FIRST2 NETWORK

SAVE THE DATE:

Our First2 Network Spring Conference is scheduled for May 16-May 18, 2024. More information is coming soon!

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Highlights: Conversations with First Generation Faculty Dr. Nicholas Turiano

Highlights is a new section that serves to focus on West Virginia students and workers that have grown and worked here. The goal is to highlight their experiences and spirit in how being in WV, being rural, being first generation, and all the wonderful things we are, have shaped the person that they have become. We are excited to add this wonderful new section!

Dr. Nicholas Turiano is an associate professor at West Virginia University who specializes in life-span developmental psychology an student support and advocacy.

Interviewer Dr. Arnett (I.A.): "I have a few questions to get our conversation going, but really my goal here is to get an idea of what your experiences were and how you feel they made you. And so, my first question really is, you are first generation, so how do you feel or what challenges do you feel like you experience when you were coming up through school or otherwise thought like they were unique for you?"

Dr. N Turiano (Dr. T.): "Yeah, so thinking about being first gen, I think one of the obstacles is knowing that your first gen. I honestly don't think I knew about it while I was in school.

And I remember having a conversation early on after I graduated, like, 'this is amazing all the resources you have for first gen students. I wish this was here when I was in school' and they kind of chuckled and said, you know, they were there for you. You just didn't know and part of it was I just wasn't looking for it."

I.A.: "I heard you say that you wish these resources had been here and you know in the end they were all along. I know that feeling too. So, do you have any specific strategies that helped you overcome those issues and then get the resources or get the funding that you need."

Dr. T.: "I think part of it was just luck. I remember taking a sociology course on race relations. The recitation was once a week with a grad student. I really connected with that person and after the class was over they said, hey Nick, would you want to be a TA for this class?

So, you meet with all of the other undergrad TAs and then the undergrads who've done this before are the mentors of those TAs. And I was able to ask them, some were first time some weren't, and like they started to give me the lay of the land of like, how do I really get through college. So that's why being involved with some people that are used to mentoring others, they were able to kind of like do that for me and I see that now at WVU our office of firsthand and student success.

We're providing those resources formally. I got it through a race relations course and that was like one of the many places I got it, but I think that centralized idea is so good to have at university and then to get students to know it's there and I think that's that was like my launching point of ONE it's okay to ask questions TWO it's okay not to know what to do and THREE it is okay to be first gen."

"I ALWAYS LIKE KNEW I WAS DIFFERENT IN [THAT] I HAD ROOMMATES ON THE FLOOR TALKING ABOUT, 'OH YOUR PARENTS SENDING CARE PACKAGES.'

I'M LIKE, 'WHAT'S A CARE PACKAGE? I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT."

DR. NICHOLAS TURIANO
Associate Professor at West Virginia University

I.A.: "How did you hear about the First2 Network and what made you want to get engaged with them?"

Dr. T.: "I was a research mentor for the McNair Scholars Program that we had here that was centered more on first gen students. I also do my research in psychology. One of the areas I do look at is the transition to college."

I.A.: "What advice would you give students that are coming up as first generation

students?"

Dr. T.: "Look at like that first semester. We get engaged, first gen, let's do it! And I think, It's almost too much sometimes for students. Like it needs to be peppered and layered and just because you didn't get someone through freshman year doesn't mean they're not interested. Keep trying. They can ignore emails. That's fine. That's not hurting them. But like, if you ever give up, then there's no chance for them to engage.

I got my PhD and I didn't get involved until the very end of my senior year. So you're fine, it's like don't give up. And I think some students just have that fatalist kind of, well, I didn't engage. I'm kind of stuck in this path. …I probably might have applied for a master's program right out of undergrad and I would have been in that program and I wouldn't have liked it and I wouldn't have known if I didn't do the applied experience."

I.A.: "How would you tailor advice if you had a student pop in your office and say, 'I'm not doing really well. I'm not feeling the call.'"

Dr. T.: "Finding out what you don't want to do is just as good as finding out what you want to do. At first shot am I'm gonna find out what I wanna do? Probably not, it'll take multiple failures or things you tried that you didn't like.

