

**University of Houston-Downtown**  
**The HILTOPP Program: High-Impact Learning to Promote Progress for First-Generation Students**

**UH-Downtown Student Demographics**

- 36% Hispanic
- 28% African American
- 22% Caucasian
- 10% Asian
- 4% International
- Average of students- 28
- Majority of students work full or part time and have family obligations
- Majority are first-generation college students
- Over 75% transfer from community colleges and other institutions

**Current Practices for First-Generation Student Success**

The university has already successfully piloted a number of high-impact interventions intended to improve the success of FTIC students at the lower level by recognizing risk indicators and then implementing appropriate strategies designed to lessen the achievement gaps associated with these indicators. We have used placement test scores as a means of identifying students at differing levels of risk.

**Strategies for Developmental Math, Reading and Writing**

Our university has a robust University College that includes a support network for all entering freshmen. The Academic Support Center provides individualized tutoring by faculty and trained peers in writing, reading, and mathematics. Identified students are required to enroll in Beginning Algebra and a linked section of MATH 1201-Math Success Lab, developmental writing or reading, and either ENG 1201-Writing Success Lab or RDG 1201-Reading Success Lab. The university also provides students multiple opportunities for making connections, including a mentoring program, a summer success program, a student research conference, and an award-winning initiative for STEM students.

**New HILTOPP Interventions**

**1) Linkages**

- a) **Developmental Reading linked with Introduction to Psychology and General Biology.**
- b) **Developmental Reading–Developmental Writing First-Generation Student Success Learners Community.** This six-hour reading/writing hybrid will be designed as a learners community for FGTIC students who place into both developmental reading and writing.
- c) **Beginning Algebra–Math for Liberal Arts link.** Based on the success of the Beginning allows liberal arts majors the opportunity to complete their developmental math requirements and core math requirement in one semester.
- d) **Freshman English I –Introduction to Psychology link.** This link is intended to foster the success of college-ready FGTIC students.
- e) **Freshman English I and II accelerated link.** This is an accelerated, six-hour course in essay and research paper writing.

## **2) Academic support build-ins for reading-intensive college-level courses**

Pilot sections of HILTOPP U.S. History II and HILTOPP Introduction to Psychology. These courses will provide discipline-specific academic support to FGTIC students exiting developmental reading and entering the college-level curriculum and to college-ready FGTIC. The instructor in these courses will work closely with a Student Success Mentor to include direct instruction in discipline-specific note-taking strategies, discipline-specific reading strategies, discipline-specific study strategies, and exam analysis.

## **3) Student Success Mentoring Program**

Each course linkage will be supported by peer-led instruction. Student leaders will attend lectures, participate in class discussions, take notes, read assigned texts, and lead out-of-class discussions and review sessions two hours per week.

## **4) First-Generation Student-Faculty Interaction Group**

Eight faculty who were the first members of their families to graduate from college, will:

- Read and discuss an overview of the research literature on FGTIC students, with an emphasis on general student characteristics, student attitudes toward interactions with faculty, and institutional trends in increasing faculty-student interactions.
- Organize a “First-Generation-Faculty-Student Tuesday Lunch Program” that encourages first-generation faculty members from across the university to eat lunch every Tuesday in an area of the university food court designated for first-generation faculty and students. A “First-Generation Five o’clock Coffee Break” will similarly facilitate faculty-student interactions for FGTIC students enrolled in evening classes.
- Create high-profile area on university’s web site called “First Member of Your Family to Attend College?” that presents information and advice to FGTIC students and their families from university faculty who were the first members of their families to graduate from college.
- Submit recommendations for additional ways to increase faculty-student interactions.

## **5) Faculty Development/Sustainability**

- Faculty who teach the linked courses will be required to read a minimum of five texts from the research literature on FGTIC students, as well as a minimum of two texts that address discipline-specific teaching strategies for underprepared students.
- Each instructor who teaches a linked course will be required to present a discipline-specific report on “best-practices in teaching FGTIC students” to his/her curriculum committee after the linked course has been designed and implemented. Faculty will also be encouraged to present their work on best practices at the university’s General Education Conference and at national conferences.
- The Team Leader will compose an annual institutional report that evaluates the extent to which the university has in place the services and programs essential to the academic success of FGTIC students. This report will be presented to the President, the Provost, the Vice Presidents, and the Academic Deans.