

NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER



Thank you to everyone that attended our Virtual Fall Conference November 17th and 18th! Stay tuned for more information about this conference in our next newsletter.



November 8th, 2023 was First-Generation College Celebration Day (FGCC) which aims to raise awareness of the first-generation college student identity and celebrate first-generation student successes.

First2 Student Updates

Blue Ridge Community and Technical College – First2 at BRCTC had an institutional team meeting and they are planning to host a game day to provide students with a fun activity before finals week. They will also be hosting two PDSA events on Friday, December 1st.

Fairmont State University – The First2 Campus Club and the Forensics Club had a Halloween Potluck together. First2 students and faculty, along with First2 Coordinator Heather Arnett, tabled for First2 Network at the West Virginia Science Teacher Association Conference (WVSTA) October 26th-28th. They hosted a club meeting 'Friendsgiving' and their scholars are continuing to work on their change ideas.

Glenville State University – The First2 students at Glenville have been working on finishing their bylaws and completing their process to have a First2 campus club that can start hosting events.

Marshall University – First2 students at Marshall are planning a Faculty Networking Dinner. They had their onboarding visit November 1st and many faculty and students were able to participate. They participated in Marshall's Dinner with the Deans and they are planning a meeting to help relieve some stress for First2 scholars before finals week.



University of Charleston – First2 at the University of Charleston held their Professor Impromptu Lecture PDSA event. They also had their onboarding visit. For FirstGen Day they set up a table and created an art piece by asking individuals on campus to use their thumb prints to fill in a First2 logo (see below). Two student directors represented the First2 Network at the High Rocks Educational Corporation Board and Staff Retreat November 4th and spoke about their experiences with the network.

Above: First2 student Hailey Cox hosting a First2 Network table for FirstGen Day at University of Charleston.

West Virginia University – WVU's First2 Campus Club recently welcomed members to new officer roles for the upcoming spring semester. Two First2 scholars will be presenting at the WVU Fall 2023 symposium through their work in the Research Apprenticeship Program (RAP); Angelina Duriez is presenting research on membrane fusion in mammalian cells and Sydney Kudlack is presenting research on how disrupting the

microbiota of tsetse flies affects their courtship behaviors. Student director Oscar Enriquez is receiving Latin Honors at Fall 2023 Graduation and is planning on applying to the Masters of Social Work Program at WVU after graduation. Student Director Rachel King presented research on pulsars at the NANOGrav Meeting in Vancouver, Canada. Scholar Austin Driggs has been continuing to work part time at 4D Tech Solutions in Fairmont as an Electrical Engineering Tech after concluding an internship last summer and will continue working with them next semester as well. Scholar Stephanie Sarfo is starting the RAP program in Spring 2023.

West Virginia University Institute of Technology – WVU Tech First2 club members went to the “Maniac Mine” haunted coal mine and their club also participated in the WVU Tech Trunk or Treat (see below). They also held their first two presentations as part of their ‘Exploring Campus Resources’ PDSA; the first presentation was with Diana Woods of the WVU Tech Launch Lab, which provides financial assistance and advice to students who want to start business ventures (they also have a makerspace near campus that is free for students to use) and the second presentation was from the library about how to access library databases and other resources students may not know about such as borrowing laptops/planimeters and remotely accessing textbooks/journals. They are continuing to work on their Exploring Campus Resources PDSA as well as a BINGO PDSA.



Above: The WVU Tech First2 Club participated in the WVU Tech Trunk or Treat on October 28th; they gave candy to the kids of Beckley and showed off their 'First2 Machine'

PDSA of the Month: Fairmont State University's SciTech Social

The Improvement Science Team has been thrilled with the work of all our First2 Institutions and would like to highlight some of our biggest Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle successes, starting with [Fairmont State University's SciTech Social](#).

Information highlighted from the PDSA template and data set that Fairmont completed for this event:

PLAN: to host an informal social event with faculty, including ice breakers, interaction activities, etc. to introduce students to professors in their department and help connect them to resources.

DO: The social was held on August 11, 2022 from 12:30-2:00 p.m. Picnic food, (hamburgers, hot dogs, potato salad, chips, cookies), a First2 booth and lawn games were set up. First2 scholars passed out bingo cards and recruited students to the event. Each bingo card contained random personal and professional facts pertaining to one or more faculty members. Students walked around initiating conversations with faculty members to find those whose experiences matched a fact on their card. Likewise, faculty circulated asking students how they were doing on their bingo cards and signing the block that pertained to them. Students were encouraged to use the QR code on the back of their bingo cards to answer survey questions and drop their signed cards into a box for door prize drawings.

