



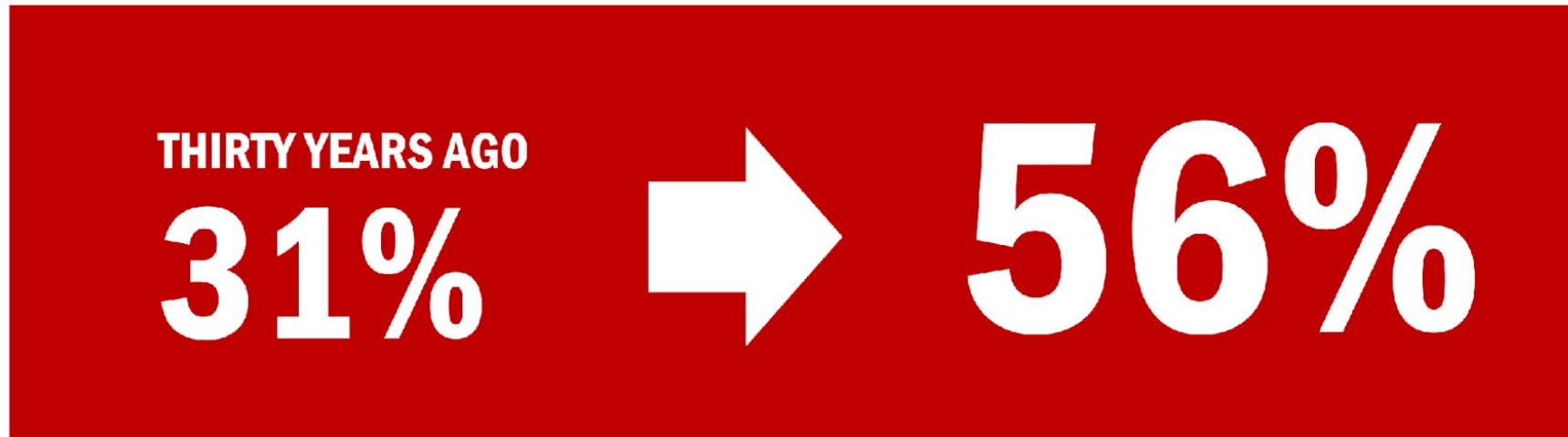
2024
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IT'S THE ECONOMY

Fostering Success among First-Generation Students: Academic Policies and Best Practices

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FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS (FGS)

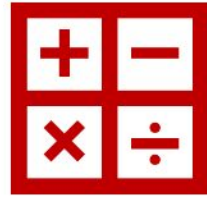


Defined as a college student who does not have a parent currently enrolled or who has completed a college degree.

KEY CHALLENGES FACING FIRST-GEN STUDENTS



**Time
Constraints**



**Math
Deficiencies**



**Language
Barriers**



**Lack of Peer
Support**

**HOWEVER... FGS have a greater interest in
business and economics careers.**

OBJECTIVES AND EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

Help FGS overcome challenges, leading to:

- **increased enrollment in economics courses**
- **more economics majors**
- **an effective pathway to a professional career**

We use a survey of 813 students at three public universities in Summer 2024 and collect performance data.

TABLE 1: SAMPLE STATISTICS

SCHOOL	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	% FEMALE	% UNDERGRAD NON-WHITE	SAMPLE SIZE	% SAMPLE FGS
University #1	4 year public	32,520	58%	61%	291	36.4%
University #2	4 year public	49,591	57%	41%	139	28.1%
University #3	4 year public	32,880	57%	69%	383	57.2%

Current sample collected in Summer 2024; additional sample to be collected in Fall 2024

TABLE 2: KEY DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

CHARACTERISTIC	TOTAL %	FGS %	NON-FGS %	DIFFERENCE
Works Full Time	23.1%	27.7%	19.1%	+8.6%**
Works Part Time	52.3%	50.3%	54.5%	-4.2%
Previous Economics	47.6%	42.0%	52.7%	-10.7%***
Math Comfort (1 to 5)	3.85	3.84	3.88	-0.04
Graphing Comfort (1 to 5)	3.35	3.30	3.40	-0.10
Level of Interest (1 to 5)	3.63	3.74	3.54	+0.20***
Business or Econ Major	86.5%	86.5%	86.5%	0.00
Family Financial Support	31.0%	26.1%	35.4%	-9.3%***
Financial Aid or Grants	52.0%	62.9%	42.9%	+20.0%***

