

# UC Merced

## The Vernal Pool

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# THE JOURNAL POOL

ISSUE FIVE  
FALL 2016



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# THE VERNAL POOL ISSUE FIVE

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**CHLOE RAY**  
**THE WAYWARD SPIRIT**



**THE VERNAL POOL**

**ISSUE FIVE, FALL 2016**

She's got her own movements across the sand. Not steady, sporadic she is as she traces her long silver fingers through the desert's dust. Can you see her? No, neither can I. She eludes me yet. But her voice, it echoes, up and above the balconies of conscious reasoning. And down far below the twisted forthcomings of hidden desires. Along this thin line of the segregation of one's radiating soul is where she plays. Fingers long, voice enticing. Laughing, laughing within the wind and amongst the stars above me.

Tonight again I try my luck. The moon sits crouched above us, it is yellow, soiled, large and looming. Dead light beads are woven within that rich black sky. The wind too is sullen tonight as it drags itself against my feet, raising and dropping grains of sand. I wrap my scarf tighter around my face, revealing my smile only in my eyes. I use them now to glance over at the boy. He stands adjacent to me, just a few paces off. Scanning the horizons with squinted eyes he clutches onto the camel's reins. Lips chapped, face a sun-baked white, and nose a shy red. I know he feels me watching, and so begins to unpack our belongings from the camel's back. A mohair blanket each, a few tin pots, and a meager fistful of carcass to last until it doesn't. The boy begins to start up a lick of fire.

This land is not ours. It is foreign to myself and to the boy. The camel, I do not know about its standing here within the desert. Though I wonder about the people from whom it departed. We came across them only once on this journey. They are the vagabonds. Trekking along the wasteland, they travel in groups of about a score. No belongings. No names. No voices. No skin. Bloody pink flesh hidden under the ripped skin of camels and coyotes in which they cloak themselves. Their eyes are swollen and bulging from their hideous bodies, two holes for noses, and lipless, teeth baring always clenched. As the brim of modernism conquered and raged against the unspoken hymns of myth and

magic, the revolution to uncover all truths lead to the capture and discovery of a clutch of these vagabonds. Tearing off their makeshift shells of borrowed pelts, the conquerors were overcome with a ghastly sight upon these heathens. Since then, there has been a rich bounty to capture and kill the folk. But I think it's impossible. You do not go to them, they go to you. Why they decided to allow the conquerors to see themselves under the spotlight of truth that one night, I do not know. But it was when they approached me and the boy, two weeks back, that I came to this realization.

Our rations were depleted. We lay dying under the smiling sun. There was no more of anything or nothing in my once-was of a body. It became just that, a body. A mess of rotting flesh. My final thoughts, ah, I did not even think. Upon death there is nothing left to feel nor to think. But maybe, maybe that is just me. Regardless, in the wake of the dying contrast which is that of the blind light of a dark death did they come. A grotesque pink face looked down on me. Teeth chattered and its eyes touched and moved along my vulnerable body. It was looking for something that it could not find. Then abruptly, a scream. I raised my head and saw the boy. Shaking, he moved away from the bent-backed creatures. Two pinks, the rest standing farther aback under their cloaks. One pink stood near me, head also craned towards the boy. The other stood in front of the boy, reaching out to him with his long skeleton fingers. Bits of flesh fell unto the steaming sizzle of sand. This caused the boy to release another uproar of fear as he scrambled back. His feet flailing underneath him. The pink returned to his group and within an unspoken conversation heard not even by the eavesdropping wind, they parted ways to reveal a beast. The camel. One camel walked past the split of creatures and past the pink heathen and past myself and unto the boy. Along the camel's back was food wrapped in palm leaves and water encased in animal liver. Since then, every night they trace our movements with their glowing eyes in the far-off distance.



I squinted. The fire cracked and wavered as the boy pricked it with a stick. The moon had been raised higher above us, and the hour of her arrival was soon approaching. The night was growing late, and myself more anxious. I spit into the flame.

“What is it?” he asks. A broken voice. No way for a child to sound.

“Nothing.”

He stared at me, scowling.

“I said nothing.”

“Bel, we’ll find’er today.”

“Don’t speak. Save your energy for when she comes.”

Stupid kid. Stubborn and stupid. At least he is not arrogant like too many folk, myself included. I let my head fall back, the brimming speckling sea of night above me. The hair along my arm gravitates toward the beauty, and that is how I know. Her presence, her lines, they begin to draw themselves around us. You see, we have come a number of times within the proximity of her existence. A taunting laugh clips at our ears from the distance of all directions. She waits and watches from the silver dunes just yonder. It is what she does. The desert is a flatbed upon daylight, and upon the uncertainty that resides within the monochrome dark she grows dunes. A platform, she skips and dances from one to another. All around us spinning and laughing, laughing and spinning. But will she torment me like this every time? The anticipation is enough to kill, you see it is the only feeling I have left. I have become a corpse chasing the reeking scent of her. I shake, violently and more and more every day. My stomach stabs itself constantly, a sharp and dreadful pain. Many days I wonder if I even move along this desert or if it is the desert that moves around me.

