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

**FIRST2 NETWORK**  
AND  
**WEST VIRGINIA**  
**JOBS NETWORK**

**CO-CONFERENCE**

**MAY 15-17**      **CANAAN VALLEY**  
**RESORT STATE PARK**      **MAY 16-18**

**WEST VIRGINIA**  
**JOBS NETWORK**

**FIRST2**  
**NETWORK**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
**AND TO REGISTER VISIT:**

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/first2-network-and-the-wv-jobs-network-spring-co-conference-tickets-817485169147?aff=oddtcreator>

## **Institutional Updates**

### **Blue Ridge Community and Technical College**

Their campus club is working on planning club events including a trip to the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. They hosted a Pi Day event on March 14th, a game day on March 15th, a lunch with the IT Dean/Faculty on March 20th, and a club meeting March 20th where a guest speaker spoke to attendees about career soft skills. They also held an institutional team meeting in mid-March.

### **Fairmont State University**

Student Scholar Jay Bow got accepted into a Bio-Archaeology field school. Congratulations Jay! At a recent meeting, another Fairmont student scholar presented about internship opportunities. Their campus club is looking into planning a trip in collaboration with S-STEM. They also held a meeting to discuss the results of the Appalachian Cultures Survey done by Kristy Henson.

### **Glennville State University**

Glenville's campus club hosted two study sessions during midterms to help students relax and study and they presented at their faculty retreat at Stonewall Resort. On March 21st they hosted a student faculty potluck as part of a planned PDSA which seven students attended.

### **Marshall University**

Marshall's First2 team tabled at the Science Olympiad. Student Scholar Erica Edinger went to the Annual Meeting for the Association of Southeastern Biologists and presented a poster there. Guest speaker Brian Wilt spoke on March 12th to First2 students and others in the COS interested in learning about his experience as a first-generation student. Two First2 students traveled with faculty to a conference during Marshall's spring break.



*First2 Marshall Scholar Erica Edinger at the Annual Meeting for the Association of Southeastern Biologists*

### **Shepherd University**

Shepherd is focused on continuing to set up their First2 program and spread awareness about the presence of First2 on their campus. Their student directors have held tabling events and have visited classes to speak to students.

### **University of Charleston**

First2 at UC has been focused on planning their Bingo PDSA scheduled for March 26th. They closed out last year's campus clubs PDSA and their Impromptu Lecture PSDA and they are working on closing out their Math Boot Camp PDSA.

### **West Virginia University**

WVU's campus club hosted a club meeting about opportunities at the rec center and they have begun planning their semester trip. They hosted a STEM faculty panel on March 20th that six instructors (representing math, chemistry, biology and physics) and about 100 students attended; the professors covered many important topics such as imposter syndrome and self care and students had the opportunity to ask the professors questions. Their Tier 2 Scholars are planning to host a Donuts with the Deans event. Student Co-Chair Rachel King presented about what First2 Network is doing to support first-generation students in the Appalachian region at the Appalachian Studies Association

Conference (with UC student Jenny Bunner and Marshall Student Nicole Liang); she said about that experience, and she was accepted into the Greenbank Observatory Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU). Scholar Maya Dixon-Gross recently obtained a teaching assistant (TA) position in a biology course at WVU, scholar Angelina Duriez got accepted into the WVU Cancer Institute summer internship, and scholars Sydney Kudlack and Stephanie Sarfo participated in the First2 Legislative Ambassadors trip that was held in February. Michelle Richards-Babb, with help from a chemistry graduate student, set up a table at the Buckhannon Upshur Middle School Career Fair on March 7th providing information about attending college and majoring in chemistry. Michelle Richards-Babb also administered the Chemistry Merit Badge with assistance from a past First2 student during WVU's Merit Badge University on Feb 24th. Michelle Paden and Michelle Richards-Babb attended the First2 Higher Education Administrator workshop on Feb 23rd. Oluwatobi (Tobi) Odeleye has committed to joining the First2 Network, welcome Tobi!

### **West Virginia University Institute of Technology**

Some of WVU Tech's campus club members will be going to Washington D.C. for a TRIO SSS Graduate School & Cultural Enrichment spring break trip. They are working towards finishing out their PDSAs for the year. They are planning an end of the year celebration, sponsored by the Dean of the College of Engineering and Computer Sciences and open to their entire campus, to celebrate their graduates.

