First Scholars Application
Content Guide

Thank you for your interest in progressing through the First Scholars Network to become a First Scholars institution!

Getting Started

This is an in-depth application process, asking you to share institutional data, detail campus-wide efforts to support first-generation students, and demonstrate institutional buy-in from leadership.

If you run into issues or have questions, don't hesitate to contact us at FirstScholarsNetwork@naspa.org. After the application has been submitted, the review committee will begin the selection process. Institutions will be notified in September 2024.

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Content Overview

Please complete the application to the best of your ability; i**t is not required for your institution to be actively pursuing each area** to be considered for selection. We look forward to learning more about the great efforts you and your colleagues are leading! The list provided, though not comprehensive, is meant to support you as you apply to the First Scholars phase.

Eligibility

To be considered, institutions need to be active in the Network Member or First-gen Forward phases of the First Scholars Network. Additionally, **institutions must be willing to maintain their NASPA institutional membership throughout their experience.**

Institutional Membership: If you are unsure of your institution's membership status, consider asking your institution's Vice President for Student Affairs or another senior leader from your institution. It is often the executive assistant to the VPSA who maintains this information. Please reach out to membership@naspa.org if you cannot locate the information internally.

Leadership Team

Institutions selected for First Scholars will be required to develop an internal First Scholars Leadership Team to lead and actively engage in various aspects of the First Scholars experience. First Scholars Leadership Team members will lead primary engagement with First Scholars and are accountable for first-generation student success at their institution.

The Application asks for the contact information of those who will serve on your Leadership team, plus some additional campus representatives, which should include the following:

- **Two (2) Primary contacts:** two currently employed faculty and/or staff who will guide the day-to-day work and participate in all aspects of the First Scholars Network experience. We strongly encourage Primary Contacts to hold the following positions:
  - Contact 1: Reports to cabinet-level leader
  - Contact 2: Individual most closely aligned with convening and leading first-gen efforts at the institution
- **Two (2) Cabinet-level leaders:** executive leaders with direct access to the president/chancellor; administrative/budgetary oversight and decision-making over a division.
- **President or Chancellor:** the most senior institutional leader with final decision-making authority. The president or chancellor will champion the institutional support of first-generation student success and will be involved in the First Scholars Network experience.
- **Institutional Research Representative (or equivalent):** the individual who will serve as a contact for the Post Secondary Partnership (PDP), data analysis, reporting, and supporting data-informed decision-making.

Open-ended Questions

The following is an inclusive list of the open-ended questions you will find throughout the Application. These questions are framed to understand your institution's interest in First Scholars and commitment to supporting first-generation student success.

We encourage you to draft your responses in a separate document and then copy and paste your final responses into the Application. Please keep your responses between 250 and 500 words.

- **Please provide a summary of your current first-generation student success efforts at your institutions.** *(This will serve as a general*

summary of your current efforts, while many of the following questions will be with a growth mindset.)

- **What are you hoping to achieve through involvement in First Scholars?** (We would like to understand what goals you may have or how engaging in a community of practice can support your institution. How can progressing to the First Scholars phase help you achieve this?)
- **What challenges or barriers may prevent this success? How do you anticipate overcoming these challenges or barriers?** *(Please know that sharing the challenges or barriers will not influence the selection process)*
- **Please select the first-generation student metrics your institution hopes to prioritize while in First Scholars.** *(Options include: enrollment, credit completion ratio, retention, degree completion, other, and none of the above)*
- **Has your institution already identified goals for improving first-generation student metrics. If so, please elaborate:** *(for example, closing a 10% completion gap between first-generation and continuing-generation students or improving first-to-second-year persistence for first-generation students by 3%)*
- **If accepted into First Scholars, please describe how your institution will <u>sustain support</u> for first-generation student success in the next five years. What commitments are in place to guarantee?** *(We are committed to making long-term, structural, and cultural changes, including how the phases of the Network can support you. Is this demonstrated in priority areas or strategic plans?)*
- **If accepted into First Scholars, please describe how your institution will <u>scale support</u> for first-generation student success in the next five years. What commitments are in place to guarantee?** *(The Center defines scaling as increasing the impact of a service, program, or initiative on a large population.)*
- **Is there any additional information you would like to share with us?**

Cabinet-Level Leader Letter of Support

As part of your application, you must upload a letter of support from a cabinet-level leader at your institution. We have provided a reference list of things to consider for your cabinet-level leader when drafting this letter of support:

- ☐ Institutional Leadership Alignment and Support
- ☐ Allocation of Budgetary Resources
- ☐ Allocation of Sufficient Personnel
- ☐ Commitment from Institutional Research (or equivalent)
  - ☐ Submitting data annually to the Postsecondary Data Partnership starting August 1, 2025
  - ☐ Submitting institutional data survey upon acceptance into First Scholars
  - ☐ Actively participate in the First Scholars Leadership Team