

To And Through College: Helping First-Gen Students Succeed After High School

Eun-Mee Jeong, Director of Alumni Services

Helen Kwan, College Coach

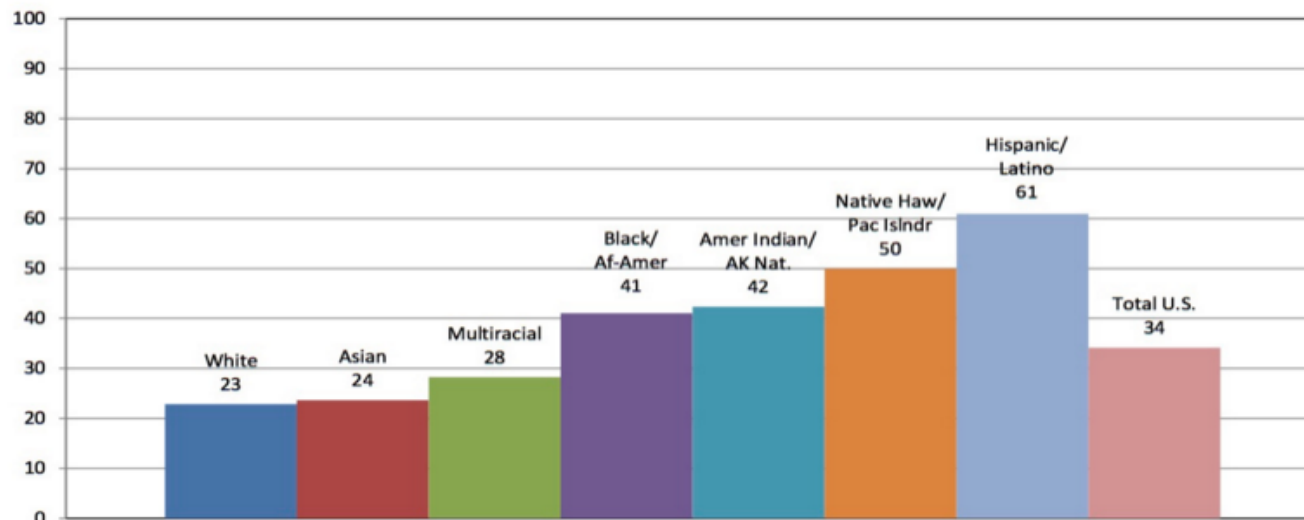
Anna Takahashi, Director of College Counseling

Eastside College Preparatory School

Who is a first-generation college student?

“First Generation” - student whose parent(s) did not complete a four-year degree

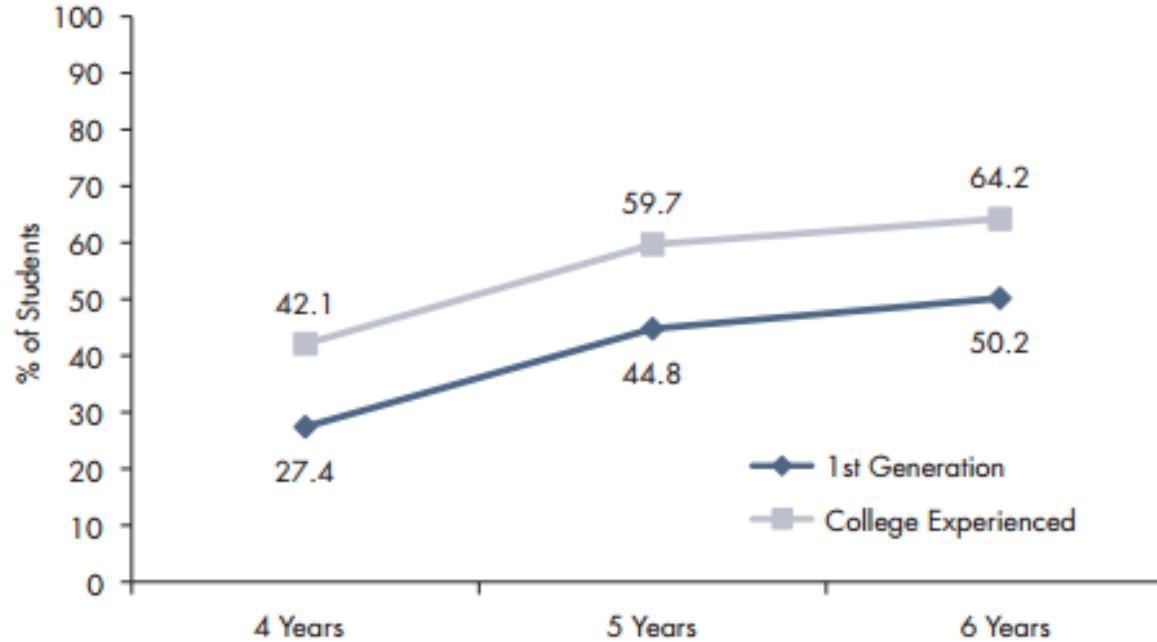
Percentage Distribution of U.S. 5- to 17-Year-Olds by First-Generation Status and Race/Ethnicity, 2011



