



# CHAPTER ONE: A FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE SURVIVAL TOOLKIT

## Purpose:

This tool aims to deconstruct systemic barriers that first-year students of color encounter in higher education. To increase retention and a sense of belonging, we seek to provide learners with the tools necessary to navigate spaces that do not reflect their lived experiences as students in marginalized groups.



## BE YOURSELF

### unapologetically.

One of the biggest challenges in college is being yourself, especially in a continuously trying world to make you like everyone else. While we are only human, you are only you. Being you is what makes you unique. Avoid going out of your way to please others. Be fearless and give grace for embracing your imperfections. Invest positive energy on elevating and exploring yourself, and not in the noise of the world.



## FUNDING YOUR EDUCATION

### Minimizing your debt.

In simple, college is not cheap. There are numerous expenses to consider when choosing higher education. The cost of books, travel, housing, food, clothes, among other expenses, can add up to a hefty bill. The goal is to minimize expenses and leave college with as little debt as possible. Invest time in searching for internal school-based or external organization, community, or identity-based scholarships to fund your education—leverage on-campus resources to access grants or departmental funds set aside to support students facing financial hardship. File an appeal with the financial aid office to get your needs heard. Start a small business that pays you for your passions. Find an on-campus job that provides you experiences towards your career.



## FIND YOUR COMMUNITY

### If it does not exist, create it.

All humans are unique with their own individuality and creativity. It is essential to find spaces and mentors that affirm your identity and reflect your historical lived experiences in college. These spaces provide a sense of belonging and serve as a comfort zone when life sends its challenge. These can be spaces that align with your culture, niches, faith, career interest, and other discourses you value. The Office of Student involvement and its events can be a good place to start your search.



## PROTECT YOUR PEACE

### Look inward.

There is only one you. As a result, you should prioritize your inner well-being. Give yourself permission to say NO without feeling selfish, guilty, or mean. Listen to your intuition to ensure you're making the right decisions for yourself. Cut ties to spaces that subtract from you rather than grow you. Be conscious of your thoughts and surround yourself with positivity. Keep a journal to record your thoughts and reserve time during the day to reflect, meditate or exercise. Nourishing the body and spirit can take many forms.



## KNOWING WHEN TO SEEK SUPPORT

### And where to find it.

It is not okay to suffer in silence. We are only human, imperfect beings that are products of our environment. No one has all the right answers, so it is okay to ask for help when you do not know the answer. Feeling overwhelmed academically? Lean in and connect to your professor. Feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or depressed? Ask how to navigate campus websites and resources to get the care and service you need. Need an internship or a job? Connect with the career center. It does not matter where you start. But it is important to seek support in any capacity to get to where you have to go - mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, financially. Many things are negotiable.