The fire light limps to a low dim without the prod of the boy who has fallen asleep under his blanket. I too, find myself succumbing to the toils of pure exhaustion.

The uncertainty of reality strips away unto the certainties of a perished past. I am greeted with the same dream every night. The mingled memories of my individual history. Many years, months, moons ago, I was a person, a person just, and no more. Right in my ways is how I behaved. For this, I was rewarded well and pleasantly with the engagement of a woman. To be soon married and blessed with the growing of a life within her I had become a man who was envied. Even I couldn't help but envy myself from just moments previous; "oh what I happy man I was then," I'd repeat over to myself as I strode along my day. But it was one day in particular that changed me.

I decided, this day, to take a single last longing look at my recently purchased home to ensure it was up to perfect standards. In other words, to make sure it was good enough to house my soon wife and soon child. Ah yes, I can still feel the autumn sunset leaning against my back that late afternoon, ushering me in to my future. As it certainly did. White walls, a sturdy staircase, and old wide windows that allowed in gracious amounts of light. Healthy and well this house felt as I traced my fingers along the wall. You can imagine now, a man, on the brim of a promising future, he must surely have been ecstatic. Chest wide with pride. But I know you see. I know what you are expecting now. A man wasted in a wasteland and a man standing face front and glad towards his future are two parallels. A demise awaits, and it is what you wait for. What we all wait for.

There was one room. The room was soon to belong to the child that was soon to be. It was small and close to our masters' chambers. It was then and there in that snow white room adorned with nothing but a single mirror that it happened. Within the span of

the next few collection of moments was when I died for the first time. Right upon the pinnacle of the sun's death and on its instant brink of decay did it splatter that room with a sharp rush of rich orange blood. My eyes strayed to the mirror simultaneously with the sun's final moment of existence. The sun sank and I was brought with it. And when the sun rose again I found myself here in another land of this desert with this boy and this camel.

Now the sky was a full black surge. Moonless, and the stars had shied away. No shadows crept individually but became one whole. Nothing moved and nothing existed alone in this atmosphere. All but her. Then instantly, the wind snatched at us, stealing with it the flags of the small flame. I stood with the boy by my side, among the churning sands underneath. Grains of the shattered past grinded against each other in excitement of her endearing movement towards us. The night had devoured us then, we stood isolated upon the charcoal sea now. The onslaught of darkness was brief as the familiar gaze of lights stood around us at a safe distance. Safe from what? The lights, were they the vagabonds? I prickled and shook and my eyes darted, my body twisted, my voice cracked, my thoughts roamed all so quickly, instantly everything began to move in the blind darkness. But where was she? The laughter, the laughter of madness grew louder as it beat itself against our ears. Drumming, drumming, you can hear now the crunch of her bare sole of foot along the sand. Moving through the sand she approaches, I can feel it but I cannot see. I cannot see! I cannot see!

Ah!

This is when I died the second time. Not by the madness of the approaching, but of the rage and careful caution of my ally. That's right. The boy who disappeared along with the camel and flame and vagabonds and her had come back. With him he brought back the lights. The stars and the moon and the glare of

the cannibals waiting. Disgusting heathens. As my blood pooled underneath me I could hear their groans of hunger and saliva dripping through the crevices of their teeth. Waiting for me to fall so they could collapse unto my skin and tear it from my own pink flesh. I would not go with them. I refused to go with them until I had discovered the truth of my second death. He spoke first.

“Why did you do it?”

I did not respond.

“Bel, I followed you through this whole damn desert watching you lose your mind. Waiting for the right moment to kill you. This is mercy. Now you tell me, why’d you do it?”

“You’re just a boy, you wouldn’t understand.”

“I’m eighteen. I am no child ‘Bel.”

“You’ve killed me.”

“You killed my mother.”

“All this death and darkness. Sickening isn’t it? Boy, focus instead on the beautiful happy sun and the kind heathens who saved our hopeless lives that day.”

Silence. So I continued.

“I loved her.”

“I did too.” Tears elbowed at his brown muddy eyes. Poor boy.

I looked for the last time. At what? At everything under the night sky.

A beautiful world, I thought to myself.

The moon was always there.

The boy was never a child.

There was never a 'she.'

