

LESLIE RUSH

I'm Leslie Rush and I am the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs in the College of Education, the Director of the School of Teacher Education, and the Co-Director of the Wyoming School University Partnership. I have been with the University of Wyoming since 2002. As a student I do not remember being aware that I was a first generation college student. I do remember depending on my friends and sorority sisters a lot during my undergraduate. High school was easy for me, I got through with minimal studying; because of this the workload in college was a bit of a shock. My first semester was rough academically and I did not do as well as I would of hoped. I do not think I realized or even knew there was somewhere I could go to get help with me courses. One thing that did help me was the friends I came to college with, they were not first generation and were able to help me with any questions I had. Admittedly, I was sheltered during me time at university, because I had joined a sorority I did not have to deal with the stresses of rent or other living expenses because I lived in the chapter house for the entirety of my time at university.

Before I settled on being a history major I had a variety of majors. It was not until my junior year that I started to wonder what I was going to do with my history degree. It was after speaking with a few of my professors I decided I would go into teaching. Although in Texas, where I was at the time, you needed at least two content areas to become a teacher, so I added English into my major. Shortly after graduation, I got a job teaching high English and then did so for twelve years. I always joke that I never ended up teaching history because it was Texas and I was not a football coach. While teaching I got my masters and doctorate.

Something I wish first generation students knew before coming to UW is how many resources are available to students. Also, that asking for help will not be seen as a negative. Students sometimes think that resources do not apply to them, or that it is not the first thing they think when they are struggling. The advice I would give to first generation students would be to go to office hours and establish a relationship with your advisor. The faculty and staff in college are great resources for students, they are great to ask questions about courses or problems you might be having with your degree path. Making sure to share long term goals, struggles, and being comfortable talking with them are all important things in the student advisor relationship.

The last piece of advice I have for first generation students is to find other students how much have the same questions as you and work together to figure it out.