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### Register for the First2 Fall Network Conference and Higher Education Administrators Workshop



We are excited to welcome you to the First2 Network Fall Conference and Higher Education Administrators Workshop November 1-2, 2024 at Lakeview Golf Resort in Morgantown, WV! **Please register by October 18th.**

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

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### Institutional Updates

#### Blue Ridge Community and Technical College (BRCTC)

First2 at BRCTC started conducting twice monthly STEM club meetings (one at each campus) in September. They are planning a field trip to a local planetarium for a Halloween event and they are discussing a field trip to Green Bank Observatory for the spring. They are considering a change idea involving e-waste recycling for their community. Their goal this semester is to diversify their club membership and increase their First2 footprint on their campuses.

#### Eastern Kentucky University

First2 at EKU hosted their first club events in September; there was an open house for students as well as a "Donuts with the Dean" event hosted by their Associate Dean. EKU's team was thrilled to facilitate these activities after much planning and anticipation!

#### Glenville State University

The First2 campus club at Glenville had their first meeting in September and they are planning to continue meeting bi-weekly. They have an ice-cream social event planned for the end of November that will involve a student-faculty interaction change idea. They also provided information about their campus club at a recent on-campus event. Their campus club participated in the Homecoming Parade with their float "STEM and Bones" and a First2 banner that included STEM information; the parade also served as a club recruitment activity.



First2 Glenville students with their float "STEM and Bones" at the Glenville Homecoming Parade

#### Marshall University

First2's team at Marshall University has started meeting with students and planning change ideas for the coming year. They also hosted an institutional team meeting and it was very productive. Their campus club has been meeting and will be participating in a Pumpkin Festival as well as hosting a Donuts with the Dean event. They have started recruiting for campus club members and will be hosting a table at Marshall's First Generation Day and Green & White Day events. They are planning an engineering-themed Halloween event as well as a medical/pharmacy school Q&A panel. Marshall's First2 students also got to have dinner with Student Coordinator Samantha Mitchell while the network's support team was in town for a meeting!



First2 Marshall students and First2 Student Coordinator Samantha Mitchell

#### Shepherd University

First2 at Shepherd has a physics/math change idea in progress. They also had the grand opening of their STEM Student Success Center on Monday September 30th!

#### University of Charleston

UC's First2 team held their first change idea activity, a meet and greet event, which went extremely well. The event consisted of faculty introducing themselves to students as well as returning First2 students sharing their experiences. While the faculty were getting food, returning First2 students had the opportunity to openly talk to new students about their classes. Their institutional team is planning for multiple events including a pumpkin painting/carving event, a scavenger hunt and a Bingo Night.

#### West Virginia University

The First2 team at WVU has on-boarded 10 students for this semester; 2 Student Directors, 8 Assistant Student Directors, and 2 AmeriCorps members. Each student is mentored by a faculty/staff member who is heavily involved in, or resourced by, the First2 Network. Tobii Odeleye has four Assistant Student Directors assisting as peer mentors in her Chemistry 115 (Gen Chem 1) class twice a week. Their students have decided to focus their club on providing fun activities to the STEM community as a whole instead of focusing on activities for primarily First2 members. Also, WVU First2 students have been invited to collaborate with the [Foundational STEM Collaborative](#) to increase tutoring and belongingness efforts at WVU. Their team is continuing to send bi-weekly emails to all First2 members at WVU with information about campus STEM events.

#### West Virginia University Institute of Technology

The First2 campus club at WVU Tech has been meeting and actively recruiting members. They will be facilitating a Study Sessions plan-do-study-act cycle and they are planning a professional development workshop as well as two other group activities for October.

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#### Shepherd STEM Center Opening

We are excited to celebrate the opening of Shepherd University's new STEM Center!

Check out this great [article](#) about Shepherd's transformation of an old computer lab into a flexible STEM student space, made possible by funding from their President's Club and the First2 Network. Congratulations Shepherd!

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#### Student Highlights - Reanna Jackson

"My name is Reanna Jackson and I am a student director for the University of Charleston. This is my first year being a student director and I have already learned so much. First2 Network has given me a lot of opportunities to branch out, meet new people, and learn how to be a good leader. First2 Network has also allowed me to go outside my comfort zone and learn more about my strengths and weaknesses, as well as myself. Furthermore, I remember my first day of college, never feeling like I belonged to a club/organization and feeling scared about what to expect as a first-generation student who will be a woman in computer science, but First2 Network has made me feel like I belong somewhere. Therefore, First2 Network is an organization to be a leader, learn more about yourself, and be able to be a part of something where you never feel alone and get to work with other people even from different colleges."

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**AmeriCorps**  
West Virginia

#### First2 AmeriCorps Pilot

This semester First2 launched a pilot AmeriCorps program in which three First2 Student Directors will be completing their network responsibilities as AmeriCorps members. Ashlea Krasňanský from Marshall University, Griffin Niamatali from West Virginia University, and Stephanie Sarfo from West Virginia University will be serving as First2 Network AmeriCorps members for the 2024-2025 academic year.