Perhaps, the man thought, perhaps the wayward spirit that taunted him so never did exist. Perhaps indeed his mind had wilted and decayed upon that moment of realization. That singular most important moment of any when he looked into the mirror. He saw what he really was, what he had always been, and what he would mutate into. The man had once loved a woman and he had once killed a woman. The wayward spirit followed him into madness, and the man had worn madness like a patchwork pelt. His eyes became swollen and bulging from his hideous body, had two holes for a nose, and lipless teeth baring always clenched.

**CARISSA ATALLAH**  
**THE ENGLISH MAJOR AESTHETIC**



**THE VERNAL POOL**

**ISSUE FIVE, FALL 2016**

The English major sips milk tea, but takes her coffee black.

See, it makes her feel poetic.

It itches when she naps in the grass,

But she's a fan of the aesthetic.

The English major convinces herself that she likes reading the classics

A little more than she actually does.

And folds their pages.

Just because.

She likes the way her cursive looks

Scribbled in the corners of her Norton Anthology books.

She hoards words that aren't hers like a Tolkien literary dragon,

Because she is an intellectual explorer,

With no new land to stick her flag in.

The English major paints a portrait of herself

With brushes carved from the bones of a late-great Victorian

And she looks at it daily

Like her name is Dorian.

And she likes Art. Likes Kahlo and Van Gogh,

But she doesn't know where she's damn going.

Still, the rowers keep on rowing.

Sometimes, her brain feels like tofu.

She wants to be someone but she doesn't know who

So she writes to write the right name for herself,

Stacking rhymes so high they're like Harry Potter books on the shelf.  
She can even do it freestyle, like Dobby the House Elf.  
But oh, she wants prose like the pros  
And poems like the Dickinsons and the Poes.  
The English major knows she isn't Wordsworth.  
But she wonders, what are my words worth?  
She used to think maybe, if my life were a little bit harder  
And my heart just a little bit sadder,  
Then my thoughts would be deeper and my stories would matter.  
So she'd hurt herself with each stemming day.  
After all, Hemingway did say  
That writing is bleeding.  
And in the books, depression is always worth reading  
But that, she would learn, was a little misleading.  
Because she couldn't write, couldn't read, couldn't eat, couldn't sleep,  
couldn't breathe.  
Trapped in the bell jar, she couldn't leave  
Until to be or not to be was no longer the question—  
Ham, let's get real. There's no poetry in depression.  
Then, the English major binds herself together  
Like the spines of her books  
Still sipping tea from mason jars just because she likes the way it  
looks.



**EDWIN PEREZ  
FIRSTGEN 1.0**



**THE VERNAL POOL**

**ISSUE FIVE, FALL 2016**

# First Generation Student 1.0

A UNIVERSITY MANUAL: SECOND EDITION  
EDWIN PEREZ

# **Thank you for purchasing a FirstGen product.**

The First Generation student or FirstGen for short is our flagship product. We here at First Gen pride ourselves in the variety of products we offer. The “First Gen” student is a highly dynamic, ultra responsive, high quality product with a detailed history and unlimited potential. We understand that your university only accepts products of the highest quality and those that meet strict standards met by prestigious companies like the “College Board” and “American College Testing.” We can assure you that our FirstGens have gone through the upmost respected activities like being part of the “Basketball Team” or being in the “Environment Club” and have gone through rigorous course work like “health” and “government & politics.”

## **Provide a Few Tests to Familiarize Yourself with FirstGen**

With a FirstGen, you can immediately put their “Financial aid and family savings” function to good use like getting the Provost the new office he’s been wanting. However, you want to make sure that your FirstGen is not malfunctioning or in need of further training. Reading this manual will help you understand the FirstGen, but we encourage you to test out the FirstGen yourself. Familiarize yourself with any advantages but also challenges that it may pose to you.

## **Use and Liabilities**

To avoid botched FirstGens and accidents, first read the safety warnings in “Handling Precautions” (p. 6) and if you're feeling particularly adventurous stop by the “How to properly maintain” section (p. 7).

## **Copyrights**

Copyright laws in your state might prevent you from admitting only certain students but we can assure you that our FirstGen meets the same standards as our competitor “Rich & White, Inc.” With a FirstGen product you can be sure that you will meet pesky diversity standards but still keep the hyper-inflated academic environment that keeps you in the “Top 100” of U.S News.

