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Center for First-generation Student Success announces new First Scholars institutions

Twenty-two institutions selected for commitment to advancing the outcomes of first-generation students

WASHINGTON, DC (March 13, 2023) - The [Center for First-generation Student Success](#), an initiative of NASPA and The Suder Foundation, today announced the selection of twenty-two higher education institutions to advance to the First Scholars phase of the First Scholars Network. These colleges and universities were chosen based upon their demonstrated commitment to advancing the outcomes of first-generation students through improving both first-generation student success initiatives and institution-wide approaches.

“The Center for First-generation Student Success is proud to announce the newest members of the First Scholars phase of the Network,” said Dr. Sarah E. Whitley, vice president at the Center for First-generation Student Success. “Through every step, it was evident that these institutions not only invested in serving first-generation students, but were prepared to make a long-term commitment to radically change the way first-generation students are served and to employ strategies for sustainability and scale for intentional impact.”

“Fifty-one institutions have successfully reached this Network phase and are actively working to establish an environment and culture where direct student supports can be established, scaled, and sustained,” Whitley added. “When a first-generation student attends an institution that is developed with them in mind, and has appropriate supports and resources, we believe outcomes will improve.”

As a benefit of this commitment, each institution also received funding to attend the First Scholars Leadership Academy, taking place in Boston, MA, on March 31-April 1 prior to the NASPA Annual Conference. Funded by the [Strada Education Network](#), each institution will send

4-6 members of the institution's Leadership Team to prepare for the First Scholars commitment, establish peer networks, and center the roles of leadership in advancing this important work. The Center recognized the following institutions for their advancement to the First Scholars phase:

- Arkansas Tech University
- Colorado State University
- Cuyahoga Community College
- Ferris State University
- Florida International University
- George Mason University
- Kent State University
- Marquette University
- Metropolitan State University of Denver
- Nevada State College
- North Carolina Central University
- Presbyterian College
- Richard Bland College
- Tarleton State University
- Texas A&M University-Commerce
- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
- Virginia Tech
- Washburn University
- Washington State University
- Wheaton College

Powered by the Center for First-generation Student Success, the [First Scholars Network](#) is a four-phase approach that allows institutions of higher education to advance outcomes for first-generation students by establishing communities of practice, gaining knowledge of resources, and building peer networks. More than 275 institutions of higher education have entered the Network and progressed through the First-gen Forward phase, while the Center recently announced a commitment to serving over 700 institutions through the Network in the next five years.

The twenty-two new institutions have been selected to join a third phase, First Scholars, that signals an unprecedented commitment to serving first-generation students. Benefits of participation in First Scholars include:

- an evidence-based and research-supported framework of actionable priorities supported through monthly workshops;
- diagnostic tools providing critical institutional insight;
- robust data sharing as part of the national Postsecondary Data Partnership;
- guidance of expert coaches along each step of the experience;
- and customized solutions and continuous improvement plans personalized to allow each institution to meet its first-generation student success goals.

Upon meeting milestones in the First Scholars phase, institutions are eligible to earn the Champion Campus designation.

“First Scholars provides a unique balance of bringing first-generation student initiative scaling into focus while drilling down into how institutions recalibrate institutional systems to elevate potential and advance outcomes for first-generation students, positioning them to be a real leader in first-generation student success,” said Dr. Kevin Kruger, president and CEO of NASPA. “I look forward to seeing their success as they drive national change and advance success outcomes for first-generation students.”

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 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.

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.