First 2 Network

SPEAKS ANOTHER LANGUAGE	IS THE DEAN OF YOUR COLLEGE	HAS GREEN EYES	PLAYED A SPORT IN COLLEGE	ROCK CLIMBS
HAS BEEN TO THE TOP OF A VOLCANO	HAS GOTTEN A GRANT	HAS A DOG	IS AN FSU ALUMNI	PLAYS A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT
TEACHES OUTSIDE OF YOUR MAJOR	HAS A CAT	FREE SPACE	WENT TO COLLEGE IN ANOTHER STATE	WAS BORN IN WV
HAS PUBLISHED A PAPER	IS LEFT HANDED	DRIVES AN ELECTRIC/HYBRID CAR	HAS CHILDREN	HAS TRAVELED TO EUROPE
BORN IN ANOTHER STATE	GREW A GARDEN	CANOEES	WAS FIRST-GEN	BORN IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

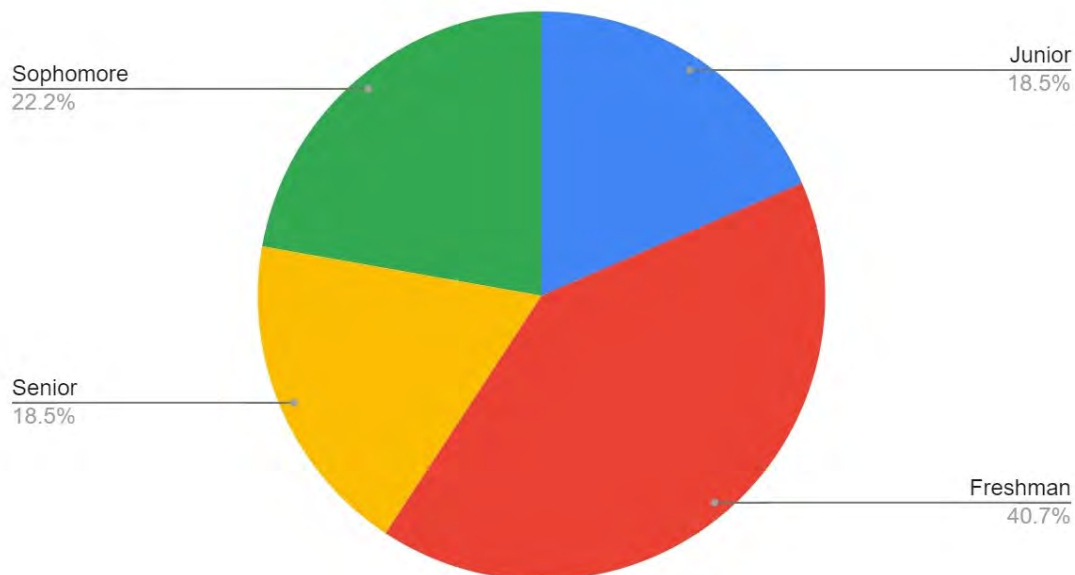
myfreebingocards.com

The bingo cards used (shown to the left) were created at

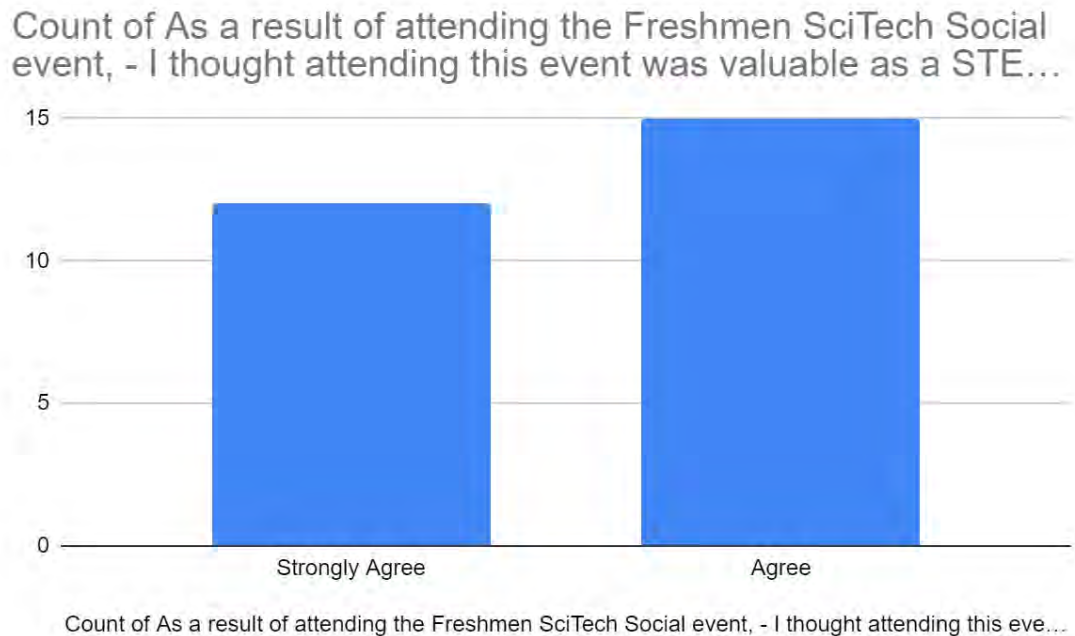
<https://myfreebingocards.com/bingo-card-generator>.