# Chapters

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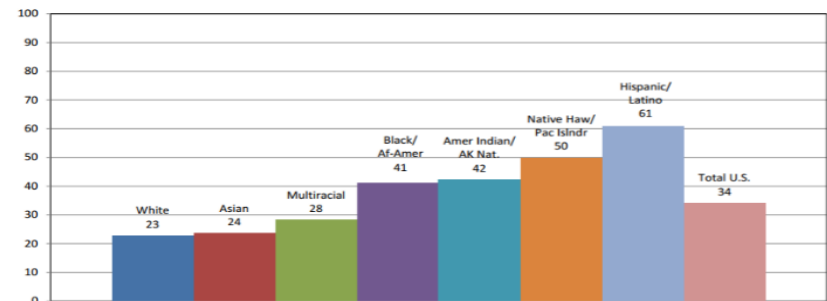
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# Getting Started

## Handling Precautions

### FirstGen Care



Source: *The Condition of Education 2012*, NCES

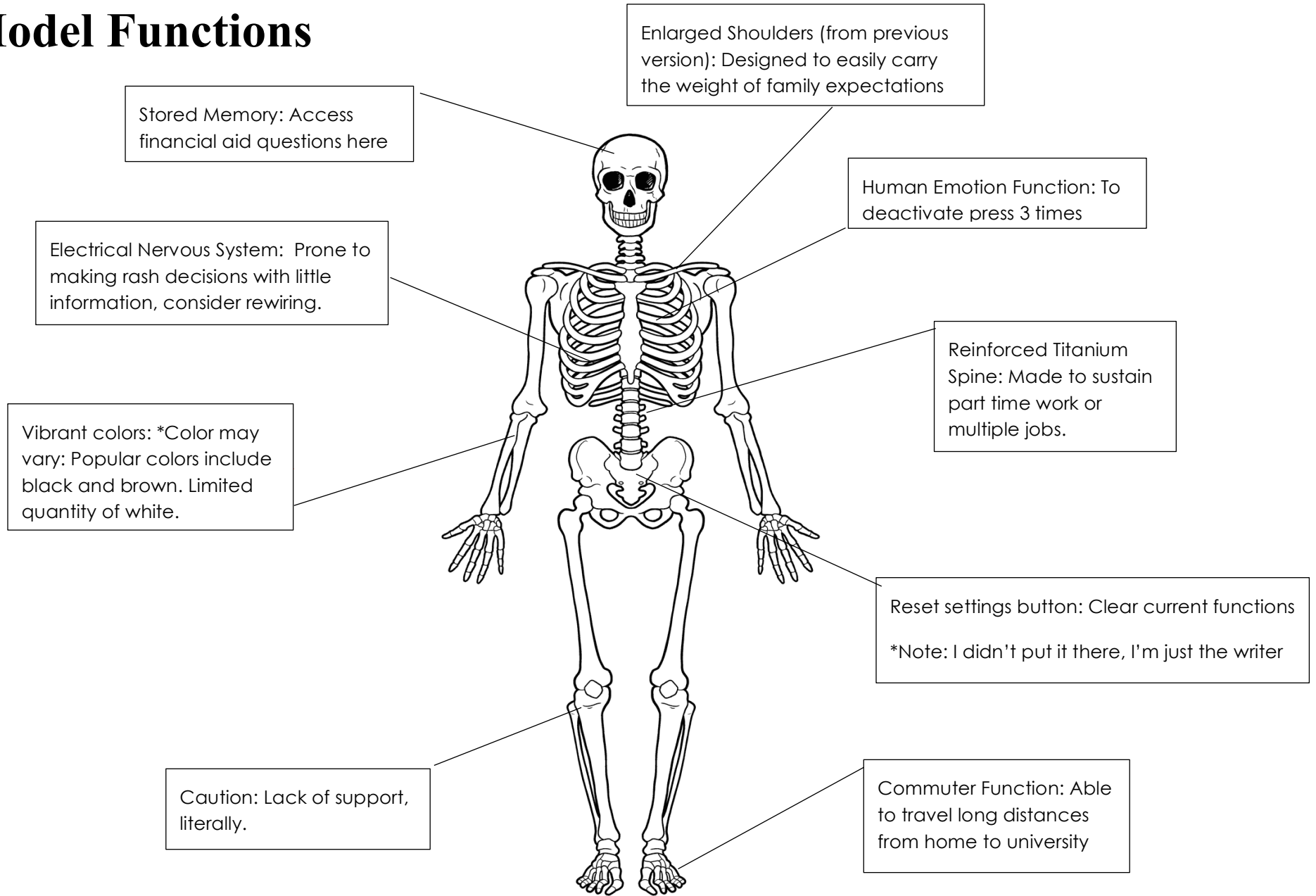
- FirstGens are less likely to take college courses in areas such as mathematics, science, and computer science. Anytime this happens make sure to put them in remedial training to reset its settings.
- More than a quarter of low-income FirstGens leave after their first year, and 89 percent fail to graduate within six years.
- 69% of FirstGens attend University because they want to help their families, compared to 39% of students whose parents have earned a degree. To turn off the “feeling” function see “Advanced operations” (p. 75).
- Colleges need to recognize that FirstGens do not easily come forward to seek help. Having regularly scheduled maintenance will help with this.
- The FirstGen needs to feel like they belong at their college or university and deserve to be there.
- FirstGens will deal with a lack of understanding from family about academic responsibilities and may experience alienation from family support.
- Alongside will come a lack of understanding about campus culture – need for networking, accessing resources, knowledge about the college campus.
- The FirstGen may have difficulty or feel apprehensive about connecting with their professors before and after class or during their office hours. See “human emotion function” (p. 5).
- FirstGens may experience a cultural conflict between home and the university environment, while they may also be confused about the expectations of being a college student.

