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First-Generation Freshmen Get a Residence of Their Own

By Lacey Johnson

When Brittany Boreing heard she had received a special scholarship for students who are the first in their families to attend college, she cried. The extra $5,000 a year would be just enough for her to fulfill a dream she had had since childhood: attending the University of Kentucky.

But once her financial problems were solved, Ms. Boreing had other fears. "I didn't know how well I'd be able to handle college work," she says. "And I was always the quiet kid in high school, so I was really worried I wouldn't have friends here."

That's when Matthew Deffendall, director of the university's First Scholars program, offered a possible solution: She could apply to live in a new residence hall created specifically for first-generation freshmen. The living-learning community would be offering on-site tutoring, weekly seminars about adjusting to college life, and special field trips to help students get to know one another.

Ms. Boreing decided to give it a try, and this fall she became one of 42 such freshmen to move into the experimental residence hall. Three months later, she is overflowing with enthusiasm for her newfound community. "I love it. I've met so many people here," she explains. Living in a place where she can focus on her studies has also been a relief. "It's mostly having everybody together so we can help each other with our homework."

With only 40 percent of first-generation students graduating from Kentucky within six years, compared with 61 percent of their peers, administrators wanted to do more to help the first-generation students "feel like they can succeed," says Todd C. Allen, hall director of the new living-learning community. Nearly a quarter of freshmen arriving at the University of Kentucky each year have parents with no formal education beyond high school, and the gap in the students' graduation rates mimics data from national studies, which have historically found first-generation students to be at a disadvantage when it comes to college completion.
The proportion of first-generation students at American colleges has actually been declining since the 1970s, as higher education has become more accessible, according to a 2007 study from the University of California at Los Angeles. But a wave of research over the past decade has prompted many colleges to start offering extra support, like scholarships, tutoring, and informational sessions, to try to improve graduation rates. As one of five universities participating in the Suder Foundation's First Scholars program, which provides scholarships and mentoring, Kentucky was already a leader in supporting first-generation students; but faculty and staff believed the university could take it one step further.

**Enviable Extras**

After a year of planning, the first floor of Kentucky's three-story Blanding III dormitory is now one of the most envied living spaces on campus. Students have access to a freshly renovated basement with a pool table, kitchen, new furniture, and panoramic artwork, which has changed the culture of the building, says Mr. Deffendall. The students who moved in this fall "truly enjoy the space," he says. "It's bright. It's fresh. It's student-friendly. I think they enjoy it even more once they've seen what other students' spaces look like."

But more important than the building itself are the services offered to the freshmen living there. First-generation students often lack family or friends to turn to for college advice, say Kentucky's administrators, and without those role models, it's easy for them to feel overwhelmed or homesick. As a response, the university requires all students in the new residence hall to enroll during their first semester in UK 101, a course designed to help freshmen make the transition to university life.

"I was a little unsure about having to take UK 101 as a requirement," remembers Alyssa Elswick, a resident in the hall who plans to become a doctor someday. "I didn't know if it would be an efficient use of my time." But she says the course has genuinely helped her learn about campus programs, get oriented at the university, and form connections with students much like herself. "Just working together with people who are trying to achieve the same things you are helps so much," she says.

Students also gather every two weeks in the renovated basement for "Topic Tuesday," where they listen to guest speakers discuss topics like homesickness, sexual health, and nutrition. One Tuesday this fall, a few students shared stories about people who had discouraged them from coming to college, remembers Kelli E. Hutchens, coordinator for the living-learning community. "They heard from people in their hometowns that they would hate it, and
it would be impossible," she says. "But they said now that they're here, they love it, and attributed it largely to the living-learning community and how it has brought them together."

There are also study sessions, counseling, and volunteering opportunities, where students have been encouraged to "pay it forward" by helping out at places like the Kentucky Children's Hospital. When students get involved, they are rewarded with field trips such as a visit to the local horse track or a zip-line tour through the Red River Gorge.

