



# *First Gen Symposium*

Monday, March 11, 2024

## Supporting First Generation College Students: Community Care that Leads to **College Completion**

**Rockford University**

Regents First Program

Dr. Karen P. Walker, Dean of Student Support

[kwalker@Rockford.edu](mailto:kwalker@Rockford.edu)

Jessica Morris, Student Support Coach and Mentoring Coordinator

[jmorris@Rockford.edu](mailto:jmorris@Rockford.edu)



# Role at RU: Dean of Student Support Programming

**Email:**

Kwalker@rockford.edu

**Phone:**

815-226-4088

**Favorite Fun Food:**

Mint chocolate chip ice cream

Dr. Karen P. Walker, Dean of Academic Support,  
Rockford University

## Dr. Karen Walker



Proud to be  
First  
Generation

**Interesting Fact:**

Dr. Walker is the youngest of 6 children, an avid reader, and moving from good to great with her gardening skills.



# Role at RU: Student Support Coach and Mentoring Coordinator

Email:

Jmorris@rockford.edu

Phone: 815-394-5180

Favorite Fun Food: Doritos and  
Cottage Cheese

## Jessica Morris



Proud to be  
First  
Generation

Interesting Fact: Jessica has  
been to over twenty Phish  
concerts and counting!

ROCKFORD  
UNIVERSITY



**REGENTS  
FIRST**

ROCKFORD  
UNIVERSITY



**REGENTS  
FIRST**

ROCKFORD  
UNIVERSITY

I AM



FIRST

**REGENTS  
FIRST**

# Effective Support for First Gens

SMOOTH TRANSITION INTO COLLEGE

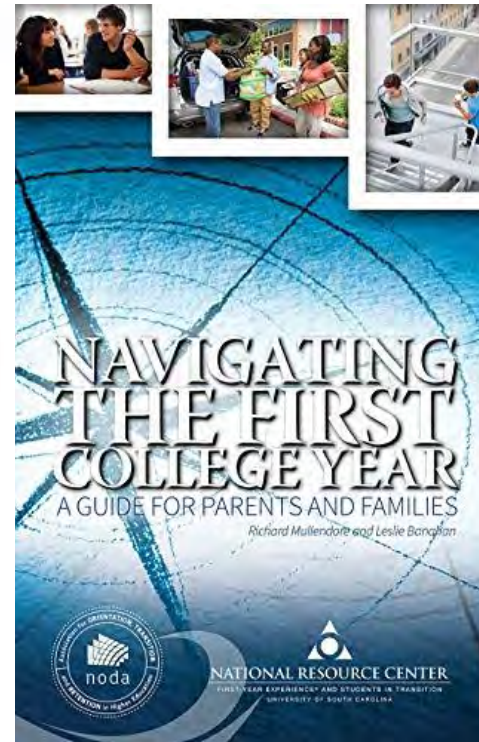
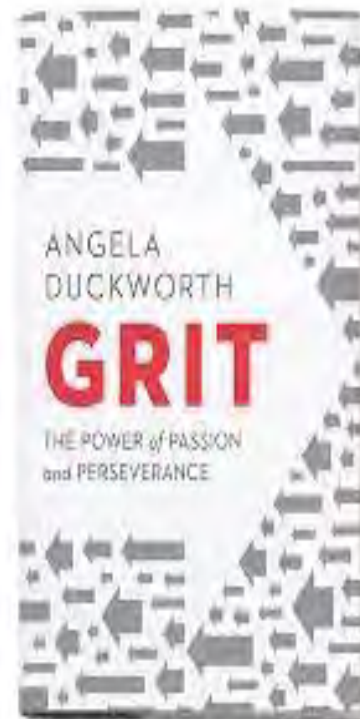
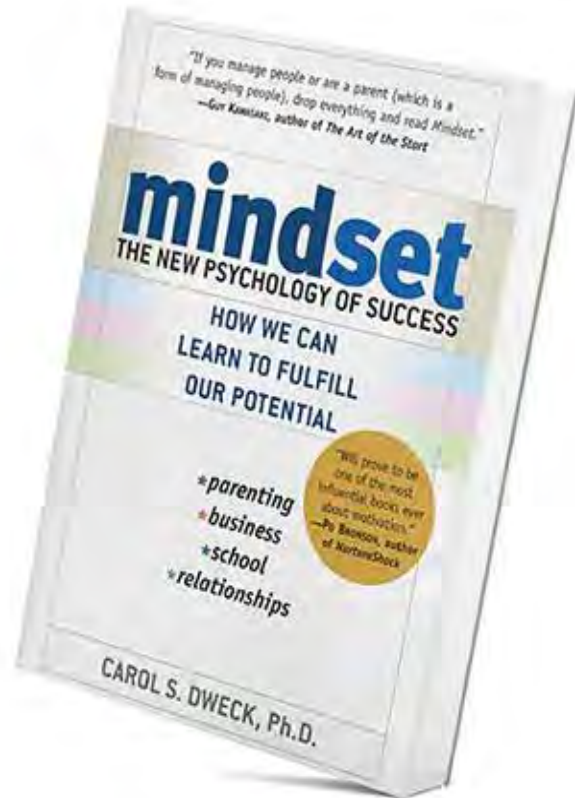
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CONTINUED STRUCTURED SUPPORT

