



AM **FIRST**

Empower, Explore, Execute Program

Gain the confidence, self-awareness, and career readiness
knowledge you need to excel in your career as a
first-generation college student

Introduction

The I Am First program will equip first-generation college students with the confidence, self-awareness, and career readiness knowledge to jumpstart into a successful journey towards achieving career and leadership development. As an I Am First student you will be amongst a group of your peers who can relate to the first-generation college experience and provide a network of support even beyond the program conclusion.

Empower

The first pillar of the I Am First program aims to provide participants with the tools and resources to build confidence and self-awareness as they embark upon their college experience at Cal State Fullerton. As a first-generation college student, it is important to recognize the many strengths and talents one has to offer and begin to apply them during your first and second years in college and beyond.

Explore

The second pillar of the I Am First program aims to provide participants with opportunities and learning formats during working sessions to begin exploring career and life goals. Students will engage in a “Design Your Life” session to begin exploring various aspects of the college experience including determining one’s major and/or career path and how it relates to the challenges and opportunities of being a first-generation college student. Students will also be exposed to a panel of first-generation alumni and faculty members that can share valuable advice and tips for success throughout the college experience.

Execute

The third pillar of the I Am First program aims to provide participants with a career roadmap plan of action and exposure to networking opportunities. These networking opportunities will provide an opportunity for students to engage with first-gen alumnus working in various professions and faculty to begin working towards executing goals and overcoming the traditional challenges of identifying as a first/second-year first-generation college student.

Award-Winning Program



2023 Career Services Excellence Award

The NACE Awards honor members' outstanding achievements in the career services and HR/staffing professions. NACE Excellence Awards are judged on program needs/objectives, content, design, creativity, innovation, measurable outcomes and ease of replication.



2024 Innovative Program Award

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 for consideration as an award recipient in a NASPA award program.

How To Apply

Qualifications

- Identify as a first-generation college student
- Fall cohort - Currently enrolled 1st or 2nd year undergraduate
- Spring & Summer cohorts - Currently enrolled transfer, 3rd, or 4th year

Application

- Fill out the application form on TitanLink
- Include an up-to-date resume
- Visit fullerton.edu/career/i-am-first for more information

Time Commitment

Full commitment to attend all sessions is required. Two or more missed sessions will disqualify students for being eligible for a scholarship award and a Career Readiness Completion Certificate granted by the Career Center.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Career and Life Planning:** Students will be able to design a comprehensive career and life roadmap that aligns with their personal and professional goals.
- **Strengths Identification:** Students will complete the StrengthsFinder 2.0 assessment and gain an understanding of their unique strengths, particularly as first-generation college students.
- **Social Capital Development:** Students will build and leverage social capital by engaging with first-generation alumni, employers, and faculty members.
- **Mentorship Engagement:** Students will be matched with an alumni mentor and will develop a meaningful mentor-mentee relationship to support their academic and career aspirations.
- **Scholarship Acquisition:** Students will have the opportunity to apply for and receive scholarship awards to support their educational journey.

NACE Career Readiness

The I Am First curriculum was designed in alignment with the eight NACE Career Readiness Competencies:



Career & Self Development



Communication



Professionalism



Critical Thinking



Equity & Inclusion



Technology



Leadership



Teamwork

Curriculum

Career Launch Materials

Each student is provided with the following resources:

- “Launch Your Career” Workbook with 8 steps to creating relationships with professionals and accessing the hidden job market
- Micro-Learning videos that are sent via text to supplement the workbook content
- Readiness Inventory to assist students with identifying their skill levels according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) 8 Career Readiness competencies.

Readiness Assessment

All students in the program take a Readiness Assessment to help them identify where their skills are in relationship building, professional communication, career planning & exploration, and internship & job search. The program Career Coaches meet with the students to discuss their results and recommend ways they can improve their soft skills.

Program Assignments

Dynamic Resume

Students are required to submit their resumes into our online Resume Review platform called Hiration to receive AI generated feedback on how to improve their resumes to land an internship or job.

Career Conversation Notes

All students will use the Career Conversation Notes template to take notes during the first meeting with their mentors.

Strengths Assessment Reflection Paper

All students will write a one-page reflection paper on how they plan to develop their strengths throughout the remainder of the academic year to overcome the challenges of being a first-generation college student.

Micro-Internships

I Am First students are notified of opportunities to apply for a micro-internship to help them gain work experience. The micro-internships are provided from a partnership with the Orange County CEO Leadership Alliance (CLAOC).

Program Sessions

There are 9 total program sessions. The first four sessions of the program focus on self-reflection and building confidence as a first-generation student. In the second half of the program, students learn about the importance of social capital and receive tools and resources to help them build and grow their networks, ultimately securing internships and career opportunities. Below is an overview of some of the sessions:

Imposter Syndrome/Phenomenon

In collaboration with the Counseling & Psychological Services office, students discover what this phenomenon entails and strategies to overcome challenges that it may present.

