

# **CEDI Action Team Report on Low-Income and First Generation (LIFG) Student Opportunities**

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# Introduction

Asuka Sango

We see our work as a continuation of the earlier efforts by the Dean of Students Office: during the 2015-16 academic year, Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students Carolyn H. Livingston created a working group to review challenges encountered by and opportunities provided for LIFG students, and to provide recommendations on how to best improve experiences and outcomes. While inspired by [the Dean of Students' 2016 report](#), we were also in conversation with the First-gen Forward Steering Committee, whose work complements ours.

Specifically, our team was charged by the CEDI leadership with:

- Considering the processes for participating in mentored student research; fellowships; off-campus studies; and a full range of student employment at Carleton.
- Determining ways to augment LIFG student access to these opportunities.
- Developing ideas for disseminating information about existing resources to LIFG students.
- Submitting to the CEDI Leadership Board a report covering this information.

While drawing on the expertise of Action Team members, we consulted the following offices and programs with regard to the above questions:

- The Dean of the College Office (especially Associate Dean Gretchen Hofmeister) about Mentored Research (Section 1)
- The Office of Student Fellowships (Section 2)
- The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program (Section 3)
- The Off-Campus Studies Office (Section 4)
- The Career Center and Student Employment (Section 5)
- The TRIO/Student Support Services and the Office of Intercultural and International Life (OIL) (Section 6)

In the following six sections, we will share our findings. Each section is organized to address our three guiding questions: the second and third questions are directly related to the charge we received from the CEDI (see above) while the first question emerged as an important area of consideration through our preliminary research and discussion (we will say more about the importance of this question in the Conclusion section):

- How do you define LIFG and how do you identify LIFG students? What kinds of data do you have about LIFG students?
- What are existing resources and opportunities for LIFG students that you have? How are they publicized?

- How can these resources and opportunities be publicized better? Any obstacles? Any room for improvement?

Each section may provide recommendations and suggestions specific to each office or program. In the Conclusion section, we will propose our general recommendations and suggestions for any individual staff, faculty and students or any offices, programs, and departments that are committed to augmenting our support for LIFG students.

### **How does the College define “LIFG” and identify students who would fit the definition?**

Before delving into our specific sections, it is helpful to provide an overview of how the College on the whole approaches the first question of how to define “LIFG.”

Our current practice of determining whether a student is “low-income” (LI) or “first-gen” (FG) starts with our admissions process. The Admissions Office codes a student as “first-gen” if either parent, or the parent the student lives with/spends the majority of their time, has not received a four-year college degree. This is the case for all students, including both domestic and international students.

As to income, there are two measures used. One is based on the income levels we use at Carleton to determine a student’s “low-income” or “middle-income” background. These ranges are determined by the Board of Trustees based on the recommendation of the Admissions and Financial Aid Committee (AFAC). Here is how they are currently defined.

- Low-income: \$0-41,999
- Middle Income: \$42,000-169,999

However, there are students who come from family incomes above \$42,000, who also qualify for a Pell Grant; this is the second measure, that is, a federal definition commonly used to measure low-income populations across college campuses. It is not the most accurate measure, but one that is used because it is determined based on students applying for financial aid with the FAFSA. As a general rule of thumb, families earning less than \$60,000 may qualify for a Pell Grant.

Thus there are multiple definitions of ‘low-income’ used on campus reflecting the complexity of students’ financial needs. The Financial Aid Office is sensitive to the fact that the two families with the same income level may find themselves in vastly different situations (for example, depending on how many children they have and/or how many of them are attending college).

Similarly, “first-gen” is not a transparent, monolithic category either. For example, international students, who are not “first-gen” in their home countries and therefore do not fit this domestic category, may still experience the same types of challenges as domestic “first-gen” students if they are not familiar with the culture of the U.S. higher education (see Section 6b for more discussion).

The multiplicity of the definition is confusing, but if the definition is too narrow, it cannot accommodate students’ diverse needs. The Admissions and Financial Aids Office do not

necessarily think of the numbers quoted above as an established, “cut-and-dried” filter; rather, they are guidelines they can use to consider students’ individual financial needs while paying close attention to their specific individual situations.

We will return to the issue of definition at the end to provide a further reflection.

## 1. Mentored Student Research

Jay Tasson

Mentored research opportunities for Carleton students are available via a variety of structures both internal to Carleton and externally. These include:

- Mentored research for credit during the term, such as that which can be done through courses like PHYS356.
- Paid research with Carleton faculty over breaks funded by the Towsley endowment, the humanities center, the Summer Science Fellows program, departmental endowed funds, and external grants.
- Carleton-funded research for students working elsewhere funded by the Kolenkow-Reitz fund.
- External paid summer research programs such as the Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program in the sciences.

To participate in these programs, students must be aware that they exist, see themselves as qualified candidates, and in the case of most Carleton opportunities, seek out a conversation with a faculty member. Participation is also enhanced when students understand the value that these programs offer for their future and when students are willing and able to find space for them around coursework, other extracurricular activities, other employment, and family responsibilities. Anecdotally, one can imagine many of the prerequisites to involvement may present more significant barriers to entry for LIFG students than for the overall population. In the remainder of this section we explore the ways in which LIFG students interact with these opportunities and the ways in which access to them can be improved.

### **How do you define LIFG and how do you identify LIFG students? What kinds of data do you have about LIFG students?**

Gretchen Hofmeister is currently compiling data on students who participate in research through many of the vehicles listed above. This list can then be checked against LIFG status as associated with the student’s Colleague ID.

### **What are existing resources and opportunities for LIFG students that you have? How are they publicized?**

Many of the existing frameworks for assisting LIFG students listed in this section are not targeted directly at LIFG students, but rather are universal design strategies that may be particularly helpful for LIFG students. We believe that this is likely a good model for many such strategies as singling out LIFG students may do more harm than good.

