

## Network Member Readiness and Progress Audit Content Guide

*Thank you for your interest in joining the First Scholars Network!*

### Getting Started

To join the First Scholars Network, you will apply using the Readiness and Progress Audit.

The Readiness and Progress Audit is a diagnostic tool that collects data on the ways your institution serves first-generation students and is utilized throughout the First Scholars Network experience to collect longitudinal progress data to better learn how your institution is working to strengthen and scale institutional infrastructure and resources for first-generation students.

The Readiness and Progress Audit will be utilized at multiple points during the First Scholar Network experience.

**IMPORTANT:** One of your two primary contacts will fill out the Readiness and Progress Audit but that individual may need the support of the leadership team and Institutional Research (IR) in preparing the questions we will provide in advance.

We recommend that you take the survey in one sitting. Please review this guide before you apply for the First Scholars Network. If you are unable to complete the Readiness and Progress Audit in one sitting please ensure to continue utilizing the same browser and internet connection.

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## E-Learning Module

To supplement this content guide we have an e-learning module that walks you through this guide. In this module you will find additional details that show what we are looking for in some of the questions.

### [E-Learning Module Website](#)

## Sample Questions

There are approximately fifty questions in the Readiness and Progress Audit. Some questions are multiple choice with a simple yes, no, and I'm not sure of the answer. The "I'm not sure" is an important answer choice as it shows what areas the institution needs to focus on in communicating with the campus community. Additional question types include select all that apply, Likert scale questions, and open-ended questions.

### Multiple Choice (most common question type)

Does your institution have a formal definition(s) of who is considered a first-generation college student?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

### Select All that Apply

Please select the response most closely aligned with your institutional definition(s) of a first-generation college student? (*select all that apply*)

- Neither biological parent earned a four-year college degree
- Neither parent or guardian earned a four-year college degree
- Neither parent or guardian earned a four-year college degree from an institution in the United States
- Neither parent or guardian with primary influence on the student at age 16 earned a four-year college degree
- Neither parent completed education beyond the associate/two-year degree
- Neither parent entered any form of higher education
- Other, (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### Likert Scale

The definition(s) of a first-generation college student is used consistently across:

|                        | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | I'm not sure |
|------------------------|----------------|-------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|--------------|
| The admissions process |                |       |                            |          |                   |              |

## Open-ended

Please elaborate on ways in which institutional leaders support first-generation student success:

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*All open-ended questions are provided below.*

## Content Overview

Please complete the Readiness and Progress Audit to the best of your ability but please understand that **it is not a requirement 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 here is not comprehensive, but is meant to support you as you apply to the First Scholars Network.

## Eligibility

In order to be considered, **institutions must be willing to obtain a NASPA institutional membership for the 2024-2025 academic year.**

**Institutional Membership:** If you are unsure of your institution's membership status, you may 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](mailto:membership@naspa.org) if you cannot locate the information internally.

## Institutional Characteristics

- Type (i.e. Public, 4-year, Private, 2-year)
- Characteristics that describe your institution (i.e. Minority-Serving institution, Hispanic-Serving Institution, etc.)
- NASPA Region

## Leadership Team

We will be asking for the contact information for who will serve on your Leadership team.

- **Primary contacts:** Two currently employed faculty and/or staff who will serve on your institution's leadership team for this initiative. They guide the day-to-day work and participate in all aspects of the First Scholars Network experience. At least one must have an individual NASPA membership profile;
- **Cabinet-level leader:** This representative typically has oversight and management of first-generation student initiatives on campus, including financial responsibility, decision-making authority, and is a conduit to, and responsible for maintaining communication with institutional leadership;

- **Institution's 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 and Data Points

The following questions will ask about first-generation momentum metrics, including enrollment, percent first-gen, completion rate, first-year retention, and credit completion ratio. **Please consult with your institutional research office (or equivalent) to provide the most recent available data.** We have provided these questions to make it easier for you.

- How many undergraduate students are enrolled at your institution? (Please use the unduplicated headcount over a 12 month period (July 1 - June 30) as reported to IPEDS) \_\_\_\_\_
- What percentage of your total undergraduate student enrollment are first-generation students?
  - %: \_\_\_\_\_
  - We do not collect this information
- What is the most recent first-year enrollment for undergraduate first-generation students at your institution?
  - %: \_\_\_\_\_
  - We do not collect this information
- Has the enrollment changed from the previous year?
  - Increased
  - Decreased
  - Completion rate has not changed
- What factors contributed to the change in enrollment?
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- How many graduate students are enrolled at your institution? (Please use the unduplicated headcount over a 12 month period (July 1 - June 30) as reported to IPEDS) \_\_\_\_\_
- What percentage of your total graduate student enrollment are first-generation students?
  - %: \_\_\_\_\_
  - We do not collect this information
- What is the most recent completion rate for undergraduate first-generation students at your institution? (*Your institution may define this as graduation rate, we ask you use the six-year rate*)
  - %: \_\_\_\_\_
  - We do not collect this information
- Has the completion rate changed from the previous year?
  - Increased
  - Decreased
  - Completion rate has not changed
- What factors contributed to the change in completion rate?
  - \_\_\_\_\_

- What is the most recent first-year retention rate for undergraduate first-generation students at your institution?
  - %: \_\_\_\_\_
  - We do not collect this information
- Has the first-year retention rate changed from the previous year?
  - Increased
  - Decreased
  - First-year retention rate has not changed
- What factors contributed to the change in first-year retention rate?
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the most recent credit completion ratio\* for undergraduate first-generation students at your institution?
  - %: \_\_\_\_\_
  - We do not collect this information
- Has the credit completion ratio changed from the previous year?
  - Increased
  - Decreased
  - Credit completion ratio has not changed
- What factors contributed to the change in credit completion ratio?
  - \_\_\_\_\_

\*For credit completion ratio, you can calculate it the following way:

Divide “Successfully Completed Credit Hours” by “Attempted Credit Hours” (successful credit hours ÷ attempted credit hours = Completion Ratio) then multiply the result by 100 to obtain percentage (Completion Ratio x 100 = \_\_\_\_%). Not all institutions track this information so if you do not, it is not a problem.