STUDY: Overall, the event engaged about 100 students and about 40 faculty. 27 students responded to the survey. Some highlights from the results that they analyzed from those

that completed the survey; 12 different majors were represented, with a broad turnout of about 41% freshmen along with strong representation from upperclassmen.



Over 96% of the respondents felt more comfortable approaching their professors and learning more about STEM clubs on campus, and 100% of the respondents found this to be a valuable experience.



Overall we can see that the interaction between Fairmont State faculty and students had a positive impact. [Click here to view the full data set from this event.](#)

ACT: Fairmont plans to ACT this PDSA cycle to include more effective data collection such that they can more accurately determine how large the potential impact of this event is in addition to some other event adaptations.

Want to learn more about this event and/or are you interested in implementing a similar PDSA on your campus? Contact First2 Network Improvement Science Data Manager Brigid Brown at brigid.brown@fairmontstate.edu.

We look forward to highlighting all our institutions and the work they are doing to create systems change across West Virginia and beyond!

First2 Student Spotlight: Ashlea Krasňanský

First2 participant, Ashlea Krasňanský, is a first-generation senior at Marshall University studying mathematics, communication studies, and digital humanities. Ashlea first became involved with the First2 Network in 2019 when she participated in a summer immersion program. She recently presented at the American Studies Association's international conference in Montreal, Canada and wrote the following about her experience there:

"I was ecstatic when my proposal, "An Overview of the First2 Network in West Virginia," was accepted into the American Studies Association's International Conference to be held in Montreal, Canada from November 2nd to 5th. I was also immensely humbled with the First2 Network's unwavering support and belief in my ability to fairly represent our collective efforts to deconstructing the barriers of persistence for first-generation, rural, and underrepresented students, like myself. Namely, Sue Ann Heatherly, Samantha Mitchell, Sarah Riley, Erica Harvey, Margaret Falletta, Heather Arnett, Brigid Brown, Madge Vosteen, Juliana Serafin, and many more amazing professionals were essential in helping me to prepare for and finance this outreach and development opportunity.

During my time in Montreal, I discovered that I was one of the only undergraduate students to present at this conference; I also happened to be the only person from West Virginia to present. In response to realizing my exclusivity, I felt anxious and pressured to fairly represent my home state of West Virginia, Marshall University, the First2 Network, and the undergraduate student body of the nation. Admittedly, I also felt a strong twinge in which I can only accredit to imposter syndrome – a feeling that I was way out of my league. This was an entirely different, professional realm than I was used to; most of my prior work had been located within the Appalachian region.

Whilst sitting on the window nook of my hotel room and eating a silent dinner on the eve of my presentation, I began to reflect on my time with the First2 Network. The half decade worth of mentors and mentees – equally as influential on me – reminded me that I am an integral part of the network. By further realizing some of the biases I still held towards

myself, I was not only able to trust those who had seen my ability to a greater extent but to also trust myself more. From that point, I made sure that each person in every session I attended knew I was an undergraduate West Virginian student, and I was proud of it. It felt liberating to own the very labels that once oppressed me.

This opportunity gave me the chance to contribute to the positive change of the narrative surrounding our state and the Appalachian region. Additionally, I was given the immense opportunity to represent student voices on an international level – proving to many that the first step to deconstructing barriers of persistence and success starts with the integration of students in that work. Lastly, I felt that I gained an immeasurable amount of insight into the world of community and program development as well as advanced my DEIAB skills; I look forward to applying this knowledge to my future leadership roles in the First2 Network.

Overall, it was my high honor to present on the amazing work coming from the network and represent the even more amazing people who I work with to create positive systems change in the higher education environment of West Virginia.”



(above) Ashlea visiting the West Virginia State Capital Building during the 2023 legislative session with the First2 Network to lobby for continued support from the state government.