Existing structures include:

- *Website*: The Dean of the College now has a [website](#) that curates information about undergraduate research at Carleton. Perhaps most importantly in the current context, it provides information for students in the form of an FAQ about how to get involved. The discussion includes information about how to be paid and/or how to earn credit for research as well as an email template for how to get in touch with a professor about getting involved in their research. This seems very important since making that first contact with a faculty member is often a key to getting involved. The website also links to the STEM Board, Fellowships office, Humanities Center, etc., which in turn link to department information.
- *Departmental Outreach*: Some departments have dedicated structures for making all students aware of opportunities and vehicles through which students can express their interest. In Physics and Astronomy, a web page lists details of opportunities available with each faculty member along with instructions for how to get involved. The faculty typically visit introductory and intermediate classes in the winter to advertise opportunities. While conversations with faculty are still needed to get involved, the department has also begun using a google form on which students can express interest in summer opportunities. This provides an accessible starting point for the process of seeking an opportunity and a mechanism for tracking interest.
- *FOCUS*: The FOCUS program does outreach to FOCUS students that is similar to the Physics and Astronomy efforts above. They host a panel discussion each year featuring students who have previously done summer research. The panelists educate attendees on the process of getting summer positions, but research during the term is usually also discussed. The Fifth-Year Intern also pushes students to talk to faculty with whom they might be interested in working during the term.
- *Summer Science Fellows*: The Summer Science Fellows program recruits four students and promises them two summers of research funding. Opportunities are for strong students who have not yet had a research opportunity who would contribute to diversity in their field. This could include financial diversity, and LIFG students are represented among this group at a rate that is higher than their fraction on the campus at large.

**How can these resources and opportunities be publicized better? Any obstacles? Any room for improvement?**

This section contains a brainstorm of ideas for how access to mentored research might be improved for LIFG students.

- The compensation for Carleton-funded opportunities may be challenging for some LIFG students. The funding is based on minimum wage in Minnesota. From this money, students often must cover housing and travel expenses. This may make research opportunities an unfavorable option for LIFG students who might have a need to net more money by working a traditional job while living at home and avoiding travel. Mechanisms that would cover housing and travel may help make these opportunities more accessible for LIFG students. This issue may be partly mitigated by the possibility of applying for additional funding available to low income students [here](#).
- Summer Science Fellows currently supports half of its students with a grant that is ending. Maintaining these opportunities for underrepresented groups, including LIFG students, will likely require a new source of funding, such as college support.
- The burden for receiving Kolenkow-Reitz funding is particularly high for students that may have less knowledge of “the system”. Students are required to make contact with a faculty member at another institution, write a research proposal, and find living arrangements on their own. Selection criteria favor students that have not previously done research, which makes taking the above steps even more challenging. A better bridge to these opportunities for LIFG students (and all students) would be helpful.
- There is not a wide-spread awareness among liberal arts advisors of what undergraduate research looks like across the campus. Some workshops sponsored by the humanities center and the STEM board, or perhaps an LTC session may help educate the faculty such that they can better advise students outside of their department.
- Perhaps some outreach analogous to existing departmental and FOCUS outreach discussed above could be incorporated more broadly into Sophomorphosis as Gretchen did in 2020.
- Historically there has been an informal networking aspect to how students enter research. It may begin with an informal conversation after class, that leads to research for credit during the term, and then to summer employment. That model likely presents a challenge for equity and inclusivity. Yet recommendations for change are difficult since faculty typically want to hire students that they know well, and thus can be confident will work out well. Student research at its best is mutually beneficial: students get a mentored opportunity and faculty get meaningful research assistance. Gretchen is exploring some ideas that may address this point:
  - Coordinate the timing of summer and winter break research offerings so that everything becomes available at the same time and we can alert students to information in a coordinated way.

- Require faculty who receive Carleton Student Research Partners funding to post their opportunities on a central website, or link them to a central website, so that students are aware of them and able to apply.
- Work with Web Services to create a “research template” that faculty (or their administrative assistants) can complete, which describes their research interests and how students can get involved. By having the information in a template, it is easier for students to scroll through the various options and learn about the different forms that research can take. Get Web Services to link these pages in some way.
- Establish goals for student involvement in research and track our progress towards those goals.
- Create more opportunities for faculty to build teaching credit for research that faculty do with students during terms.
- Increase compensation for faculty mentoring of student research during summer.
- Create faculty development opportunities for those mentoring students in the summer.
- Build on the student development program that the Humanities Center does and that the STEM Board piloted in summer 2020.
- Create a student self-reflection tool to help them evaluate their interests in research. In combination with input from the UR Director, this could help them to envision the next step.

## **2. Fellowships**

Marynel Ryan Van Zee

### **How do you define LIFG and how do you identify LIFG students? What kinds of data do you have about LIFG students?**

OSF defers to college standards for defining first-generation and/or low-income students. It appears currently that the only way to identify LIFG status is using Colleague IDs.

OSF has not had a practice of fully tracking all contact or of collecting Colleague IDs. We have tracked all individual meetings Marynel has had with students since August 2017 (to the best of our knowledge) and some participation in information sessions in the same period (to the degree that we can retrace our steps in terms of sign-in sheets, etc.). It will be impossible to provide information about all email contact/announcements. Despite these limitations, we hope it will be possible to develop a picture of how LIFG students interact with our office and the opportunities we offer.

OSF will join the effort to use a blinded process, in consultation with Institutional Research and Assessment, to identify how many LIFG students have had contact with the

Director of Student Fellowships. The data we have compiled are ready to submit to Institutional Research and Assessment. In addition to whatever we can learn through data analysis, it is likely that OSF has reached LIFG students through cooperative efforts with TRiO; recruitment for the Mellon Fellowship programs (which include first-generation students among their target groups); and other specific measures.