"Families who have not been to college don't know how to assist their sons and daughters as much as they would like," says David Pollick, a senior adviser at the Council of Independent Colleges, who was a first-generation student himself. "You just come without the same set of tools."

'Something to Be Celebrated'

"We try very hard not to say, 'You're first generation, so you're probably not going to do well,'" explains Mr. Deffendall. He prefers for students to think about the hall as an opportunity to be with people of a similar background who are facing the same challenges. "It's something to be celebrated," he says. "We try to turn it around so that it's more of a badge of honor than a stigma."

Removing students from the mainstream and placing them together in a residence hall could make them feel isolated or self-conscious if it's not handled properly, cautions Mr. Pollick, who also oversees an awards program that recognizes institutions that have helped their first-generation students. "If there's a big bright spotlight over the door that says 'First Generation,' that would be disastrous," he says. Still, he believes that using a living-learning community could be advantageous.

Similar communities exist at a handful of other colleges, such as the University of Cincinnati and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. But with plans to house 100 students next year, expanding onto the second and third floors of the building, the University of Kentucky's may soon be the largest of its kind.

"It was a wonderful idea," says Candace McQueen, another freshman living in the hall, who comes from a small town in eastern Kentucky. "Everybody in the dorm knows everybody else, and we all hang out together. I've been in other residence halls, and they hardly know anybody who comes in the door."

Having close friends on campus and feeling supported increases students' self-confidence, according to Alan Seidman, a professor of
Something that has meant a lot to Ms. Elswick is how much Kentucky's faculty and staff genuinely seem to care about her as an individual. "Everyone has expressed an interest about who I am and what I want to do with my life. Never have I felt that I didn't matter in some way, and the first-generation community has definitely helped with that," she says. "I'm really thankful for it."

Well... Like many in the professoriate, I am a first gen. And I remember many other students, at the undergrad and grad level, who left school, or were dismissed from school for poor performance, because they didn't learn, as quickly as I, how to function in the world of higher education. I think often of some of these students, and the capacities society, and their families lost, when they gave up their goal of a degree.

I think we too often think about education as an individual thing, a set of choices and consequences with effects of a limited scope. That not the case. This effects the student's life, and the lives of those around them. It effects the work world, and it also effects schools, which also suffer when they have to replace students lost to attrition, in addition to recruiting a new incoming class.

Is it really that this generation is wussier, pansier, inepter, less self sufficient, and relatively more helpless than we were? Or is it that a range of nearly useless educationist mentality middle administrators and administratresses have taken over and engage for their own purposes in a prolonged juvenilization or even infantilization of our underclassmen?

education at Walden University. In his book, *College Student Retention*, he writes that being socially connected can also help students stay enrolled.

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Is admitting people who shouldn't be admitted wasteful? What about enticing into going to college people who probably ought not go and who a generation or two ago would not have gone? Is that wasteful? And what about the danger to the country of raising up a generation who are very limited in their ability or willingness to do anything for themselves? And what about the wastefulness of cultivating and enabling a cadre of adolescence prolonging "first year experience" directresses (most seem to be female), and the like?

jffoster 3 weeks ago

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115thDream 3 weeks ago

jff, I agree that plenty of people are admitted who shouldn't be, and that we occasionally spend more effort than might be wise to shepherd them through. But one isn't more likely to be such a student because their "parents" didn't go to college--it might even be that the opposite is true...as you say about yourself. In any case, the big difference in graduation rates suggests that cultural capital of some kind is playing a role. I'd be happy to eliminate that role (and, for what it's worth, the influence of parents--positive and negative--in what is too much a prolonged-adolescence approach to college), but since we can't, helping these students have a shot at a more level field is ok with me.