Students will say 'I'm getting pressure from home. I need a job and I'm not allowed to move home unless I have a job lined up by graduation.' I'm like, did you Google anything? Or have you looked at a job website? Usually the response is 'what do you mean job website? Where are those?' I'm like, you could Google that too, but like, let's do it right now here.

Students will shift to 'that's all I needed.' They just need a little push because the unknown is so scary to them that it's overwhelming and they're like, 'I'll just do this or I'll put this off.'"
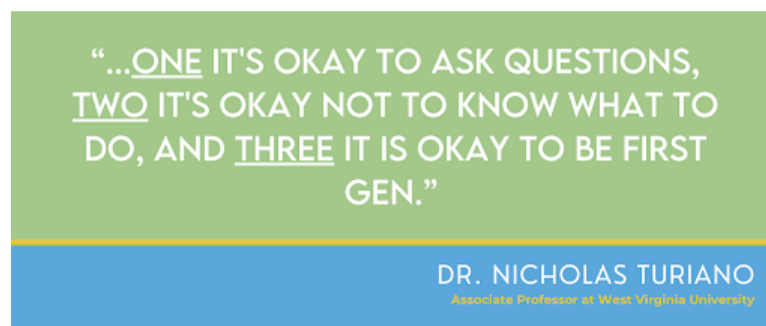

"I ALWAYS THINK ISSUES NOW ARE MINCEMEAT COMPARED TO ME CRYING AT THANKSGIVING TO MY MOTHER ABOUT, 'I'M GONNA DROP OUT OF COLLEGE' AND AT THAT POINT I REALLY THOUGHT LIFE WAS LIKE OVER (YOU KNOW, ACADEMIC LIFE, LIKE I'M CLOSING A CHAPTER)."

DR. NICHOLAS TURIANO
Associate Professor at West Virginia University

I.A.: "Considering everything that you've been through from the beginning to the absolutely fabulous person that you are now... how do you think that these experiences have made you a different person and in what ways?"

Dr. T: "It's kinda nice to show like, hey, I'm okay, like I'm gonna have challenges whether I'm first gen or not and it doesn't matter if I have an advanced degree. Alright, stressing me out, but like I got this. I got from college. I can get through this type of thing. We have a lot of students and if only a handful are utilizing it [the resources]. What is it? Are they not hearing our message? Are we delivering it in the wrong way? Like. How can we get students to utilize these resources?

We laugh sometimes and say like first generation students are like a mafia at a certain point. We protect each other but it's really like we protect everyone with camaraderie and it becomes contagious. That's why we say it's like a nonviolent mafia.

"...<u>ONE</u> IT'S OKAY TO ASK QUESTIONS, <u>TWO</u> IT'S OKAY NOT TO KNOW WHAT TO DO, AND <u>THREE</u> IT IS OKAY TO BE FIRST GEN."

DR. NICHOLAS TURIANO
Associate Professor at West Virginia University

Dr. Heather Arnett has a Ph.D. in ecology and evolution. She worked at the University of Charleston specializing in gateway courses and establishing the First2 Network there. She now works as the First2 Network Program Coordinator with STaR at the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission.

First2 Student Updates

Fairmont State University – The First2 Campus Club at Fairmont hosted their last club meeting of the fall semester. They discussed Home Tome Ambassador visits and potential club shirts. Their campus club is also planning to write holiday cards for local nursing home residents. Their semester ended December 8th and their Student Directors noted, "We made it through the semester and we are looking forward to getting more active next semester!"

Marshall University – First2 at Marshall recently held their Holiday Party to wrap up the semester. They are working on a 'Donuts with the Deans' PDSA for next semester to hopefully expand and serve beyond their campus club.

West Virginia University – The WVU First2 Campus Club held their last regular club

meeting for the semester. They also hosted a graduation party for Garrett Bender and Oscar Enriquez, First2 WVU students who are graduating this month. Congratulations Garrett and Oscar!

West Virginia University Institute of Technology – WVU Tech's First2 Campus Club held their last club meeting of the semester; club members presented tips for studying for finals. They also announced that Fayth Laxton will be their club president next semester.