### **What are existing resources and opportunities for LIFG students that you have? How are they publicized?**

The opportunity to apply for a fellowship is open to all students and alumni. Some individual external fellowships limit eligibility in one or more ways, such as citizenship, grade point average, or financial need. Several internal fellowships are open to all class years except seniors and two internal fellowships are currently open only to seniors. One internal fellowship is not open to international students and one includes financial need as a criterion. Internal fellowships offer the opportunity to budget for up to \$1000 toward a savings goal (a category we used to call 'lost wages') to offset the loss of income from paid employment that would have taken place in lieu of pursuing a fellowship-funded activity. Nearly all fellowships (internal and external) are open to students in all disciplines.

Initial exposure to the idea of fellowships/ to the Office of Student Fellowships (OSF) may come in a variety of ways:

- An email from OSF (either general or targeted)
- Referral by faculty, staff, or a peer (student may initiate contact or Marynel may initiate contact based on a referral)
- Information session on a particular fellowship/set of fellowships (held when appropriate for approaching deadline or posted online - *more students are using the online info sessions than would typically attend an in-person session*)
- Information session for a particular group of students (those targeted by a fellowship opportunity, those in a particular student group (including TRiO cohorts), those in a particular class year, etc..)
- Conversation at a tabling event
- Student's own initiative/visit to the website or office

Not all students who learn about fellowships are interested in applying for one at a given time, or at all. The application processes themselves can be fairly straightforward, with a single deadline (internal fellowships) or scaffolded, with multiple deadlines (external fellowships). The multiple-deadline structure for external fellowships is designed to reduce stress by breaking down the different elements of applications and providing sufficient time for reflection, feedback, and revision. It is also designed to ensure the best possible quality of applications.



## How can these resources and opportunities be publicized better? Any obstacles? Any room for improvement?

Potential Obstacles for LIFG Students may include:

- Lack of awareness that opportunities exist (this can apply to all students due to information overload/too many emails, announcements that may seem impersonal/not directed toward them, limited time in advising sessions to discuss the many opportunities open to them, etc., but may be more prevalent among LIFG students). OSF has not had student employees, so we lack formal peer-based outreach.
- No personal connection or relationship with someone who has applied for (and/or received) a fellowship.
- Sense that fellowships are not 'career opportunities' in the same way that externships or internships are (regardless of explanation on website and as part of information sessions or discussions); the word itself is both ambiguous and not familiar to many people, whereas 'internships' are more of a known thing.
- The physical location of OSF in the Dean of the College Office may present an obstacle (though TRiO and the Career Center are also some distance from the 'heart' of campus).
- Sense of a hidden curriculum around fellowships (regardless of our efforts to demystify and provide guidance on how to navigate it).
- Concern that post-BA fellowships do not provide as much money as a job would or that the prestige associated with an opportunity is not valuable enough to offset the difference.
- Familial concerns about opportunities that involve living outside of the US for a period of time (e.g., OSF has had students decline awards due to parental anxiety about distance and lack of contribution to family income).
- For prestigious external awards, LIFG students may not have the (significant) requisite record of voluntary or other co- and extracurricular activities because they need to earn money during breaks and other 'free' periods.
- Fear of failure (fellowship applications always involve the risk of non-selection, and often involve the reality of it).

Some ideas for improvement:

- Add a student employee to create peer-to-peer advising, promotion, etc.
- Can Career Center student employees make promotional videos about fellowships? *Currently in progress; these videos will be interviews with previous/current fellowships applicants from a wide range of backgrounds. I believe a few students who will be asked to interview fall into the LIFG category.*

- Assuming that LIFG students are disproportionately missing among students who pursue fellowships, additional targeted outreach could be done that is likely to reach LIFG students; this could draw on the First-gen Forward initiatives and could showcase LIFG students who have used fellowships to pursue their interests.

### 3. Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Programs

Sindy Fleming

The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship program's objective is to address, over time, the problem of underrepresentation in college and university faculties. This goal can be achieved both by increasing the number of students from underrepresented minority groups who pursue PhDs in humanistic fields and by supporting the pursuit of PhDs by students who may not come from traditional minority groups but have otherwise demonstrated a commitment to the goals of MMUF.

#### How do you define LIFG and how do you identify LIFG students? What kind of data do you have about LIFG students?

Their goal is to increase the number of students from underrepresented backgrounds. Even though LIFG is not specifically mentioned it is still a considering factor. Currently MMUF does not have analyzed data on first-generation students/low-income, however, it can easily be gathered from the application process.

#### What existing resources and opportunities for LIFG students do you have? How are they publicized?

MMUF is a program for students who want to pursue their PhDs in a humanistic field. Students need to meet the following *eligibility requirements*.

- Are a US Citizen, Permanent Resident, or DACA (except for students at the University of Cape Town, the University of the Western Cape, and the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa);
- Are a Sophomore or Junior;
- Demonstrate academic promise and a commitment to growth and excellence;
- Major in one or more of the [Mellon Designated Fields](#);
- Aspire to pursue a PhD in a humanistic field (including humanistic arts and humanistic social sciences) and a career in the academy; and
- Are a minority student or someone committed to eradicating racial disparities in higher education.

Students who are accepted in the MMUF programs receive a range of support designed to foster their intellectual growth and achievement. Perhaps the most important of these is a dedicated community of scholars on campus and nationwide who share their commitment to intellectual excellence, their passion for research, and their desire to see positive change in the academy. More specifically, they receive during each year of the fellowship:

1. **Faculty mentoring** on a weekly basis in one-on-one and seminar settings;
2. **Peer mentoring** in one-on-one and seminar settings; all fellows enroll in a 2-credit MMUF seminar each term throughout the fellowship;
3. **A for-credit Mellon research seminar** each term;
4. **Generous stipend support** for summer and winter-break research activities, including travel;
5. **Repayment of up to \$10,000 in undergraduate loans** if you pursue doctoral study in Mellon designated disciplines; if undergraduate loans total less than \$10,000, the remainder may be applied to loans for MMUF graduate study.
6. **Access to other funding and intellectual opportunities** later in their graduate and professional career, such as the Social Science Research Council's Pre-doctoral Fellowships and Dissertation fellowship.

The MMUF program is currently publicized to students who meet the program's eligibility requirements listed above. The students are informed about the opportunity by the following methods.