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### **First2 Higher Education Administrator Conference**



On February 23rd, 2024, First2 Network held a Higher Education Administrator workshop in the WV Higher Education Policy Commission's David Hendrickson Conference Room of the WV Regional Technology Park in Charleston, WV. The workshop activities explored how administrative efforts in higher education can help change systems to better support the success of rural, first generation and other underrepresented STEM students. 23 people attended the workshop including 15 representatives (faculty, department chairs, deans, and/or provosts) from 8 higher education institutions, six First2 staff members

and/or PIs, a member of our Industry Advisory Board and a member of our External Advisory Council.

Taking the opportunity to use HEPC's new conference space at the WV Regional Technology Park (and receiving a warm welcome from STaR Assistant Director Janet Rorrer), this group came together to explore together how strategically targeted administrative efforts can help change systems to better support the success of rural, first generation and other underrepresented STEM students. Working together, Institutional Administrators, Faculty Liaisons, and First2 staff focused on key issues of effort and investment that every member of the team carries.

One of the most prominent issues that has surfaced again and again over the years has been team incentives. This can affect initially involving participants but also in continued involvement, particularly as financial compensation is not going to be a primary motivation. Members workshopped alternative but equally important means of compensation, which included but were not limited to merit for post-tenure, placement in faculty PAF as service and/or scholarship, time release incentives, and shifts in departmental funding toward retention. It was clear at all levels of the institution there was care and concern for faculty and staff work.

Another key issue revolved around student credit requirements - specifically in the way they affect student scholarships, full-time enrollment, and re-entry into programs. Many groups discussed support systems such as parachute courses, alternate term courses, and substitute courses from student success centers. The teams recognized issues of course transferability and low course sizes. They also recognized the limitations of alternative term courses and the extra financial costs.

The workshop was a positive and productive event focused on creating ways for students, faculty, and institutions to work together and work effectively. The workshop helped develop ideas for how to create communication channels not just within an institution (including students, faculty, deans, student success, etc.) but also across institutions.

The workshop was organized by First2 Network and Science, Technology and Research Division of HEPC, with support from the National Science Foundation under Award Numbers: HRD-1834586, WV Higher Education Policy Commission; HRD-1834601, Green Bank Observatory; HRD-1834575, Fairmont State University.

[Click here](#) to read a full summary of the First2 Network Higher Education Administrator workshop and [click here](#) to access a recording of the workshop.

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## Student Spotlight: Zorayah Jackson



Zorayah Jackson is a First2 Student Director and second year student at Blue Ridge Community and Technical College (BRCTC) studying software development engineering. The summer before starting at BRCTC, she attended the 2-week summer internship program being offered there through First2 Network. During that experience First2 Student Coordinator Samantha Mitchell spoke to them more about what the First2 Network was.

Zorayah spoke about how, “at that time, I still wasn't a hundred percent sure what it was, but I knew that it was for first generation students and they were helping them to stay in STEM...I thought it was a great opportunity and a great experience because that [internship] helped me get to know all the professors. Half of the day was for the internship and then the other half was different guest professors talking about the classes they teach, so we got to meet all of the professors that we would end up having throughout our courses.”

When asked what she gained most from that internship, she talked about how getting to know her advisor was particularly helpful. “Any questions I had, I was really comfortable being able to ask.” She also spoke about how getting to know her STEM peers was an important part of that experience. “I felt like I had a lot of support because I knew everyone; I was comfortable enough to reach out through an email. I also had people that were taking the same classes, so I was okay asking them for help.”

