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NEWS

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FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE**

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UCI First-Gen Faculty Initiative Launches Virtual Mentorship Project Introducing *First Things First*, an Experiment in First-Gen Video Mentorship

Irvine, Calif., Nov. 11, 2020 – In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UCI's First-Gen Faculty Initiative has launched a new virtual mentorship project that pairs first-gen faculty with first-year, first-gen students. The *First Things First* project is an evolution of the First-Gen Faculty Initiative designed to help incoming first-gen students adjust to university life and overcome the challenges of a remote learning environment.

Officially launched Week Two of the 2020 Fall Quarter, *First Things First* is a year-long video exchange where students create weekly videos responding to a prompt provided by their faculty mentors. The prompts will encourage them to share their unique impressions and insights on a range of topics related to their experiences as first-gen, first-year students. Their faculty mentors will then respond with their own videos, offering advice, sharing strategies and reflecting on their similar experiences. This video dialogue aims to reach a wide community of UCI first-gen students and to help them feel recognized, understood and encouraged.

First Things First videos will also be posted on the [UCI First-Gen website](#) and shared on official UCI accounts, such as the ones run by the Office of the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning (OVPTL). Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning and Dean of Undergraduate Education Michael Dennin will also be posting the videos on his own social media accounts.

According to Vice Provost Dennin, participating in the project is an exciting opportunity to empower students:

“One of our core missions at OVPTL and UCI as a whole is to support first-gen students and help them to find success both as undergraduates and in their future endeavors. Through *First Things First*, we hope to offer a platform for first-gen students to share their stories, celebrate their triumphs and inspire others with their resilience.”

Douglas M. Haynes, Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, also sees the project as an excellent avenue for understanding the needs of UCI’s diverse student population and improving the university’s ability to offer support:

“There are four key questions that should drive mentoring to advance inclusive excellence pedagogy: who are our students, are they thriving, how do we know and what can we do to improve. Each answer provides a vehicle for learning more about the hopes, ambitions and needs of UCI students while deepening our own capacity as educators, advisors and mentors to scaffold their success.”

First Things First videos can be viewed on the [UCI First-Gen website](#) and Vice Provost Dennin’s [YouTube channel](#). Information on *First Things First* students and their faculty mentors can be found [here](#).

About the University of California, Irvine: Founded in 1965, UCI is the youngest member of the prestigious Association of American Universities and is ranked among the nation’s top 10 public universities by *U.S. News & World Report*. The campus has produced three Nobel laureates and is known for its academic achievement, premier research, innovation and anteater mascot. Led by Chancellor Howard Gillman, UCI has more than 36,000 students and offers 224 degree programs. It’s located in one of the world’s safest and most economically vibrant communities and is Orange County’s second-largest employer, contributing \$7 billion annually to the local economy and \$8 billion statewide. For more on UCI, visit www.uci.edu.

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