- Email to students who have selected a major in the humanistic field, meet the GPA requirement, and are either juniors or seniors.
- Faculty referral (department chair)
- Information session for the students who have selected a major in the humanistic field, meet the GPA requirement, and are either juniors or seniors.
- Informational one-on-one meetings with students who are interested in MMUF.

### **How can these resources and opportunities be publicized better? Any obstacles? Any room for improvement?**

This year, the faculty coordinator and a representative from the current MMUF cohort who is also a Posse student will attend a sophomore Posse meeting so that students are fully aware of the program. We plan to continue this practice in the future.

MMUF coordinators can and will consult with OIIL and TRIO to see if they have recommendations for students whom we should reach out to specifically. They will have identified natural leaders and students who are seemingly successful in their fields.

The faculty coordinator will also reach out to members of the Humanities Center Board asking them to refer students but also to encourage their colleagues to do so. The Board

members are a group of leaders in the Humanities across campus who are invested in diversity in the humanistic fields.

## 4. Off-Campus Studies

Bethstyleline Chery

### How do you define LIFG and how do you identify LIFG students? What kinds of data do you have about LIFG students?

Although the office does not directly target LIFG students, they do try to ensure that all students' financial needs are met depending on the level of need that they have.

### What are existing resources and opportunities for LIFG students that you have? How are they publicized?

The existing resources and opportunities include:

- Job postings: They are advertised on the [student job portal](#) and as a feature on the OCS website. In the past, Jen has also sent our student fellow job posting to a list of program alumni because you have to have studied off-campus at least once to apply.
- OCS Programs: The office has all Carleton programs listed on their [portal](#) and has a comprehensive directory within their application system for [non-Carleton program opportunities](#).

Publicity efforts include:

- Job Postings: are advertised on the [student job portal](#) and as a feature on the OCS [website](#). The office may also send out student fellow job postings to a list of program alumni who have studied off-campus at least once.
- OCS Programs: all Carleton programs are listed on their [portal](#) and there is a comprehensive directory within our application system for [non-Carleton program opportunities](#).
- To advertise upcoming programs, the office advertises in a number of ways:
- Posters around campus advertising the office's [events](#)
- information sessions and virtual tables conducted over Zoom this fall because of COVID restrictions on campus
- campus calendar with digital signage
- Handshake
- Campus announcements email
- Various newsletters (OCS, CGRS, OIIL) have also posted their events.
- The World's Fair Event held in January every year advertises heavily

- Advising appointments Monday-Friday afternoons available for students to speak with someone about programs.
- They also have 1-2 OCS Fellows who do weekly peer advising. Advisors are trained on OCS matters beforehand so they can advise appropriately.
- The office offers targeted advising on the financing of OCS experiences and maintains a list of internal and external [scholarship opportunities](#) on the OCS website. They advertise these options campus-wide in the same way they advertise other OCS opportunities.

### **How can these resources and opportunities be publicized better? Any obstacles? Any room for improvement?**

The biggest obstacle for recruiting students to the OCS events and meetings or to apply for programs is the intensity of their busy schedules. This problem was exacerbated by the pandemic because their life is inundated with more zoom meetings. The pandemic also caused all the OCS programs to be cancelled up to this point, which of course presents a serious challenge to the OCS office. However, they were able to successfully recruit 53 students for a newly created DIS program for the fall term of 2020.

There are also some barriers to study abroad that are pretty standard for students: financial, “fear of missing out,” credit availability, etc. The OCS office addresses these issues by breaking down costs clearly for students, allowing all Carleton credit to count for Carleton programs, transferring approved class credit for non-Carleton programs, publicizing scholarships/financial aid availability for programs, and providing many program options each term for a wider variety of choice. The OCS advisers are always willing to speak to students or parents about questions and concerns (particularly now as they relate to COVID). Their individual meeting appointments are available.

In addition, the OCS office is always looking to improve outreach and get the word out about programs and events. They have pre-departure and re-entry events in the winter and spring terms for students who are coming back from, or about to go, abroad. They also have fellow(s) peer advise in Sayles once a week. Another successful outreach strategy has been to prioritize collaboration with other offices on campus such as OIIL and TRIO to reach students through common events and activities.

## **5. Student Employment**

RJ Holmes-Leopold

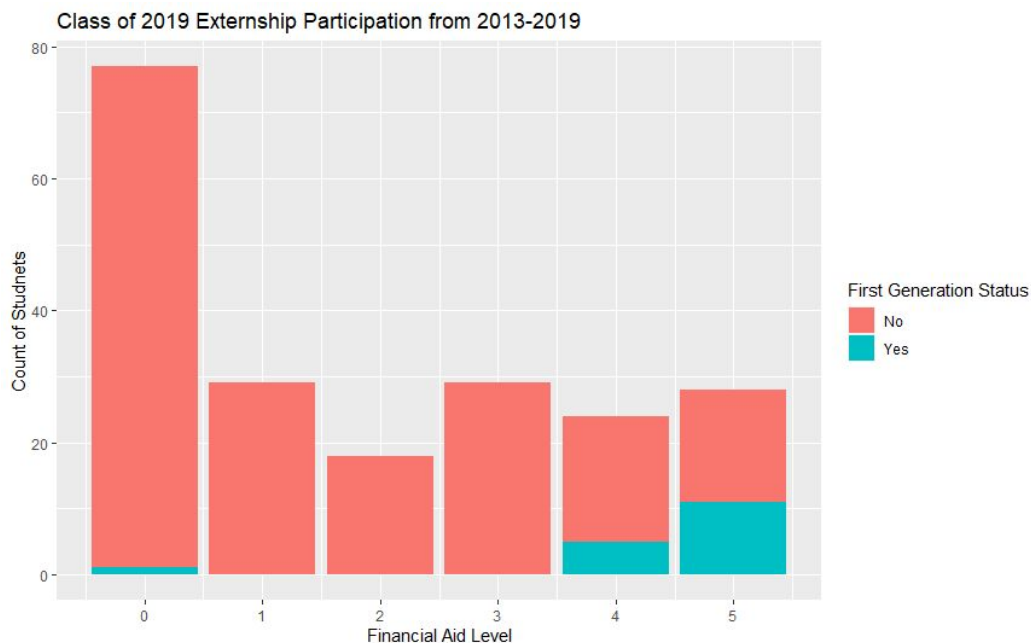
## (a) Externships

Externships are one- to three-week career exploration and immersion opportunities offered during winter break. The majority of externships are unpaid, but students are eligible to receive funds to offset costs associated with transportation and food during the externship, as most participants are not completing the externship in their home city. Students are responsible for securing their own housing for the duration of the externship, and the Career Center keeps a list of “warm leads” for housing options. Externship participation data collected by the Career Center is included since 2014.