Source: *The Condition of Education 2012*, NCES

What does this mean in higher ed?

Figure 4. Weighted Four-, Five-, and Six-Year Degree Attainment Rates, by Generation in College



What are the impacts of being first-gen?

A study published in the [*Journal of College Student Retention in 2012*](#) found that first-generation college students receive far less emotional, informational, and financial support from their parents than continuing-generation students. Those less-supported students also reported having higher levels of stress and anxiety than the few first-generation students who did feel supported by their parents. That's not to say the parents are uncaring or don't want their children to succeed. In many cases, the parents want to be involved, Washburn said, but they are not sure what level of involvement is appropriate and what advice to provide.

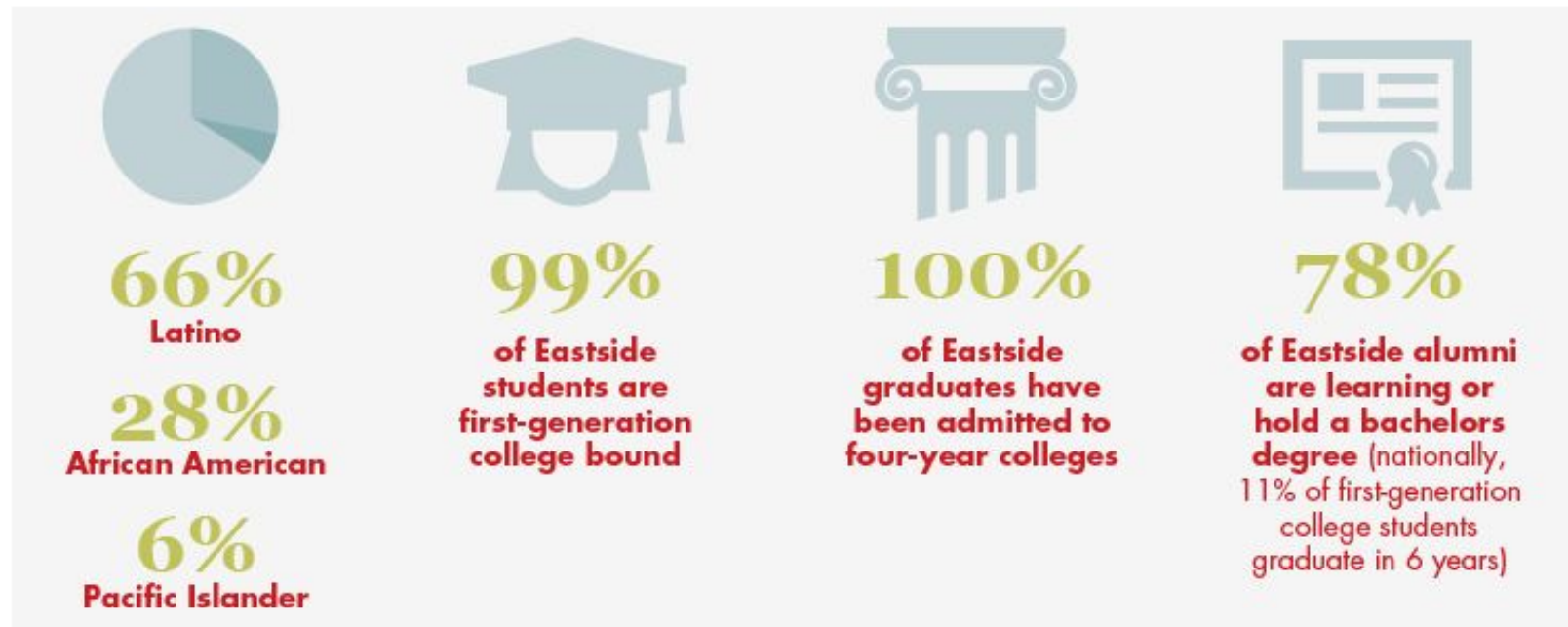
In other cases, he said, parents may not understand the value of college, even encouraging students to drop out so they can more immediately help support the family.