nyhist 3 weeks ago

The assumptions in this comment are appallingly obvious. Why is someone whose parents and grandparents didn't go to college somehow less intelligent, less capable of doing college work than someone from a more educated, privileged background? My parents were college-educated, but my grandparents (on both sides of the family) were not. My parents both had professional careers. I often don't know of my students' backgrounds, but I learned at a recent graduation that one of the most promising recent students (now happily embarked on a successful professional career of her own) had been raised by her grandmother, a home health aide who had saved for months to be able to attend. That, in my experience, is not a random example. And I've also experienced the opposite—the wealthy student from a privileged background who plays his (and it's always his) way through college. I applaud UK for creating this living-learning unit.

rick1952 3 weeks ago

Why do you assume that students who participate in programs like the one described in this article shouldn't be admitted to college? I am first generation, and like you, my father did not graduate from high school - he did eventually earn a GED after his military service which included combat service in Korea. My mother graduated from a vo-tech high school (as they were referred to back then.) They wanted me to go to college and I did. But it did not take me long to figure out that there were lots of things others knew about navigating college that I did not. Had a program like this been in place, there are benefits I might have gained beyond the classroom (where I was successful, I graduated with honors in my major) that would have enhanced my experience (benefits often referred to as "social capital.")

Even more important, I realized that I was always perceived as "an exception" as a student rather than as a capable person who did not enjoy the social, financial and academic advantages of many of my classmates. I agree with the earlier responder - academic social Darwinism is what is truly wasteful and disagree with your expressed attitude that programs like the one in Kentucky are wasteful and inappropriate.

If you are an academic (I realize not everyone who reads and posts on this site is one) then I recommend to you Dick Light's book, Making The Most Of College, in which one of the points he makes is that attitudes like the one you expressed are outdated and unhelpful.
with respect to developing the talent and learning of students. The idea that colleges should just admit good students and then "get out of their way" is a lazy and unworthy attitude for any faculty to hold. And, Light started looking at this issue at Harvard, where we would have to agree that "unworthy applicants" are not likely to gain admission much less enroll.

I am all for re-inventing education in a way that seeks to expand and improve learning for as many persons as possible, rather than stay stuck in an old conception of "well, I toughed my way through an unhelpful and wasteful process, so why can't you, you wuss." I prefer to say, "OK, I learned from the shortcomings of my experience, and here is how I think I can help improve it so that you can get even more benefit than I did." I believe that is how educational progress can be made, for individuals and for society.

We have limited reply embedding here, so to 115thDream,

I suspect a good deal of the "cultural capital" may have to do with whether they read books as children and youthes, in the county / parish library if not their own. In that case, they made their own higher spot on the "playing field".

to nyhist,

Again, because of the limited embedding here, I'm not sure whether your comment about assumptions was intended as a reply to me. If so, you might want to read mine, especially my initial one, again. If not, I apologize.

to rick1952

I don't. If I did, I would have to assume I myself shouldn't have been admitted. I do question whether they ought be hand-held in the way U Ky, U Cincinnati (also mentioned in article) are doing. As to this being "outdated", I think that means "out of fashion". Well, of course it's out of fashion among those whose positions and paychecks depend on our thinking of 1st generation freshmen as nearly helpless victims.

In answer to your "If you're an academic...", professor of Anthropology and Linguistics in an R1 (or whatever that category is called now) for over 40 years.

@jffoster, Directresses? Really?! You seem incapable of responding to the article or to any comments without resorting to insults, which in my estimation, indicates that is you who has an extended adolescence and who needs some hand-holding and molly-coddling to help you understand how to engage in respectful, intelligent discussion.

I've met plenty like you, firmly embedded in academia, and have seen so many students suffer from your bitter, yet petty, tyranny.

Maybe someone can mail a copy of this article to a congressman or senator (or Ame Duncan) as an example of why costs continue to increase in higher education. Hand-holding like this isn't cheap.
Less costly than the wasted subsidy dollars due to attrition? This actually seems like a pretty cost-effective way to improve student retention.