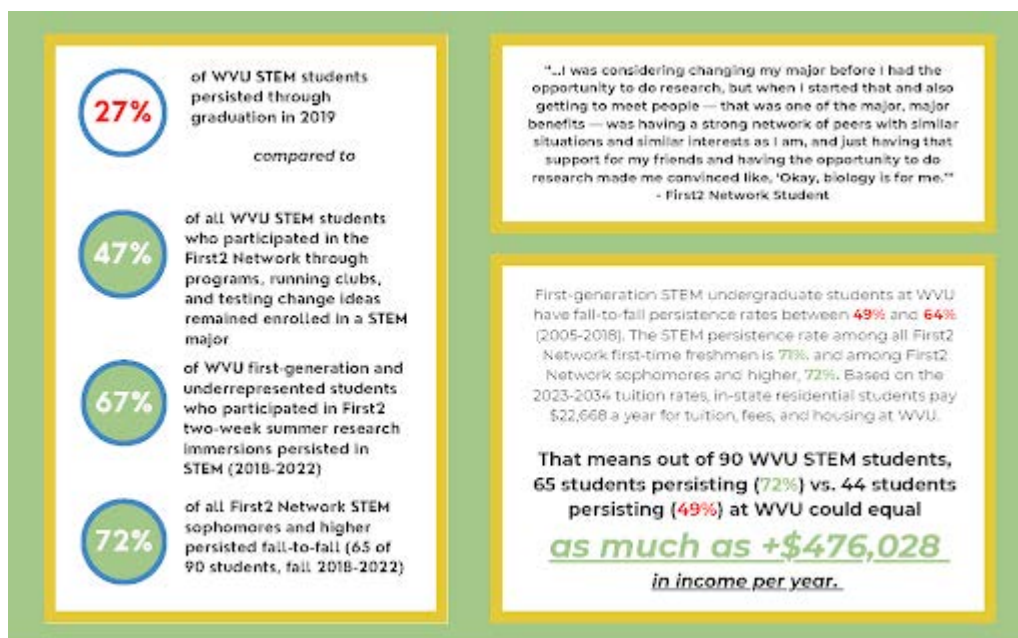
We talked about the First2 program at BRCTC and she noted that BRCTC's First2 campus club offers multiple meeting times, including meetings over Zoom and an evening time, so that student commuters have more options to attend. We discussed what feels important to her about being a First2 Student Director there and Zorayah said, “I wanted to be a director so that I could help mentor people...after the summer [internship] we had two mentors and I just felt like that was such a great thing to have. I wanted to be somebody that someone could look up to or someone that could help be a tutor for STEM classes; I felt like if [students] know what they're doing they'll be more likely to stay.”

She says her favorite experience being a First2 Student Director has been, “planning out PDSAs...I like thinking about how it is going to have an effect... thinking about the impact

that it could have.” We also discussed the peer-to-peer mentoring the First2 student directors have been doing and how she thinks that this is a valuable initiative for the network to continue. She said, “I feel like it helps, especially with first generation students, if you have somebody to talk to about college. Someone who's been in college for a little bit longer than you, they'll be able to help you and [offer] tips...especially because they're part of the network and in the same or related major, they have most of the same experiences that you have, so seeing how they manage their time, how their transition from high school to college was, how they grew relationships with their professors, how they've been able to better fit in on campus...I feel like it's important to have somebody to talk to who has gone through the same experiences as you.”

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## Celebrating our Network Successes



## On the Road with First2: Legislative Ambassadors at the WV State Capitol

On February 22nd, 2024 our First2 Legislative Ambassadors visited the West Virginia Capitol to learn more about the Capitol building and the legislative process as well as to engage with state representatives about legislative decisions that may affect the retention and persistence of STEM students. First2 Student Directors and Scholars also wrote letters to their state representatives to complement their visit and these engagement efforts.

While at the Capitol, they shared information about the First2 program with various organizations, senators and house representatives. Some First2 students chose to speak

with their representatives about HB 4919, a bill that would permit a college student to reapply for the Promise Scholarship on an annual basis if that student falls out of eligibility during the academic year. We believe their engagement with legislators to discuss this bill and the benefits it could have for college students pursuing STEM degrees (academically rigorous disciplines like science and engineering are difficult for all students, but first-generation and other underrepresented students encounter even more obstacles) was truly meaningful, and since our visit this bill was passed by both legislative bodies and approved by the Governor.

We are incredibly proud of our First2 students for speaking with their representatives about issues that could have a profound impact on the systems change work that feels important to them and that will positively affect STEM student success for years to come.



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## Events and Opportunities





### **Solar Eclipse Viewing Party**

**April 8, 1:30 - 4 p.m.**

**WVU Planetarium**

From WVU's website, "Experience the 2024 solar eclipse with the WVU Planetarium! On April 8th, the U.S. will be ideally situated to experience either a partial or total solar eclipse. Take advantage of this rare opportunity and join the astronomers from the WVU Planetarium as they host a Solar Eclipse Viewing Event on campus. This free event will offer an opportunity for audiences of all ages to experience the partial solar eclipse right here on campus alongside astronomers who can answer all of your eclipse questions. Planned activities include children's coloring activities, astronomy demonstrations, and hands-on observing through our solar filter-equipped telescopes. Eclipse glasses will be handed out to all attendees at the event while supplies last."