“Students with parents that didn't go to college don't have that person they can call when they have a question. They have no map. That child is lost.”...

Jake New, “The Opposite of Helicopter Parents,” [Insider Higher Ed](#), 08/13/2014

Background about Eastside

BY THE NUMBERS



What are some roadblocks to completion?

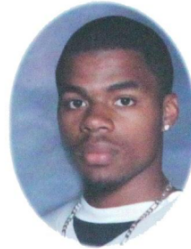
Financial

Academic including remediation

Social/Psychological

External pressures (e.g., family, community, societal messaging)

Perceived and actual complexity in completing a degree



Early lesson learned

Initially, the school was founded with the mission of getting underrepresented youth into college.

Eastside's founders realized that the challenges for alums did not end with entering college.



Eastside's Alumni Services

Alumni Services started in 2007, with the intent of helping alums navigate college to graduation

Today, the program focuses on two objectives:

- College Success

- Career Readiness

Team structure

- 2 College Coaches

- 2 Career Coaches

- 1 Director



Alumni Services

College Coaching Program

Our goal is for our alumni to successfully complete a bachelor's degree within 6 years.

Throughout their time in school, we work with alums on:

- **Academics** - Reflect on academic growth opportunities and identify/utilize resources on campus
- **Finances** - Graduate with minimal debt and knowledge of budgeting
- **Social / Emotional Concerns** - Feel integrated on campus, be in good health or working on it



Alumni Services: College Coaching Program

Academics

Check on classes

Upcoming assignments and assessments – preparation, outcomes, and reflection

Level of engagement and interest

Purchase of books and supplies

Utilization of campus resources – office hours, tutoring, advising

Roadmap

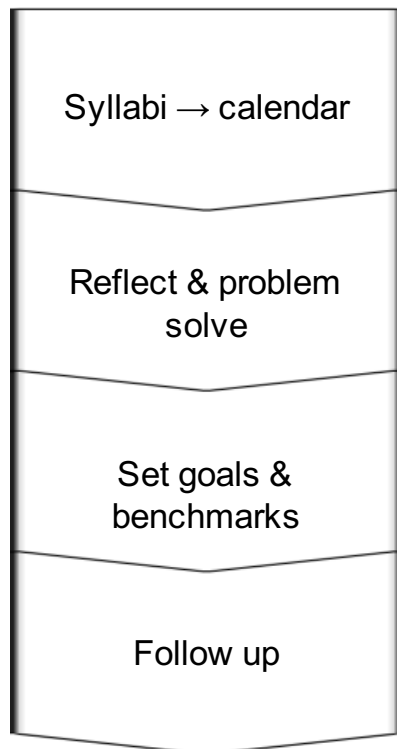
Choose classes next term to fulfill GEs or major requirements

Create minimum 2 year plan

Study plan

Academics (example)

Creating a study plan



~ December 2014 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		2 OH 2-3:30 MT Review Start Ch 8 Read Chapter 10 Read Ch 7 & review	3 Finish chapter 8 Write Intro for paper Print slides Flashcards from slides Review CH 8	4 Start Ch 9 Start reviewing & analyzing articles Flashcards from slides	5 Finish Ch 9 & 10 Draft Review slides from first topic Start CH 9 review slides	6 Ch 11 Finish draft Review slides from second topic Chapter 11 & 12
7 Review Chapter 3,4,5 Topics flash cards for definitions, complete practice quizzes Review slides from second topic	8 OH review paper Chapters 1-2, 6(flashcards and quizzes at end paradigms) Read Ch 14 Review CH 8 & 9	9 Chapter 7 & 8 OH 2-3:30 list of questions from studying Revise paper, final edits Finish Chapter 14 Review slides for that day's lecture	10 Chapter 9&10 PAPER DUE Read Chapter 12 Review difficult topics for midterm	11 Chapter 11 Finish Chapter 12 Midterm	12 Review Topic 4 Review chapter 1&2, slides	13 Review Topic 5& 6 Review CH 6 (flashcards) Review flashcards CH 1-4
14 Review hardest topics Review flashcards CH 4&5	15 AMERICAN POL. FINAL 3-6PM Review Ch 7-12 flashcards	16 PSYCH FINAL 8-11am Review CH 6 slides, quizzes, flashcards				20 DONE!!! Eastside Holiday Party ☺
			Review Ch 8 & 9 flashcards and slides	Review CH 10, 11 & most difficult topics	SOC FINAL 8-11am	

