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Register for the First2 Network and West Virginia Jobs Network Spring Co-Conference



We are excited to welcome you to the First2 Network and West Virginia Jobs Network Spring Co-Conference in May!

The theme for the West Virginia Jobs Network is **CONNECTING TALENT WITH OPPORTUNITY, SUPPORTING WORKFORCE PATHWAYS, AND BUILDING**

STRONGER WORKPLACES. They will be examining the biggest challenges in workforce development and highlighting emerging innovative solutions. Their sessions of the conference will focus on workforce development opportunities; including training, programs, resources, and certifications, as well as networking with people and organizations across the region.

The theme for the First2 Network is CONNECTING INSTITUTIONS AND THE VALUE OF THE PDSA RESEARCH METHOD. We will learn more about promising practices in retaining rural, first-generation, and other underrepresented STEM students and how we can bridge the gap from college to the STEM workforce. Our conference sessions will focus on institutional collaboration, STEM industry insights and plan-do-study-act cycles.

[Click here for more information and to register!](#)

Institutional Updates

Blue Ridge Community and Technical College (BRCTC)

BRCTC's campus club hosted a VR Escape Room event at the end of March and a game night in April. They are also holding elections for new officers for the next school term.

Fairmont State University

Fairmont's First2 club held their last club meeting of the semester; they are looking forward to their end-of-semester dinner with S-STEM and SURE. They have had multiple discussions about how they can improve recruitment and retention for next semester. First2 members at Fairmont held a joint institutional team meeting and club meeting and they are preparing for their summer bridge program. A group of First2 students attended the annual West Virginia Academy of Science (WVAS) meeting in April at Glenville State University.

Glenville State University

Glenville's institutional team has been working hard this semester; they have held numerous events such as study sessions, a student-faculty potluck PDSA, and an event where they educated peers about the First2 club and first-generation STEM students while handing out candy bags. At their candy event, 30 people responded to a short survey about rural, underrepresented and/or first-generation students in STEM and what they know about those topics. They have been meeting weekly to plan their retreat and upcoming PDSA. They completed their PDSA on student-faculty interactions, which was a potluck to bring STEM professors and students together to increase belongingness.

Marshall University

Marshall's First2 team hosted a fun restaurant outing to increase their connectedness as a group during the month of April.

Shepherd University

This month has been a great beginning for the First2 Network at Shepherd! Their first group of events, which involved tabling in Ramsden (their dining hall), had a little bit of a rocky start but the following events had a great turnout. They hosted a "Final Exams Prep Seminar," where they presented and discussed study tips and practical advice with other STEM students. They also had two study session events for finals. Perhaps most exciting of all, they got approval to move forward with creating a STEM student success center out of one of the lesser-used computer labs! They sent out a survey to get a better picture of how students envision the space being used, which got a whopping 112 student responses. Overall, they are happy with the level of engagement they have been able to garner, but there is always room to grow.

University of Charleston

This has been a busy month for UC's First2 club. They hosted another exciting First 2 Impromptu Lecture PDSA and crowned Professor Lori James as the new winner of the BS Award! They also hosted a senior send off at Pies and Pints where they celebrated their graduating seniors Hailey Cox, Jacob Slate, and Lauren Roush. Hailey and Lauren are premedical students who plan to pursue medical school after graduation. Jacob Slate is planning to pursue a Master's degree. Student Director Hailey Cox received the outstanding senior award from the Biology department. Directors Hailey Cox and Emily Hissom acted as judges for the Kanawha County Health Sciences and Technology Academy (HSTA) symposium.



University of Charleston Student Directors Hailey Cox and Emily Hissom serving as judges for the Kanawha County HSTA symposium.

West Virginia University

Student Director Rachel King was awarded the Goldwater Scholarship! It's a huge recognition for excellence in undergraduate research. Tier 2 Scholars Sydney Kudlak and Mylee Franklin hosted a Donuts with the Deans event where students were invited to network with faculty and staff from WVU in a casual environment between classes. Student Directors hosted a table at Earth Day on the Green at WVU (hosted by the WVU Sierra Coalition); many people were directed to the First2 website! Scholar Maya Dixon-Gross presented her research at the Spring 2024 WVU Research Symposium, titled "The Lenition of Consonants in Different Prosodic Boundary Strengths." She will also be interning at the WVU Cancer Research Institute under Dr. Ivan Martinez. WVU's First2 Club plans to host a "Professor Help Session" with STEM professors where scholars can ask questions related to course content and finals; networking will also be encouraged. Dr. Tobi Odeleye from the WVU Department of Chemistry has agreed to join the First2 Network institutional team, welcome Dr. Odeleye! Their club held a graduation party to celebrate graduating First2 students Keyzar, Revan, and Sarah. Their institutional team has been working on closing out this year's PDSAs, including the Workshop Series PDSA. Political Science major and First2 Scholar (funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission) Stephanie Sarfo was awarded a Gilman Scholarship to study in South Korea this summer; the aspiring lawyer said she believes studying abroad will help her develop skills in intercultural sensitivity and adapting to new environments. Neuroscience major and First2

