

Navigating Through Self Doubt as a First-Generation Latina Transfer Student!

While attending Cerritos Community College, I was awarded a trip to visit multiple UC's in California with the help of the transfer center. The school I was most excited to visit was UC San Diego; as soon as I arrived, I knew this was the school I wanted to attend, even if that meant I had to move away from home.

Once I got accepted, I knew that I had to put in double the effort to be successful because I was not just a transfer student, I was a first-generation, Latina student from Huntington Park. Growing up, the schools I attended did not offer many resources that focused on college preparation. This meant I had to find information regarding access to college elsewhere, which can be very difficult and confusing. Even though my parents were not able to help me navigate the university system, they constantly showed me to never give up on my dreams.

I still remember getting dropped off by my parents and wondering if coming to San Diego was the right choice for me. I started to question myself and wondered if I made it this far because of simple "luck", despite knowing that my past accomplishments are what got me where I am today. Little did I know that other students like me were feeling the same way.

What is imposter syndrome?

Imposter syndrome refers to an individual who doubts their skills, abilities, successes, and overall capabilities in their life (Parker, 2016). Although I had heard of this term before, I never thought I could experience this. Believe it or not, this is something very common among first-generation college students from minority groups.

How did I experience imposter syndrome as a first-generation Latina?

There were times where I felt that I was not up to the standard of being at a university like UCSD. Imposter syndrome can look very different for others and people can experience different forms of imposter syndrome throughout their college experience. In my case, I felt like I had to work twice as hard and prove myself to everyone around me and make my parents proud because as most first generation and Latinx students can attest to, graduating college is more than just earning a degree, it's a way to honor our parent's sacrifices. Let's face it, when a Latinx student goes to college, their whole family goes to college!

I began to question if the grades I received were because the class was too easy, or not challenging enough, even when I knew I had worked really hard to earn those grades. I vividly remember, being super stressed to look at my grades after submitting an assignment or finishing an exam because I expected the worst. Here's the thing: why would I expect the worst when I

worked so hard and pulled all-nighters? I didn't believe in myself; I didn't think I was prepared or capable enough to earn high grades.

How did I get through it?

Okay, so here I am, 2 years down the road and GRADUATING! I've learned the importance of believing in myself and never forgetting why I started this path. If you ever find yourself struggling to believe in yourself, I want you to remember: why are you doing this in the first place? What motivated you to pursue an education? For me, my parents are my biggest motivation, I want them to know their hard work and struggles have paid off and that keeps me going every single day! Here are other ways I made it through these awkward feelings:

- **Practicing *SELF-LOVE*** Yes! Self-love goes hand in hand with self-care, don't ever forget to remind yourself that yes, you are a student, but you are also human! It is important to remember to feel good about ourselves and be our own cheerleader. A great way to do this is to take a minute each day to reflect on your accomplishments and own them. Remember, mind over matter! The more you acknowledge how amazing you are, the more you'll feel it!
- **Finding Community!**
 - One way to do that is by visiting the various community centers around campus. I loved attending and volunteering at events that were offered through the [RAZA Resource Centro!](#) It made me feel proud to have a community center on campus where I felt represented. This is also a great way to get connected with other students and faculty! There are many opportunities for you to get help and be involved, take a look at our quick list of [resources](#) to get started.
- **Being a part of the Triton Transfer Hub**
 - I wish there would have been a [Transfer Hub](#) when I came in as a first-year transfer. Take advantage of all the wonderful resources it offers and start early! As transfers we only have two, or maybe three years to make the best out of our college experience, don't wait too long. Schedule an appointment with one of the [Peer Coaches](#), they are transfers just like you and know exactly what it is to walk in your shoes (I was a peer coach when the space first opened! It was awesome!).
- **Reaching out to faculty!**
 - Attend office hours as much as possible and ask questions even if you think they don't relate to class, I guarantee you that you'll get more out of the class and enjoy it more. I've been lucky enough to meet a group of diverse faculty who are supportive and willing to mentor me even after I graduate. This is also a great way to build relationships for letters of recommendation in the future. (you'll need those)

- If you're still nervous about attending office hours, fear no more! [Dine/Coffee with a Prof program](#) is a great opportunity for students to get coffee or dine with faculty members or graduate teaching assistants. Did I mention, it's completely FREE? I know reaching out to faculty can be intimidating, but this program is a great way for you to meet with professors or TA's outside of an office.
- **Volunteering**
 - I am so grateful to have been able to volunteer at the [Triton Food Pantry](#) and at many events my college needed support in. I met some of the most amazing people doing this and I was able to get involved and learn about other resources. It is also a great way to give back! Make sure to check out the [Center for Student Involvement](#) to find volunteer opportunities at UC San Diego and in the local community.
- **SI SE PUEDE!**
 - BELIEVE in yourself! Look at me, I am a Latina from Huntington Park and I made it this far. Yes, with many bumps in the road but I am here, and so are you. As transfer students, our college path might look a bit different from others, and that's okay. If you ever feel like you don't belong in a place like UCSD, I am here to tell you that you do belong here, you are setting the path for future transfer students and should be proud of all your accomplishments.

Source: Parkman, Anna. (2016). The Imposter Phenomenon in Higher Education: Incidence and Impact. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*. 16. 51-60.