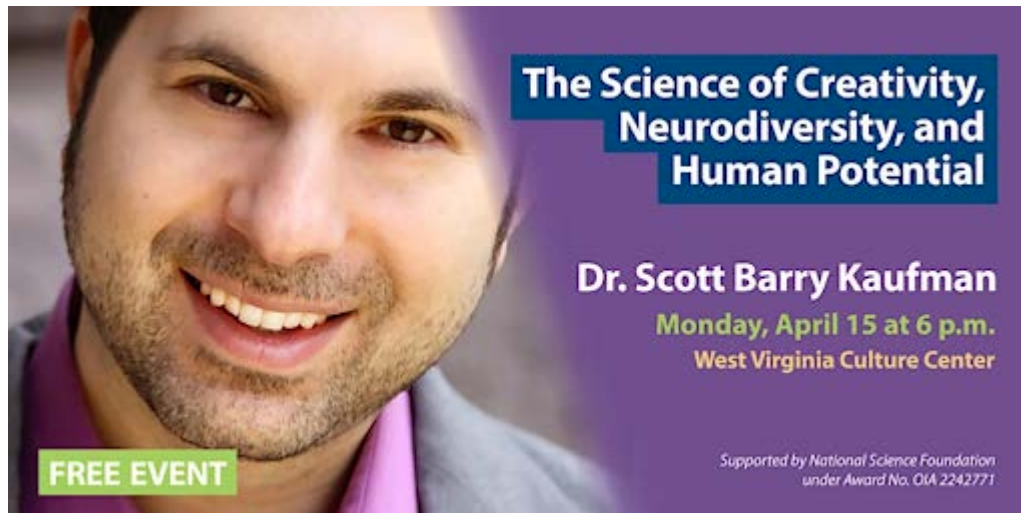


Be a SUMMER INTERN at High Rocks' transformational camps!

### **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](mailto:brooke@highrocks.org). Questions? Email Brooke or call (304) 653-4891. For more information about our program, visit [highrocks.org](http://highrocks.org).



**STaR Division's STEM Speaker Series: Dr. Scott Barry Kaufman**  
**West Virginia Culture Center in Charleston, WV**  
**April 15 at 6 .p.m**

"Renowned humanistic psychologist, [Scott Barry Kaufman](#), explores the depths of human potential by challenging traditional metrics of success. Using his research, knowledge of science, and enthusiasm, Kaufman helps all kinds of minds live a more creative, fulfilling, and self-actualized life. His early educational experiences made him realize the deep reservoir of untapped potential of students, including bright and creative children who have been diagnosed with a learning disability. Today, Kaufman shares the science of thriving at work and growing from setbacks as well as how to foster self-actualization and creativity in the workplace and in education." [Register for free here](#)



## **West Virginia Student Success Summit**

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

**Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center**

**July 17th & 18th, 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.](#)



“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/>.”

### **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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### **News from the NSF INCLUDES National Network**

#### **Webinar on the 2021-2022 Committee on Equal Opportunities in Science and Engineering Report April 19th 1:00pm-2:30pm EST**

“The NSF INCLUDES Coordination Hub is excited to announce the launch of our National Network Quarterly Webinars! To inaugurate these engagements, we are pleased to extend an invitation to our upcoming webinar focused on the pivotal [2021-2022 Committee on Equal Opportunities in Science and Engineering \(CEOSE\) report](#). Delve into a comprehensive exploration of “Understanding Intersectionality” and its critical role in enriching the STEM community with diverse perspectives and expertise.

This session aims to illuminate the key recommendations of the CEOSE report, offering insights on how intersectional considerations can shape and strengthen institutional policies, practices, data collection, and analysis. Join us to gain a deeper understanding of how these recommendations can impact your current endeavors and inspire meaningful actions in your future projects. Prepare to engage in dynamic discussions, exchange ideas, and explore the tangible implications of the CEOSE report's findings. Your participation is vital as we strive to integrate these insights into our collective journey towards a more

inclusive and diverse STEM environment.

Mark your calendars for April 19th at 10:00 - 11:30am PST/1:00 - 2:30pm EST for insightful discourse and register

here: <https://sri.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJlscO6srjwEiuSOppUMdanguKW8jyglQU>

We encourage you to be a part of this conversation and look forward to your valuable contributions. Should you have any inquiries or require further information, please feel free to reach out at [nsfincludeshub@sri.com](mailto:nsfincludeshub@sri.com)



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