First-Generation U.S. Medical School Matriculants

First-generation1 (first-gen) students, or those whose parents have not completed college, constituted 15% of the 2022-2023 U.S. medical school matriculant pool.2 First-gen students bring many positive contributions to the physician workforce, such as grit, self-determination, and optimism. However, they may also face socioemotional and financial challenges.

Among the first-gen students in the 2022-2023 U.S. medical school matriculant pool:

- **41%** were underrepresented in medicine.3
- **53%** were women.
- **43%** attended community college.

**Financial Profile.** First-gen matriculants have had to navigate substantial financial hardships on their journey to medical school. The majority of 2022 first-gen matriculants grew up with a family income below $50,000 per year, and the majority were Pell Grant recipients.4 Pell Grants are need-based grants awarded to undergraduate students that do not need to be repaid. Approximately one-third of U.S. undergraduates receive Pell Grants.5

- **71%** of known U.S. first-gen students were Pell Grant recipients.
- **64%** of known U.S. first-gen students grew up with a family income below $50,000 per year.

**Four-Year Graduation Rates.** The four-year graduation rates of first-gen students nearly mirror those of nonfirst-gen students.6,7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>First-Gen Four-Year Graduation Rate</th>
<th>Nonfirst-Gen Four-Year Graduation Rate</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2022 Graduates</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023 Graduates</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td>83.1%</td>
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**Summary and Implications.** These data suggest that first-gen matriculants may significantly contribute to the overall diversity of medical schools in numerous areas, including race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and educational background. These data also suggest a need for financial support and a medical school culture inclusive of nontraditional journeys to becoming a physician. Despite the additional challenges first-gen students face, their chances of success are the same as their nonfirst-gen counterparts.
Key Questions for Interpreting This Snapshot

1. Does your medical school have resources and staff available to help guide students and their families to understand and navigate financing, applying to, and paying for medical school?
2. Does your medical school have relationships with community colleges within your state or policies regarding accepting such coursework from applicants?
3. What academic, mental health, and wellness resources or organizations does your institution have that might be specifically beneficial to first-gen medical students?

References and Notes

1. Applicants are considered first-gen if they report that their most highly educated parent or guardian has up to some college but has not received a degree.
3. Underrepresented in medicine (URiM) refers to racial and ethnic populations that are underrepresented in the medical profession relative to their numbers in the general population (American Indian or Alaska Native; Black or African American; Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish Origin; and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander). Data include matriculants who self-identified as one URiM race or ethnicity alone or in combination with any other race or ethnicity.
7. Calculations include only nondual-degree MD students.

Additional Resources

First-Generation YouTube Playlist. https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2ALHNlitsuTC3hfjT7kleX723MYZqiq

Tools and Resources for First-Generation Medical Students. https://www.aamc.org/career-development/affinity-groups/gea/first-generation-students

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