financial stability, and providing better opportunities for their children. They lack the resources, direction, and knowledge about college processes and planning. First-generation students are geographically-constrained and look for colleges close to home and are less likely to apply for financial aid. First-generation students are also more pragmatic – they are more likely to indicate that making more money and securing employment is a very important reason for going to college. 37% of new first-generation students say they will probably work full-time in college, compared to only 15% of other students.

Nationally, about 40% of first-generation students leave college without a degree, compared to only 20% of students whose parents have degrees. 25% of first-generation students complete a Bachelor's Degree within eight years of graduating high school, compared to 70% of students whose parents possess degrees. Community colleges, with their low-tuition, close proximity to home, opportunity to work part-time, and open admissions are usually the institution of choice for first-generation students.

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<sup>1</sup> First-generation students are students whose parents have not completed college. The information included here was taken from the following sources: American Council on Education. (2006). *Missed opportunities revisited: New information on students who do not apply for financial aid*. Washington, DC.; Inman, W.E., & Mayes, L. (1999). *Characteristics of first-generation community college students*. *Community College Review*, 26.; U.S. Department of Education. (1998, 2005). *First-generation students: Undergraduates whose parents never enrolled in postsecondary education, First-generation students in postsecondary education: A look at their college transcripts*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Wimberly, G., & Noeth, R.J. (2004). *Schools involving parents in early postsecondary planning*. Iowa City, IA: ACT; UCLA Higher Education Research Center, *Annual National Survey of American First-Year Students*.

Researchers have conceptualized the difficulties first-generation students face under the framework of “integration and cultural transformation.”<sup>2</sup> Because of their background, first-generation students can find integration into the academic and social college environment challenging. Because going to college is an explicit act of upward “cultural mobility,” first-generation students must also deal with tensions between family/peer culture and college culture.<sup>3</sup>

Programs and the provision of information based on assumptions that first-generation students will utilize and comprehend information in the same manner as students whose parents attended college will not be effective in assisting them reach their academic goals. All community colleges should be clear with first-generation students and parents about college planning, preparation activities, testing procedures, and financial aid.

### **Role of Parents**

Parents play an important role in the education decisions of community college students. While involved, research indicates that parents play only a minor role when it comes to the ultimate decision.<sup>4</sup> Research about the role of parents in college choice decisions<sup>5</sup> indicates that parental *involvement* increases over a student’s high school career, but the role of parents in a student’s *decision*-making processes decreases over time as students move from internal/personal sources of information to external sources of information. Additionally, community college student parents may exhibit confusion about transfer and general education procedures and terms college officials may assume to be universal, like “A.A.” or “catalog.”

In a survey of parents attitudes about JJC, 80% of parents indicated JJC is a quality option for the first two years of colleges.<sup>6</sup> From an enrollment management perspective, the best messages for parents are that community colleges are affordable, provide the opportunity for students to transfer, and that community colleges are an ideal place to receive a quality instruction *and* remediate academic deficiencies.

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<sup>2</sup> London, H.B. (1992). Cultural challenges faced by first-generation students. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 80, 5-11.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Education, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Bers, T.H., & Smith, K. (1989). Parents and the college choice decisions of community college students. *College & University*, 64, 335-348.

<sup>5</sup> Bers, T.H., & Galowich, P.M. (2002). Using survey and focus group research to learn about parents’ roles in the community college choice process. *Community College Review*, 29.; Bers, T.H. (2005). Parents of traditionally-aged community college students. *Research in Higher Education*, 46, 413-436. Hossler, D., Schmit, J., & Vesper, N. (1999). *Going to college: How social, economic, and educational factors influence the decisions make*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.

<sup>6</sup> Joliet Junior College. (2001). *CLARUS Scan: Parental attitudes about JJC*.

# Parental Education

## *Educational Attainment for Students' Mothers, Fall 1999-2005*

	JJC						NATIONAL					
FALL	< H.S.	H.S.	Some Col-lege	A.A./Cert.	B.A.	Grad./Prof.	< H.S.	H.S.	Some Col-lege	A.A./Cert.	B.A.	Grad./Prof.
1999	10.5%	40.3%	17.9%	14.1%	12.2%	5.0%	17.0%	39.5%	2.9%	18.9%	14.0%	7.7%
2000	10.1%	36.9%	21.1%	17.4%	8.5%	6.0%	14.4%	35.1%	16.5%	16.3%	11.4%	6.3%
2001	9.5%	38.4%	17.5%	12.5%	16.2%	5.8%	14.8%	35.6%	16.7%	15.8%	10.9%	6.2%
2002	7.9%	38.2%	22.2%	15.9%	9.5%	6.2%	15.3%	34.0%	16.9%	15.9%	11.7%	6.2%
2003	8.1%	39.5%	16.5%	16.5%	12.9%	6.6%	14.8%	34.5%	17.0%	15.8%	11.8%	6.1%
2004	8.2%	37.9%	21.2%	15.4%	11.8%	5.6%	14.3%	32.6%	17.3%	16.5%	12.9%	6.5%
2005	11.2%	33.8%	18.2%	18.4%	12.1%	6.3%	13.7%	33.8%	17.2%	16.2%	12.7%	6.4%

## *Educational Attainment for Students' Fathers, Fall 1999-2005*

	JJC						NATIONAL					
FALL	< H.S.	H.S.	Some Col-lege	A.A./Cert.	B.A.	Grad./Prof.	< H.S.	H.S.	Some Col-lege	A.A./Cert.	B.A.	Grad./Prof.
1999	12.4%	32.8%	21.1%	14.1%	11.7%	7.9%	16.9%	30.9%	14.9%	14.7%	13.4%	9.3%
2000	13.5%	33.0%	13.1%	21.5%	11.9%	7.1%	17.2%	32.9%	14.9%	14.2%	12.6%	8.3%
2001	9.3%	31.8%	17.2%	16.9%	14.4%	10.4%	17.7%	33.1%	14.8%	14.1%	12.4%	7.9%
2002	12.2%	35.2%	17.5%	15.8%	10.5%	8.9%	17.7%	32.2%	15.2%	14.0%	12.8%	8.1%
2003	11.1%	34.0%	14.8%	15.1%	18.2%	6.8%	17.1%	32.9%	15.0%	14.1%	12.9%	8.0%
2004	10.2%	32.5%	19.1%	18.0%	12.7%	7.5%	16.4%	32.1%	15.1%	14.5%	13.4%	8.6%
2005	13.3%	34.3%	14.0%	19.7%	11.7%	6.9%	16.4%	33.6%	14.8%	14.2%	12.9%	8.0%

*Note.* < H.S. = Did not graduate high school; H.S. = High School Diploma; Some College = Enrolled in college, but never received a degree; A.A./Cert. = Associates and vocational certificates; B.A. = Bachelors; Grad./Prof. = Graduate or Professional Degree (PhD, MD, MA, JD, etc.).