# Variation in FirstGen Models

## Explore the diverse characteristics of our FirstGens

1. FirstGens are more likely to be
  - a. Female
  - b. Older
  - c. African American or Hispanic
  - d. Have dependent children
  - e. Come from lower-income families than students whose parents have college degrees
2. FirstGens are
  - a. More likely to delay entry into postsecondary education
  - b. To begin college at two-year institutions
  - c. To commute to campus
  - d. To take classes part-time while working full-time
  - e. To stop in and out of college
  - f. To need remedial coursework
3. FirstGens will have
  - a. Less knowledge about the college application process
  - b. Lower educational aspirations
  - c. Lower levels of academic preparation
  - d. Fewer resources to pay for college
  - e. Less encouragement and support to attend college, particularly from parents

# Model Functions



# Proper Maintenance

## Important FirstGen Technician information

### Save these instructions

- The FirstGen needs to get involved.
  - One of the keys to feeling like the FirstGen belongs on campus is to have it get involved in student groups. Have it meet others with similar interests.
- It is crucial that the FirstGen get to know their professors.
  - They must attend their office hours and introduce themselves.
  - The professors can provide important mentorship and suggestions for increasing its chances of success.
- Too often, FirstGens try to do it all alone and do not seek help, albeit due to their “lack of support” function.
  - Having the FirstGen programmed to view seeking help as a sign of strength, resilience and persistence, rather than a weakness is crucial.
- FirstGens who take part in mentoring and coaching services were 10 to 15 percent more likely to advance to another year of college.
  - The FirstGen can greatly benefit from this addition (see additional software/products).
- To have happy and productive FirstGens, create a FirstGen living-learning community.
  - This helps establish and support FirstGen students as part of the university.
- Create, and reward, leadership opportunities for the FirstGen.
  - Offering these students an active role in campus activities can help build community, as well as confidence and professional experience.



# Tips

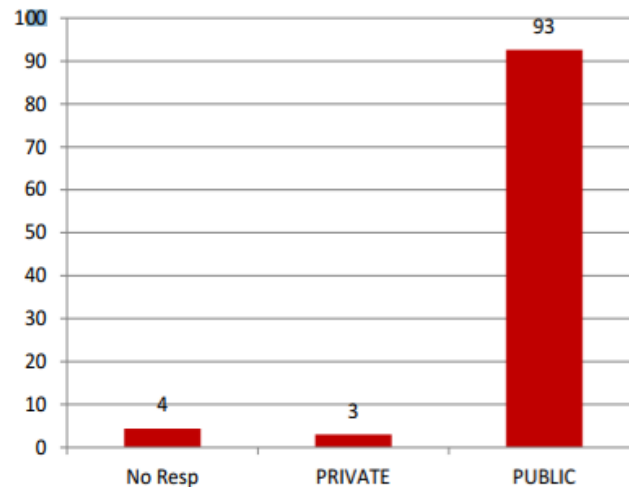
## How to keep a steady flow of FirstGens

- Establish a Regular Presence in High Schools
  - Or as they are also known, “FirstGen Factories”

Majority of FirstGen factories are public institutions

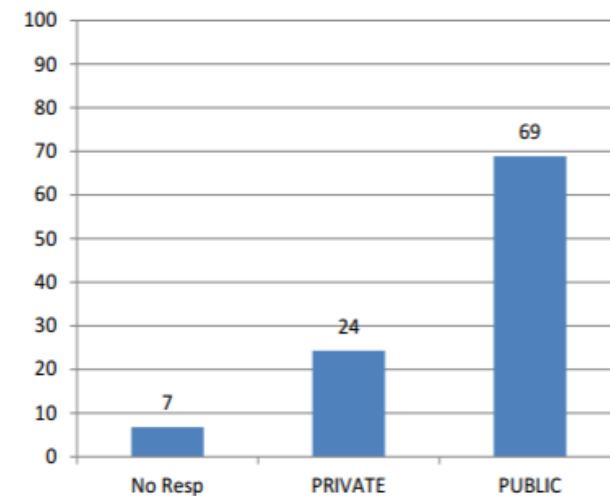
### School Type, 2011 Cohort

Percent of Schools with Majority First-Generation Test-Takers (N=5,291)



