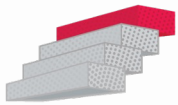


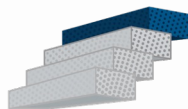
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# First, Too: An Exploration of First generation Faculty Experience from the Field

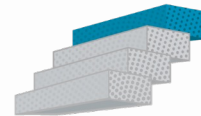
Stephanie Bobbitt, Ph.D., LPC (she/her)  
Nicole Pulliam, Ph.D. (she/her)  
Monmouth University



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SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO  
STUDENT SUCCESS  
CONFERENCE**



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STUDENT SUCCESS  
CONFERENCE**

# Land Acknowledgement

The city of Anaheim is located on the ancestral homelands of the Tongva and Acjachemen nations people. We recognize and honor their enduring relationship with this land and pay our respects to their elders past, present, and future.



# How We'll Share Space Today

- Background of the FG Faculty Initiative
- FG Programming & Support
- FG Faculty Narratives
- Your FG Stories



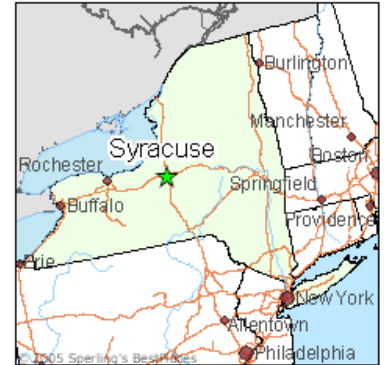
# Our FG Stories



**Stephanie Bobbitt, Ph.D., LPC**  
Assistant Professor

- First in family to attend college
- Working class family
- Single parent household
- No educational support or guidance
- Pressured that women “don’t need school”
- Told to give up often
  
- Sought mentorship
- New career goals and aspirations
- Advanced degrees
- Professional licensure

**New York**



# Our FG Stories



**Nicole Pulliam, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor

Inaugural Director, Social Justice Academy

- First in household to earn a high school diploma
- Working class background
- Push from high school counselor
- Academic under-preparedness
- New career inspiration
- Advanced degrees
- Upward mobility & entrepreneurship; wealth-building



# Background of First, Too FG Faculty Initiative

- Our FG experiences as faculty
- Feelings of isolation
- Feelings of under-preparedness
- Lack of belongingness
- Feelings of fraudulence
- Navigating unspoken rules of tenure & promotion
- Lack of mentorship & guidance from those from similar backgrounds
- FG students at Monmouth University; but how many FG faculty?

# Background of First, Too FG Faculty Initiative

**(D)**IVERSITY  
**(I)**NNOVATION  
**(G)**RANT



As part of Monmouth University's commitment to creating an inclusive, affirming, and equitable campus community, the [Office of the Provost](#) and [Intercultural Center](#) launched a new Diversity Innovation Grant (DIG) pilot program in the Spring of 2021 to provide encouragement and financial support to members of the campus community who want to take an active role in our shared commitment.

- June 2022-applied for grant
- Awarded \$10,000 for Fall 2022-Spring 2023 Implementation
- June 2023 – reapplied for grant
- Awarded \$10,000 for Fall 2023-Spring 2024 Implementation
  
- As of Fall 2024 – First, Too has become a sustained program

# FG Faculty Programming & Support

- Hosted monthly lunch meet ups with FG faculty & students
- Created a directory of FG faculty for webpage development
- Gathering events – bowling, graduation celebrations
- Cool swag!
- Presenting here!

<https://www.monmouth.edu/css/first-generation/first-too-at-mu/>





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# First Too at MU: First-Generation Faculty Initiative

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[First-Gen Advising](#)

[First to Fly: First Generation at Monmouth](#)

[First Too at MU: First-Generation Faculty Initiative](#)

At Monmouth University, we transcend the conventional university experience—we are a thriving community dedicated to sending a powerful message to our first-generation students: “You belong here, and your potential is boundless.”

**The First-Generation Faculty Initiative at MU**, co-created by Nicole Pulliam, Ph.D., and Stephanie Bobbitt, Ph.D., is a groundbreaking endeavor aimed at amplifying the presence of faculty and academic leaders who, much like our students, paved the way as first-generation college attendees. Rooted in innovation, this initiative is guided by a singular mission—to foster a profound sense of inclusion, ultimately bolstering the retention and success rates of our first-generation scholars.

**MU's First-Generation Faculty Initiative** comprises a dynamic network of educators who share a common bond as first-generation college students themselves. Actively involved within the university community, these faculty members proudly embrace and champion their first-generation identities. Serving as unwavering advocates, they dedicate themselves to elevating the first-generation community at Monmouth University.

This project was made possible in part due to funding from the Diversity Innovation Grant Program coordinated by the Office of the Provost and Intercultural Center at Monmouth University.

# FG Faculty Narratives

- “First Too has created an opportunity to connect with other faculty who have travelled similar but unique paths. I feel comfortable being vulnerable in this space with like minded colleagues and not having to manage the feeling of always needing to know or be perfect.”  
- **Dr. Vernon Smith, Educational Counseling and Leadership**
- “I never thought about myself being first-generation until First, Too. It was an immediate “ah-hah” moment as I reflected upon it, and began to link some of my initial struggles with not having that home base of college experience. In some ways, these persisted into graduate school. That persistence could have been avoided if there was a support network in place.”  
- **Dr. Dennis Rhoads, Biology**

# FG Faculty Narratives

- “My parents, neither of who are college-educated, have instilled a great amount of work ethic and resilience in me. I have applied these traits to academic work both as a student and now as a professor, and I am proud of all I have accomplished and all I can give back to the Monmouth University community.”  
- **Joseph Torchia, English**
- “I am proud to be a first-generation college graduate because it provides support to the idea that our strength often lies primarily within. Our circumstances of origin do not necessarily dictate the reality of our present.”  
- **Dr. Patrick Walden, Speech Language Pathology**

# FG Faculty Narratives

- “I’m only now beginning to understand why being first generation is interesting and also why challenges exist for our students. I suppose I’m most proud of being part of a community that recognizes barriers, develops a caring community and working towards an equitable framework for all our students.”  
- **Dr. Sean Sterrett, Biology**
- “I am most proud of the fact that I had the motivation and perseverance to figure out how to go to college. My parents had no resources and little advice about this experience other than strongly encouraging me to pursue higher education.”  
- **Dr. Michael Cronin, Social Work**





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# Your FG Stories





**Thank You!**

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**SEE YOU IN DENVER, CO!**