FIGURE 1: PERFORMANCE STATISTICS

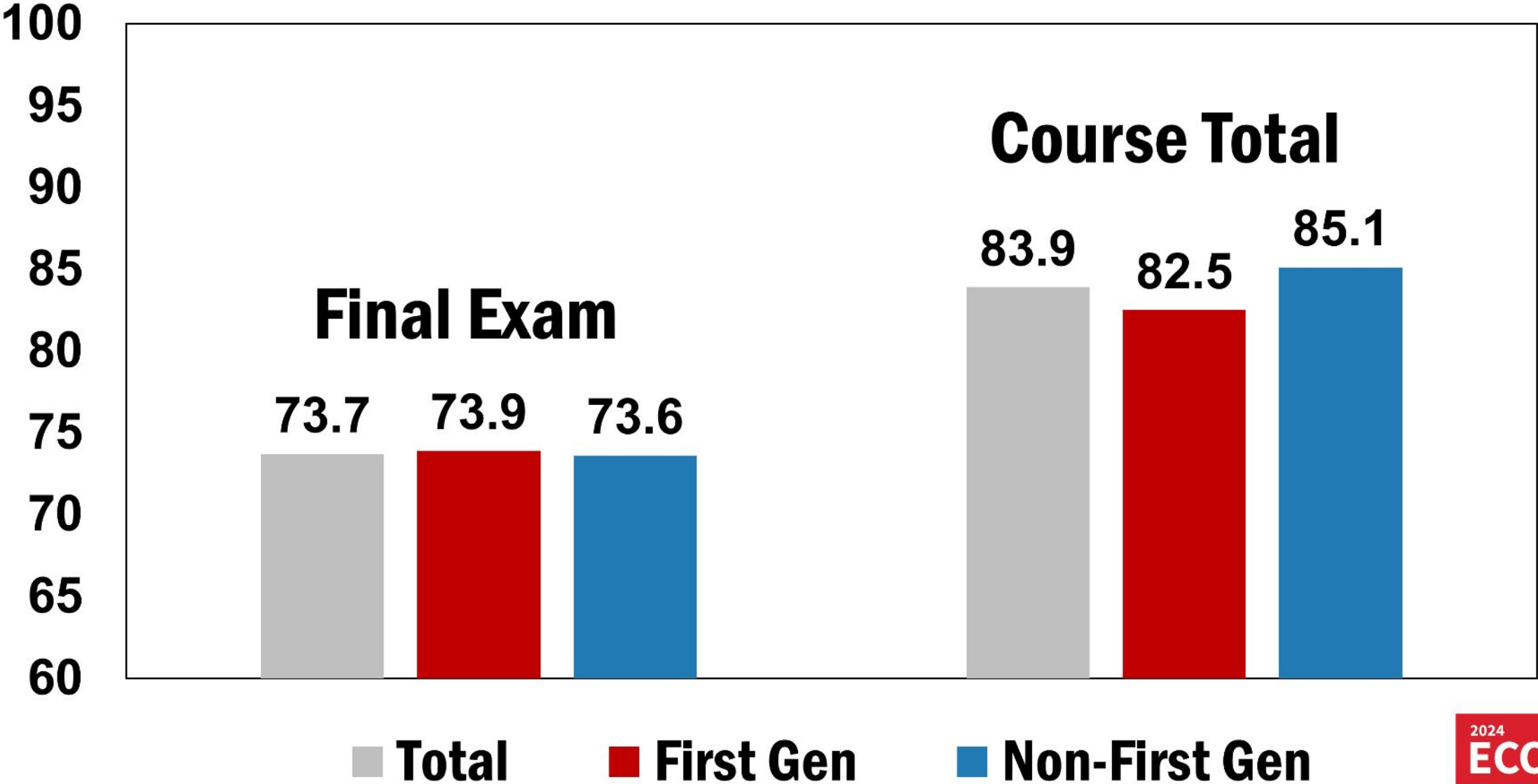


TABLE 3: FIRST-GEN ON PERFORMANCE

DEP VAR: FINAL EXAM AVG	COEFFICIENT	STANDARD ERROR
First Gen	0.44	1.01
Female	-3.79**	1.00
Constant	75.45***	0.83

DEP VAR: COURSE AVERAGE	COEFFICIENT	STANDARD ERROR
First Gen	-2.51***	0.75
Female	-1.38*	0.74
Constant	85.76***	0.62

