

# Talk About Class

March 31, 2014

## ***Inside Higher Ed:***

During January's White House opportunity summit, policy makers and higher education leaders announced over 100 new initiatives designed to bolster first-generation and low-income students' college success. While students who overcome the odds to gain access to college bring with them significant grit and resilience, the road through college is often a rocky one.

First Lady Michelle Obama described the obstacles that first-generation and low-income students commonly confront. No stranger to these challenges, she said:

*You're in a whole new world. You might have trouble making friends because you don't see any peers who come from a background like yours. You might be worried about paying for classes, and food, and room and board because you have never had to set your own budget before. You might be feeling guilty when you call home because Mom and Dad are wondering why you didn't get a job so you could help support their family. Those are the kinds of obstacles these kids are facing right from day one.*

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Our research provides compelling evidence that talking about social class equips first-generation and low-income students to succeed. In our recent study, published in *Psychological Science*, we invited first-generation and continuing-generation students at the beginning of the school year to attend a one-hour program designed to help them transition to college. Unbeknownst to them, half of the students attended a "difference-education" program while the other half attended a "standard" program. In both programs, newly minted first-years at an elite university listened to a diverse panel of junior and senior students talk about their transition to college, challenges they faced, and how they found success. In the difference-education program, however, panelists' stories also included a discussion of how their social class backgrounds mattered in college. In the standard program, panelists did not reveal their social class.

Read the whole story: [\*Inside Higher Ed\*](#)