Institutional Updates: Glowing and Growing Fall 2023

Blue Ridge Community and Technical College
Blue Ridge is working on building up their campus club and trying an iteration of the summer immersion research program. As they are a community college these programs necessarily look different and have different challenges they need to address. They have THREE students on their team this year and some new faculty to support their program. They are our smallest school and we are always impressed with the work they do!

Fairmont State University
Fairmont State is heading off this semester with a significant focus on student engagement and student voice. They have used one of their meetings to engage students on data and the Supplemental funding proposal/budget from HEPC. In addition, they engaged THREE students with the WVSTA conference (actively working the event). They have many PDSAs going that focus on student belonging and understanding, including bridge events and study weeks. Also a shout out to FSU for being all caught up on their IRBs!

Glenville State University
Glenville is working through serious adversity and coming through shining. Being small, both in size and faculty, key stages in the PDSA process (in particular steps such as establishing a club and receiving IRB support and approval) have been longer and more difficult that expected. Nevertheless, this fall the club is off and starting to run, with the leadership of two student directors that JUST started this fall. They are actively working together to discuss introductory course structure and are tackling math anxiety in the classroom. Great job institution of many hats!

Marshall University
Marshall is working extra hard this year as they have some new faculty onboard or taking on very different responsibilities than before, which is definitely a challenge. They are doing great with TEN students on their team. A student (call out to Callia Yang) is leading a PDSA that focused on student mentoring and cross institutional connections. In addition the team is very interested in support and early research experience, making a good attempt to embed a research immersion program during the semesters while overcoming faculty

concerns and fears. Also a shout out to MU for being all caught up on their IRBs!

University of Charleston

The University of Charleston is working very hard this fall with a partial new onboarding as they experienced nearly a complete faculty turnover in their First2 Program. They also stand to lose nearly all of their senior students from the club and scholar positions to graduation this year. They are very focused on supporting and onboarding all their members and engaging everyone in their institutional team (very well I might add). They are doing amazing with several PDSAs that are focused on student learning and student rapport with the faculty.

West Virginia University

WVU has done an excellent job of growing their team with a total of TWENTY-NINE individuals engaged in First2 on their campus. Additionally they have created an office of First Generation support with a staff focused specifically on that space and work. From their hard PDSA work it is clear to see that their focus in on communication and mentoring support. WVU has PDSAs that focus on student voice and learning in the classroom as well as active mentoring support. They also have several focused on the club and communication, in particular a new listserv to maintain connections between faculty and students.

West Virginia University Institute of Technology (WVU Tech)

WVU IT sports a very large student scholar and engagement group this year with FIFTEEN listed in their materials. They also are extremely engaged this year as a whole institution, onboarding or maintaining SEVEN active faculty and deans. They are also initiating or completing a very large number and variety of PDSAs focused on both recruiting faculty and creating rapport with students through the club and interactions (such as BINGO night).

Resource Corner: Updated "20 Things I Wish I Knew as a Freshman"

Our First2 Student Directors recently updated the First2 Network "20 Things I Wish I Knew as a Freshman" resource. This is a great resource to discuss with high school seniors or incoming freshman who may not know exactly what to expect from their first year in college.

Click here to access a PDF of this updated resource.

PDSA of the Month: WVU Listserv

The First2 Network uses improvement science (a systematic approach to testing high-impact practices in education) to test high-impact practices — "change ideas" — that improve retention of first-generation and other under-represented college students in STEM fields. First2 has developed a theory of change that identifies four primary drivers of success for these students. Institutional teams within the First2 Network plan, conduct, study and act on change ideas using a Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycle, then share their findings throughout the Network.

This month we are featuring WVU's completed Listserv PDSA; click here for a summary!

Virtual Fall Conference Recap

On November 17th and 18th the First2 Network presented their 2023 Virtual Fall Conference. The focus of this conference was on industry connections (including connections with industry mentors) and sharing PDSA information and methodologies between institutions.

On November 17th, First2 Network Institutional teams provided updates on their First2 activities (click here to see the slides that they presented) and Katie Stinson presented on behalf of the National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN) about engaging First2 mentees and mentors through the NRMN platform. In addition, Craig Thomas presented on how First2 students can schedule mock interviews with industry mentors and the network hosted various break-out rooms regarding building a First2 policy agenda, the West Virginia Jobs Network (WVJN), Industry, Graduate School, and Professional.

