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First generation students learn to navigate college

[Nelson Garcia](#), KUSA 10:21 p.m. MDT August 8, 2015



First generation college students learn how to succeed on campus.(Photo: Nelson Garcia)

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DENVER - In a few weeks, Julian Cazares will begin fall semester as a freshman. He is the first person in his family to ever go to college and he is nervous.

"It's a a bit similar to the transition from middle school to high school times two," Cazares said.

He says having no relatives able to help him understand the nuances of higher education and being independent is a disadvantage.

"Me not having the orientation because my parents didn't have it themselves was a huge barrier for me," Cazares said.

That's why the Denver Metro Chamber Foundation and it's 2015 class of Leadership Denver created a program called "Ready, Set, College." Business professionals around the metro are are teaching first generation college students like Cazares how to succeed after high school.

"They're driven, They want to go on to have better lives, but they may not have parents; they may not have mentors that have done this before," Timi Aguilar, Leadership Denver member, said.

They are learning things like how to find a tutor, how to manage their time, and how to manage student loans.

"Helping our first steps for college is a huge, huge thing for me," Cazares said.

Aguilar says business leaders around Denver put this program together because they felt that it was a priority for the community.

"For these students, I think that this is just a great way to really feel that empowerment and understand what it's going to be like to live in that college environment," Aguilar said. "How do we help shape those entering college so that they can have a positive experience and go beyond."

Cazares says the program is helping him be a little less nervous about starting college.

"It took a load off my shoulders," Cazares said. "You've got to be independent and you're not going to have your parents or your teachers there to guide you in every step."

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