### Inventory Question Topics

The questions in this inventory tool cover many topical areas identified by empirical research and evidence-based practices as imperative to first-generation student matriculation, persistence and completion, and post-graduation career and continued education trajectories. The majority of these questions are select all that apply and likert scale questions. Any questions that require a written response will be provided in the open-ended questions below. These questions are grouped into sections that align with the First Scholars actionable priorities:

**Aligning Leadership & Institutional Strategy** - Cabinet-level leadership commitment to first-generation student success is essential. If the desire is for first-generation efforts to become embedded into institutional culture, be sustained through transition, and scaled, then it is critical for senior leadership - those who have decision-making capabilities, strategic direction, financial resources, and an ability to galvanize audiences - to lead the charge. Leadership sets the tone for institutional culture and commitment, fiscal, and human resource support, and visibility for strategic innovation and improvement. Leadership identifying opportunities on campus where

first-generation student success efforts align with institutional strategy and subsequently identifying where the gaps exist is critical to creating a plan to advance scalable efforts with maximum potential for support and resource allocation. Institutions focused on improving first-generation student success outcomes must develop a definition of success for that particular campus as an essential first step. Once the end goal is clear, the institution can develop a holistic, student-centered strategy across all dimensions of the student experience, from the classroom to support services to campus operations to relationships with the broader community - all designed to foster measurable improvements in persistence rates, time to graduation, and completion rates.

- Support from President or Chancellor
- Support from other cabinet leaders

**Elevating Actionable Data for Decision-Making** - Data informed equitable decision-making is vital to institutional success in resource allocation, student success metrics, program review, and regional and programmatic accreditation requirements. Disaggregate student data to ensure the first-generation population is specifically and appropriately addressed in institutional resources and support services.

- First-generation definition
- Analyzing intersectional identities
- First-generation self-identification
- Data collection and use
- Needs assessment of first-generation students
- Demonstrating return on investment

**Mapping & Networking Institutional Efforts & Resources** - The most influential institutional transformation occurs as a result of cross-campus partnerships and collaborations. Moreover, for new initiatives to succeed, institution-wide buy-in is required. Develop a networked approach that aligns with your institution's culture.

- Overall first-generation perception, awareness, and programming engagement
- Steering committee perception and roles
- Dedicated office, physical space, organization
- Federal TRIO programs

**Strengthening Institutional Communications** - Recalibrate internal and external communication toward an asset-based, first-generation inclusive approach including communication from pre-matriculation through post-completion for students, broader internal and external stakeholders, and the multitude of ways in which communication occurs.

- Communication for first-generation students
- Institutional websites that exist devoted to providing information to first-generation students and their family systems

**Fostering Knowledge Across the Institution** - Faculty and staff that learn more and build their knowledge about the first-generation student experience and their intersectional identities increase the ability of the

institution to relate, understand, support, and serve all students. In addition, there are many ways an institution can break down barriers to first-generation student success including equity-minded curriculum design, course audits through the academic review process, identity visibility, professional development, academic support, and reflection on current classroom and course practices.

- Campus stakeholders
- Engagement of stakeholders

**Demonstrating Return on Investment** - Initiatives designed/implemented with first-generation students in mind that span the academic career may result in data that demonstrate a return on investment, and may be considered for scaling across the institution. Institutions must balance new initiatives, current budgets, and the external factors that influence institutional finances. In particular, ROI is a way to gauge proposed program growth and resource allocation. Institutional representatives with budgetary oversight (finance, budgeting, accounting, etc.) will be key partners while working towards this priority.

- Calculate ROI for undergraduate first-generation students
- Calculate ROI for graduate first-generation students

### Open-ended Questions

The following is an inclusive list of the open-ended questions that you will find throughout the inventory. We encourage you to type these separately in a word document so that when completing the Readiness and Progress Audit you can copy and paste them. Please ensure to keep these responses between 250 - 500 words.

- **Please provide a brief 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.)*
- **If you would like to, please elaborate on ways in which institutional leaders support first-generation student success:** *([Review this video](#) by Dr. Nancy Crimmin, Senior Faculty Fellow as she shares some recommendations to institutional leaders to demonstrate their support. This video may help you reflect on what is happening at your institution that further demonstrates this support)*
- **Please describe who at your institution has been appointed to lead first-generation student success.** *(for example, is there someone whose role has first-generation student success in the job responsibilities or is someone taking this on in addition to their role?)*



- **Please provide no more than three (3) brief examples of how your institution is directly serving first-generation students through programs and services specific to this population:**
- **Please describe how your institution will sustain support 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?)*
- **Please describe how your institution will scale support 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 to a large population.)*
- **What is your institution hoping to achieve by joining the First Scholars Network?** *(We would like to understand what goals you may have or the ways engaging in a community of practice can support your institution. How can joining the First Scholars Network help you achieve this?)*
- **Are there student outcome metrics your institution is hoping to improve through advancing first-generation efforts?** *(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%)*
- **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 have no influence on the selection process)*
- **Is there any additional information you would like to share with us?**