It doesn't matter where you come from, all that matters is where you're going.
Dear colleagues,

Our newsletter this month is dedicated to our first generation faculty, trainees and staff. This topic is particularly close to my heart as I, too, am a first generation medical doctor in my family and a first generation American. It has been an exciting journey and I am beyond grateful for the many opportunities that I have been given along the way.

I noticed that the term “first gen” is sometimes seen as a deficit, rather than strength. For first gen graduates, the entire cultural context of a University might be foreign, and many might face financial constraints. At the same time, first gen’s might have extraordinary abilities with regards to their determination, resilience and creativity. First gen’s often have been trained their entire lives in finding solutions to apparently insurmountable obstacles. First gen’s are risk takers, “out of the box” thinkers and problem solvers. As a community, we have to enable them to contribute these unique qualities.

For some first gen’s, entering an elite University means bringing honor and pride to their families. It might reflect the strength, hard work and tenacity of the entire family. Many first generation graduates have experienced struggle and suffering. Arriving at Stanford can feel like reaching a clearing at the end of a long, hard journey. To these colleagues, I would like to say: We are proud of you! Keep moving forward! Being at Stanford is a condition, not an achievement. Being at Stanford means seizing the opportunities, making the next great discovery and making a difference in our patient’s lives. We are humbled, grateful, and blessed!

I remember that stepping into a new world of apparently abundant resources and opportunities was coupled with high expectations for the people I would encounter. In my younger self’s mind, these people were smart, strong, integer, courageous, compassionate and faithful. Unfortunately, during my career path, I had to make some different experiences. But I still believe that true leaders are like that. I hope that at Stanford Radiology, we will live up to this expectation – that we will enable everyone to make meaningful contributions, that we will support each other and become happy when we see each other grow. We need an orchestra to play our symphony.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E86Npp_CfcM

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoYJCuOiho0

Heike Daldrup-Link, M.D., Ph.D.
Associate Chair for Diversity
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First Generation Faculty, Trainees, and Staff
When will you earn money?

Mom looking at my new badge:

You look fantastic!

I have exciting news!!

— A Baby??

No, I passed my exam!

— Oh.

Dad, how can I solve this problem?

— You are so smart. You will figure it out.

Dad, my friends want to attend that overseas program. It costs $3,000.

— I guess that means you stay here?

What do you want to be in 10 years?

— Alive!
I am a part of the first generation community at Stanford. I am the first person in my family to finish college directly after high school, the first MD, and the first PhD. My family was on WIC when I was growing up, so times were hard and money was tight. I learned to be resourceful and creative in my solutions to problems. With limited resources, my family always supported me and my endeavors even when they didn't understand them or necessarily agree with them. To this day, pretty much no one in my family understands what I am doing in my training or why I do not have a “real job” yet, which can make family gatherings and conversations difficult from time to time. I was so excited to discover the First Generation Program at Stanford, and am a proud mentor within this program. This Program is such a great opportunity to reach out to those students who are in the same position I was, and give them a hand, a path, an understanding ear when it is hard to know what the next step should/could be. Being a first generation student comes with a lot of challenges, but it is also incredibly exciting to be able to possibly make a difference for those who come after you. I am thankful that Stanford fosters a community of inclusion, mentorship, and paying it forward through the First Gen Community.

– Audrey Verde, MD, PhD

I am the first PhD in my family. My parents get a kick out of calling me “doctor” and always say it with special emphasis. I'm sure they still see me as the goofy little kid singing and dancing around the house. My parents were incredibly hands-off when it came to school and career. The only advice I got was “do your best” and “I'm sure you'll find something you love to do.” Picking a major, applying to grad school, completing qualifying exams, and preparing for my doctoral defense were 100% on my own. My family loved and supported me but had no idea how to guide me through these milestones. I'm still not sure they understand what a postdoc is or why I'm doing one. And that's okay. They are tremendously proud to say that I have a PhD and work at Stanford and I feel honored to set the precedent for my loved ones.

– Anonymous
I was born in Caborca, Mexico and was fortunate enough to have parents who made endless sacrifices to ensure my three siblings and I could have the best opportunities to succeed.

Soon after I was born, my dad moved to the US and sought work as a day laborer doing construction in Phoenix. Back in Caborca, my mom and my siblings and I lived with relatives and struggled to make ends meet. When I was 11, we crossed the border and joined my dad in Phoenix. My parents both continued to work long hours in physically demanding jobs – my mom as a housekeeper and my dad as a landscaper. Fortunately, our socioeconomic status slowly improved; my dad became a citizen, the rest of us achieved permanent resident status, and my dad started his own landscaping company. My parents set me up to be the first person to attend college and subsequently medical school. I am indebted to them and hope that I am now in a position to serve as an advocate for greater diversity in our program, recruit minority applicants, and mentor diverse students who are interested in radiology.

