



In This Issue

- Celebrating our First2 Graduates
- First2 Spring Conference Highlights
- Events and Opportunities
- News from the National INCLUDES Network

First2 Network is proud to celebrate our participants that have graduated during the 2023-2024 academic year. CONGRATULATIONS for all of your academic accomplishments!



Josiah Baker has graduated with a Mechanical Engineering degree from West Virginia University Institute of Technology. He says, “After graduation, I plan on pursuing a master's degree in Engineering starting in Fall 2025 while working in an engineering position. A major highlight from my time with the First2 Network has been the All Students meetings, where I had the opportunity to interact with STEM students from across the state. My advice to future first-gen or other underrepresented

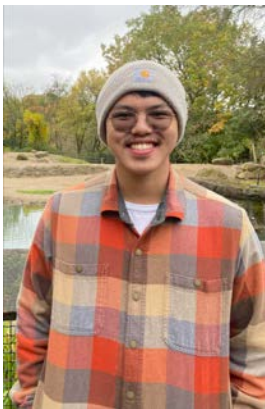
students is to learn how to prioritize commitments and understand that it's okay to say no.”



Julia Barnes was a Marshall scholar for one year. She has graduated from Marshall University with a major in Forensic Chemistry and minors in Biology and Criminal Justice. She says, “My next steps are to attend Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia in Forensic Drug Analysis/Toxicology. I’m super excited for the next two years!”



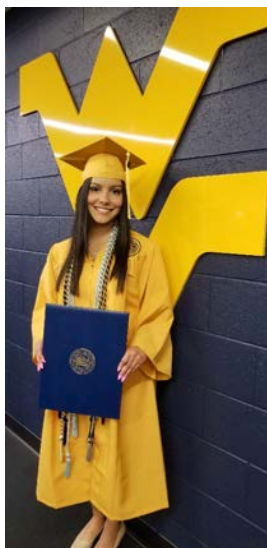
Karlana Boyce has graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering Technology in Electronics Engineering Technology and a minor in Computer Science from Fairmont State University. She says, “A major highlight from my time as a First2 Scholar was being able to connect with other students that have similar interests as me. I was never great at making friends, but First2 allowed me to find my people within Fairmont's campus and beyond.” Karlana is pictured here with their senior project, the ‘Treble to Bass Converter.’



Revan Buan is completing his last semester at West Virginia University doing an internship for Exercise Physiology. He has received an internship with Onehealth WV doing research about climate change at West Virginia State University. He says, “My biggest takeaway from First2 is that there will always be a community that can help you become successful in your time at college. To all the underrepresented students, I would say to make sure to put yourself out there and try to network with your classmates and professors. Just getting to know your classmates and professors will always go a long way if you continue to communicate with them year after year.”



Hailey Cox has graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with a Biomedical Sciences Concentration from the University of Charleston. She says, "Working with the First2 Network for the past three years has been a tremendous experience that has led me to recognize growth within myself and those I closely worked with. Perhaps the most rewarding experience of my undergraduate career was watching the atmosphere of our small club evolve. What started as a mostly virtual experience when I entered, to being a vibrant community when I left, I know we created something really special. With that, First2 taught me that there are always going to be changes needed to improve our environments, and the organization equipped me with the tools to manifest these transformations."



Keyzar Dominguez has graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry from the Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Design at West Virginia University.. Keyzar's post-graduation plans are to attend the Chemical Education Ph.D. program at West Virginia University and to continue conducting research that aims to improve how students learn chemistry.



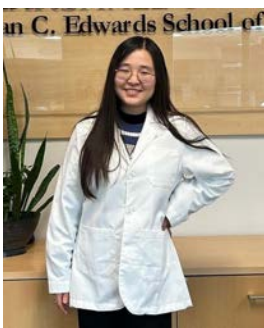
Oscar Enriquez graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences degree in Multidisciplinary Studies from West Virginia University in December 2023. He hopes to get a Masters in Business Administration in the future. He says, "My major takeaway from First2 Network is that a community can be made anywhere. Being a first generation student is hard but there are many ways to set yourself up for success."



