



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**National First-Generation College Celebration to honor  
first-generation student and alumni accomplishments on November 8**  
*Sixth annual celebration to highlight adult learners; feature virtual event on Nov. 1*

**Washington, DC (October 26, 2022)** - On November 8, 2022, the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) and the Center for First-generation Student Success, an initiative of NASPA and The Suder Foundation, will lead the national efforts for the sixth annual [First-Generation College Celebration](#).

November 8 marks the 57th anniversary of the signing of the 1965 Higher Education Act, which has helped millions of first-generation students persist to degree completion. As 2022 also coincides with the 50th anniversaries of the Pell grant and TRIO's [Educational Opportunity Centers](#) and [Veterans Upward Bound](#) programs, this year's celebration will emphasize adult learners.

"The First-Generation College Celebration is an annual opportunity to celebrate the outstanding accomplishments of first-gen students, faculty, staff, and alumni," said [COE](#) president Maureen Hoyler. "At the same time, we can work together with K-12 and higher education institutions, non-profits, corporations, and interested stakeholders to bring awareness to the needs of this population."

Launched by COE and the [Center for First-generation Student Success](#) in 2017, the First-Generation College Celebration (FGCC) has united hundreds of college campuses across the country an often-overlooked population through numerous events, including student rallies, faculty-led panel discussions, artistic performances, and more in recognition of first-generation students, administrators, faculty, and alumni.

At the national level, COE and the Center for First-generation Student Success will co-host a virtual event featuring a panel moderated by Dr. Brenda Dann-Messier, Senior Advisory with the Education Strategy Group; Rhode Island's Postsecondary Commissioner; and Past Assistant Secretary for Career, Technology, & Adult Education.

The panel includes Dr. Kelly Brochu, Assistant to the President for Special Projects at Regis College, Matt Donovan, Director of Educational Access Programs at Morehead State University, and Dr. Vanessa Sheared, President, Board of Directors at the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education. Each panelist will discuss the first-generation adult learner identity, share their unique experiences, and offer insight into

tools and resources for first-generation students.

This event will broadcast twice, on **Tuesday, November 1, 2022, at 4:00 p.m. ET** or **Wednesday, November 2, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. ET**. [Registration](#) is free and open to all.

“The First-Generation College Celebration brings attention to the accomplishments of a population representing one-third of all currently enrolled college students,” said Dr. Sarah E. Whitley, vice president at the Center for First-generation Student Success. “Not only that, but advancing an asset-based national narrative on first-generation student experiences and outcomes is one way to help first-gen students understand the tremendous strengths they bring to our communities.”

To learn more about the First-Generation College Celebration, view the Media Kit, or see highlights from past celebrations, visit the National First-Generation College Celebration [page](#). You can also track and view activities and events from across the country on social media by searching for #CelebrateFirstGen.

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#### **ABOUT THE COUNCIL FOR OPPORTUNITY IN EDUCATION**

The Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) is a nonprofit organization, established in 1981, dedicated to furthering the expansion of college opportunities for low-income, first-generation students, and students with disabilities in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., the Pacific Islands, and Puerto Rico. Its membership includes more than 1,000 colleges and agencies. Through its numerous membership services, the Council works in conjunction with colleges, universities, and agencies to help low-income students enter college and graduate. Over a million low-income students and students with disabilities each year receive college access and retention services through our member colleges and agencies.

#### **ABOUT THE CENTER FOR FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT SUCCESS**

The Center is the premier source of evidence-based practices, professional development, and knowledge creation for the higher education community to advance the success of first-generation students. Based in Washington, DC, the Center aims to acknowledge the intersectional experiences of first-generation college students. It offers an outlet for sharing cutting-edge research and current media conversations, opportunities for engagement through online learning, conferences, and events, and access to a bevy of programs and services intended to improve first-generation initiatives across higher education.

#### **ABOUT NASPA**

NASPA is a member-centered association supporting a diverse and passionate network of 15,000 professionals and 1,200 institutions across the globe. It is the professional home for the field of student affairs and is dedicated to cultivating student success in collaboration with the missions of its institutional members, a network of colleges and universities representing every sector of higher education.