**Create a Big Brother-Big Sister program that would link current Fresno State students with incoming students on a one-on-one basis.**

## CURRENT CHALLENGE:

I would like to see the disconnect between students and campus diminish as well as the fear many first time college attendees may face.

## PROPOSED SOLUTION:

My sister was a first generation college graduate. Her first semester at Fresno State was terrifying for her to say the least. She did not know many students and thus did not make any connections. It was not until her second semester at Fresno State that she made friends and became connected to the university in a way that could not have happened on her own. I would like to suggest a program, such as the Big Brother Big Sister program, that would link current Fresno State students with incoming students on a one on one basis. Our great expansion of technology use has reached many more students than before, but personal face to face contact can also be implemented to increase our student's interaction and overall experience at Fresno State.

## BENEFITS TO FRESNO STATE:

The students that Fresno State serves are incredibly diverse and even though many may be from the region, there are many others than come from other parts of the state and even from outside of California. Providing our freshmen students with a point of contact who is an actual person will increase their sense of comfort in the university as well as help them become involved. Having a student who has already experienced much of what Fresno State has to offer guide an incoming student would be amazing. It could also lead to a lifelong friendship, but that would just be icing on the cake.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

**\*This idea was scored by CAIFE alumni in conjunction with Ideas 51 & 107.  Please see Idea 107 for scoring rubric.**

**Create a comprehensive experience for our First Gen students that engages faculty and current alumni in investing in their four year experience to expand their knowledge and use of campus resources and connections, support their sense of belonging, aid in progression to graduation and prepare for success as alumni in our community.**

## CURRENT CHALLENGE:

The challenges I would like to address are (1) student success and sense of belonging among first generation college students, (2) faculty retention and professional/leadership development, and (3) increasing alumni and community engagement in support of the University and its future.

Research confirms that affinity, positive environments and a sense of belonging promotes student success and are the precursors for engagement. Further, recent research has shown there is a powerful correlation between engagement and philanthropy. According to the Council for Aid to Education, however, alumni engagement is on the decline falling more than 50% in the last 20 years. One must question why are universities failing to engage their ever-growing and increasing more diverse pool of alumni? Could it be that today's alumni simply do not understand their role as graduates?

With over 72% of Fresno State students being the first in their family to attend college ("First Gen"), research shows that positive environments and nurturing relationships lead to graduation. On campus, these environments and relationships are primarily fostered by faculty. Yet, upon graduation, the relationship wither and attempts to reconnect by advancement often fall short of expectation. Given the First Gen understanding of alumni engagement, there is reason to believe that these post baccalaureate relationships cannot be sustained without activity and thoughtfully engaging faculty, staff and current alumni as a team to educate First Gen on what it truly means to be an alumnus.

## PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Fresno State's First Gen students are tomorrow's next generation of alumni ("Next Gen"). Our First Gen students need a comprehensive experience that engages faculty and current alumni in a comprehensive four year experience that will expand their knowledge and use of campus resources and connections (gathering existing resources currently on campus supporting student success), support their sense of belonging, aid in their progression to graduation and prepare them for success as alumni in our community (through Student Affairs mentoring programs, career services and community service opportunities) and connect them to current alumni mentors and role models. Additionally as they near graduation and interface with alumni, they will be provided with experiences and workshops that highlight their role as new alumni and invites them to come back and "pay it forward" for the next cohort of First Gen/Next Gen students.

## BENEFITS TO FRESNO STATE:

Fresno State's First Gen/Next Gen program will benefit Fresno State by creating a cohort feel for First Gen students, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender, and foster a sense of belonging that aides in the progress to graduation; supporting faculty and staff development, starting with all incoming new hires, with programs and workshops on collaboration, relationship building, community engagement which will support not only student success and alumni/community engagement but engender and foster a spirit of collegiality among faculty and staff. Additionally programs, workshops and, potentially, online webinars (mini courses) for seasoned faculty and staff could provide collaboration and relationship building blocks that would provide sustainable, long term benefits for the entire campus; developing and maintaining robust, diverse connections and partnerships with alumni and community members that can help grow the University and help Fresno State exceed its goals long into the future. With the many transformative plans in our future, we at Fresno State need to develop, maintain and grow our relationships, those on campus and off, to launch us successfully into our bold, bright future!

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

**\*This idea was scored by CAIFE alumni in conjunction with Ideas 6 & 107.  Please see Idea 107 for scoring rubric.**

**Establish a peer mentoring program, especially for first generation college students, where Juniors and Seniors can mentor Freshmen and Sophomores, or students can be mentored by adults in the community.  This would be an academic/career oriented Big Brother Big Sister type of program.**

**CURRENT CHALLENGE:**

Many of our first generation college students lack the support of family members who can guide them through their college career toward a career path related to their interests and talents. Too often, they have not had mentoring to develop career goals and sometimes have not chosen an appropriate major area of study. They often do not understand the importance of identifying their interests/talents early in their college career, in order to choose options that will be a good fit I would like to see the university establish a peer mentoring program, especially for first generation college students, where Juniors and Seniors who have achieved this understanding can mentor Freshman and Sophomores. Another possibility is to develop a community partnership with adults (possibly retirees who have attended college) who are interesting in mentoring our students.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:**

I believe our students in need of mentoring could benefit from a more hands on personalized approach than is offered currently. Though our academic advisors may address this in some way, in large departments it may be difficult for students to get this 1:1 attention. Also, our younger students may be more willing to talk with peers if they are intimidated by faculty members, or grandparent figures if they meet with retirees. I imagine that something along the lines of an academic/career oriented Big Brother Big Sister program might help.

**BENEFITS TO FRESNO STATE:**

I would expect that an academic/career oriented Big Brother Big Sister program may help to increase retention and help our graduates to have greater satisfaction with their Fresno State experience. It may also decrease the number of Super Seniors.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

**\*This idea was scored by CAIFE alumni in conjunction with Ideas 6 & 51.**