Zorayah Jackson has graduated with an Associate of Applied Science in Software Development Engineering degree from Blue Ridge Community and Technical College. Post-graduation she plans to take some time to work on expanding the skills she has learned in addition to developing new skills that are in-demand professionally. She says, "A major highlight from my time with First2 was getting to know my professors more. When I attended school most of my classes were online, so that connection is already harder to make for the average online student; but because of First2, I was able to create those relationships with the professors that were a part of First2. Even if I wasn't in their class every day, I still felt like that connection was created and maintained through different events and I felt comfortable enough to reach out in case I did have trouble, which is a really big step for me; and I've been able to apply that to life as well, not just school."



Ashley Lanham has graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science from West Virginia University Institute of Technology (WVU Tech). WVU Tech Professor J.T. Hird reflects, "Ashley Lanham has been an important leader in the WVU Tech First2 group and an excellent student. She is a highly recommended student tutor. She mentored more junior students starting to do research in computer science and helped us recruit and retain computer science majors."



Nicole Liang was a Marshall scholar for four years. She has graduated from Marshall University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences with minors in Chemistry, Psychology, and Pre-Professional Healthcare Studies. She says, "I will be attending the Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine after graduation!"



Lauren Roush (SGA ResLife Representative, Honors College Student, Lions Club President and Tutor) has graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from the University of Charleston. She says, "My major takeaway from First 2 Network was the friendships. I am so thankful for my friends that I made through the program as well as the connections with the University of Charleston students and staff."



Garrett Sherman-Bender graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from WVU in December 2023. First2 Student Coordinator Samantha Mitchell reflects, "During his time with our program, Garrett demonstrated remarkable growth as a leader. His ability to inspire and guide others has developed tremendously, making him a role model for his peers and a testament to the impact of our program."



Jacob Slate from Mammoth, WV has graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in West Virginia Biology with an Environmental Biology Concentration from the University of Charleston. We are grateful for Jacob's participation in First2 and his contribution to the network. We wish him the best as he continues to work towards his future goals!



Sarah Titta, Geology major from Elkview, WV has graduated from West Virginia University. Margaret Falletta (First2 Marketing and Support) reflects, "I worked with Sarah during their summer immersion experience and truly admired their enthusiasm, their humor, their creativity, and their dedication to STEM research." We wish Sarah the best and we are excited to see what the future brings!



Callia Yang was a Marshall student director and co-chair of First2 for two years. She has graduated from Marshall University with a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in Biology and minoring in Mathematics, Chemistry, and Pre-Professional Healthcare Studies with honors. She was the student body Vice President, a co-chair of the First2 Network, and an alumna of Alpha Xi Delta. She says, "Next year I plan on continuing my education at the Marshall University School of Medicine!"

West Virginia University First2 Students Win Goldwater Scholarships

WVU-First2 Institutional Team member and WVU undergraduate, Rachel (Ray) King, was awarded a 2024 Goldwater Scholarship to support Ray's continued undergraduate education in physics with a research focus in the area of astronomy. Ray has been involved in the First2 Network for the last three years and has served as both Director and Co-Chair. Easton Cahill was supported by First2 during a summer internship at WVU. Easton was awarded a 2024 Goldwater Scholarship to support his undergraduate education in biology and research in the area of ophthalmology. Great job Ray and Easton, WVU and the First2 Network are proud of your success!

[Click here to read an article about the Goldwater Scholarship recipients.](#)

First2 Spring Conference Highlights



First2 Network and West Virginia Jobs Network Co-Conference Attendees

The annual First2 Network Spring conference was held May 16-18 at Canaan Valley Resort in Davis, WV.. This year was different as we ran a co-conference with the West Virginia Jobs Network (WVJN) working to focus on the connections between higher education and employment and what those pathways look like for students and early career professionals; WVJN's held conference events May 15-17. The location was more centralized to all of the higher education institutions although some industry members noted that it was remote and therefore made it more difficult to attend for only one day. Overall, the conference received comments about an increase in engaging sessions, open topics, and excellent bacon!

