

1. Project Name:

First-Generation Scholar-Practitioner Series

2. Individual or Group Submitting

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3. Project Plan. Please describe your goals, timeline and desired outputs of your project. Other media (images, sketches, diagrams) are welcomed!

WHO ARE WE?

To understand our goals, our desires, we need to first understand who we are. While this answer will continue to evolve, it will always be rooted in where we've come from.

This is where Sury comes from:

My first memories are with my father. Bapak and I would walk to the beach at 5 a.m. to watch the water at high tide come in and sweep offerings of flowers and rice out to the Indian Ocean. Before tourists arrived with the harsh sunrays, I got to do my favorite thing in the world: watch the tide-pools fill. It's here, at the edge of the sea, the change of the tide, this liminal space, where I often find myself – the in-between. Bapak emigrated from Indonesia to the US, where he ended his studies in architecture. Like many other parents, my mom and bapak worked around the clock to afford rent in Cambridge so my sister and I could attend good public schools. My mom dropped out of college after her first semester to support the family, and both her and bapak became street vendors in front of the Jamaica Plain Arts Center. In the mornings, on public sidewalks, streets, and plazas, I learned from our neighbors the power of collaboration. At home in the evenings, bapak would draw houses, blue prints I would lie out on the linoleum floor as he transformed scraps of paper into whole cities. 2020 marks thirty-three years since bapak moved to the US; five since I graduated with a college degree, and one and a half since I've had the opportunity to study at as a graduate student at Harvard.

There's a power in this in-between but there's also an uneasy feeling when I feel in it alone, like an overwhelming push-pull of waves mixing foam with sand, tumbling salt and exoskeletons. There's a pressure, a deep gratitude, a fear of failure, an art of translation when my heart feels caught in my throat sometimes – techniques of survival. But when I saw friends who I lived and studied next to for four years suddenly don a first-generation red and black chord for Harvard College graduation, this feeling of

alone-ness subsided, replaced by a collective sense of overwhelming pride, possibility and hope. I wish I had known four years ago who my neighbors were. Known that we were perhaps working through the same in-betweens, alone and isolated in our rooms. When we graduated alongside our caretakers at Harvard College's first generation graduation, we stood in a room, together, it was the best feeling.

This is where Sydney comes from:

I am the American-born daughter of an immigrant from China and a refugee from Vietnam. I have grown up in a country where my father fears for my safety and wellbeing daily because this country's violence is the reason why he had to leave his. My first memories of navigating government bureaucracies began when I learned how to read and translate mail and official documents for my family members. My mother, whose workplace exposes her to toxic chemicals on a daily basis, was my first instructor in environmental justice and has cultivated me to hustle in all the ways I know.

I now go to school at an institution that my father doesn't have the social capital to recognize its name, and my mother worries about whether she is "smart" enough to be with me on campus. In lecture halls full of students, I often feel alone, with a tightness in my throat and images of myself sinking into a deep hole or with fire in my breath and my heart, as I tell the truths that were ignored or never known. I am tired of academia extracting and fetishizing my community's trauma and wisdom without any commitments to addressing our inequities. I am tired of being seen when the department needs to tokenize a first-gen womxn of color for open house. These emotions and experiences are not unique to me, but very few other students share these capacities in a place like Harvard GSD. Mine and the wisdoms of other first-generation students will be missing from the design profession without deliberate and institutional efforts to change.

It shouldn't take until graduation for first-generation students to get to know each other. Many of us have grown up experiencing the exact injustices we're trying to address here in school – injustices that result in trans-generational trauma and uneven geographies of health and wellness. For many of us, that's why we're here. For many of us, these injustices continue to impact ourselves, our families, our friends while we're in the classroom. The personal, the professional, the political – we embody it. When we graduate, when we return home, these geographies will still persist – as well as our drive to expose and change them. As a school, a center of civics and democratic engagement, we have an opportunity here, a moral obligation, to support first-generation students, architects, planners, landscape architects, designers, change makers. I believe it first

starts with supporting our mental/physical/spiritual health. It might be \$5000, but this can go a long way. This can have rippling effects.

GOALS, TIMELINE, DESIRED OUTPUT

There are many first-generation students (and faculty) on campus. We're out here! When we apply to school, we checked a box stating we are first-generation. We'd love a chance to get to know each other, a chance intentionally grow together. As Sury's mentor says, "People do better when they feel part of something larger than themselves" – This is health and wellbeing.

The goal of this project is to promote the wellbeing, leadership, academic and professional success of first-generation students. First-generation students are students who are the first in their families to attend a higher education institution; many of whom come from working-class families and communities of color that have experienced systemic oppression. First-generation students are resilient, persistent, and incredibly resourceful. However, his identity is overwhelmingly invisibilized at Harvard and at GSD, which has resulted in mental health challenges and continued hardship among first-generation students. The goals of this project are to begin retooling the design curriculum, not only to better equip first-generation students to become practitioners, but also to provide space for first-generation students to share their unique knowledge, shape the profession, and improve relevance to underserved and marginalized communities. This project supports first-generation architects, planners, landscape architects, and designers to feel more healthy and whole (both individually and part of a larger community).

As a part of this, we propose the first-ever First-Generation Scholar-Practitioner Series for graduate students at Harvard, culminating in a First-Generation Graduation Ceremony (the first of its kind to be held for graduate students at Harvard as well)! The training consists of four, two-hour long sessions that each focus on building community, while growing a toolset specifically crucial for the health and wellbeing of first-generation students.