FIGURE 2: FINANCIAL ISSUES ON PERFORMANCE

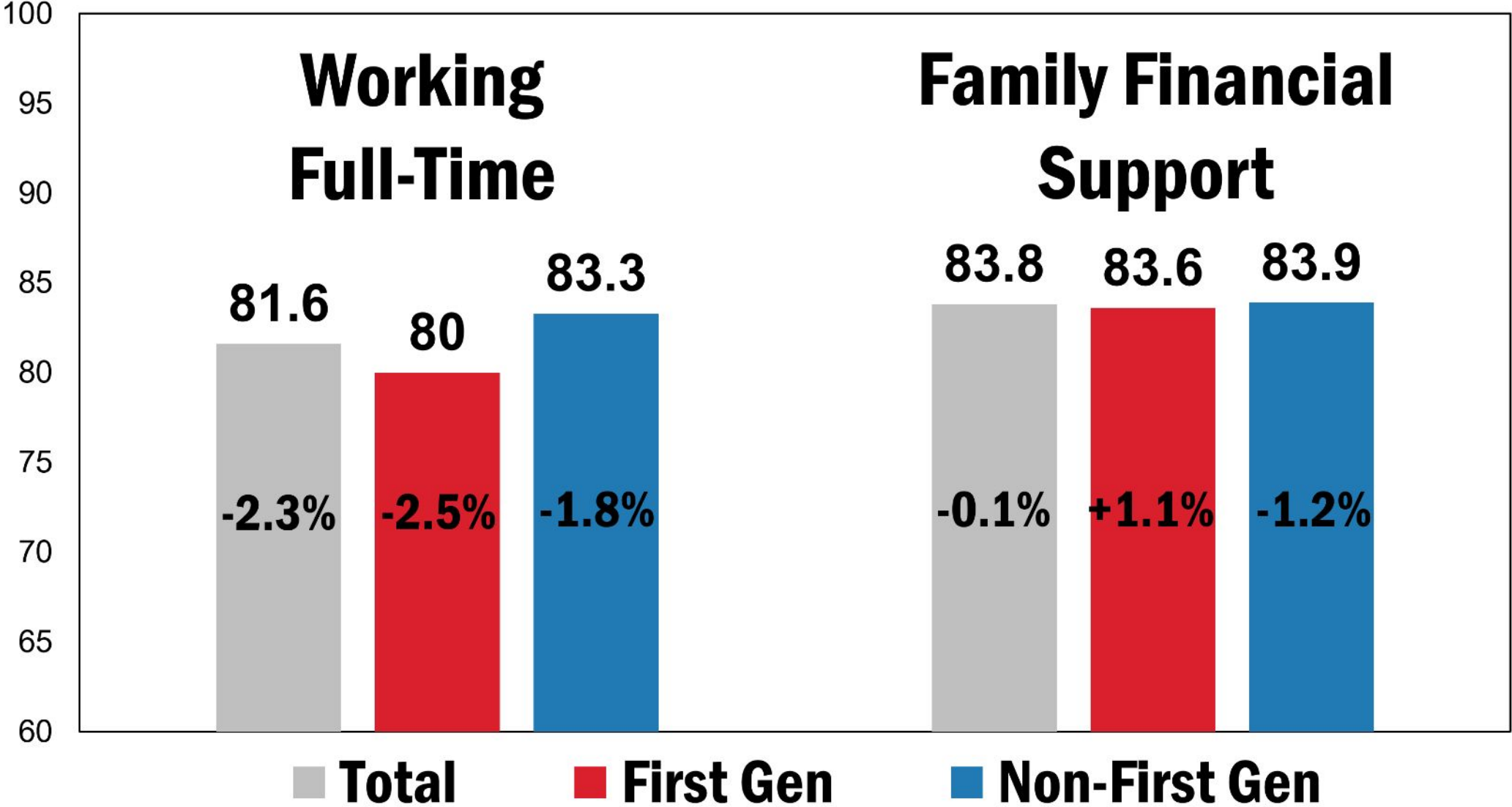


TABLE 4: REGRESSIONS (DEP VAR: COURSE AVG)

VARIABLE	COEFFICIENT	STANDARD ERROR
First Gen	-2.415**	1.122
Works Full Time	-4.754***	1.748
Works Full Time x First Gen	0.203	2.163
Family Support	-2.307**	1.173
Family Support x First Gen	3.269*	1.865

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

How do we close the gap in course performance between FGS and non-FGS when final exam grades show no difference in content mastery?

We look at state and federal policies, institutional-level policies, as well as course-level policies to address this issue.

STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES

Tuition-Free or Low-Cost Online Courses

- **State-Sponsored Online Learning Platforms**
- **Federal Support for Online Learning Initiatives**

Expand Financial Aid and Debt Forgiveness Programs

- **Increase Access to Need-Based Aid**
- **Debt Forgiveness for Low-Income Graduates**

Free Community College or Subsidized Transfer Programs

- **Free Community College Programs**
- **Subsidized Transfer to Four-Year Institutions**

Tax Incentives for FGS Families

- **Federal and/or State Tax Credits**

STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES

Workplace Flexibility for FGS

- **Federal and State Incentives for Employers**
- **Paid Internship Opportunities**

Work-Study Program Reforms

- **Expansion of Federal Work-Study Programs**

STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES

First-Generation College Student Support Centers

- **Dedicated State and Federal Funding for FGS Centers**
- **Federal Grants for Institutional Programs**