student Remeri McClanahan was recently recognized as the 2024 WVU Undergraduate Student Employee of the Year. Remi has worked as an undergraduate researcher for Dr. Carla Brigandi for the last two years. See the write up at:

<https://media.appliedhumansciences.wvu.edu/stories/2024/04/14/wvu-recognizes-remeri-mcclanahan-for-work-on-project-appalachian-coders>.

West Virginia University Institute of Technology (WVU Tech)

WVU Tech's First2 club is wrapping up the year with their Campus Resources PDSA; students got to learn about different resources they have on campus beyond just the classroom resources. Students also celebrated winning several awards at the Dean of Students Awards and TRIO Student Support Services end of the year banquet. Students and faculty enjoyed their second annual cookout, sponsored in-part by the First2 Network club. Several WVU Tech First2 members are planning to attend the First2 Conference in May.

First2 Students Present at the Appalachian Studies Conference

First2 Network was proud to present a panel presentation, "The First-Generation Experience: Navigating Support Systems in Appalachian Higher Education" on March 9th at the 47th Annual Appalachian Studies Conference which was held this year at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC. First2 students prepared content for this panel presentation that was then finalized and facilitated by Jenny Bunner, Rachel King and Nicole Liang.

The theme for this year's conference was "Beloved Community: Pride in Identity, Culture and Geography." First2's presentation spoke to the importance of understanding the identities of first-generation students in the Appalachian region and how student support staff, faculty and peers can be part of building supportive networks for these students within their respective academic and professional settings.

Their presentation emphasized the significance of students establishing effective communication with professors and academic advisors which included discussions about the accessibility of professors through office hours, email etiquette, and having advisors and peer mentors provide guidance on how to communicate professionally with professors and navigate campus resources. They also discussed other support systems available to first-generation students and how these resources play a pivotal role in student success, such as academic advisors, career services offices and teaching assistants. The value of undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs) was highlighted because UTAs may feel more approachable than graduate teaching assistants to undergraduate first-generation students

who may feel more comfortable engaging with peers that are closer to their age and that have more recently navigated similar academic content and challenges.



First2 students (from left) Rachel King, Nicole Liang and Jenny Bunner presenting at the 47th Annual Appalachian Studies Conference at Western Carolina University

From their presentation abstract, “By addressing communication barriers and encouraging active engagement with campus resources, we aim to empower first-generation students to thrive academically and professionally in the Appalachian context.”

First2 marketing and support staff member Margaret Falletta from High Rocks attended the conference with First2 and said about this experience, “It was a wonderful opportunity for conference attendees to actively learn from, and engage with, the First2 students about effective strategies for understanding and supporting first-generation student experiences. I think that those that attended this presentation felt deeply engaged with the material being facilitated and left with many practical take-aways they could immediately implement in their professional and academic spaces. By sharing our network knowledge and ‘lessons learned’ at conferences like this, we make further strides towards large-scale systems change across the region.”

Congratulations to Jenny, Nicole and Rachel for facilitating an inspiring presentation for all that attended!

[Click here to view their presentation slides.](#)

First2 at the First Generation Conference

First2 Network was excited to participate in the West Virginia First-Generation Student Success Conference in Charleston, organized by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) and Council for Community and Technical College. West Virginia University, University of Charleston and Fairmont University First2 groups all had representatives there, including two students, two faculty, and three student success staff members from Fairmont University. From WVHEPC, “This event focused on advancing the academic success of first-generation college students. Participants focused on addressing first-generation students’ unique needs, which is paramount to ensuring their success in college and in their careers.”

[Click here to read more about this conference.](#)



First2 staff and team members attended the West Virginia First-Generation Student Success Conference

CURE Summer Workshop Interest Form

Would you like to learn more about how to include student research activities in your STEM courses? We all know from the literature and our own work at First2 that engaging students

in research and other work-based activities is a game changer when it comes to STEM persistence. However, for a variety of reasons, not all STEM students can take advantage of internship opportunities. First2 is interested in funding a summer workshop for STEM faculty that will get you started on developing a research experience within your existing STEM course(s), which could be piloted in the spring of 2025 or fall of 2025. The workshop will be led by one of the leaders of CUREnet and it will be highly interactive!