Organizations that attended were extremely varied. Organizations made an effort to send at least 1-2 representatives (many making up the 1-2% groups); however, these groups had an enormous impact, leading 12/35 (34%) of the sessions and taking part in two separate networking events, the Career Connector Mocktail Networking event (facilitated by Generation WV) and the Employment Mentoring Event. Both of these networking events were large (~1 hour sessions) and were student/early career faculty focused.



students engaging and presenting during Saturday morning's poster session

We also saw an uptick in roles for the conference. We had an increase in attendance, 97 total attendees this year compared to 74 total attendees last year. In particular, a large number of students attended (26 total); their voices and perspectives were central to the conference, with students leading 10 of the 35 sessions (28%). These sessions focused on current pathway effectiveness, pain points, and successes (a student panel, student led PDSAs, and student led demonstrations as examples). We also had student success/counselors specify their presence, i.e. listed themselves as part of Fairmont State Student Success rather than Fairmont State, which was a major goal. In the future we

hope to see this increase and plan to create a separate identifier for these professionals. We also saw the participation of a second 2-year school (in addition to Blue Ridge Community and Technical College), New River Community and Technical College, whom we met at the HEPC First-Generation Conference in February. We are very excited to continue building our relationship with New River and other community and technical colleges.

	Percent of Total
Fairmont State University	16.9%
West Virginia Institute of Technology	10.1%
High Rocks	9.0%
West Virginia University	5.6%
First2 Network	5.6%
University of Charleston	4.5%
Marshall University	4.5%
Glenville State College	4.5%
Eastern Kentucky University	4.5%
Generation WV	3.4%
Coalfield Development	3.4%
Blue Ridge CTC	3.4%
Shepherd University	2.2%
Northern Kentucky University	2.2%
New River Community and Technical College	2.2%
HEPC	2.2%
AVN Corporation	2.2%
WVU Medicine	1.1%
WV All STAR	1.1%
Syensqo	1.1%
none	1.1%
InspectionGo/ramenopolis	1.1%
Green Bank Observatory	1.1%
First Ascent	1.1%
Davis & Elkins College	1.1%
Chemours	1.1%
Brad & Alys Smith Outdoor Economic Development Collaborative - First Ascent	1.1%
Ascend WV	1.1%
Appalachian Promise Alliance	1.1%

variety of organizations in attendance and their relative attendance percent.

**THANK YOU AGAIN TO EVERYONE THAT ATTENDED THE FIRST2 NETWORK AND
WEST VIRGINIA JOBS NETWORK CO-CONFERENCE!**

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW CONFERENCE PHOTOS, PRESENTATIONS AND POSTERS](#)

Events and Opportunities



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.](#)

AmeriCorps Service in West Virginia

Did you know that for each year of AmeriCorps (or VISTA) service in West Virginia, you can earn one year of tuition and fees (last dollar in) that can be used for undergraduate or graduate school in WV? [Search for AmeriCorps opportunities here \(you can filter by state\).](#) and [search for VISTA positions here.](#)

News from the NSF INCLUDES National Network

Cluster 1 (Communities of Practice) - Ecosystem Interruptions

Thursday, July 18th 2:00pm-3:30pm EST

Associated with NSF INCLUDES National Network

“Drawing on the previous two discussions, we will begin to identify ‘ecosystem interruptions’ that we can take collectively and potentially within our own projects, as relevant in your contexts, to accelerate the changes INCLUDES seeks. Here, we could outline possible agendas for stakeholders.”

Disclaimer - these are intended for affiliates with INCLUDES funded projects only.

Please register here: <https://e.eventform.com/?eid=4ZoxE%5BZyhDHEVNt3zPSpgZm3%3BXpRIO%3Bg%7D>



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