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**INCREASED RETENTION & COMPLETION RATES**

# Book Talk: Build a Solid Support Program Foundation



# Proud to Be First: Take a Seat at the Table

ROCKFORD

WRAP  
AROUND

STUDENT  
SUPPORT



CAREER



SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL



FINANCIAL



ACADEMIC



# Regents First **Retention Facts**

Summer/Fall 21 Inaugural Cohorts	Total Participants = 12	Fall21 to SP24 <b>Retention rate = 83%</b>  WD = 1 student MW = 1 student
Summer/Fall 22 Cohorts	Total Participants = 16	Fall22 to SP24 <b>Retention rate = 94%</b>  WD = 1 student
Summer/Fall 23 Cohorts	Total Participants = 25	Fall23 to SP24 <b>Persistence rate = 100%</b>

# Regents First Program Staff for 2023-24 Academic Year

- **Dean of Student Support**
- **Student Support Coach**
- **Graduate Assistant (25 hours/week)**
- **1 Peer Mentor (rising Senior)**
- **2 Peer Mentors (rising Juniors)**
- **2 Peer Mentors (rising Sophomores)**

# Participant Requirements

GOAL = 25 PARTICIPANTS

10 = Summer 2023 Start

15=Fall 2023 Start

Pell Eligible/MAP Eligible

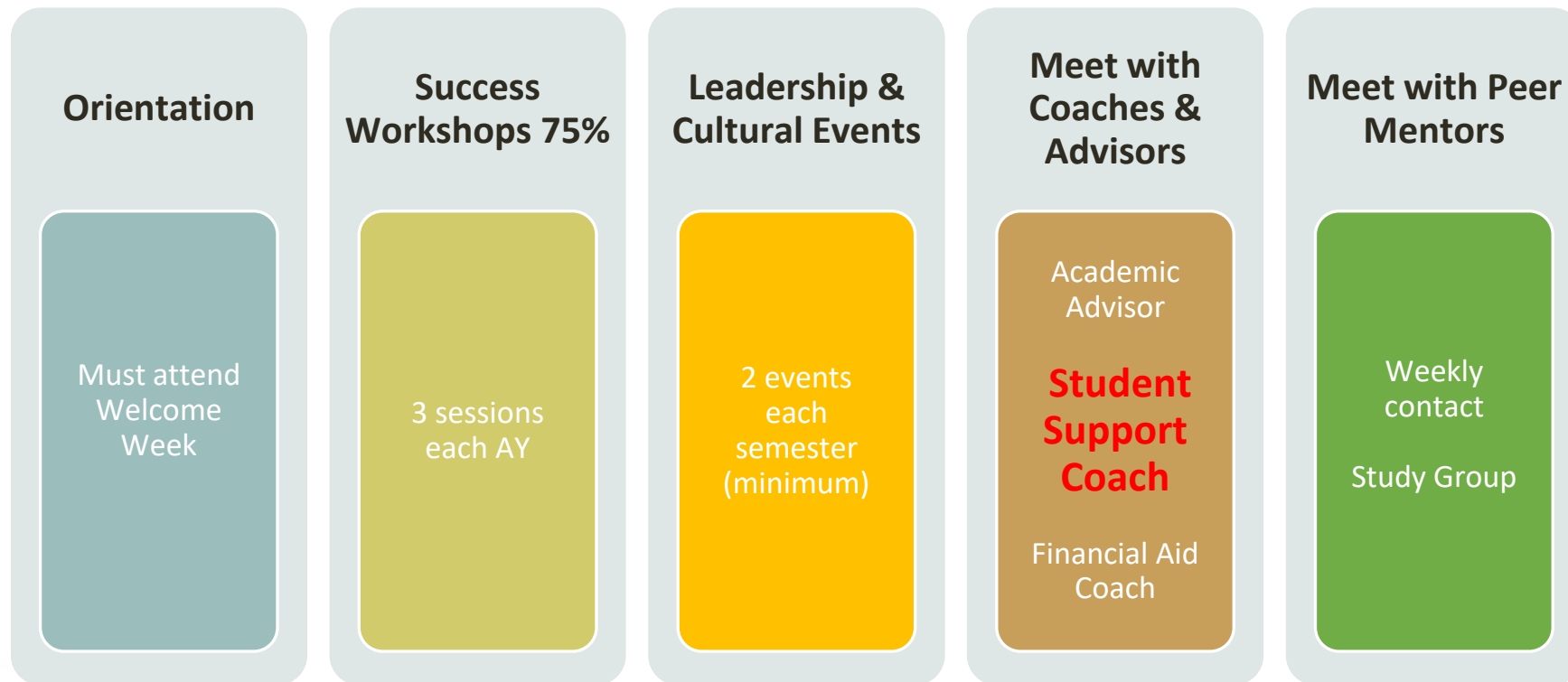
First Generation

Regular or Committee Admit

Complete **Application** & **Interview** for Program Participation

Summer or Fall Retreat

# Non-Negotiable Requirements Can Foster a Sense of Belonging on Campus



# Weekly Coaching Meetings and Mentoring Program



- Weekly Coaching Meetings:
  - Coaching Syllabus
  - Academic Pivot Plan
  - Connections to Academic Support and other student resources
  - Weekly assignment check-ins
- Weekly Group Study with Peer Mentors
  - Fosters connections with peers
