

# CULTURAL TRANSITIONS:

## Insights from a conversation with first-year, first-generation college students



First-generation students (FGs) are students whose parents have not graduated from a four-year institution

# 42%

of UCSC undergrads are FGs, as of 2016

Source: UC Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

## THE PROJECT

To address the cultural transition to college, we conducted surveys and facilitated a 2-hour interactive conversation\* with 19 first-year FGs to:

- review research and language on the cultural transition to college;
- create a supportive community to reflect on shared experiences;
- provide an introduction to campus resources; and
- solicit direct feedback on best practices for supporting FGs.



\*After transcribing and analyzing data, the research team reported selected themes here.

## HOW DO FGs TALK ABOUT THEIR TRANSITION?

"It has been hard to transition, hard to be away, and hard to be here. College is confusing and an integrally privileged experience and that's hard to deal with, coming from our backgrounds."



Honoring the family; feeling pressure to succeed; managing family roles



Feeling isolated on campus; lacking a sense of community



Being resilient; feeling proud; experiencing personal growth

## FGs WANT FACULTY & STAFF TO KNOW...

"[Using] statements like 'you should know this' and 'this should be a review' makes it hard for students to approach [faculty] with questions and concerns."

- It's challenging to juggle home and school life, especially for FGs who provide or care for their families.



- Not all students have the same background (e.g., knowledge of resources, opportunities). Be patient & clear with expectations.

## WHAT DID FGs GAIN?

- + COMMUNITY
- + SHARED EXPERIENCE
- + SENSE OF BELONGING
- + KNOWLEDGE OF RESOURCES

"I realized I am not the only one who feels alone; it gives me hope that I can make it."

## IMPROVE THE CONVERSATION

FGs recommended improving these conversations by...

- Including diverse FG success stories
- Discussing more topics (e.g., managing multiple tasks)
- Offering variety in programming (e.g., small group discussions, writing activities, ice breakers)

