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CONTACT:

Bill Barker

Senior Director of External Relations & Policy

bbarker@naspa.org

(202) 719-1188

**Center for First-generation Student Success Becomes Independent Organization
Under New Brand—FirstGen Forward™**

*New nonprofit announces over \$7 million in initial fundraising to scale impact,
launch next phase of work serving FirstGen college students*

WASHINGTON, DC (June 24, 2024)—The Center for First-generation Student Success today announced that it has become an independent nonprofit organization under a new brand: [FirstGen Forward](#).

FirstGen Forward is the only organization solely focused on creating transformational change for college students whose parents or guardians do not yet have a bachelor’s degree (FirstGen students). Partnering with a growing network of colleges, universities, and other allies, FirstGen Forward works with higher ed institutions to develop innovative strategies, redesign systems, promote cultures, and take actions to serve the unique needs of FirstGen students.

“We are launching our next phase of work. FirstGen Forward will curate a movement to transform the experiences, and ultimately the successes, of FirstGen students in education, career, and life,” said Maurice Jones, CEO of FirstGen Forward. “Working with partners around the country, we will challenge the nation to ensure FirstGen students thrive.”

Jones announced the new organization and brand during a keynote speech on June 23rd at the 2024 NASPA Conferences on Student Success in Higher Education in Anaheim, California.

Jones also announced that FirstGen Forward has secured new investments totaling more than \$7 million from funding partners including The Suder Foundation, ECMC Foundation, TIAA, The Moody Foundation, and The Powell Foundation, among others. These investments will support the scaling of FirstGen Forward’s comprehensive services to better serve FirstGen students around the country.

Established in 2017 as an initiative of NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education and The Suder Foundation, the organization has evolved from a scholarship program

for FirstGen students on several campuses to become a collaborative effort across the entire higher education system, working directly with hundreds of institutions that serve millions of students.

FirstGen Forward is home to the FirstGen Forward Network, which includes 419 higher education institutions serving more than 2.5 million FirstGen students across 49 states and the District of Columbia.

“Our expectations are high, because the need for FirstGen students to succeed is great,” Jones said. “Fifty-four percent of undergraduates today, 8.2 million learners, identify as FirstGen. Their graduation rate is 29 percent lower than continuing generation students, or those with at least one parent with a bachelor’s degree or a higher level of educational attainment.”

“FirstGen Forward exists to help close this gap. By doing so, we create a multigenerational impact for our students and their families, advance the missions of institutions, and propel our nation’s economy through a skilled workforce ready for the jobs of tomorrow.”

FirstGen Forward will work across several priority areas to scale its impact and growth in the years ahead:

- **Strengthening and Expanding the FirstGen Forward Network:** FirstGen Forward will work directly with colleges and universities on strategies for improving FirstGen student success by driving evidence-based solutions and providing professional development and customized coaching to advance systemic, scalable impact. FirstGen Forward plans to add hundreds of schools to its network in the next four years.
- **Serving as an Indispensable Resource for the Entire Field:** There are approximately 4,000 higher education institutions across the nation. Through the collaboration with network institutions and additional insights from other work, FirstGen Forward will leverage its learnings, resources and expertise to disseminate scholarship, research, best practices, and thought leadership to benefit the entire field of higher education.
- **Building and Sustaining a Multi-Sector Coalition:** FirstGen Forward will lead a multi-sector coalition across public and private sectors to advocate for the necessary resources, partner support, and public policies to create and sustain an environment where FirstGen students can succeed in college, career, and life. FirstGen Forward is in a unique position to bring together organizations across multiple sectors to help shape partnerships, policies, and practices that make greater support for FirstGen possible.
- **Enhanced Focus on Data Insights and Sharing Best Practices:** With a wealth of diagnostic tools and data compiled over the last decade, FirstGen Forward will enhance its analysis and insights capabilities to develop and promote scholarly research and data-informed practices as the primary clearinghouse for postsecondary education to advance FirstGen outcomes. FirstGen Forward aspires to be the premiere source for facts, data and expertise about FirstGen, helping all stakeholders understand the connections between educational success and workforce impacts.

FirstGen Facts

- One out of every 2 undergraduates today—8.2 million students—identifies as FirstGen.
- 62% of students who are veterans are FirstGen.
- 54% of FirstGen students are minorities, compared to 39% for continuing-gen.
- The median income of FirstGen families is \$40K, compared to \$100K for continuing-gen.
- The FirstGen graduation rate is 20%, compared to 49% for continuing-gen.

The Promise of More FirstGen Graduates

- If we close the FirstGen graduation gap, we'd have 4.4 million more work-ready professionals, and equal nearly \$700 billion in net benefit to the U.S. economy.
- Those who complete a college degree are:
 - 86% more likely to be employed
 - More likely to earn higher wages and have greater household wealth
 - 76% more likely to be civically engaged (voting, volunteering in the community)

To schedule an interview with [Maurice Jones](#) or one of FirstGen Forward's subject matter experts, please contact Bill Barker at bbarker@naspa.org or (202) 719-1188.

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About FirstGen Forward

FirstGen Forward™, formerly the Center for First-generation Student Success, partners with higher education, philanthropy, business, the public sector and others to catalyze first-generation student success in education, career and life.