State-Sponsored College Preparation and Bridge Programs

- **High School Pipeline Programs for FGS**
- **Summer Bridge Programs**

First-Generation Academic Success Programs

- **Federal and State Academic Mentoring Grants**

State-Sponsored Mental Health Programs

- **Expand Mental Health Services for FGS**

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

Flexible Learning and Support Services

- **Flexible Course Offerings**
- **Learning Communities**

Enhanced Financial Support & Counseling

- **Targeted Scholarships**
- **Financial Counseling**

Academic Support Programs

- **Bridge Programs**
- **Peer Mentoring**

Faculty Training and Development

- **Culturally-Responsive Teaching Workshops**
- **Transparent Pedagogy**

COURSE POLICIES AND BEST TEACHING PRACTICES

- **Unveil the hidden curriculum**
- **Craft a course structure with flexibility**
- **Provide transparent assignments and evaluation**
- **Leverage economics concepts through culturally-responsive teaching**
- **Take a compassionate and inclusive approach**
- **Address psychological factors**



UNVEIL THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

- **Refers to the unwritten expectations and practices in higher education (college jargon) that may be unfamiliar to FGS (Chatelain, 2018)**
- **Create a comprehensive syllabus**
- **Offer convenient office hours**
- **Provide resources and guidance**



FLEXIBLE COURSE SCHEDULE

FGS often encounter external demands that hinder studying.

- **Reinforce the relevance of each activity and assignment**
- **Discuss the skills and knowledge to be acquired**
- **Provide frequent updates and reminders**
- **Consider scaffolding and other practices that break assignments into smaller steps with frequent review**
- **Allow for makeups, extensions, and/or dropped scores**



PROVIDE TRANSPARENT ASSIGNMENTS

- **FGS benefit from enhanced clarity in assignments and evaluation practices (Winkelmes, 2016)**
- **Provide detailed criteria on assignments and illustrate expected quality and depth of work**
- **Empower students to self-assess and improve their work**
- **Offer consistent framework for grading**



CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE TEACHING

- **Recognizing and embracing the experiences of FGS to create an engaging and inclusive learning environment**
- **Economics deals with real-world issues and practice decision-making, allowing teachers to tie concepts better.**
- **“Call-in” FGS to class discussion without “calling them out”**



ECONOMIC EXAMPLES FOR FIRST-GEN STUDENTS

- **Opportunity cost: financial tradeoffs between working and investing in education**
- **Externalities: educational attainment and its spillover effects**
- **Public policies: discussing issues of social & economic equity**
- **Human capital: college education as an investment affecting career options and the rate of return**
- **Income inequality and economic mobility: tying FGS' aspirations with economic mobility and socioeconomic status**
- **Financial literacy: budgeting, savings, debt, investment**



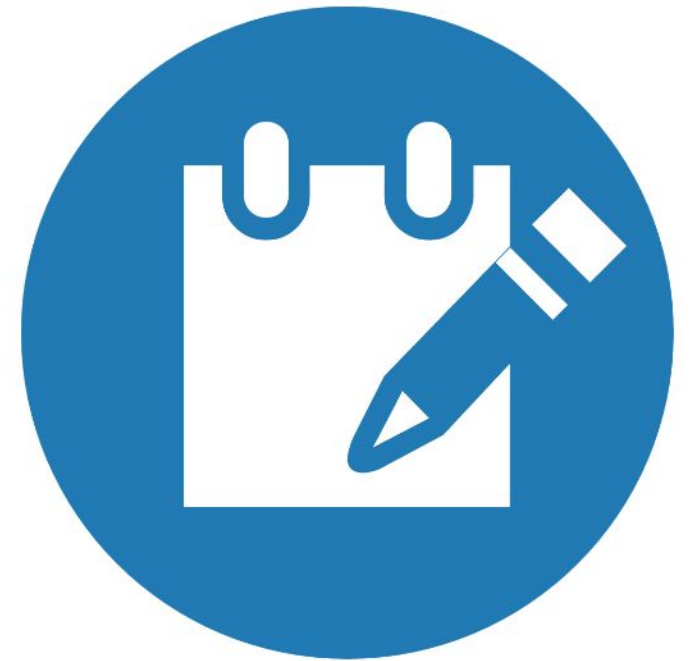
STUDENT ATTRITION AND DIVERSITY

- **FGS are associated with higher rates of attrition.**
- **Causes include lack of student support, anxiety, social isolation, financial constraints, lack of academic readiness, and lack of connections on campus.**
- **Economics courses offer ways to increase inclusiveness through representation and broad perspectives.**



CONCLUSION AND TAKEAWAYS

- **FGS represent a large proportion of college students, especially in urban areas.**
- **Economics plays a potentially valuable role to connect the goals and aspirations of FGS who disproportionately favor business majors.**
- **Government, institutional, and course policies tailored to FGS in economics can build majors, increase diversity in economics, and reduce income inequality.**



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