

UC Merced

Bobcat Comics

Title

Empowering Non-native English Speaking Students at UC Merced

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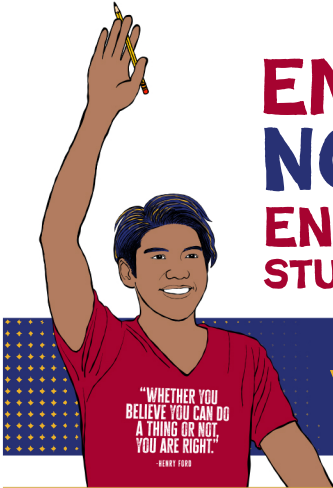
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EMPOWERING NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING STUDENTS AT UC MERCED

First-generation college students face unique challenges, including financial constraints, cultural adjustments, lack of academic preparedness, unfamiliar institutional systems, and stigma, which are exacerbated by limited English proficiency, yet many higher education institutions fail to identify and support these students adequately.



When asked about factors that affect their writing, students discussed the following.


NON-NATIVE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CHALLENGES



I THINK IN THE FIRST LANGUAGE I SPEAK, WHICH IS NOT ENGLISH. SO, TRYING TO SAY WHAT I WANT TO SAY, IN ENGLISH, IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE. I'M NOT GIVING THE PERFECT WRITING, BUT I'M TRYING TO DO MY BEST. BUT IT'S HARD.

Difficulty with proper grammar, spelling, and word choice were all highlighted by students, particularly those who were non-native English speakers.


FIRST-GEN CHALLENGES




I HONESTLY FEEL LIKE I DON'T HAVE ROLE MODELS BECAUSE I AM THE OLDEST AND EVERYONE ELSE IS YOUNGER THAN ME. MY PARENTS AND COUSINS DIDN'T GO TO SCHOOL. I'M THE FIRST. I FEEL LIKE I DON'T HAVE ANYONE TO LOOK UP TO AND EVERYONE'S LOOKING UP TO ME.

First-gen students expressed their limited access to academic role models outside of the classroom given that they are the first in their family to pursue higher education.


SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS



WITH THE INSTRUCTORS YOU FEEL LIKE THEY WANT TO HELP YOU AND THEY'RE NOT GOING TO JUDGE YOU FOR WHAT YOU WRITE ON PAPER.




THEY MAKE YOU FEEL WELCOMED AND VERY COMFORTABLE. LIKE YOU'RE NOT A LIKE A BURDEN LIKE SOME PROFESSORS.



IN THIS CLASS THE INSTRUCTORS REACHED OUT TO ME. THAT WAS GREAT, BECAUSE I ACTUALLY FELT LIKE I WAS GETTING A LITTLE MORE CONFIDENT BECAUSE THEY WERE COMING TO ME INSTEAD OF ME REACHING OUT.


Students claimed that developing personal relationships with their instructors made it easier to ask for help when needed. Several students claimed that they felt more confident in their abilities when their instructors offered direct feedback and assistance.

SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



SHE GOT US RICE CRISPIES IF IT WAS YOUR BIRTHDAY.

THAT WAS COOL.



IN THIS CLASS I FEEL INCLUDED. I FEEL LIKE I ACTUALLY BELONG.

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Students reported that the small class size allowed them to interact meaningfully with their instructors, which increased their comfort level in group discussions and presentations. The intimate class setting, coupled with interactive activities, builds a sense of community and makes students feel valued, motivating them to attend and engage. However, students often struggle with basic writing conventions and lack confidence in seeking help.