

## FAQS

### **I know I have to think about my career after college. How do I pick a major, find a job, or even decide what I would like to do after I graduate?**

Many students experience struggles related to picking a major, finding a job, and considering graduate school. Some first generation college students find it confusing to know what they can do with a particular major, while others struggle with deciding on what their major should be. Sometimes parents have strong beliefs about the 'usefulness' of certain degrees. Fortunately, there are resources that can assist you with these and other questions, and prepare you for a job search or graduate application. See the "Resources" button to the left.

### **I am concerned about how to pay for college. Where do I go for assistance? What resources do I qualify for and how do I find out about them? How long will my scholarships or financial aid last? What are the restrictions on financial loan?**

- Finances are a concern for many college students, but perhaps particularly so for first- generation college students and students of lower socioeconomic status. In addition to paying for college, many students may be experiencing their first savings or checking account, or opening a new credit card without a solid understanding about what credit is.
- The Office of Financial Aid (114 Silas Hunt Hall; 479-575-3806; <http://finaid.uark.edu/>) is a very important resource for you to use. There are many financial aid programs which may include: Grants, Scholarships/Waivers, Loans, and Employment. Financial Aid can assist you with the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

### **How do first-generation students feel on campus? I am concerned how I will be different, and what it will be like to be the first in my family to complete college. What can I expect?**

First-generation college students face all of the same struggles as their non-first- generation counterparts. However, there are some issues that are unique to this group. It is important for first-generation students to know that they are not alone, and that there are resources available for them. First-generation students have a range of feelings about being the first in their family to attend and complete college. These feelings can include:

**Excitement and Anxiety** over being away from home at college, on their own, and the first in the family to attend college. These students may ask themselves, "Am I cut out to be a college student" and may believe that, despite their stellar academic performance in high school, they do not have what it takes to succeed at college.

**Responsibility** to help pay for their education, perhaps even more so than students of higher socioeconomic status backgrounds. In addition to financial responsibility, these students may be pressured by family and friends to return home often, and may receive mixed messages about their changing identities (e.g., wanting the student to succeed, but not wanting to be different from the rest of the family.)

**Guilt and Shame** about having the opportunity to attend college while others in the family had not been able or chosen to attend. There can also be shame around being different from one's peers at school, when one's peers have a long lineage of family members attending the University of Illinois or who seem to know the 'lingo' when a first-generation student does not. These students may wonder if it is fair for them to be at school while their parents struggle financially at home, and may feel that they need to go home to support their families.

**Embarrassment and Resentment** over one's socioeconomic status or the level of education in one's family. First-generation students may try to act like their family is more 'highly educated' or financially well-off than they really are to conceal their differences. First-generation students may also be embarrassed or ashamed of their academic

performance if it is not as good as they or their families would like. Finally, first-generation students may perceive resentment from members of their families or extended families about them being able to attend college.

**Confusion** over the entire college process, from application to graduation to job or graduate school searches. These students may not be aware of the resources available to them, or what kinds of careers are available for them to pursue.

### **How might things change with my family now that I'm in college?**

Families may feel 'out of the loop' around what their student is doing at college, as it is a foreign place to them. It is important that first-generation students and their families:

- a) communicate about what college is like (e.g., how courses and schedules are different)
- b) talk about what each person would like (e.g., how often they will talk on the phone or visit, etc.)
- c) learn as much as possible about the college process and what to expect.

Many of the stressors that can arise within families of first-generation students may stem from a lack of knowledge about the college process. As much as possible, parents should be included and informed, so that both students and parents or guardians can communicate openly and clearly with each other.

### **What are some ways I can get involved in campus life?**

- Check out <http://www.uark.edu/campus-life> for some ideas!

### **FINANCIAL AID TERMINOLOGY:**

**FAF** – Financial Aid Form – Check the schools you are applying to regarding the type of form required.

**FAFSA** – Free Application for Federal Student Aid- Federal Student Aid, a part of the U.S. Department of Education, is the largest provider of student financial aid in the nation.

**Federal Pell Grant** – are usually awarded only to undergraduate students. The amount of aid you can receive depends on your financial need, the cost of attendance at your school, and more.

**Federal Perkins Loan** – provides low interest loans to help needy students finance the costs of postsecondary education. Students attending any one of approximately 1,700 participating postsecondary institutions can obtain Perkins loans from the school.

**Federal Stafford Loan** - fixed-rate student loans for undergraduate and graduate students attending college at least half-time.

**Work Study** – Program which assists students to find part-time jobs on or off campus and subsidizes their wages; Awarded to students with need

### **RESOURCES:**

- CLASS+: <http://class.uark.edu>
- Center for Educational Access: <http://cea.uark.edu>
- Student Support Services: <http://sss.uark.edu>
- Writing Center: <http://qwc.uark.edu/>
- Math Resource and Tutoring Center: <http://mrtc.uark.edu>
- Testing Services: <http://test.uark.edu>
- Financial Aid: <http://finaid.uark.edu>
- Student Affairs: <http://studentaffairs.uark.edu>