### How do you define LIFG and how do you identify LIFG students? What kinds of data do you have about LIFG students?

First-generation students are identified in Handshake from student records held in the Registrar’s Office. Level of financial need is used as an estimated proxy for low-income with 0 being no need and 5 being the highest need for financial aid. The financial need categories only include students who submitted a FAFSA and are awarded financial aid from the college.

The table below shows the representation of first-generation students by financial need category for members of the class of 2019 who participated in externships. Levels 4 and 5 students are ones with the greatest amount of financial need and are used as a proxy for low-income households.



### What are existing resources and opportunities for LIFG students that you have? How are they publicized?

Externships are offered throughout the United States and a few internationally. Over the past three years, approximately 250 students are selected to participate--about one-half of total applicants per year. Externship opportunities are posted at the beginning of the academic year on the Career Center's online jobs platform, Handshake, along with the weekly career email, social media, and Sophomorphosis programming. Students may apply to up to five opportunities by submitting their résumé and cover letter. The majority of externs are sophomores starting their process of industry exposure. The next largest group of externs are seniors, many of whom are looking to affirm their post-graduate interests, gain some tangible project experience in preparation for employment applications, or testing out a potential industry they had not previously explored. Externs are eligible to receive Career Center funding to offset costs of food and transportation.

### **How can these resources and opportunities be publicized better? Any obstacles? Any room for improvement?**

Barriers to access for externships include the potential need for LIFG students to complete paid work during winter break, lack of awareness about the program, possible concerns competing with other students as part of a selective process for externships, and general concern about the total cost of being away from home for one to three weeks during the break.

### **(b) Internships**

Approximately 500 Carleton students are engaged in an internship during the summer break. The Career Center, in conjunction with other campus units including the CCCE, Chaplain's Office, and Dean of the College, provide funding to support almost half of the student interns with housing, transportation, food, and income replacement. The average internship grant amount from the Career Center is usually around \$3,500 for the summer. Interns, nationally, are more likely to secure employment after graduation and paid interns are substantially more likely to enter jobs with higher starting salaries.

### **How do you define LIFG and how do you identify LIFG students? What kinds of data do you have about LIFG students?**

First-generation students are identified in Handshake from student records held in the Registrar's Office. Level of financial need is used as an estimated proxy for low-income with 0 being no need and 5 being the highest need for financial aid. The financial need categories only include students who submitted a FAFSA and are awarded financial aid from the college.

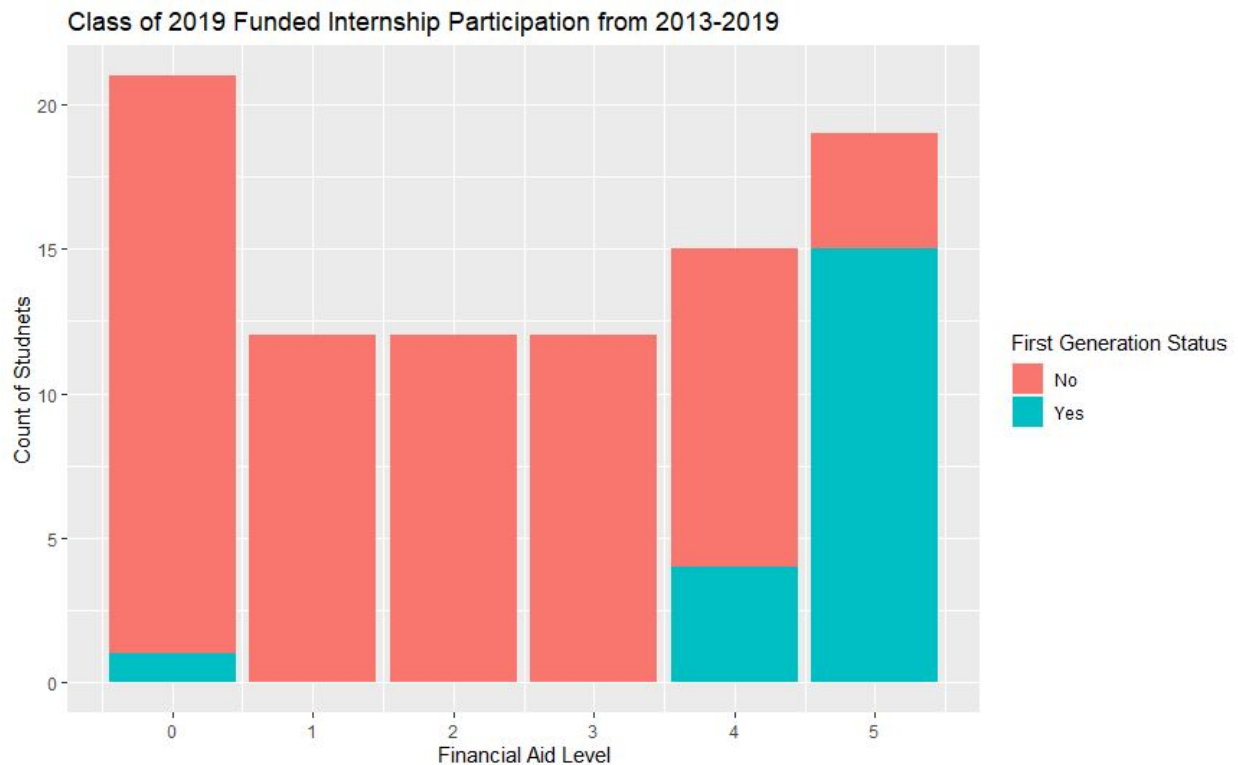
The table below shows the representation of first-generation students by financial need category for members of the class of 2019 who participated in externships. Levels 4 and 5

students are ones with the greatest amount of financial need and are used as a proxy for low-income households.