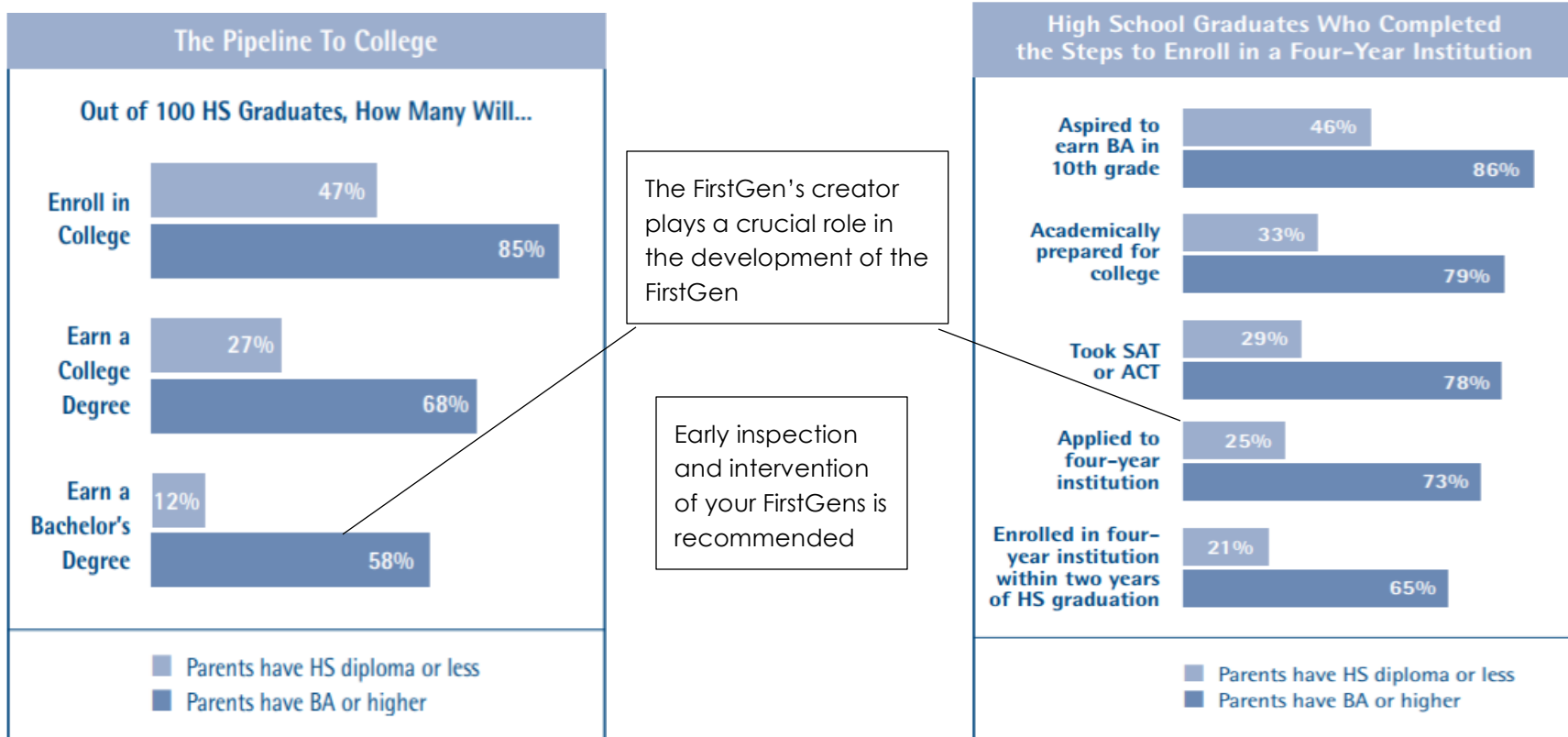
Steer clear of Private factories they lack a large FirstGen inventory.

Percent of Schools with Majority Non First-Generation Test-Takers (N=10,458)



