Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership: First-generation College Students & Leadership Outcomes

Overview
In February 2018, the Multi-Intuitional Study of Leadership (MSL) was disseminated to a random sample of 4,000 University of Maryland undergraduate students; 891 (22.3%) useable responses were collected. During the administration, the University of Maryland administered a campus-wide Climate Study, which may have impacted MSL response rates. The MSL examines socially responsible leadership skills, as conceptualized in the Social Change Model, and practices and the campus experiences and environments theorized to contribute to leadership development in college. The Social Change Model envisions leadership to exist in six components: Consciousness of Self, Congruence, Commitment, Collaboration, Controversy with Civility, and Citizenship. The MSL was first administered in 2006 and has since been used by over 350 institutions. In 2018, over 80 higher education institutions participated across five countries, including 10 of the 14 Big10 Institutions. For more information on the Social Change Model and the MSL, visit: leadershipstudy.net.

This report highlights findings regarding if there are different leadership outcomes for students who self-identify as first-generation college students. A breakdown of participants is listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-generation Students</th>
<th>UMD</th>
<th>Big Ten</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of First-generation Participants</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
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</table>

This information is self-reported by respondents. UMD participants included in Big Ten sample.

Overview
For this study, first-generation college student was defined as someone whose parents or legal guardian(s) have never enrolled in post-secondary education. Participants self-reported the highest level of education obtained by any of their parents or guardians and responses were recoded such that students either were or were not first-generation. Of the respondents at UMD, 62 (10.3%) self-identified as first-generation. Of the respondents from across the Big Ten, 610 (11.8%) identified as first-generation. When excluding UMD participants from the Big Ten total, 548 (12.0%) identified as first-generation college students.

Highlights
Examining the responses regarding student employment and leadership outcomes produced a number of highlights further detailed in this report:

- Frequency of socio-cultural conversations and leadership efficacy scores are statistically higher for non-first-generation students at UMD compared to their first-generation peers.
- First-generation students at the University of Maryland reported that they were confident or very confident in taking initiative to improve something at a lower rate (61%) than their peers who reported their parents had enrolled in post-secondary education (72%).
- There were no differences in overall leadership capacity of first-generation students compared to their peers.
- First-generation college students at the University of Maryland have similar outcomes as first-generation students at other Big Ten institutions.
Results

Leadership Outcomes: UMD Comparisons

The following five variables were analyzed and assessed for students who identified as first-generation at the University of Maryland as compared to their peers: socio-cultural conversations (e.g., “talked about different lifestyles/customs”), social perspective taking (e.g., “I believe there are two sides to every question and try to look at both of them”), social generativity (e.g., “I think I am responsible for ensuring a state of well-being for future generations”), leadership efficacy (e.g., confidence in “leading others”), and overall leadership capacity (e.g., “I can be counted on to do my part”).

Leadership Outcomes UMD participants

Each scale was created using various questions presented on the MSL. Responses are similar between students who reported being first-generation and those who did not. However, socio-cultural conversations ($p < 0.05$) and leadership efficacy ($p < 0.05$) scores were statistically different between UMD participants and their non-first-generation peers, with first-generation students reporting lower scores on both scales.

Leadership Efficacy

Exploring the items that make up the leadership efficacy scale, first-generation students at the University of Maryland report lower confidence in the following leadership behaviors: organizing a group’s tasks to accomplish a goal ($p < 0.05$), taking initiative to improve something ($p = 0.05$), and leading others ($p < 0.05$).

Statistical comparisons reflect t-test significance of $p < 0.05$; percentages reflect the percent of respondents selecting “confident” or “very confident” in their ability to perform the task listed.
Exploring the items that comprise the socio-cultural conversations scale, first-generation students at the UMD report having discussions with students whose religious beliefs (p < 0.05) and political opinions (p < 0.05) differ from their own less frequently than their peers.

**Institutional Comparisons**

In addition to comparing first-generation students to their non-first-generation peers at the University of Maryland, University of Maryland students indicating they were first-generation college students were compared to their peers at other Big Ten institutions on the same outcomes. Results suggest that first-generation students are similar across institutions on these outcomes.

**Leadership Outcomes for First-generation College Students**

Scale ranges are not consistent across leadership outcomes: Socio-cultural Conversations (0-3); Social Perspective Taking (1-5); Social Generativity (1-7); Leadership Efficacy (1-4); Overall Leadership Capacity (1-5)
Appendix

Participating Institutions:

- University of Illinois
- Indiana University
- University of Maryland
- University of Michigan
- University of Minnesota
- Northwestern University
- Purdue University
- Rutgers University
- University of Wisconsin*
- The Ohio State University**

*This university participated in the Big Ten MSL Coalition, but opted out of data sharing.

**This institution participated in the MSL, but was not a part of the BIG10 Coalition.