### What are existing resources and opportunities for LIFG students that you have? How are they publicized?

The majority of Carleton internships are secured by the students themselves. They identify and apply for internship opportunities through personal networks including faculty, staff, and friends as well as by using online job boards through the Career Center, industry-based searches, and general search engines like Indeed, internships.com, and LinkedIn. Students apply for Career Center support starting winter term and funds are allocated on a rolling basis through the end of the academic year. Approximately \$450,000 can be allocated to support students internships per year with a goal of increasing funding support to \$1 million per year after all gifts have been received through the Every Carl for Carleton campaign.

The table below shows first-generation status of Career Center funded internships between 2014 and 2019 for the class of 2019 by financial aid need level.



### How can these resources and opportunities be publicized better? Any obstacles? Any room for improvement?

Common obstacles for students to secure internships include not knowing about the value of internships as part of their academic/professional preparation, concerns about affordability with



both paid and unpaid internships during the time period offered, uncertainty about how to find internships and to successfully apply for them, potential for loss of income that could be applied to school or family expenses by not doing paid working during the summer, uncertainty about the utility of the internship relative to career preparation in a field that might have low compensation or high unemployment, and lack of awareness about funding support offered by the college.

### **(c) On-Campus Jobs**

Approximately 80% of Carleton students are employed in on-campus jobs throughout the campus. Employment is usually granted to students based on need-based aid in their financial aid package. Students work up to 10 hours per week depending on the role they serve at Carleton. Common employment opportunities are with Bon Appétit, Gould Library, the recreation center, as well as academic and administrative offices. Approximately 200 students are employed in various student life-related offices as peer leaders.

#### **How do you define LIFG and how do you identify LIFG students? What kinds of data do you have about LIFG students?**

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#### **Offices with 4+ LIFG employees**

<b>n</b>	<b>Campus Unit</b>
34	Dining
19	ITS
13	Physical Education and Recreation
13	Residence Life
7	Library
6	Admissions
5	GSC
5	Theatre and Dance
4	Career Center
4	Chemistry

- 4 OIIL
- 4 TRIO

**What are existing resources and opportunities for LIFG students that you have? How are they publicized?**

The Student Employment Office maintains a list online of available work opportunities throughout the year, as well as for employment during the break periods. Of the 185 first-generation and financial aid level 4 or 5 students, 156 have on-campus employment (84%). Additionally, 16 students hold more than one campus job.

**How can these resources and opportunities be publicized better? Any obstacles? Any room for improvement?**

Possible obstacles for student employment include lack of interest in less desirable job roles, balancing academic workload with on-campus work responsibilities, and possible flexibility of schedules or interest relevance with off-campus opportunities making them more attractive than on-campus roles.

## **6. TRIO/Student Support Services and Office of Intercultural and International Life (OIIL)**

Asuka Sango

### **a) TRIO**

**How do you define LIFG and how do you identify LIFG students? What kinds of data do you have about LIFG students?**

As discussed in the Introduction, there are currently two different definitions of “low income” students used at Carleton.

However, TRIO must follow the federal guidelines based on household taxable income, which is about 150% of poverty rate and \$30,000 of household income or less. Students self-report this information based on the federal guidelines explained in their application forms. They also self-report their first-gen status at this time. TRIO then enters all the information for Colleague ID.

TRIO’s funds are restricted to students they serve (LIFG students and students with disabilities); it serves about 40 students each year. However, there are students who are

above these thresholds or those who may not self-identify as first-gen, but may experience the same kinds of challenges.

Another challenge in defining LIFG is the connection between “low income” and “first-gen.” The two categories do not necessarily overlap, and connecting the two categories has pros and cons. TRIO’s strategy is to celebrate the first-gen category and focus its programming on it while focusing on the low income category for resources. For the purpose of the report, it is helpful to keep them together because there is a significant overlap between the two.

### **What are existing resources and opportunities for LIFG students that you have? How are they publicized?**

Once students self-identify themselves as low income and/or first-gen through the admission process, the College (TRIO) has the responsibility to reach out to all of them notifying them about their eligibility for financial aid. This is the first attempt on the part of TRIO to communicate to LIFG students about TRIO, the population that TRIO serves, the academic resources, etc. Even before LIFG students make their admission decision, TRIO works closely with the Admissions Office in organizing events and discussions about the college experiences and financial issues. Once students are admitted, TRIO provides a range of events for the student population that it serves:

- The first-gen faculty panel (once a year in the winter term)
- The first-gen directory and the breakdown of the “hidden costs” on their website.
- The TRIO awareness week in the fall term to celebrate the first-gen experience. As part of this week, there is a TRIO T-Shirt day when the first-gen faculty will wear the T-Shirt to celebrate the first-gen identity and show support.
- Of course, the pandemic has affected TRIO’s programming; these events are now held remotely.

These events are publicized through:

- Social media (TRIO’s facebook page, instagram, updated and maintained by peer leaders under the supervision of the director and assistant director, Trey Williams and Karina Sierra); also, TRIO and its partners such as Career Center follow and repost each other to help spread the word; for example, currently peer leaders post videos about voting; they are updated every day or every other day.
- Brochures delivered to students mailboxes.
- Peer leaders will use chalk to write messages on boards/streets.
- Broadcasting “Did you know ... ?” to raise public awareness about the first-gen using digital signages on main campus buildings such as Sayles, Weitz, CMC, and Library.

