

# ENGAGING FAMILIES TO ENGAGE STUDENTS:

Exploring how university outreach activities can forge productive partnerships with families to assist first-in-family students navigate their higher education journey.

## DID YOU KNOW

- 51% of Australian students are First-in-Family (FiF) (Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013)
- 26% considered leaving in their first year (Coates & Ransom, 2011)
- FiF students are half as likely as their second or third generation peers to attend university (OECD 2013)



“ My family want to know why? So I say why not! ”  
Mary,  
First-in-family Student

“ It was never spoken about before and now, you know, 'Oh what are you going to do? Are you going to leave school and go to uni?' ”  
Elle, 33, Single Parent w 3 children



“ Naomi is the first in our family to do this and I've always said, you know, 'Education's the key to everything.' ”  
Grandmother of Naomi

## THE JOURNEY SO FAR

### 2013 Small Institutional Grant

- 25 FiF learners interviewed
- 3 journal papers: small study - rich output (O'Shea 2014, 2015, 2015a)

### 2014 OLT Seed Grant

- 101 FiF students (+ some family members) interviews
- 173 students and 40 family members surveyed
- Key output: [www.firstinfamily.com.au](http://www.firstinfamily.com.au)

### 2015 OLT Fellowship

- 9 staff workshops conducted at universities nationally
- 15+ FiF students interviewed
- 47 parents surveyed
- 59 staff surveyed

## WHAT IS THIS FELLOWSHIP DOING?

- Developing National Principles for engaging with first-in-family learners and their families.
- Implementing a range of outreach activities and strategies designed to retain this cohort.
- Providing institutional workshops and mentoring to assist in better supporting first-in-family learners.
- Organising a National Forum on first-in-family learners and their family capital.

## KEY FINDINGS TO DATE

- The role of 'Family Capital' in the academic success of this cohort (O'Shea, 2015).
- Approaches to engaging this cohort that are 'meaningful', 'movable', 'timely' and 'holistic'.
- Focus on the 'cultural strengths' and 'capabilities' of students was to avoid implicit deficit framings.
- Strategies to develop deliberate and overt links between the university and homeplace.
- Recognition of the powerful intergenerational implications coming to university has for those around the learner.
- Institutional approaches to harnessing first-in-family learners as cultural change agents.



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