  - Builds community
  - Breaks down potential barriers between students

# Campus Connections

- Encourage **Student Leadership** Positions and Opportunities
  - Regent Experience Guides
  - Student Government Associations
  - Peer Tutors
  - Campus Activities Board
  - Mentors for Regents First/MCM (Men of Color Mentorship)
  - PASS (Peer Assisted Student Support)
  - Campus employment
  - Commencement Volunteers
  - Campus Club Leadership



# LEADERSHIP: First Gen Campus Club



# Structured Support for First Gens

## Encouraging **Self** Care

- Professor office hours
- Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction (SI)
- Meet with counselor at Lang Health Center
- Exercise
- Christian Fellowship Group

## Facilitating **Community** Care

- Recognition and celebration of growth and accomplishments
- Mentor led study groups
- Time and space to be “real” with others who can relate
- Physical space to gather and have a “campus home”
- Group pages on social media and chat platforms



# Executive Leadership Team Support for First Generation Students



# Commencement 2023 Volunteers: We are NEXT!

2022: 3 Volunteers  
2023: 8 Volunteers



Summer/Fall 2021  
Inaugural Cohort =

**83% Retention  
Rate**



# Regents First 2021 Cohort

## Summer Cohort



Genell  
Butler-Jefferson



Daryan Donadio



Briana Flores



Kyle Reed



Dyoceline  
Reyes-Maya



Mia Roby



Jennifer Pina



Socorro  
Valenzuela-Veloz

## Fall Cohort



Julisa Gutierrez



Da'Quan  
McIntosh



First Gen Symposium



# First Gen Symposium

First Generation Scholars Network

Monday, March 11, 2024



**Proud to Be First!**