(above) Ashlea (center) with Juliana Serafin of WV HEPC (left) and Sue Ann Heatherly of Green Bank Observatory (right) at the NASA IV&V Dinner Party in Spring of 2023 in Charleston, WV.



(above) Ashlea Krasnansky (front, bottom right) collaborating with fellow First2 Network student participants at the 2023 Spring Conference at Stonewall Jackson Resort, WV.

Ashlea also presented at the First2 Network Virtual Fall Conference on November 4th, 2023 on plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycles and while doing so had the opportunity to share some additional thoughts about her experiences with the First2 Network.

“It’s been a very touching experience to look back where I started and to see me now. I’ve just seen a lot of growth that, quite frankly, I credit to the network...when I started, I was not receptive to receiving help in any form...I thought it was kind of a scam. I know that sounds horrible, but that was just my experience as a first generation student who never really knew that help like this existed; never really knew that a community of this nature could exist even...”

“...so, upon reflection and introspection, these PDSA cycles have been amazing...working through PDSA cycles to help not only understand myself better, but to help other people understand themselves and their role in society, in their community, and in STEM – to realize their potential – has been phenomenal in my life’s journey. For that, I am eternally grateful to the First2 Network.”

On the Road with First2: Onboarding Sessions



First2 Network onboarding sessions serving 128 people from First2 institutional teams were provided onsite at each of our seven West Virginia First2 institutions between September 18, 2023 and November 8, 2023. First2 staff members Brigid Brown (Improvement Science and Data Manager), Samantha Mitchell (Student Coordinator), and Erica Harvey (Institutional Team Coordinator) teamed up to design and lead the

onboardings, which evolved based on institutional desires and feedback from previous sessions. All sessions attracted a mixture of student, faculty, and staff/administrator attendees, including some who were very familiar with the network and others for whom this was the first introduction to the network.

Mitchell highlighted the purpose behind the significant time and effort put towards onboarding this fall: “Onboarding is the crucial bridge that transforms a new team member from a stranger to a productive and engaged contributor. It goes beyond mere logistics; effective onboarding cultivates a sense of belonging and familiarity with the network’s culture. We are hopeful that this initial investment in integration pays off exponentially, as it accelerates the learning curve, fosters positive relationships, and ensures that the institutional teams understand their role and feel invested in the collective success of the network.”

According to Harvey, “I loved getting to know the teams on their home territory, and the opportunity to understand more of the context for First2 at each individual institution. It was really helpful to meet with some key administrators on each campus, hear their thoughts and ideas, and provide a soft invitation to the First2 workshop for administrators that we are planning to schedule early in the new year. I’m deeply grateful for the work done by the institutional liaisons and others to host these sessions, including finding rooms, providing parking passes and directions, setting schedules and inviting/encouraging a diverse set of attendees.”

[Click here to read the full summary of these onboarding sessions.](#)

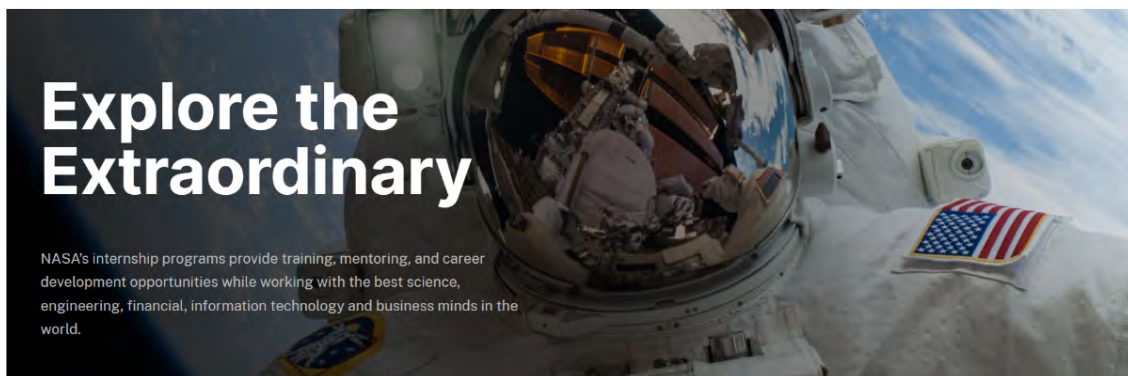
Events and Opportunities



The Center for First-Generation Student Success states, “FGCC is celebrated annually on November 8th to commemorate the signing of the Higher Education Act (‘HEA’) of 1965 by then-President Lyndon B. Johnson. This act created federal financial aid programs to fund students’ educations and make key investments in colleges and universities.” [Click here to view the Center for First-Generation Student Success’ FGCC Virtual Event.](#)