In many areas of Kentucky, you're talking about students from areas where education isn't valued and just getting to college is an achievement. They come from high schools where the dropout rate from freshman year-senior year is terribly high. Most of them are quite capable of doing college work, but the culture shock is significant. Many of them are away from home for the first time in their lives. Yes, they do need a little extra help adjusting to college, but it benefits Kentucky in the long run. If they finish college, they're less likely to need Medicaid or prison which are two of the highest costs in the state budget.

Most of the comments I've read related to this story about a living-learning community for first-generation college students is appalling and disgustingly ignorant, elitist vitriol. For the record, ample research supports the hypothesis that first-generation college students face unique obstacles that other students do not. This does NOT mean that these students are less intelligent or academically-capable; instead, it points to issues related to what might be called "academic capital" but feel free to choose your own terms.

I was a first-generation college student yet earned high entrance exam scores, was a National Merit to 10% student, earned academic scholarships to multiple colleges, but struggled when I left my rural home and moved into a dormitory on a large state university. Let me guarantee you (jffoster) that I am no wussy or pansy or any other insulting name you've chosen to call these students. Thankfully, a couple of professors and staff members dedicated some of their valuable time to show me the ropes and help me better navigate the university, which made a huge difference and most likely served as a springboard for moving on to graduate school and long career in higher ed, where I've attempted to dedicate some of my valuable time for first-generation students, particularly those from rural areas. These students are bright, dedicated, and quite capable if offered a little help in navigating the Byzantine beaurocracies of universities.

"Let me guarantee you (jffoster) that I am no wussy or pansy or any other insulting name you've chosen to call these students."

Read the last paragraph of my original initial comment again carefully and you'll see that I did not call these students those things.

And from your sentences next following the one I quoted above, it sounds like you did what most of us 1st generation freshmen did, and what you should have, and what a good many of these current first generation students are probably capable of doing.

jffoster - thanks for your follow-up reply. You state, "you don't" in response to my question about assuming first generation students are unqualified. OK, but that is not the message I picked up from your original post. I picked up a condescending presumption that today's first generation students are somehow less capable than our generation (I am just behind you with 34 years in higher ed.)

If I may, I want to challenge you again, however. You characterize the programs as "hand-holding." Why shouldn't colleges work to build supportive communities among students and provide services that help introduce them to the benefits of their educational experience. As I indicated in my original response, I did not fully recognize or understand how I could benefit from college as a freshman (oops, as a first year...
A special residence hall and first year seminars do not strike me as automatically "hand-holding" any more than an introductory course in anthropology in a well-appointed classroom (well-appointed = good seats, desks, IT equipment, and appropriate paint and finishings) with a knowledgeable faculty member who can guide students entry to a new discipline. Perhaps if you thought about entering college as having some similarities to entering an academic discipline you might find yourself less disgruntled and more appreciative of the efforts made to improve the educational experience of students. Again, I strongly recommend Light's book - I think you will find yourself in agreement with many of his recommendations based on his findings. They probably balance reasonably what you seem to call for (students' taking responsibility for their educational enrichments) and what I am supporting (college's creating environment's that support student learning.)

Truth in advertising disclaimers: I am a student affairs professional. I am also, and have always been, a strong advocate for increasing and improving access to college for those who have traditionally been excluded or ignored.

Since several commenters have understood something from my post original different from what I intended, I'll here repeat the last paragraph of my original initial comment.

"Is it really that this generation is wussier, pansier, inepter, less self sufficient, and relatively more helpless than we were? Or is it that a range of nearly useless educationist mentality middle administrators and administratresses have taken over and engage for their own purposes in a prolonged juvenilization or even infantilization of our underclassmen? "

And I wouldn't mind a real seminar for freshmen. But calling a small class a "seminar" doesn't make it a real seminar. And most freshmen, first generation or fifth, are not ready for a real seminar.

