This is part of the Spotlight series created by the First-Gen Planning Committee. If you are a first-generation student, faculty member, staff member, or alumni interested in being interviewed, please contact us at firstgen@kennesaw.edu to schedule an interview or to complete the brief survey.

**FIRST-GEN INITIATIVES AT KSU**
firstgen.kennesaw.edu

---

**SPOTLIGHT: NATALIE WASHINGTON**

Natalie is a senior majoring in Integrated Studies with a focus on Sociology and Human Services.

---

**EXPERIENCES**

**What has been your overall experience as a first-gen college student?**

"My experience has been a little bit all over the place. It's been a learning curve and a roller coaster of emotions for sure. When I decided to go to college it took a lot because I ventured away from my family in Washington, D.C. -- in addition to not even knowing how college worked. But I'm glad I followed my heart to do so because I learned more about myself, and I also grew into adulthood because of these learning experiences. Also, having to figure out everything on my own, from applying for financial aid, budgeting expenses, getting acclimated to how everything works, registering for classes and all that was quite a learning experience but in turn one that was quite memorable. Thankfully, my godparents helped financially with my tuition and played a huge part in helping me get set-up for college by furnishing my first place. If it wasn't for their help and support I probably wouldn't have had the confidence, yet alone the peace of mind to take on the world of college."

---

**LESSONS LEARNED**

"I wish I knew like the basics of college, such as how to apply for financial aid and other things that seemed like the mere basics to other students. I also wish I knew how to budget my expenses as effectively because I always had my parents to fall back on with regards to expenses so this was a whole new learning experience I had to endure on my own. I had to teach myself all those new things that were oftentimes may have been well known to other students unlike myself."  

---

**ADVICE**

"Have fun but stay focused! Try to get involved if you can, and most definitely utilize the campus resources. There are so many organizations, departments, clubs and tutoring programs that are available that I wish I had taken advantage of at the time. Also, take advantage of the professors that are available to you! Just make the best of your undergraduate experience. Finally, even though you may stumble or fall a few times, get frustrated, or even lose hope, just be sure to never give up!"

---

**ON GOING TO COLLEGE**

"I knew I wanted better for myself. Having parents that didn't go to college made me curious to know what college was about. I also saw that going to college helped you get access to a better job, so I went in and looked at all the different paths that college could take me and how it would benefit me."