NOTES: SOC – Yellow / Office Hours: TTH, 2-3:30

American Politics – Green / Office Hours: M2-5

PSYC- Aqua Blue

Alumni Services: College Coaching Program

Finances

Review financial aid package

Determine direct and indirect costs

Create yearly budget

Help with forms, esp if selected for verification

Send reminders for financial aid deadline

Contact financial aid office with student



Alumni Services: College Coaching Program

Finances (example)

Freshman at CSU completed all financial aid documents on time. Eastside alum was selected for financial aid verification, is in review, and is being asked to pay for tuition or else will be dropped from classes.

Catch-22: Needs full-time enrollment to get financial aid but needs financial aid to pay off balance owed to school.

College coach support:

- Make calls with student who may not advocate for him/herself; ask the right follow up questions or push when necessary
- Model tone and attitude when talking with financial aid reps
- Debrief with student to ensure comprehension and any to-dos

Alumni Services: College Coaching Program

Social / Emotional Concerns

Adjustment to college

Involvement on campus

Culture shock

Roommate or housing issues

Stresses with home or family

Medical concerns, both physical and mental

Alumni Services: College Coaching Program

Social / Emotional Concerns (example)

Sophomore at a UC thinks she may be suffering from clinical depression but hasn't sought professional help.

She has considered CAPS, but her parents "don't see anything wrong with her" and do not understand how counseling could be useful.

College coach support:

- Encourage her to talk with CAPS or other trusted adult on campus, in order to get help for herself and to get advice on how to talk with her parents
- Potentially talk with profs or use another resource to contact profs on her behalf (dean, adviser, disability services, etc) for possible extensions
- Give student a safe place to share concerns, esp if it's hard to do so with parents

Alumni Services: College Coaching Program

Metrics

- Rate of college graduation
- Check-in, virtual or in-person meetings, once every 1 to 3 weeks
- Connection with at least one college faculty or staff member
- Involvement with at least one extracurricular activity
- On par with or below average national student debt



More lessons learned

Eastside also found that challenges for alums did not end once the college diploma was in hand!

Case example

Alum graduates Eastside and heads off to **Pomona College**.

During college, spends 1 summer as a **Research Assistant in the Psych department**. She also serves a **mentoring program for 3 years**.

This alum is described as **bright, mature, thoughtful, and responsible**.

She earns a **Bachelor's in Psychology, within 4 years**.

Unemployed for 1 year after graduation!

First destination is a **Research & Policy internship**, which she supplemented with a job at **Urban Outfitters**.

Alumni Services

Career Pathways Program (CPP)

CPP Internship Program

Started 2011

Created to help alums access opportunities, which their more affluent peers can get through a family / friend network

CPP Career Coaching

Started 2015

Created in order to help alums be proactive in their career exploration

Alumni Services: Career Pathways Program

Internship Program

What we do

- Develop corporate and non-profit partnerships, primarily in the Bay Area
- Identify paid internship needs / opportunities
- Serve as talent source and act as recruiting service
- Provide professional development program to interns during the summer



Alumni Services: Career Pathways Program

Career Coaching Program

We aim to support the development of independent and resilient job seekers.

We aspire to have the Eastside college graduate

- Be able to develop a job search strategy and execute it effectively
- Be able to make informed career choices, based on testing of career paths during college
- Have professional experience to make them competitive candidate
- Have developed fundamental skills relevant to their career path
- Understand the value of mentors and be actively pursuing mentoring relationships

Our goal is to have college graduates be in graduate school or in a professional career within 6 months of graduation.



Alumni Services: Career Pathways Program

Metrics

- Number of internships secured, through or independent of Eastside partners

Beginning to track:

- Percentage of alums in college who participate in career coaching program
- Percentage of college alums in first destination within 6 months of graduation



Reflections on the last 9 years...

What has helped us to be successful

We believe the key to serving students successfully is to develop a strong relationship with them

Start developing relationships before they graduate from high school

Adjust tactics based on student personalities, needs, and preferences

Make clear we care about the student, more holistically

Benefit from established network of trust, based on student experiences with Eastside faculty

What has helped us to be successful

We adapt in order to stay connected



What has helped us to be successful

It takes a team to serve our alums

College coaches act as a case manager, and gathering input from various stakeholders is critical

Faculty

Residential Faculty

Eastside affiliates



...even peers!