This article makes me proud. My father was not only a first-generation student at the University of Kentucky, but also the first person to go to college from his hometown of Mackville, KY. He graduated (in 4 years) and went on to have a fine career. Of course, he was there in the late 1920s when first-generation students were probably common. Still, I'm proud of his accomplishment and salute all those like him who chose to take on the challenge of attending college.

One concern I have about the current program at the University of Kentucky is that it could be too restrictive. I hope that first-generation students will be encouraged to branch out into other residences after their first year. Meeting and working with a wide variety of students is one of the most valuable aspects of a college education.

Maybe college itself is hand-holding, keeping people on ice until they're 25, give or take five. Maybe more and more it is regarded as cost-effective technical training and institutionalization for society. Maybe the academic world reflects and tip toes around the conflicts, inadequacies, and disturbances of society at large. Maybe we should just let people read their way to an education (like my grandfather), while they work and gain experience of responsibility upon which to base vocational and philosophical choices. Maybe they could enroll in academic programs later in life, as needed--and for varying lengths of time. Maybe they could exercise initiative instead of being neutralized, dumbed down, and saddled with school loans. But then we might have enterprise and rebellions.

Isn't schooling in youth a trade-off? After flourishing in a high-pressure college prep high school and the first year of college with delightful roommates I crashed and largely wasted four years and surrendered a college teaching fellowship—not for want of trying, but because I was lonely and struggling with ultimate questions and vocational quandaries and no one intervened. My parents were first-generation college graduates, a teaching and social service family with deep respect for clerics and writers; they had five younger children. Some attention and a community could have been all that I needed--that, or a monastery.

The ethnic college that I attended raised students over many generations to a point at which some in my generation were capable of scholarship and art; the year before I arrived it was still using a catechism approach to philosophy. Henry Adams was not very sanguine about his 19th century Harvard classmates either. Is it justified to take students where they are and patiently raise the level of education? And, by the
way, is governmental and corporate subsidization of research justified? Scholarship is relative and largely myth. I still don't know how I was supposed to make sense of the 90-some books and five 24-page papers that we were assigned each semester. Helping students in whatever way we can is our responsibility.

JF: Finery? Excuse? Pansier? Helpless? Are you sure that you want to use those words, considering the world that we're leaving the young?

As a first generation college student, I found even the transition from a blue collar commuter undergraduate college (San Francisco State) to an elite graduate school (the University of Chicago) difficult. In my course on the organization of knowledge in the humanities in the Graduate Library School at Chicago, I was completely lost when the discussion covered topics like the great philosophers and artisans. I suddenly realized that unlike my classmates, I was raised without any exposure to the cultural and the esthetic.

It was not your home that let you down -- home prepared you to strive. It is the high school program and the undergrad program at SF State that left you unprepared for graduate school and the fact that you were ignorant of "the great philosophers and artisans" falls to the curricula you experienced PRIOR to grad school.

I too am a first-gen student who went to a huge university with no idea what awaited me. I learned the ropes through trial and error and graduated in four years with stellar grades and went on to earn a PhD. But if programs can be instituted to help save a few befuddled, demoralized but smart and ambitious students, then that is all to the good. However, if there had been such a residential program in my time, it's the last thing I would have wanted. From a small, provincial town, I went to college partly to grow up, experience new places and different people and to be ON MY OWN. Like jffoster, I decry the renewed emphasis on "in loco parentis" that the boomer generation worked so hard to undo.

My institution has instituted many fine programs to aid first-gen students and I am active in those programs, but if first-gen students live only with other first-gen students they will be deprived of many opportunities for intimate encounters with students who have all the cultural capital and heady experiences that have been denied them. In addition, chances to become close to students from very privileged backgrounds with the kinds of connections that are unavailable to most first-gens often arise because of being paired with roommates from entirely different spheres of life, as my own experience proved.

I guess I simply find it hard to understand why any first-gen student would want to forgo any opportunity to expand one's own narrow experiences and background.