– Mario Moreno, MD

I can complete the phrase “first generation” so many ways – Greek-American, college graduate, physician, interventional radiologist. As typical for someone coming from an immigrant family, much of my childhood and young adulthood was spent trying to find my place between my very Greek parents and “those Americans” (as my parents called them). I was made fun of for bringing spanakopita for lunch as a kid and for not knowing common English words that my parents never used at home. Later on, I felt out of place because I didn’t have a parent as an alumnus of my undergraduate or medical school. However, I feel so fortunate to have my parents motivating me and supporting me every step of the way. As I grew older, I molded my own identity. Now, while I still encounter awkward moments that remind me of the cultures I straddle, I am honored to help other first generation physicians along their path. I also would be thrilled to eat spanakopita for lunch every day.

– Amanda Rigas, MD
Growing up in the Southwest and East Coast, looking different from pretty much everyone else was strange to say the least. I was a brown kid, in a very un-brown neighborhood.

While most of my childhood was benign, there were unfortunately numerous periods punctuated by actions intended to hurt me. Actions that left me feeling deeply alone, angry, and outright terrified. Sometimes I found myself at the bottom of a dark pit, completely paralyzed by self-hatred and utter confusion. After all, I was a quiet kid who went about my business. Why did they treat me this way? Why did they feel compelled to gang up on me? And why did I feel so helpless? I would just try stay quiet and still. Walking away would only provoke them to physically attack me. I was trapped until they tired. I hated being brown.

In elementary and junior high school, for example, it was not unusual for some of the school kids to mock my skin color by performing a poor rendition of a Native American pow wow dance around me, or call me cruel nicknames, likening my color to that of feces. It pains me to say it also wasn’t uncommon to be dragged into yet another fight to defend
my little sister’s honor when several boys would make inappropriate gestures at her. Or when I was routinely picked last to be on a sports team because there is no way a brown Asian kid can be good at sports. Or even being told by the High School Principal that I did not deserve to be Valedictorian because there were smarter (white) students than me in the school, even though being the ‘top student’ in your class was defined by your GPA. “Really??!!?” I would say to myself, shaking my head and feeling sick to my stomach. There were also some rather NSFW expletives I said in my head when that happened- I’m still in disbelief when I reflect upon these experiences. They make me think of all the people of color across the globe, and those belonging to different sexual and gender minorities, who share in this disturbing reality on a daily basis. Many of which who have it a LOT worse than me. These thoughts make my soul cry and despair, and at the same time give me strength when I realize the amount of courage they must muster, just to survive.

For me, surviving was made possible only through the loving support of my parents. I was also fueled by a personal desire to prove those haters wrong. Damn it if I’m gonna let them win, I often said to myself (and still do to this day). I need to prove everyone wrong, and that I’m someone who can do something meaningful. Turns out I did a few ok things over the years...... 1st place in the City Science Fair, recipient of some Merit Awards, entrance into a few good schools and fellowship programs, Teacher of the Year awards, and now a faculty member, part of the Stanford family. I do, however, walk into life every day with an undeniable chip on my shoulder.

Is that a good thing? Do I even dare say that perhaps there is silver lining to being treated so poorly in the past? I’m not sure I would go that far, because I wouldn’t want anyone to experience what I did. Fortunately for me, I had a tremendous network of support around me, including my parents, siblings, friends and teachers who gave me the foundation and confidence to overcome those experiences. But there is certainly a fire that burns deep inside me to this day, to do something positive and help empower those around me, especially those less fortunate. That fire came from a not-so-good place. However, I am thankful that I have the opportunity to use what I’ve been through for something good. At least, that is my hope every day.
First gens think out of the box . . .

First Generation Faculty, Trainees, and Staff
Benedict Anchang is a trained statistician, computational biologist and Instructor in the Department of Radiology. Benedict is also the chair of the trainee diversity committee in the department of Radiology and very enthusiastic about motivating under-represented minority trainees in the field of Biomedical data sciences and to foster diversity in Radiology with the goal to solve complex problems. Benedict's current research and collaborative work in systems biomedicine involves developing innovative computational models to improve our understanding of the tumor microenvironment using high-dimensional single-cell data. Advanced single-cell technologies offer the possibility to profile DNA, RNA and proteins in single cells, thereby allowing us to precisely characterize cell types and states by their molecular products, and how they vary across tissues, systems, and organs, and ultimately how they influence health and disease.