Design Your Life & Major Exploration

I Am First Instructors educate students on what types of careers they can look into based on their interests and majors. Students have an opportunity to think critically about what they want to pursue and what is important to them in a job.

StrengthsFinder Assessment

All students in the program take the CliftonStrengths Assessment to help them build confidence in themselves by identifying their Top 5 Strengths.

LinkedIn/Informational Interviews

Students are introduced to LinkedIn, an online networking platform, to help them connect with alumni and professionals. The instructor emphasizes the importance of building a personal brand and effective communication. Students receive tips on reaching out for informational interviews to learn more about their desired industries.

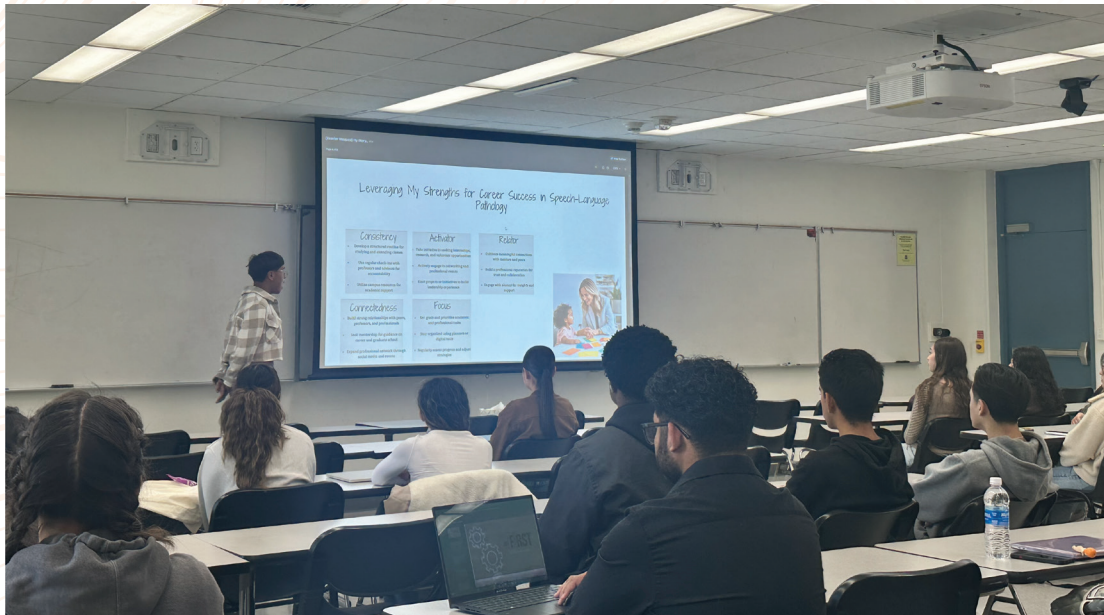
Social Capital – What Is It and How Do You Get It?

During this session, I Am First Instructors discusses the importance of talking to people and building relationships to find career opportunities. Alumni professionals are invited to share how they built their networks that led them to career success.

Speed Networking with Alumni Professionals

During this session, students learn to communicate their skills and goals to professionals through a speed networking activity. They start by crafting a "tell me about yourself" statement to prepare for the event. Then, students meet with 4-5 alumni professionals, practicing their statements, building confidence, and sharing their goals and aspirations with both the alumni and their peers.

Scholarship Project



Students have the exciting opportunity to participate in a project that offers a \$250 scholarship. To qualify, they must create a PowerPoint presentation and hone their communication skills. The project encourages students to share how the I Am First program has equipped them with essential skills to achieve their goals, highlight the most significant aspects of their identity, and proudly discuss their life accomplishments.

Mentorship

Each student in the I Am First Program is paired with a mentor who works in a field they aspire to join.

- **Connect and Engage:** Students learn the art of reaching out to their mentor, introducing themselves, and setting up engaging meetings to build a strong connection.
- **Mentorship Meetings:** Students are required to meet with their mentor at least twice during the program, ensuring valuable face-to-face interactions.
- **Communication Mastery:** Students submit brief reports on their mentor meetings, honing both their verbal and written communication skills.

Mentee Testimonials

"Connecting with my mentor who is in the human services field was the best thing I could have done this semester. I will be a Senior this upcoming fall semester and I am excited to now have a clear focus on my career goals! This program is truly life-changing and empowering as a first generation college student."

"I had the pleasure to meet my mentor and learn more about her life experience. At first I was hesitant because we both have different majors and insights, but once I got to know this individual, I realized we had a lot of similar experiences. This mentorship has helped me thrive, grow, and navigate my future goals."

Student Testimonials

*"I Am First Program and Career Launch has been **an invaluable resource** in shaping my professional mindset. It has enhanced my ability to communicate effectively with professionals and has boosted my confidence in pursuing future career opportunities."*

*"The I Am First Program and Career Launch has **given me a broader perspective on creating professional relationships**, helping me create a base, and finding new opportunities."*

*"Thanks to I Am First, I was **able to embrace and empower myself** along with other first generation students at CSUF."*

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