ALL academic institutions who are very serious about retention, success and graduation ought to have some kind of living and learning programs for ALL freshmen, and perhaps transfer students -- the would be "C" students would earn "B", B's students could earn A's with survival skills, mentoring, tutoring and supplemental instruction.

I plead with all institutions who admit students at risk, or conditionally to set up living and learning programs.
I don't know if there is a correlation between first-generation college students and college students who have to work throughout college, but I would imagine that there is simply because first-generation students are more likely to come from poorer families. I would have loved to have an opportunity to simply be around other students my freshman year who had to work while trying to assimilate to something completely foreign to them. I went to an engineering college my freshman year and was the only student I knew who had to work, which put me at a severe disadvantage to compete academically. Even if my school only put first-generation students together without offering the other support programs mentioned here, I would have felt much less alone and would have felt less hopeless.

I was a first-generation college student; in fact, my parents were first-generation high school graduates. My preference, were I beginning college this year, would be to surround myself with students who attended demanding high schools and whose parents HAD graduated from college.

Call it what you will – the program is SEGREGATION: based on parents' educational status or parents' color/race/ethnicity or financial status, this is SEGREGATION. Would we believe that first graders should be segregated on the same basis? Or 10th graders?

Finally, offering special freshman-year experience courses (I don't care whether you call them seminars or courses or programs) is a tactic designed to increase retention which, we all hope, increases the college-success rate both for the students themselves and the institutions which help many of these kids rack up huge debts. BUT, doing so through a segregation program brings more negatives than whatever positives may come of it. Will we expect future employers to offer "first generation employed" programs? Or grad schools to offer "first generation grad student" experiences?

By the way, I am a first-generation college grad, have been involved in higher education for over 40 years, AND am a female in mathematics. Just give these first-generation kids a chance, do not paint them as "needy" and accept that "poor does not mean stupid" -- and finally, do not cripple them with segregation! Welcome good students to the academy, keep the office door open, and drop the condescending attitudes so that those who need an ear or a helping hand can get it but do not segregate based on parents' educational status (or any other parental characteristic).

Since most of the readers of the CHE are well acquainted with books, if you haven't already done it, I would challenge you to read Mike Rose's tour de force on remedial education and first generation students entitled, "Lives on the Boundary." Mike was a first generation student from one of the barrios of Southern California locked into a non-academic track until one of his high school teachers saw something special in him—he could tell great stories, and he had a knack for writing poetry. His essay writing wasn't "academically acceptable." But he was different: anyone with half a mind could tell that Mike had a mind. This particular teacher took Mike under his wing and helped him learn how to write well enough to earn acceptance into a liberal arts college in Southern California.

When Rose got to college, he found that the survival strategies that he employed in high school didn't work in college. Rose found that college was a constant struggle.
and he almost dropped out, until he hooked up with the one instructor who had helped his high school teacher get through college. With this instructor’s help, Rose accomplished the seemingly impossible; he graduated from college with a B.A. and got admitted into a creative writing Master’s degree program in one of the prestigious graduate schools in Southern California. At one point Rose admits that without the help of his high school teacher and college instructor, he would have never made it. He said he saw others who could write their way out of the barrios. However, he was not one of them.

Rose found a similar confining structure in graduate school that he had experienced in high school and undergraduate school. He labeled these structures “jails”. Instead of the non-academic track of high school and liberal arts track in undergraduate school that didn’t include any experiential education, he was locked into a graduate program that prided itself on liberal arts pedagogy. The instructors in this program wouldn’t let him learn to write poetry in the way he was most comfortable. Rose was absolutely convinced that he learned more about writing poetry by writing poetry, than he did by being confined to the library for hours and after hours, reading page after page of essays from “unknown scholars” (unknown to him) who had dutifully recorded their thoughts about the poetry that had been assigned in class. At one point, Rose gets up enough courage to tell the chair of the department that he learned more about writing poetry by writing poetry. At this point Rose is told that is not the way they did things at this institution. Rose completes a Master’s degree and “drops out” for 10 years to teach high school and help students in the same way he was helped. He later returned and completed a Ph.D. and became director of Remedial Education at Prestigious University. His program was well-known for its success rate in retaining and graduating students, without attaching a damaging label or stigma on the students. In the meantime, he won many awards for his poetry and has been a successful researcher in educational psychology.

