

Introduction to Stanford GradFLIP

A strong sense of belonging is important for academic success and psychological well-being of all students (Strayhorn, 2012), yet First-Generation and/or Low-Income (FLI) students often feel a cultural mismatch between their home culture and the college culture (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). The Stanford Graduate First-Generation and/or Low-Income Partnership (Stanford GradFLIP) is an organization committed to building a strong sense of belonging and community among FLI graduate students. In addition, because they are often the first in their family to go to college, FLI students lack the resources necessary for knowledge of university norms, practices, and academic life (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). This lack of resources could be exacerbated during graduate school. Therefore, GradFLIP is also committed to 1) advocate for the needs of FLI students on campus; 2) acting as a liaison between the FLI community and campus offices or other student groups; 3) engage in cross-class dialogue between those identifying as FLI and other students; and 4) being an agent of education and change on behalf of FLI students at Stanford. GradFLIP is geared toward FLI graduate students. However, any currently registered Stanford student may be a member of the group, including undergraduates and co-terms.

History of Organization

GradFLIP became an official Stanford organization in the 2014/2015 academic year due to an apparent need for the Stanford FLI graduate community to have a space to come together. Upon its inception, GradFLIP received a large amount of support from the FLI community shown through high attendance rates at GradFLIP events throughout the year. GradFLIP has been well-received throughout Stanford, with support and encouragement from various Stanford students and administrators, including administrators from the Diversity and First-Gen office, FLIP, and staff in different departments who may also be from FLI backgrounds.

Areas of Focus/Action/Concern

Although a fairly new organization, GradFLIP has established itself as a strong presence and advocate for the FLI community at Stanford. This year, GradFLIP hopes to continue building community and belonging through 1) general mixers, 2) organizing speaker workshops or panels to highlight FLI issues, and 3) dinners with Stanford faculty and alumni from FLI backgrounds. In addition, GradFLIP hopes to advocate on behalf of the FLI graduate student community, including promoting FLI student needs to the university. This year, we are excited to plan a FLI graduate student retreat to strengthen ties within the FLI graduate community while also providing wellness workshops and panels surrounding prominent issues in the FLI community. We are also hoping to work with Stanford administration to share a survey with graduate students to better understand and address the needs of FLI graduate students and consequently advocate for those needs. The FLI identity can be fairly invisible, and it is important for organizations like GradFLIP to continuously understand the needs of those who identify as FLI in order to better serve them.