FIRST2 NETWORK CHANGE IDEA EXPERIENCE

HIGHLIGHTED CHANGE IDEA

Student, Faculty, and Staff Social Interactions

SUMMARY

We wanted to encourage underclassmen to seek help from their professors by facilitating informal interactions in a panel discussion. We thus held a Professor Panel in Fall 2024 in which professors were invited to speak about their own experiences as both instructors and students. Students reported that the event made them more likely to reach out to their professors for help in the future.
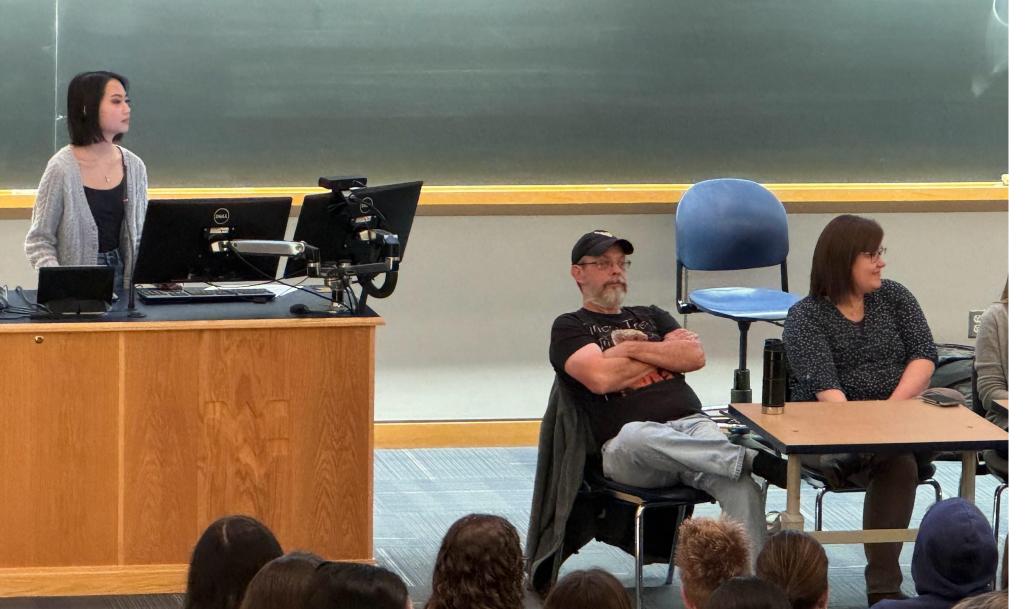
ACT

Our plan to adapt the change idea is to first make the event 1 hr instead of 1.5 hrs due to the number of people who left early. We also should have provided more microphones as some panelists did not have one, so they had to speak loudly, making it hard to hear for people in the back. Events like this should only be advertised to STEM majors; we advertised to STEM classes that were not necessarily specific to STEM majors, therefore some people may not have felt the event to be personally relevant (which may explain why they left so early).

PLAN

We will advertise the event via our STEM List_serv and ask STEM professors to advertise it to their students. We will offer to give professors a list of students' names if they wish to offer extra credit for attending. The panel will go for 1.5 hrs. Sydney Kudlak will compile panel questions as well as guide the panel. Students will sign in via a QR code. After the event, students will complete a post-survey via a QR code. Student representatives from various STEM clubs/organizations will be invited as guest speakers to pitch their clubs. Light refreshments will be offered to facilitate interaction.

DO

More than 200 students attended the panel. We ended the panel ~30 min early due to the number of students who left early. 5 professors served as panelists. We asked questions about educational background/career, current research, teaching, WVU resources, and advice. In a retrospective survey, many students reported feeling an increase in belongingness. Many students also reported that they enjoyed hearing about the professors' backgrounds and personal experiences, advice for college success, and were more likely to seek help from professors. A panel similar to this was done in Spring 2025 in which upperclassmen and graduate students were invited to speak about their college experience. Assessment of the STEM Student Panel data is currently still in progress.

STUDY

Our main learning questions were:

(1) Does the Professor Panel help students feel more comfortable approaching their professors?
(2) Do students who participate in the Professor Panel show an increase in belonging?

Our data support both of our learning questions.

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS

DATA

Question	Before Panel % agree	After Panel % agree	% increase
I feel a sense of belonging in my campus's STEM community.	54.90%	70.60%	28.60%
I feel a sense of belonging when I am in science or mathematics classes	53.40%	63.20%	18.35%
My experiences with First2 Network Campus Clubs this semester positively influenced my sense of acceptance and belonging at college	43.10%	57.40%	33.18%

Students' thoughts on Professor Panel	% agree
Liked hearing professors' background and personal experiences	39.5%
Liked hearing advice and tips on studying and success in college	14%
Felt more comfortable approaching professors	52%
Felt more willing to seek help from professors	13.8%

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Students were asked to rate their sense of belongingness and willingness to approach professors before and after the panel. Given the number of students who reported an increased feeling of belongingness after attending the panel, we can conclude that events that facilitate informal interactions between faculty and students promote a sense of belongingness. They also make students feel more comfortable approaching professors, making them more likely to seek help when needed.

TIPS FOR OTHER INSTITUTIONAL TEAMS

Events like our panel should only be advertised to STEM majors specifically, and the duration should be kept to ~1hr. The sign-in should also be given at the end so that students are encouraged to stay for the full event. Extra credit seems to be a major motivating factor for attending.

Presented By:
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