Who: Anyone who self identifies as a first-generation graduate student from Harvard GSD

Where: a classroom at Harvard GSD

When: four-two hour sessions that occur throughout Spring Semester 2020

Session 1: Who are we? (Storytelling and Personal Narratives)

Session 2: Financial Literacy and Wellness

Session 3: What does it mean to return home? (The Personal, Professional, Political)

Session 4: First-Generation Graduation (Celebrating Ourselves and Our Caretakers)

Here, Spring semester becomes a time to unite first-generation students and provide a space develop skills, cultivate peer support, and reflect deeply on the ways we can uniquely shape the design profession and make it relevant and generative for the communities we come from. Many first-generation students at Harvard GSD would like to be part of this.

4. Core Values – The GSD PB Process has three core values – health, equity and collaboration. How does your project advance each value in its development and/or implementation?

We represent two members of a larger cohort of first-generation students, professors, and allies across the country doing some amazing work with profound impact to, not only first-generation students' health, wellbeing, and morality, but to those of all members in our civic institution (and the international institutions that look toward us). While some may see this proposal as small or only impacting a few, we're excited for this opportunity to expose how this actionable project in fact has a great ripple effect. We have an exciting chance here to advance a movement of health justice that's larger than us—it touches the communities impacted by health inequities that we carry with us into GSD every day. By providing the time, space, and financing to support first-generation students at Harvard GSD, we are not only symbolically and physically validating their belonging here, but we're acknowledging the systemic oppression that likely speaks to why they're pursuing their degree; saying “Hey, this physical/mental/inter-generational knowledge that you embody is what makes you extremely qualified to be here working on what you're working on – it's also perhaps what makes this hard. It may take a daily toll on the health and wellbeing of your family back home. It may take a toll your health and wellbeing, as a student/teacher/caretaker/daughter/sister/ally.”

This program uniquely recognizes the agency of first-generation students as protagonists, rather than a remedial project. Health is a function of access to power and agency, and by promoting the agency of first-generation students, this project precisely advances the health of an underserved constituency.

This pilot will also be a time for students to collaborate and surface insights for designing future and further first-generation programming for Harvard GSD.

Our project stands in solidarity with marginalized movements that have been happening across university campuses for decades. We have a chance here at Harvard GSD to be stronger safe space where first-generation student's health is recognized and prioritized as being crucial to furthering the core values of health, equity and collaboration.

5. *Impact and Longevity* – How will your project impact the GSD community, in both the immediate term and the long term? Who will be in charge of carrying the work forward beyond April 2020, if your project necessitates that?

Our project is intended to be exactly that – ours. By ensuring that it's student-led (and that those students get paid for their labor), we're ensuring the impact and longevity of the project on the GSD community both immediately and in the long term. While some may argue that student-led groups have high turnover rates because of how quickly students graduate, the First-Generation Scholar-Practitioner Series will be open to all first-generation GSD students of any year along with faculty, and staff who are also first-generation. After April 2020, the next cohort will work with session leaders to organize the next spring summit. Eventually, we see this annual series blossoming to become a more comprehensive Harvard GSD program (including career services, supply funds, peer mentorship) that supports the complex needs and capacities for first-generation students to shine. This is similar to how Harvard College has a built in, college-funded program supporting first-generation students.

We see this summit as part of a larger opportunity for Harvard GSD to support first-generation students, faculty, and staff as they provide a wealth of knowledge to the school. We are currently working with the Diversity Committee at Harvard GSD and have been in contact with first-generation Professor Anthony Jack at Harvard GSE, along with Harvard College alumnus and co-founder of the First-Generation Student Union Jesse Sánchez. The proposal is also inspired by the “Keys to the Kingdom” course taught by Ken Wang at UC Davis Law and the First-Generation Law Student program developed by UC Davis Law students. We are also excited to meet with Dean of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Naisha Bradley in the next few weeks.

6. Budget Table – Include a table of your project budget. We have included a sample budget template in the RFP to use if it is helpful. Reminder – groups may request up to \$5,000, but are welcome to request less than the full amount.

Because many first-generation students usually spend time out of class working multiple jobs, supporting their families both financially and emotionally, these sessions must be paid for. Students will be compensated at a rate of \$20 per hour.

Budget: \$5000

Students: \$20 per hour, \$40 per session*

Snacks/Food: \$25 per session

*this number is based off the first first-generation GSD meal held last semester where 15 students attended from across disciplines

**\$100 for session 4 (the graduation celebration)

Training Session	Topic	Expenses	Total
1	Who are we? (Storytelling and Personal Narratives)	- Session leader - Students - Food	\$1000
2	What does it mean to return home? (The Personal, Professional, Political)	- Session leader - Students - Food	\$1000
3	Financial Literacy and Wellness	- Session leader - Students - Food	\$1000
4	Session 4: First-Generation Graduation (Celebrating Ourselves and Our Caretakers)	- Guest speaker - Students - Food	\$2000

7. [OPTIONAL] Please use this last question to elaborate on any other element of your project that you find important for us to know (and that you did not have an explicit chance to discuss up to this point.)

Thank you for taking the time to read our proposal. For more information about first-generation student work at Harvard, please check out these really neat links:

Harvard First-Generation Student Union: <http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/firstgen/>

Harvard First-Generation Harvard Alumni: firstgeneration.sigs.harvard.edu