### **How can these resources and opportunities be publicized better? Any obstacles? Any room for improvement?**

Thus TRIO already does a great job publicizing itself and its service; their strategy emphasizes transparency and accessibility with the effective use of technology (“meet where students are”) providing a model for all of us to emulate.

Having just received the renewal grant for the next five years, TRIO will continue its existing programming while starting new initiatives. For example, TRIO is currently organizing a challenge to increase its social media followers to double the number of followers to 500 with the help from alumni. Also, TRIO seeks new partners for collaboration by working with the QRE and Al Montero, the Director of Advising, in addition to its existing partners.

Such opportunities of collaboration will be a key for the further growth of TRIO. In order to address the time poverty issue and effectively reach out to students, it is critical that our efforts will neither complete nor duplicate, but rather complement one another.

Although the 2016 report had many concrete, positive outcomes (such as the breakdown of the “hidden costs” on the TRIO’s website, and the DOS’s emergency medical or transportation funding, laptop programs, and book funding), there is still a lot of work to do to raise campus awareness on the LIFG issues. Currently, many of us may be introduced to the information about LIFG students on the Admissions Office’s brochure, but are not fully aware of their situations unless they directly work with these students. Since Trey Williams joined Carleton in 2015, TRIO has been working hard to change the image of LIFG (especially the FG part) from that of a stigma to that of proudness, there is still much work to be done to combat that stigma. Finally, it is also important to consider what segments of the student population TRIO may be missing such as international students with the first gen type of experiences, as discussed above, as well as dimensions of LIFG experiences that have yet to receive full attention such as the experience of LIFG students with disabilities.

## **b) OIIL**

### **How do you define LIFG and how do you identify LIFG students? What kinds of data do you have about LIFG students?**

OIIL focuses all of its programming and support on students that identify as other than Caucasian on the admissions application. Within this population, OIIL holds information specific on visa holding students, Undocumented Students, and specific representation within each ethnic group. The Dean of the Students Office keeps all the information on DACA students as they assist with the renewal process.

“International students” is the category that includes both visa-holding students (about 200 each year) and permanent residents of the United States who had lived mostly abroad prior to matriculation (60-100), and does not include DACA students (15-25 each year), whos are on their own category. The current section focuses on visa-holding international students.

Visa-holding international students do not qualify for Pell Grants, as these are only available to U.S. Citizens or Permanent Residents. This has several important implications for considering international students' financial situations.

First, in the Introduction, we have discussed the two measures that the Admissions Office uses to define a student's "low-income" status. Between the two, the second measure (i.e., the federal guidelines) cannot be used to determine international students' financial needs. Instead, Carleton uses International Certification of Finances, which international students are required to fill out in order to self-report their family income, saving, etc.--namely, all of the assets that their parents have. Based on this information, the Admissions and Financial Aid Offices determine international students' financial needs and select the named scholarships (Cf. [Scholarships for International Students](#)).

Second, the government requires all domestic students receiving Pell Grants to go through loan counseling. However, international students do not receive loan counseling; instead, Rodney Otto from the Financial Aid Office answers questions from international students and makes sure they understand the terms of their financial aid packages. Determining international students' financial needs requires a deep contextual reading of their financial background information taking into account differing costs of living across the world and social and political situations of each country, which can be volatile. For example, while the College determines the financial aid amount in the U.S. dollars, the current exchange rate is not stable in a lot of countries, which influences international students' ability to pay. In addition, it is very difficult for them to change their financial aid package after matriculation even with life-changing circumstances. This does impact several students every year; and even more than usual during the pandemic; e.g., there were many international students who could not travel back to their home countries because of the travel restrictions, and had to apply for the Dean of the Students' emergency funding.

Thus determining an international student's "low-income" status is no easy task. That said, one measure that the OIIL uses is that international students more than half of whose tuitions are covered by the College can be considered "low-income." About 25% of international students fit this category (it can reach up to 30% in some years). Many of those international students who receive scholarship aid from Carleton fit our definition of "low-income" using U.S. dollars. However, within their respective countries, their family income may place them at different levels depending on, for example, the cost of living.

As for the "first-gen" category, the College uses the same definition for both domestic and international students, as discussed in the Introduction. The OIIL asks international students whether they self-identify as "first-gen" on the ISO (International Students Orientation) arrival form. There are typically about 10-15 self-identified "first-gen" international students each year.

However, "first gen" is essentially a domestic category. Even international students who are not "first gen" in their home countries may share the same experiences and challenges with the domestic "first gen" students if their parents had not attended college in the United States. As a result, international students may struggle adjusting to the U.S. education system

and the academic rigor of Carleton, and this struggle may be exacerbated if they are navigating financial issues (regardless of whether they fit the official or unofficial “low-income” definitions).

For example, hidden costs specific to international students exist (in addition to the general hidden costs identified on the TRIO’s website), which may be hard to understand for international students. Scholarship or any financial support above the cost of tuition and fee is taxable, and yet, is not tax deductible. The named scholars (about 40 each year) receive travel stipends and support for visa application fees, which are also taxed. To make the matters more complicated, each country has a different tax treaty with the United States; some countries do not have any tax treaty. Other low-income issues that international students may experience relate to travel, break housing, medical expenses, and technology access.

### **What are existing resources and opportunities for LIFG students that you have? How are they publicized?**

All international students are required to attend the International Students’ Orientation upon matriculation. This orientation plays a key role in providing international students with guidance in navigating the US college life and addressing various international-student specific issues including but not limited to the low-income or first-gen issues described above. They can also consult the OIIL’s website.

In terms of pushing out the information to students, Liz Coby (Director of International Life) periodically sends out an email to all international students (at least one email per term; but the frequency increases in extraordinary circumstances to every week or every other week). Also, all international students are introduced to OIIL peer leaders during their orientation, and many of them sign up for the peer leader program.