What has helped us to be successful

We cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach

Some considerations that influence a coach's approach to relationship development:

- Level of risk for different dimensions; academic, finance, and social / emotional
- Other mentoring relationships in alum's ecosystem
- Input by alum on how much s/he wants to lean on the coach

What has helped us to be successful

Alums know there are “no strings attached”

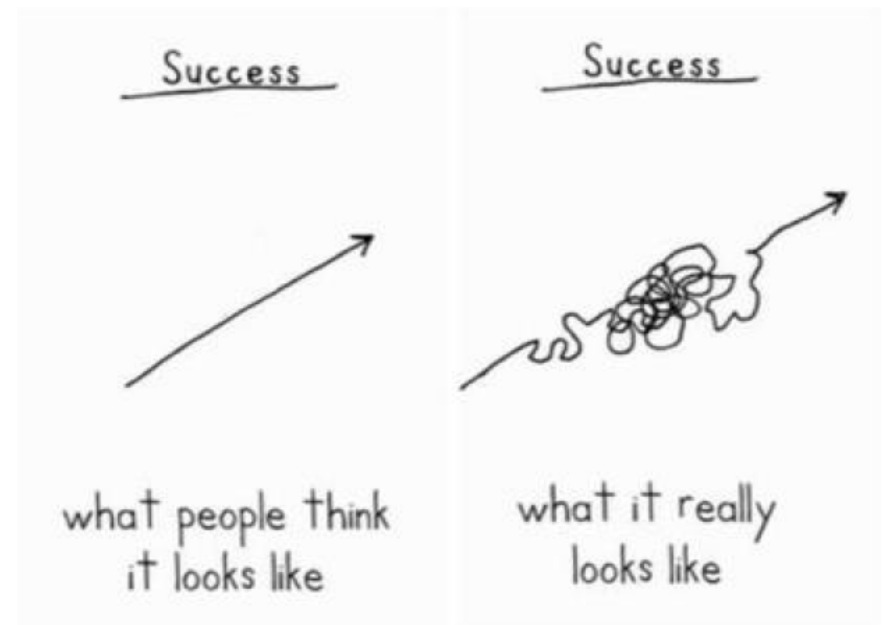
Eastside understands that the path to success can be a rollercoaster, and we will work with our alums, regardless of the way his / her journey unfolds.

Enrollment status

- Pursuing bachelor’s degree
- Enrolled in community college
- Off track and out of school

Unexpected changes

- Transferring schools
- Navigating a dismissal
- Switching majors



What has helped us to be successful

Feedback is a gift

Growth mindset is woven into the goals and curriculum for high school students, and the same applies to the administration.

Examples of programmatic changes based on feedback

- AP classes
- Foothill College Coursework
- Alumni Services
- Residential program

What has helped us to be successful

Coaches have relevant experience (and fantastic personalities)

College Coaches



Carissa Garcia

2 years: Mentor for UC Berkeley Starting Point Mentorship Program

1 year: College Adviser at Skyline High School

First gen. college graduate



Helen Kwan

1 year: Teacher at Urban Prep

1 year: Peer advisor in college

2.5 years: Stanford Residential Assistant

First gen. college graduate

Career Coaches

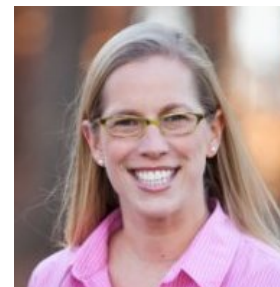


Alicia Montesa

3 years: University Career Services

7 years: Recruiting and Diversity programs, primarily for tech companies

First gen. college graduate



Leigh Frasher

10 years: Career Coaching, including ~3 years at Management Leadership for Tomorrow

8 years: Brand management in various companies

What keeps us up at night

Barriers beyond our control

Mental health

Finances

Culture shock

Family and / or peer influences

What keeps us up at night

Opportunity for even more support on campuses

Limited resources for first-gen support (ex. Number of EOP spots)

Need for better coordination across different offices (e.g., financial aid, housing, academic, registrar, etc.)

Questions? Experiences to share?



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Eastside's Programs and Best Practices

http://eastside.org/_pdfs/EastsidePrograms&BestPractices2015_a.pdf