FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who are first-generation college students?
While there is no universal definition for "first-generation college student" and much of the research uses the definition "a student with neither parent having any education beyond high school," we choose to define a first-generation college student as "neither parent having received a four-year college degree."

Why do these students struggle to access and complete college?
It is estimated that 30 percent of students enrolled in postsecondary institutions today are low income, first-generation college students. But 89% of these students will not earn a bachelor’s degree six years out from high school. They drop out of college at four times the rate of their peers whose parents have a postsecondary education.

There are myriad reasons that these students struggle to access and complete college. Namely, their parents lack the ability to guide them in the college process having not navigated it themselves and they are often in schools and communities where college counseling and college-minded peers are lacking or nonexistent. Academic preparation is sometimes another factor, but motivation to pursue college is not in question. Research shows that low-income, first-generation college students aspire to attend college at rates equal to their higher income peers whose parents have a college degree.

How is I'm First helping?
We know that students respond best to peer influence and personal experiences, especially in the pursuit of college. Inspired by Dan Savage's It Gets Better project, I'm First is collecting YouTube video stories from first-generation college graduates to inspire and offer advice to the next generation of students who will be first.

We also know that students lack access to good information and support in their pursuit of college. I'm First helps aspiring first-generation college students, and those who advise them, to research and connect with colleges that care about first-generation college students, get answers to their questions about college, attend live Google+ Hangouts, and follow a blog written by current first-generation college students who have won the I'm First Scholarship and are chronicling their college experiences and offering advice.

Who will use I'm First?
Through media outreach and public advocacy, we are calling upon college students, deans and professors, business leaders, doctors and lawyers, politicians and celebrities who are first-generation college graduates to share their stories and offer some encouragement to future first-generation college students.

Through marketing and outreach to high schools and youth-serving organizations, aspiring first-generation college students, counselors, and college access providers will become users on the web application.

We also partner with a growing network of four-year colleges and universities who participate in and support I'm First.
Who are I'm First's College Partners?
Four-year colleges and universities who share our commitment to serve first-generation college students are invited to partner with I'm First. College Partners manage a profile highlighting their campus programs and services that support first-generation college students and use the web application to access a database of prospective first-generation college students and a national directory of community-based organizations and college access programs.

A list of College Partners can be found here: http://www.imfirst.org/partners/college-partners/college-partners-list/

Why is I'm First unique as a college search tool?
Popular websites and guidebooks that help students research colleges are not cutting it for first-generation college students. They tend to offer a very general overview of an institution and offer only a basic presentation of facts and statistics about the school.

College and universities profiled on I'm First focus on the important campus programs, opportunities, and resources that exist for first-generation college students. Do they have a fly-in or visit program for prospective students who couldn't afford to visit otherwise? Do they have a summer bridge program to help incoming students acclimate to college? Do they peer mentoring and academic advising to help students persist to graduation? The facts and figures on the college profile are also broken down by student diversity, student success, affordability, and admissions metrics with first-generation college students in mind.

Is I'm First only online?
No, Center for Student Opportunity publishes the I'm First Guide to College, a unique college guidebook designed to help first-generation college students make their college dreams a reality. In addition to profiles of the colleges and universities, the Guide features an interactive college planning and preparation curriculum for students, teachers, and counselors.

Take a sneak peak inside and order at http://store.imfirst.org.