Program Overview:

The First-Generation College Student (FGCS) Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program provided financial, academic, and social support for first-generation undergraduate college students who were majoring in social work and had demonstrated a commitment to work in the field of child welfare. The program recruited participants from within the university, area community colleges, and child welfare agencies. The program was a child welfare training program designed to increase the number of BSW students who are knowledgeable and skilled in the area of child welfare practice; expand retention and graduation rates for first-generation college BSW students, especially those committed to child welfare enterprises; and enhance the child welfare competencies of all Texas State University BSW students.

Major Activities and Accomplishments:

- Developed and implemented recruitment materials and distribution plan. Publicized project among state child welfare agency, community colleges and the university (College of General Studies and School of Social Work). Mailed more than 3,000 brochures, fliers and applications to over 13 child welfare agency offices and 30 community colleges; made recruitment visits to several community colleges.
- Established procedures for application review, stipend processing and disbursement. Developed stipend repayment agreement.
- Developed database for tracking student and program outcomes.
- Developed a special orientation program, “First Step Orientation: Stepping Up to a Career in Child Welfare,” that was conducted at the beginning of each academic year for new project participants. The orientation program provided students an opportunity to interact with faculty of the School of Social Work who were themselves first generation college students, other first generation college students and other project participants.
- Developed a peer mentoring handbook and implemented a peer mentoring program. First-year project participants were mentored by second-year
participants and second-year participants were mentored by graduates of the university’s Title IV-E child welfare training program.

- Implemented follow-up meetings, one at the mid-point and one at the end of each academic semester for the purpose of maintaining communication about project goals, addressing issues affecting participants, sharing resources, and facilitating a support system for project participants.
- A total of 42 first generation college students participated in the FGCS-BSW project across the life of the grants. Of the 42 students, 74 percent (n=31) successfully completed their BSW degrees. All but one of the remaining students are still enrolled in the degree program, making for near 100% retention rate.
- 36% (n=15) of project participants continued their studies in the MSW degree program upon graduation from the BSW program. Of these, eight students have completed the MSW degree and seven students remain enrolled.
- Post-graduation employment status has been reported by 23 participants. Of these, 56% (n=13) have accepted employment in a child welfare setting; 21% are employed fulltime in a setting other than child welfare.

**Dissemination Activities:**

- Developed and distributed a DVD about the project, first generation college students’ potential for effective child welfare practice. Using data from the project’s survey of field instructors, project staff developed and implemented a workshop for Texas School of Social Work field instructors on effectively working with first-generation college students.
- Presentations regarding the project have been made at one international professional meeting, five national social work meetings, and one regional child welfare professional meeting.
- One manuscript, *Training First-Generation College Students for a Career in Child Welfare: An Untapped Resource*, has been submitted for publication and is under revision. An additional manuscript is in process.