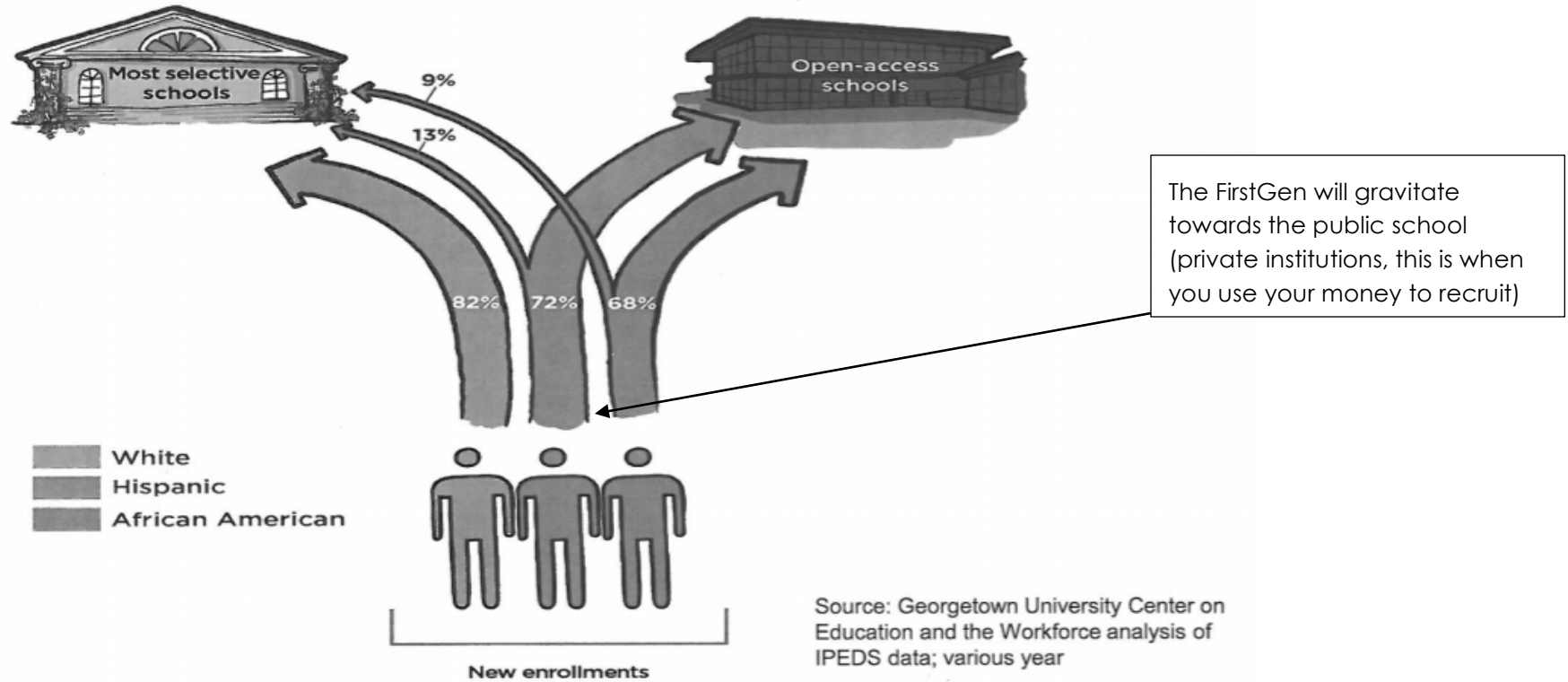
Source: NCES common core of data tables

- Introduce a Summer Bridge program
  - A few years ago, a university introduced a summer bridge program for incoming FirstGens whose test scores suggested they could use a tune up in Math and English. The two-month summer session was free for those FirstGens who qualify.
    - It reviewed some of the “hidden-curriculum” concepts, introduced the campus’s many useful facilities, and helped to forge important relationships with peers and mentors.



- Enlist current first-gen students and graduates in creating targeted recruiting messages
  - No one understands the FirstGen better than the FirstGen

Between 1995 and 2009, 82 percent of new white freshman enrollments were at the 468 most selective four-year colleges, compared to 13 percent for Hispanics and 9 percent for African Americans; 68 percent of new African-American freshman enrollments and 72 percent of new Hispanic freshman enrollments were at open-access two- and four-year colleges, compared to no growth for whites.