Dr. Anchang recently received an award from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation in support of the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI) in response to a funding request: “Collaborative Computational Tools for Human Cell Atlas” [1] whose goal is to create a shared, open reference atlas of all cells in the healthy human body as a resource for studies of health and disease. Dr. Anchang’s proposal to the CZI, entitled “Detection and Visualization of Temporal Partitioned Cellular States using Single-cell Analysis,” aims to develop a computational analysis framework for generating reference maps using time series single-cell data. More broadly, this project is part of a large scientific community effort where participants who are thought leaders in

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single cell analysis will accelerate progress, facilitate communication and maximize open dissemination of single cell analysis tools and resultant knowledge.

Dr. Anchang also received a 2018 American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) Minority and Minority-Serving Institution Faculty Scholar in Cancer Research Award, provided by the American Association for Cancer Research and supported by the National Cancer Institute's Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities. AACR-MICR Awards are presented to scientists who are full-time underrepresented minority faculty members and faculty members of minority-serving institutions at the level of instructor, assistant professor or above, who are engaged in meritorious cancer research, and presenters of meritorious abstracts at the AACR Annual Meeting. Dr. Anchang will present his research work on “Individualized Drug Combinations Based on Single Cell Drug Perturbations” at the AACR Annual Meeting 2018 in Chicago, Illinois (2018 Proceedings of the AACR). Stanford recently filed a patent related to his work (PCT/US2017/026243) on “Systems and Methods for Targeted Therapy Based on Single-Cell Stimulus Perturbation Response” and a related paper has just been accepted for publication by Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).

[1] https://www.humancellatlas.org/news

Examples of Famous First-Gen Graduates

Albert Einstein
Steve Jobs
Oprah Winfrey
Michelle Obama
Hillary Clinton
Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford,
Richard Nixon
Margaret Thatcher
Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor,
Thurgood Marshall
Elizabeth Warren
Colin Powell
Marc Tessier-Lavigne
Brian Geene
Samuel Jackson
Stanford Diversity & First Gen Office
The DGen office envisions equity, empowerment and authentic engagement between all Stanford students. The DGen office provides campus leadership for students, faculty and staff to consciously and actively affirm intersectional identities and foster intergroup relationships. Through research, forums, classes and workshops, we build student capacity and confidence to experience a sense of belonging and develop authentic connections with people from different backgrounds. Within this mission is a special focus on enriching the experience of first-generation and low-income college students by supporting their academic and social transitions, empowerment and community building. Visit: diversityandfirstgen.stanford.edu or visit the office in the Old Union.

First Generation MD Mentorship Program at Stanford
The 1st Generation Mentorship Program is a community of Stanford Medicine students, faculty, alumni, staff, who are either the first in their family to attend college/graduate/professional school and/or are the first in their families born in the United States. The work of the 1st Gen program is to build a strong community network for our first-generation trainees, helping to enrich the Stanford Medicine community by promoting a sense of belonging and enabling students to navigate medical school more effectively: https://med.stanford.edu/md/student-affairs/1stgenmentorship.html
If you are interested in becoming a mentor for first gen trainees, you can sign up here: https://stanfordmedicine.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_aVqpbKRpjBwzOOF
Stanford University President Marc Tessier-Lavigne, PhD, the first in his family to attend college, honored first-generation medical and graduate students and their mentors: http://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2017/09/first-generation-students-and-their-mentors-honored.html

Stanford First-Generation and/or Low-Income Partnership
FLIP is a student organization committed to serving the first-generation and/or low-income community at Stanford. FLIP’d mission is to raise awareness about class issues, build a first generation and/or low income community that transcends all barriers, foster an open and respectful campus environment, engage in a cross-class dialogue, advocate on behalf of the community, and empower first generation and/or low income students at Stanford. https://www.facebook.com/stanfordflip/
EdMobilizer – Equalizing Higher Education from Within
EdMobilizer aims to create equitable pathways to broaden college access and success for undocumented, first-generation and/or low-income (UFLI) college students. To address financial, social, and academic disparities within higher education, we develop and advocate for policies that reduce barriers to college, increase the number of first-generation and low-income (FLI) college students in higher education, and change support systems on the institutional level.
http://www.edmobilizer.org/#equalizing-higher-education-from-within

NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
(formerly the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators) is the leading voice for student affairs administration, policy, and practice. The NASPA Center for First-generation Student Success serves as the primary entity to increase the research, scholarship, and effective practice supporting first-generation students:
https://www.naspa.org/constituent-groups/groups/center-for-first-generation-student-success

Each year, NASPA honors prominent higher education and student affairs leaders, programs, and initiatives for contributions and impact on the field. NASPA members are encouraged to nominate outstanding colleagues and stellar programs at the international, national, and regional levels:
https://www.naspa.org/about/awards/view-all
At any given moment you have the **POWER** to say: **This is NOT how the story is going to END**