On November 18th, improvement science Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) ideas, methodologies, successes and adaptations were shared across institutions and Dr. Sara Sawyer discussed the importance of metacognition in teaching and learning settings.

After the conference First2 Program Coordinator Heather Arnett reflected, "Working on designing and moderating the fall conference was a really amazing experience for me. It allowed me to get very in depth connections with all of the major groups we serve, both to fulfill their needs/wants but to also see how everyone was really excited about engaging with each other. My biggest challenge I think was trying to ensure in a virtual setting that everyone had what they needed and could still participate in the sessions and break out rooms."

Click here to view the full conference agenda and click here to view a list of speakers.

Thank you to everyone that contributed to this valuable convening, and we look forward to seeing you at our In-Person Spring Conference May 16-18, 2024!

Events and Opportunities

Academic Lab Manager Needed (Full-time position w/ Benefits): Apply ASAP
Applicants for Academic Lab Manager Needed! Job Description – Academic Laboratory
Manager II – Department of Chemistry, Eberly College of Arts and Sciences (23061)
(taleo.net) Link: https://lnkd.in/eaJNkNwz. Bachelor's degree in chemistry or related
science field required. Be sure to upload a resume and also discuss relevant experience
for the position. Note that teaching assisting as an undergraduate or graduate student or
even engaging in research should count as relevant experience for the position. Contact
me (mrichar2@wvu.edu) if you have questions about this position.

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,
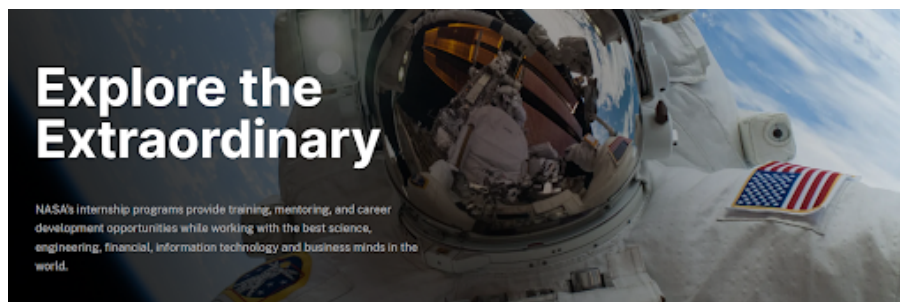nursing, physics, computer science, bioinformatics, and other health-related fields are

invited to apply." Applications for their summer internship program are due by noon ET February 16, 2024. Click here to learn more.

Machine Learning Foundations Accelerate Innovation and Promote Trustworthiness" webcast being offered on January 11, 2024 at 11:00am ET. From the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) website, as part of their distinguished lecture series: "Investing in applied machine learning without understanding the underlying foundations is like investing in healthcare without understanding biology. Foundational research has had a tremendous impact on machine learning, from optimization methodology to privacy protections and from data acquisition strategies to uncertainty quantification. Understanding machine learning foundations has also deepened our insights into longstanding challenges in statistics, optimization theory, numerical simulations, and engineering. We have yet to witness the full impact of these foundational developments. In this talk, I will highlight several major examples of these foundations and their impacts on theory, practice, and workforce development. Furthermore, we will explore emerging directions in machine learning for which new theory is necessary and where future foundational research is likely to play a critical role, including scientific discovery and ensuring machine learning methods are fair, safe, equitable, and sustainable." Click here to register for this webcast.

Short-Term Research Experience Program to Unlock Potential (STEP-UP)

NIH's STEP-UP program provides paid hands-on summer research internships for undergraduate students. These internships focus on underrepresented students, provide a wide range of research choices with mentor-guided support from experienced researchers, and are flexible in location. Applications are due by February 1st. Click here for more information, to check your eligibility and/or to apply.

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.

Looking for more opportunities? West Virginia University's Undergraduate Research office has compiled a list of numerous external scholarship/summer programs that you can access here.