On January 4, 2024 3:00pm-4:00pm NIH will be offering an information session about their summer research internship opportunities. From their website, they “offer research opportunities in the biomedical, behavioral, and social sciences with opportunities to explore basic, translational, and clinical research. Students interested in biology, engineering, epidemiology, psychology, mathematics, chemistry, pharmaceutical sciences, nursing, physics, computer science, bioinformatics, and other health-related fields are invited to apply.” [Click here to learn more.](#)



Interested in a summer internship with NASA? Internship applications are being accepted on a rolling basis until February 2, 2024. “NASA Office of STEM Engagement (OSTEM) paid internships allow high school and college-level students to contribute to agency projects under the guidance of a NASA mentor”; [click here to learn more about NASA's internship opportunities.](#)

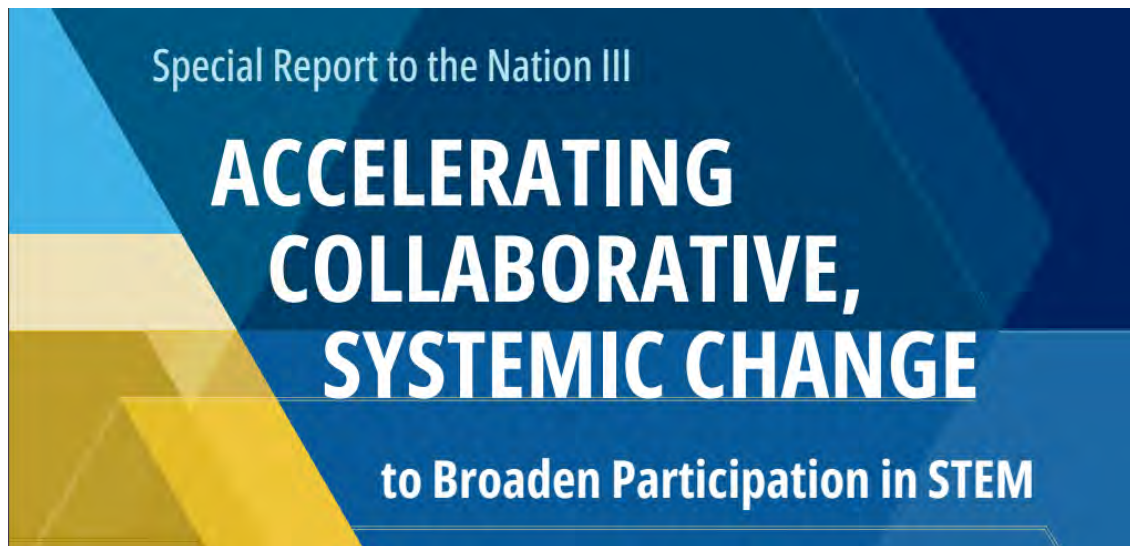
News from the INCLUDES National Network



The NSF Includes Coordination Hub has shared their latest biennial report, "Making Visible the Invisible - Understanding Intersectionality" from the Committee on Equal Opportunities in Science and Engineering (CEOSE). According to the Hub, "This broad theme serves to recognize that much of the work and understanding related to broadening participation and diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility remains unacknowledged, misunderstood, undervalued, and understudied. CEOSE calls on NSF to utilize intersectional analysis to remove barriers to participation in STEM fields." You can read the summary [here](#) or access the full report [here](#).

Mentorship, Well-being, and Professional Development in STEMM – Addressing the "Knowing-Doing Gap": A Workshop

"The National Academies just posted the video and materials for their Mentorship, Well-being, and Professional Development in STEMM - Addressing the "Knowing-Doing Gap" Workshop. The workshop uses "an intersectional approach to explore the "knowing-doing gap" as a framework to help faculty and institutions understand and develop strategies that bridge current systemic and cultural barriers to the support and promotion of graduate students and postdoctoral scholars in the STEMM research ecosystem." [Click here to access their workshop.](#)



From the INCLUDES Hub website, "NSF's Eddie Bernice Johnson INCLUDES Initiative released the Special Report to the Nation III - Accelerating Collaborative, Systemic Change to Broaden Participation in STEM. This is the first report that discusses how the INCLUDES Initiative will approach measuring systems change. It also includes project spotlights that showcase progress toward broadening participation outcomes for the INCLUDES Initiative. The report can be accessed [here](#) or at <https://www.nsf.gov/edu/Pubs/INCLUDESSpecialReportIII.pdf>



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