First2 Student Coordinator Samantha Mitchell reflected, "I'm excited to expand our student directors into the AmeriCorps program because I believe it's an innovative model that could create a sustainable path forward for our work with the First2 Network. It also offers a variety of opportunities that could significantly help make higher education more affordable for our students."

AmeriCorps is a program that works with non-profit partners to provide members with opportunities to address local challenges through national service. In addition to increasing capacity for First2, AmeriCorps members placed in the network in West Virginia will receive monthly stipends and, after successfully completing their service, a Segal Education Award of \$2,817.14 to use toward educational expenses as well as a one-semester tuition waiver for any West Virginia public college/university.

"High Rocks is pleased to have the First2 Network come on board with this initial class of AmeriCorps members," says High Rocks Director of Programs Devin Preston. "We hope Ashlea, Griffin, and Stephanie take pride in their commitment to national service while taking full advantage of the leadership opportunities, workforce development, and tuition assistance provided to them through High Rocks, AmeriCorps, and the state of WV. They are the pioneers in what we envision as a strong new pathway to success for students."

[To learn more about AmeriCorps click here.](#)

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#### S-STEM Planning Grant Awarded

##### Multi-Institutional Collaboration Awarded ~\$100,000 NSF S-STEM Planning Grant by Dr. Aida Jimenez Esquelin, Lead PI at WVU Tech

We are excited to announce a new project, Building an Inter-institutional Collaboration for STEM Achievement among Small Universities in Appalachia, funded by the National Science Foundation Division of Undergraduate Education (S-STEM), which brings together WVU Institute of Technology (WVU Tech), Fairmont State University (FSU) and Glenville State University (GSU), three small, primarily undergraduate universities in West Virginia, to develop a multi-institutional collaboration aimed at boosting the number of talented, low-income STEM students in Appalachia who graduate and go on to successful careers or further education.

Dr. Aida Jimenez Esquelin will be the leading PI along Co-PIs Dr. Robert Nichel from FSU, Dr. Sara Sawyer (GSU), and Sarah Riley (High Rocks, First2 Network). The \$100,000 funding awarded is to assist with the incredibly complex planning effort.

Over the course of the academic year 2024-25, project leaders at each participating institution will support teams of faculty, student support staff, and students, incorporating their perspectives and experiences to determine the challenges low-income students face at our colleges. These perspectives will guide changes in curricular and co-curricular supports, campus climate, and the financial aid process.

"We hope to generate a cross-institutional needs assessment report and assess the viability of establishing a community of practice among three Appalachian PUIs related to integrating early research experiences into STEM curricula, especially foundational courses," says Dr. Jimenez.

[Read the full article by Dr. Aida Jimenez Esquin here.](#)

[You can also check out this WVU Tech news article about this initiative here.](#)

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### Best Wishes for First2 Staff

As we start a new program year we want to extend our best wishes to departing staff and thank them for their service to the First2 Network.



**Brigid Brown** - Brigid was our Improvement Science and Data Manager at Fairmont State University from December 2022 through August 2024. She supported the continuing evolution of the network's improvement science work and organized plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycle coaching for the change ideas of our institutional teams. Brigid brought a social science background and a strong determination to distill information to its essence to avoid overloading people with information. She came up with the "PDSA Tracker" which has become a central organizing fixture for the network. We'll miss her great sense of humor and ability to walk in crazy heels!



**ICF** - Members of our ICF team (Johnavae Campbell, Kimberly Cowley, Kimberly Cook, and Caitlin Howley) led the network's external evaluation efforts and prepared our annual evaluation report. First2 PI Sue Ann Heatherly from Green Bank Observatory reflects, "I want to say how grateful I have been to ICF for their diligent and thorough external evaluation of the First2 Network...they have always helped us learn from and improve what we're up to, based upon the findings that they have." To Johnavae she further notes, "I hope you will accept First2 Network's deep appreciation for how you've helped us grow and also extend that to the other ICF staff...you all have been a real partner in helping this network be successful over the years."



**SRI** - SRI is an independent nonprofit research institute that served as a mentor backbone for First2 Network from 2018-2024. SRI provided help with the development of organizational structures and governance as well as help with all aspects of our adoption and refinement of improvement science work, including shared measures and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approvals. Many change idea testers received thoughtful coaching from Kirby Chow, Jared Boyce and Debbie Shaver over the years, and Louise Yarnall, Cindy Ziker, Hannah Cheever, and Victoria Schaefer provided significant mentoring and support. PI Erica Harvey shared, "I'm deeply grateful for all the ways that SRI folks have educated, supported, encouraged, and pushed us to take the next key steps all along this journey. I appreciate the solidity of their many contributions, and the many times the SRI team helped make heavy work lighter and difficult challenges get resolved. First2 is much better because of their involvement."

