Best practices for teaching first-generation students

Make your expectations clear

- Help students understand the culture of your field (provide the big picture for them)
- Create transparent assignments (see https://tilthighered.com/ for examples)
- Offer study strategies (consider assigning “How to Get the Most Out of Studying: Beliefs That Make You Fail... Or Succeed,” a series of 5 videos by Dr. Stephen Chu)
- Model and encourage metacognition (see Promoting Student Metacognition by K. Tanner - https://www.lifescied.org/doi/full/10.1187/cbe.12-03-0033 - for specific ideas)
- Draft a clear course calendar (and stick to it)
- Provide rubrics (see http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php and https://www.rcampus.com/indexrubric.cfm)
- Offer formative assessments (see https://www.usf.edu/atle/teaching/interactive-techniques.aspx for a list of classroom assessment and interactive techniques)
- Scaffold learning

Promote a growth mindset

- Convey to your students that learning is the result of work, not innate ability (find more at https://www.mindsetworks.com/science/)
- Offer feedback that promotes growth; show students what they did well, and what they still need to improve on (chapter 8 from James Lang’s Small Teaching (2016) offers great examples)
- Promote services for ALL students; for instance, consider making tutoring sessions part of students’ grade
- Encourage students to take ownership of their education (motivation increases when students see connections between their classes and life goals)
- Encourage students to set learning goals

Organize study groups

- Offer students opportunities to interact with peers in and outside of the class
- Create group projects that necessitate cooperation (the following article offers great insights on what constitutes a well-designed group project: Michaelsen, L. K., Fink, L. D., & Knight, A. Designing Effective Group Activities: Lessons for Classroom Teaching and Faculty Development. In To Improve the Academy: Resources for Faculty, Instructional and Organizational Development, 1997)

Develop personal relationships
• Get to know your students (academically through pretests, discussions of expectations and study habits, and personally) and adjust your teaching accordingly. For a more in-depth understanding of how prior knowledge can hinder or help learning, consult chapter 1 of *How Learning Works* by Ambrose et al. (2010).
• Make one-on-one meetings (during office hours) mandatory (if feasible)
• Share your own struggles and your “aha” moments
• Advise and mentor all your students
• Contact students who miss classes or struggle academically
• If possible, offer students the opportunity to engage in undergraduate research
• Make students aware of scholarship and internship opportunities