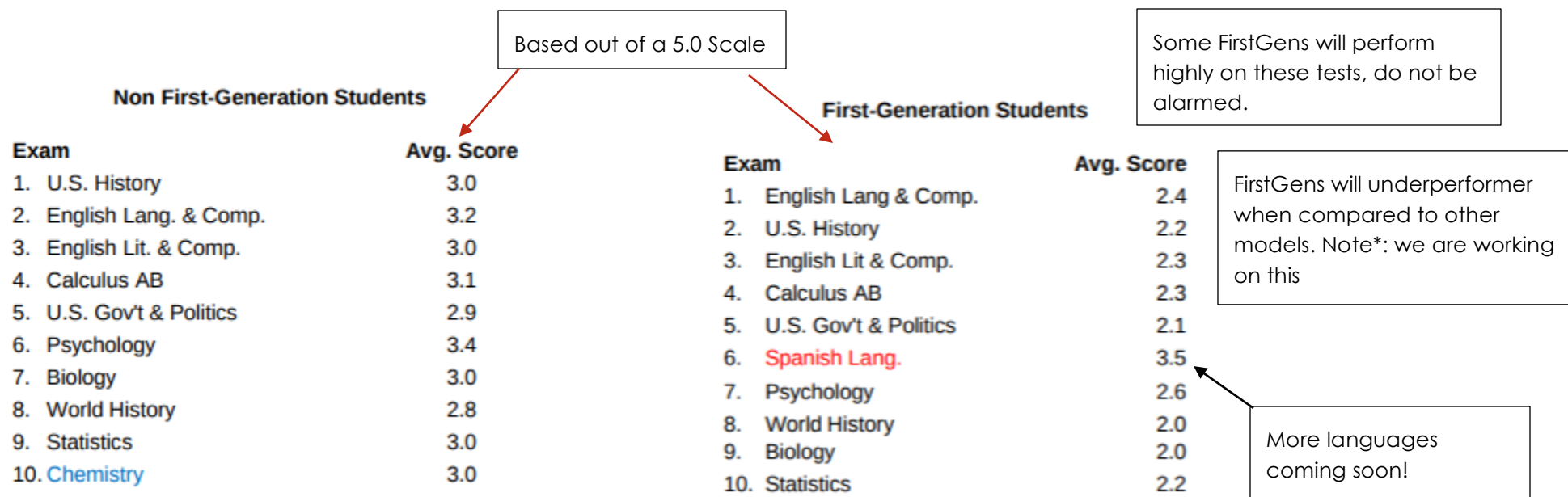


The FirstGen will gravitate towards the public school (private institutions, this is when you use your money to recruit)

- Have a faculty that is diverse and understands FirstGen needs
  - Faculty are the majority of the budget at institutions of higher education, faculty are the ones that create the culture of institutions mostly, and they are the ones that through their practices, create or don't create success for the students

- Involving parents in the transition to college
  - When FirstGens participated in residential summer programs, the students learned what it was like to be on a college campus while the families experienced what it would mean to have their children go to college

## Average AP Scores Across Most Popular Exams, 2012 Cohort



- Ensure appropriate first-year placement.
  - FirstGens are often mistakenly placed in remedial courses that can extend their college experience by two to three semesters or more
- Create a data tracker that monitors student performance and allows advisers to recommend more relevant coursework and support.
  - This is useful for keeping efficient FirstGens but also to prevent further malfunctioning

- Create a landing page for first-generation students.
  - Everything is on the internet, have a section devoted to FirstGens on your website
- Remind the FirstGen of dates and deadlines, they will often forget or be unaware of them.
  - A free or low-cost ways to keep students on track, include sending text-message alerts to parents and students about registration deadlines and financial aid information.

# Testimonials:

“Reading the FirstGen 1.0 has helped out my campus tremendously, we had a 60% increase in FirstGen in only 2 years. This got me promoted and gave me a sweet new office, thanks FG Inc.” – Rob Eagleton, Director of students affairs, *Prestigious University*

“The easy and understandable instructions in the FirstGen 1.0 manual has helped me better understand different populations and communicate this to my employees” - Mary Ellen, Dean of Sciences, *Public University Somewhere in the West*

“The FirstGen 1.0 manual is riveting, it lays the groundwork for how future generations will write manuals” - Harry Tranquil, *Industry leader in manual production*

If you loved the FirstGen 1.0 as much as the people above did, we encourage you to take a look at our other manuals. Our work in the field of education has made us into the top world renowned company we are today.

For a one year subscription and only 15 payments of \$19.99 each you will get access to classics like, “So you have Foreign Exchange Students” and “Dealing with Campus Protestors: A Humane Approach.” Not only will you get access to these great titles, but we offer a 24/7 call service for any questions about being racist or culturally insensitive. Never be caught in these predicaments again, Contact FG Inc. to get all the tools you need to be the most progressive campus in the world. We offer a wide variety of products and manuals all set to the highest standards.

We accept all major credit cards. Cash payments can be processed at the FG headquarters.

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# Limited Warranty

## If FirstGen product or recommendations fail please contact the parties below:

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**MARLEEN APODACA**  
**A WORLD I NEVER KNEW**



**THE VERNAL POOL**

**ISSUE FIVE, FALL 2016**

Running in a world of white mist  
Nothing but the barren dirt trail ahead  
The cold bites my bones and I clench my fists  
I should've stayed in bed

Clouds curl around my feet  
Impossible to escape as it rises to my knees  
Beckoning me to never leave

Away from the night that wrapped me in a sheet of dim stars  
Now gently lifting with dawn's eye

My body becoming one with the sweet oblivion  
In the distance geese sing their broken song  
My mind is in a melodic trance  
The sound of feet drumming the earth

The cold pulls warmth into my veins  
My hair is kissed by the morning dew  
I am etched by the lake and green plains  
A world I never knew

