

# GIVE ME FIVE



## 5 WAYS TO SUPPORT FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

FEEDBACK & FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT QUOTES FROM SPRING 2020 PANDEMIC SURVEYS  
VISIT [HTTPS://ASSESSMENT.UIOWA.EDU/ACE-SUPPLEMENT](https://assessment.uiowa.edu/ace-supplement)

"I value being able to communicate with other students and my professor. Having a conversation is the easiest way to clear up misunderstandings, get information, or just build connections."

"Being able to meet for a discussion and engage in back and forth dialogue made a huge difference in what I learned."

"One thing that helped me learn was for instructors to send out a to-do list every week. The to-do list kept me organized and up to date. Sending to-do lists every week can ease overwhelming stress and anxiety."

"Receiving constant feedback from my instructors...on what went well and what I could improve on."

"Unfortunately with online instruction, it is difficult to reach out for help."

"Individual office hours for students, instead of a normal Zoom call. Students may not feel comfortable asking [for help] in front of others."

"Professors that are willing to adapt...and understand that this is a very stressful time for all of us, including students, made the biggest difference for me this semester. This showed that professors truly cared about our education."

"I have internet troubles with most places like the library and with fast food restaurants closed, I can't get easy access to the internet. My home internet is very unstable, and I have gotten kicked out of 2 exams."

"I think encouragement should play a bigger role. We are in college so we should be able to have the motivation to do our coursework, but it's hard to stay focused on school when thousands of people are dying. Having professors that are encouraging and positive would make a huge difference."

"I enjoyed and benefited from online lectures, but I think technology in general and access to it has been a hurdle for many of my peers."

**Spring 2020 Student Concerns:** All students expressed non-academic concerns that affected their academic experience. In each case, first-generation students reported the same concerns, but at higher levels of frequency than their continuing generation peers.

While this document was developed with first-generation students in mind, utilizing these strategies in the classroom will benefit all students and can continue to be utilized in post-pandemic classrooms.

For more ideas on how to implement these strategies or adapt them for your course, visit <https://teach.uiowa.edu/keep-teaching-iowa>



<https://firstgen.uiowa.edu>

### CREATE CONNECTIONS

Begin classes with ice breakers, help students build relationships with each other through small group activities, partner with students to set community guidelines for your class at the beginning of each semester.

### COMMUNICATE CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Be explicit in communicating the goals, tasks, and expectations of every assignment, regularly check in with students to see if they have questions or need clarification.

### BE ACCESSIBLE

Encourage students to ask for help, explain what office hours are and how to prepare for them, set routines for responding to students' emails and share this schedule with your students.

### BE FLEXIBLE

Show empathy and concern for your students' well-being and design coursework and projects that allows space for flexibility when students need it.

### ACKNOWLEDGE STUDENTS' PERSONAL CHALLENGES

Check in with students to assess technology needs, be aware of campus resources and share these with students, and be supportive of students' personal needs as these can profoundly impact their ability to be academically successful.

## How often have these challenges interfered with your academic work during the pandemic?

