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Center for First-generation Student Success welcomes Tennessee Board of Regents' community colleges to the First Scholars Network

These thirteen community colleges mark the first statewide system of schools to commit to advancing first-generation student success with the Network

WASHINGTON, DC (September 12, 2023) - The [Center for First-generation Student Success](#), an initiative of NASPA and The Suder Foundation, recently welcomed all thirteen community colleges in the Tennessee Board of Regents system to its First Scholars Network.

“With this commitment from the Tennessee Board of Regents, every two-year public institution of higher education in Tennessee has shown that first-generation student success is a priority,” said Dr. Sarah E. Whitley, vice president with the Center for First-generation Student Success. “It’s clear that the Board of Regents and the community colleges’ leadership are working hard to ensure that all first-generation students will have access to what they need to earn their degree and take their place in the Tennessee workforce.”

Powered by the Center for First-generation Student Success, the First Scholars Network offers a national model for scaling holistic first-generation student success by engaging and empowering institutions of higher education to radically transform the first-generation student experience, advance academic and co-curricular outcomes, and build more inclusive institutional structures. To date, 349 institutions of higher education have entered the Network, representing 49 states and the District of Columbia. The Center recently announced a commitment to serving over 700 institutions through the Network in the next five years.

“This is a systemwide effort to equip our two-year public institutions with the tools and resources they need to further first-generation student success,” said Dr. Heidi Leming, vice chancellor for student success for the [Tennessee Board of Regents](#). “A large percentage of the more than 70,000 students enrolled in our state’s community colleges identify as

first-generation students, and it's our goal to give each one of these students the support they need to graduate and achieve their career goals."

The thirteen community colleges in the Tennessee Board of Regents system comprise all two-year public institutions in Tennessee, each with a specific service area. The system includes (institutions listed alphabetically):

- Chattanooga State Community College
- Cleveland State Community College
- Columbia State Community College
- Dyersburg State Community College
- Jackson State Community College
- Southwest Tennessee Community College
- Motlow State Community College
- Nashville State Community College
- Northeast State Community College
- Pellissippi State Community College
- Roane State Community College
- Volunteer State Community College
- Walters State Community College

"The impact of this partnership with the College System of Tennessee extends beyond Tennessee; it will serve as a model for other states to emulate moving forward," said Dr. Stephanie Bannister, assistant vice president at the Center for First-generation Student Success. "This is an opportunity for us to partner on system-wide transformation, moving beyond individual institutions, and we are thrilled to get started."

To learn more about the First Scholars Network and the Center for First-generation Student Success, visit firstgen.naspa.org.

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ABOUT THE CENTER FOR FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT SUCCESS

The Center is transforming higher education to drive first-generation student success effectively and equitably across education, career, and life. We provide data, training, and expertise for a growing network of colleges and universities around the country to scale and sustain the important work of serving first-generation students. 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 TBR - THE COLLEGE SYSTEM OF TENNESSEE

The College System of Tennessee is the state's largest public higher education system, with 13 community colleges, 24 colleges of applied technology and the online TN eCampus serving approximately 140,000 students. The system is governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents.

ABOUT NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

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.

ABOUT THE SUDER FOUNDATION

Since 2008, Eric and Deborah Suder have been working to transform higher education by serving the unique needs of first-generation college students. In 2009, the Suders launched a family foundation and created the First Scholars® Program, a holistic network of resources and support to dramatically improve graduation rates and unlock the success of first-generation students across education, career, and life. Driven by a desire to reach more students and create lasting institutional change, in 2017 The Suder Foundation partnered with NASPA in a joint venture to establish The Center for First-generation Student Success and reimagine First Scholars for scalable impact.