Reading
many of the comments attached to this article, one sees the reason why there aren’t more programs like UK’s program. Higher education is full of pompous bullies who stand in front of classes every day. If they don’t say it, their actions suggest that: “If you’re not like me, you’re worthless. If you can’t or don’t learn like I do, that’s too bad—just get with the program or get out of the way; you’re taking up space and resources that could be put to better use.”

Since several commenters have included their pedigrees, I felt it was safe to include mine. I was also a first generation student. My father dropped out of school in 1917 at the end of fifth grade. If he were to attend high school, he would have had to travel 12 miles to the closest high school, paying for transportation and tuition on his own. Instead he went to work in a factory to help support his family which consisted of twelve brothers and sisters. His older brothers were all involved in the Armed Services (WWI) and couldn’t financially help the family. At the age of 12, he was too young for service in the military, but not too young to get a job in a factory. He worked at that same factory for 50 years until he died in 1967. When WWII came around, he had been promoted to plant manager and was considered an essential war worker, so he was excused from military service. Although he only had a fifth grade education, he was very intellectual. He developed three processes that his company patented to assist in the production of vulcanized fiber. He never saw a dime of the millions that his patents made for his company.

My mother was raised in the coal region of WV and dropped out of school at the end of 11th grade. She went to work in a factory to escape the dreariness that coal mining cast over the whole region where she lived. After her one year of committed service to the munitions plant was over, she quit and went to work at the factory where my father was supervisor. (She didn’t like working around bombs.) As they say, the rest is history. I was born one year after WWII ended. After I was born, my mother quit the factory and went to work in dress shops, and then for a national department store chain. This chain did things differently than
most of the chain department stores. Each store in the chain was responsible for doing its own buying. So in the early 1960's, my mother with her 11th grade education, found herself taking annual trips to New York City to sit in on fashion shows and to buy women's coats and wedding dresses for her store.

Although my parents “weren't educated,” as long as I can remember there was never a doubt, I was going to go to college. When it came time to pick a college, I had full tuition scholarship offers from three schools, one an Ivy League School. However, my father was showing signs of illness, so I chose to stay at home and commute to the state university in our home town. With the help of a Great Books of the Western World scholarship I finished college with no outstanding debts for a total cost that would have been less than the cost of one year's worth of transportation, room and board to any of the three schools that offered me full-tuition scholarships.

In my junior year my father became very ill and died during the exam period of my junior year. Because I had doubled up course work most of my college career, I had no requirements left for my senior year. To take advantage of this, in my senior year I began taking graduate level courses that I knew would count toward the next step in my career. I also increased my work hours at my part-time job to 35 hours per week. This way I was able to get married and help my mother with her expenses.

Because I had taken essentially one year of graduate school as an undergraduate, and the fact that I skipped the Master's Degree and went straight into a Ph.D. program, I was able to complete my course work and my Ph.D. dissertation in three years. I remained in graduate school for a fourth year on a double assistantship, with full responsibility for teaching two courses per semester, the current teaching load of full-time instructors at that time. This plan allowed me and my wife to present my wife's parents and my mother with their first grandchild. They were able to see the first two years of her life up close.

Although I was a first generation student, I was one of those students that Rose said could write or calculate (I was a mathematics major) his way out of the lower middle class. However, I have seen too many students in my 40 years as an administrator in higher education who could not work their own way up and out without some assistance.

With the pressure for more and more students to get additional education, I believe we will see more and more students who need additional help. UK is on the right path to helping these students. The sooner more institutions see this, the better off those institutions, their students and the country as a whole will be.