

Customer Spotlight: First2 Network

July 28, 2020

First2 Network (First2) is an expanding group of people and organizations across West Virginia that seek to improve Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) persistence among rural, first-generation, and other underrepresented STEM students. As many as 7 in 10 first-generation students leave a STEM major within two years. First2 is working to change that.

What started out as a pilot project in 2016 to provide rising college freshmen with early exposure to STEM research, has turned into a National Science Foundation (NSF) Inclusion Across Communities of Learners of Underrepresented Discoverers in Engineering and Science (INCLUDES) grant funded initiative. In September 2018, First2 received an NSF INCLUDES award of \$7.15 million for the next five years to double the rate of STEM graduates in the state of West Virginia from 30% to 60%. This funding, coordinated through the Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) allows us to develop a statewide network of innovative stakeholders who will collaborate to solve the STEM persistence problem and grow our economy.

At our core, we believe that students should be co-creators of the solutions to STEM persistence. Therefore, in addition to building research skills, First2 programming is centered around transferring student agency and developing students' leadership capacity along the way to graduation. If you or your company is interested in partnering with First2 to help the STEM students of West Virginia succeed, please reach out to the First2 Program Coordinator, Jade Irving, at jade.irving@wvresearch.org. For more information about First2, please visit our website at <https://first2network.org/> and follow us on social media!