This simple survey will gauge your interest in participating in the workshop and building a CURE, but does not obligate you to participate. We'll do follow-up communication once we get a sense of everyone's interest. Also, please feel free to forward this interest survey to other STEM faculty on your campus! <https://forms.gle/4T15u1R2p5eqddPH6>

Events and Opportunities



REU Site: Undergraduate Robotics Research for Rural Appalachia

West Virginia University Research Corporation
May 2024 - Jul 2024

Undergraduate Robotics Research for Rural Appalachia:

Undergraduate students will work in small groups in one of five robotics research labs at WVU under the mentorship of a faculty and perform research in the areas of motion planning, localization, coordination, autonomy, and locomotion for challenging field applications and more!

Program Dates: May 20-July 26, 2024 (10 weeks in duration).

Participant Benefits: Stipend of \$7,000 (\$700/week for 10-weeks), lodging, meal expenses, travel reimbursement to/from REU Site (limited to ~\$500/participant) and comprehensive training to move participants toward intellectual and research independence.

Eligibility:

- U.S. citizenship or permanent residency is required.
- Students must be currently enrolled in an undergraduate program (no specific majors are required).
- Students must not have completed an undergraduate degree prior to the summer program.
- Students from any higher-education institution of the U.S. are eligible, but students from institutions in the [Appalachian region](#) are especially encouraged to apply.

Application: [Apply for the Summer 2024 program](#) by May 10, 2024. Applications will be evaluated as soon as received and on a rolling basis. Applications will be accepted until all positions are filled.



“The West Virginia Upward Bound Math-Science Academy 2024 (WVUBMS) will be held at West Liberty University in West Liberty, WV, starting May 28 through July 3. Up to 120 high school students from John Marshall and Weir High Schools will participate in this college-going summer academy experience. West Virginia UBMS will hire camp counselors to serve at the summer academy. If you are interested, [complete this application](#). Applying to be a camp counselor at WVUBMS is a competitive and professional work-based experience. The application process will consist of reviewing applications, contacting references, interviewing with WVUBMS staff, and passing a personal background check. If you have questions about WVUBMS or the camp counselor position, please contact WVUBMS staff at 304-414-5572. For more information about WVUBMS, check out our webpage at <http://wvupwardbound.org/>.”



Be a SUMMER INTERN at High Rocks' transformational camps!

High Rocks Summer Internships

High Rocks is a leader in transforming the lives of young people and the impact they have on their communities. We are a set of award-winning leadership development programs based in Pocahontas County, West Virginia. High Rocks' mission is to educate, empower, and inspire young people, giving them the confidence to lead active lives and work towards the long-term betterment of our community. A group of four to six interns complete a ten-week internship at High Rocks from mid-May to mid-August. The internship has two main

components – seminars and hands-on experience working with teen girls in summer camps and trips. This creative and unique experience will help you grow as a leader, a thinker, and a doer. All majors are welcome to apply as long as you bring a passion for hard work, youth development, and social change. Interns are provided with housing at High Rocks and with meals while summer camps are in session. Interns also receive a living stipend of \$776.33 twice monthly and an

Education Award of \$1,824.07. To apply, send your résumé (with references) and cover letter to: Internship Program, High Rocks, 195 Thompson Rd., Hillsboro WV, 24946 or email your cover letter, references, and résumé to Brooke Burns, brooke@highrocks.org. Questions? Email Brooke or call (304) 653-4891. For more information about our program, visit highrocks.org.



West Virginia Student Success Summit

“Navigating New Horizons: Empowering Educators & Students in a Changing Landscape”

Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center

July 17 & 18, 2024

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education, the West Virginia Department of Education, and West Virginia GEAR UP are thrilled to invite you to "Navigating New Horizons: Empowering Educators & Students in a Changing Landscape," an essential event designed to equip educators with the tools, knowledge, and resources needed to thrive in an ever-evolving educational landscape. In today's rapidly changing world, educators and stakeholders play a pivotal role in guiding students toward success. This event aims to empower stakeholders with the insights, strategies, and tools necessary to navigate new challenges and seize emerging opportunities effectively. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

REMINDER: West Virginia University Undergraduate Research External Opportunities

Listings

West Virginia University Undergraduate Research maintains a list of external opportunities, including summer internship opportunities, that students can apply for. To view their active listings visit:

<https://undergraduateresearch.wvu.edu/research-opportunities/external-opportunities>



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