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### Upcoming Opportunities



### West Virginia Science Teachers Association (WVSTA) Conference: "Science 24/7"

October 24-26, 2024

Stonewall Resort in Roanoke, WV

Information: <https://wvsta.org/general-info>

"Embark on a voyage with fellow science educators whose timeless passion for science knows no bounds. Dive into the depths of knowledge and harness the lessons of the past to illuminate the path ahead for science education in West Virginia. This year's theme, "Science 24/7," embodies our evolving understanding of our world in the year 2024 and recognizes our pursuit to further our knowledge and make long-lasting impacts in our teaching practices. Please bring a teacher friend with you or invite a first-time attendee! WVSTA first-timers will walk away with immediate ways to improve the science lessons already happening in your classes!"



## A Mountaineer's Journey

### How Country Roads Paved My Way to Aerospace Leader

**Dr. Kerri B. Phillips**  
Thursday, October 24 at 6 p.m.  
West Virginia State University  
Fannin S. Belcher Theater in the  
John W. Davis Fine Arts Building

**FREE EVENT**

Supported by National Science Foundation  
under Award No. DMR-2207771

STEM Speaker Series with Dr. Kerri Phillips: Learn more about West Virginia native Kerri Phillips and her path to aerospace engineering


October 24, 2024

6:00pm-8:00pm

West Virginia State University - Fannin S. Belcher Theater, John W. Davis Fine Arts Building

Register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/stem-speaker-series-with-dr-kerri-phillips-tickets-1028870367967?aff=ebdssbcategorybrowse>

"Dr. Kerri B. Phillips is the Chief Scientist of the Air and Missile Defense Sector (AMDS) at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory, where she advises on strategic technical direction, science and technology initiatives, and novel applications of technologies to address critical warfighting needs. Prior to her current appointment, Dr. Phillips served as Program Area Manager for Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Targeting (ISR&T), focusing on developing, prototyping, and transitioning state-of-the-art capabilities to revolutionize ISR&T in the U.S. military. She also served as the Program Manager for hypersonic weapons, working closely with the U.S. Department of Defense to support rapid development and fielding of hypersonic systems. Dr. Phillips is a subject matter expert in missile guidance and control, and her technical contributions to innovative guidance algorithms earned her a Letter of Recognition from the Missile Defense Agency. She has also served as an instructor for aerospace engineering courses at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland. Dr. Phillips is an associate fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) and was a recipient of the Emerging Leader Award from the Society of Women Engineers in 2022. Dr. Phillips earned dual bachelor's degrees in aerospace and mechanical engineering and a Ph.D. in aerospace engineering from West Virginia University and a master's degree in systems engineering from Johns Hopkins University. She grew up in Weirton, West Virginia, where she attended Weir High School."



## SEARCHDE 2024

The 42nd Southeastern-Atlantic Regional Conference on Differential Equations

November 9-10, 2024  
Register and Submit an Abstract by October 21, 2024

The 42nd Southeastern-Atlantic Regional Conference on Differential Equations

November 9-10, 2024

8:00am-6:00pm

West Virginia University - Hodges Hall, Room 202

Register and Submit an Abstract by October 21, 2024:

<https://mathanddata.wvu.edu/searchde-2024>

"Hosted by the School of Mathematics and Data Sciences at West Virginia University, in Morgantown, WV, and organized in cooperation with The Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM). For more than forty years, the Southeastern-Atlantic Regional Conference on Differential Equations (SEARCADE) has devoted itself to bringing together the region's leading experts and young researchers. The meeting provides a valuable venue for researchers to exchange ideas and foster collaborations on questions arising from differential equations and applications. Moreover, it provides an excellent mentorship platform for students, postdoctoral researchers, and junior faculty. It has become a tradition for SEARCADE to include a significant proportion of talks by advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and postdocs, who are encouraged to present their research. Additionally, application-oriented talks that focus on numerical or experimental aspects will interest engineers, software developers, and other professionals in the region."

#### News from the National INCLUDES Network



**The NSF Eddie Bernice Johnson INCLUDES National Network 2024 Topical Conference: Designing for Accessibility and Student Success in STEM**  
November 17-19, 2024

**BWI Airport Marriott in Lithicum Heights, MD**

**Register:** <https://web.cvent.com/event/2b085b78-6c74-4b3e-b530-e42860b6b249/summary>

"This inaugural conference has specifically been designed for INCLUDES National Network members in Cluster 1 (large-scale NSF-funded projects such as Alliances and Collaborative Change Consortia). The Alliance of Students with Disabilities for Inclusion, Networking, and Transition Opportunities in STEM (ANTO-STEM) and INCLUDES Coordination Hub have co-created this event to explore accessibility and universal design in various STEM environments, from education pathways to workforce settings. Attendees will learn from experts and gain actionable strategies to enhance inclusion in STEM education and workforce settings."



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