### **How can these resources and opportunities be publicized better? Any obstacles? Any room for improvement?**

To augment the existing system of outreach, the OIIL is seeking ways to improve their outreach strategies:

- Using social media;
- Continuing to collaborate with the Career Center and looking for new collaboration partners (e.g., international faculty adviser);
- Raising awareness for unique issues international students face, especially the lack of funding for break housing.
- Educating the campus community about the “low-income” or “first-gen” issues that international students experience and challenging the accepted image of international students as mostly full-tuition paying students.
- Keep improving the ISO and updating the information to be included.

# Conclusion

Asuka Sango

## (a) Summary of Our Findings

One of the most important conclusions we draw from our findings is the importance of creating a clear, campus-wide definition of LIFG. The definition plays a key role in LIFG data collection (i.e., Colleague ID), and the data are used in turn to identify students to be contacted for opportunities. In other words, it determines the success of our outreach.

Currently, we rely on Colleague ID to identify LIFG students; the data that correspond to Colleague ID are based on the information students self-report through the admissions process. In addition, there are definitions or thresholds used by specific offices or programs: e.g., Career Center uses the level of financial need (explained in FAFSA) as proxy for low income; MMUF targets “underrepresented” students--the category that overlaps with but not identical with the LIFG category.

We see three possible issues with our current definition of LIFG and how it’s applied in our outreach.

First, the “low income” and “first-generation” categories do not always overlap. In addition, the student perception of the two categories differs: while the “first-gen” category can be celebrated, the “low income” category is usually perceived as a stigma. Although combining the two may be convenient and effective in some situations (e.g., for writing this report), one must carefully reflect on whether or not to do so depending on one’s specific goals.

Second, the disparity between the two categories also points to an important reminder that no identity category (LI, FG, or LIFG) is monolithic. We must not assume that students who fit our LIFG definition necessarily share the same concerns and experiences.

Third, conversely, we must not make any assumptions about those who may not neatly fit our LIFG definition. For example, international students may need the same kinds of assistance that domestic LIFG students need (e.g., skills in financial literacy or academic cultural literacy) even though they may not fit our LIFG definition.

Efforts to address the issues of “low-income” and “first-gen” definitions are underway. Most important, the First-Gen Forward Steering Committee has put together a new definition of “first-gen.” In addressing the third issue mentioned above, the committee provides a more inclusive definition: “A student is a first-generation college student if neither their parent(s) nor legal guardian(s) received a bachelor’s degree from a college or university in the United States or abroad. Even if they have an older sibling who attended college before them, first-generation status applies.”

We agree with the committee that a more inclusive definition of LIFG can help us balance a “universal design” approach with a more targeted approach to LIFG issues. The act of defining creates a boundary that both includes and excludes. Any definition comes with



assumptions about where that boundary should be. We need to be fully aware of its limitations so that our definition can do the work it needs to do.

Indeed, our existing resources and opportunities for LIFG fall on the spectrum between the two. Towards one end of the spectrum are found TRIO and Student Employment, where resources are targeted specifically for LIFG, and MMUF may be situated in the middle. Closer to the other end of the spectrum are OCS, OSF, and Mentored Research programs whose outreach efforts take a “universal design” approach while accommodating the specific needs of LIFG students.

## **(b) Recommendations**

Based on our findings, we identify three major areas of recommendations: publicizing, increasing awareness, and collaboration.

**Publicizing:** As we discussed earlier, our publicizing efforts must start with definition-making (or remaking), which allows us to gather the most accurate data about LIFG students (using Colleague IDs). Having the data is crucial for active outreach. After identifying the student population for outreach, one must carefully choose the most effective method of publicizing. Publicizing the resources and opportunities on a website is an important first step, but it is passive in that we are expecting students to find it. As such, a website cannot effectively address the issues of information overload and time poverty on campus, which our findings suggest are common obstacles to outreach efforts (and the problem has been exacerbated by the pandemic). It is important to “meet students where they are” and push the information out to them. In so doing, balancing universal design vs. targeted outreach will be important so that assumptions inherent in our LIFG definition will not prevent us from reaching out to students who need our assistance.

**Increasing awareness:** We believe faculty and staff (especially those who serve as advisers to students) should know what kinds of barriers may exist for LIFG students without necessarily making any monolithic assumptions, as we suggested earlier, and make proactive efforts to lower the barriers. They should be aware of the resources and opportunities that we cover in this report.

**Collaboration:** Our findings suggest that there are already good efforts occurring in various campus offices and programs. While each office and program can certainly improve its outreach efforts, as we suggested at the end of each section, it is equally important to increase communication among them and create opportunities for collaboration. By helping one another in publicizing LIFG opportunities and increasing awareness about common issues and challenges that LIFG students may encounter for LIFG issues, we will be able to tackle the information overload and time poverty issues while ensuring that our efforts will neither compete or duplicate, but rather, complement one another. In sum, collaboration should be a



foundation for our efforts in the first two areas -- publicizing and increasing awareness -- and more generally in our discussion about and outreach to LIFG students.

The following are our concrete suggestions for making improvements in these three areas:

- Create short videos to celebrate LIFG (or FG) experiences (including faculty and staff, but especially students)
- Create promotional videos about the existing resources and opportunities for LIFG students.
- To organize LTC sessions to raise faculty advisers' awareness about LIFG issues (possible session ideas include: to start a conversation about the possibility or feasibility of incorporating into the A&I skill-training modules about academic cultural literacy and/or financial literacy; or to organize a faculty panel of Posse mentors to learn common issues that recur in their Posse advising)
- Use peer-based outreach. There should be a mechanism to train peer-advisors for the purpose of consistency. We may utilize an existing structure (e.g., RA outreach and cohort leaders' talks during the New Students' Week).
- Shift from informal referral to systematic, targeted, intentional outreach in recruiting students for employment, research and funding opportunities.

By implementing some of these specific ideas, **the three areas of publicizing, increasing awareness and collaboration** should mutually reinforce one another. It is our hope that sharing this report with the CEDI constitutes the first step in that direction.