

News Release

University of Minnesota Crookston selected to join First Generation Network

By Cassandra Morthera on Monday, August 3, 2020

The Center for First-generation Student Success, an initiative of NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education and The Suder Foundation, is pleased to announce the inaugural cohort of First Scholars® Network institutions. The University of Minnesota Crookston was selected to join the Network after demonstrating a commitment to advancing the outcomes of first-generation students through improving both first-generation student success initiatives and institution-wide approaches.

First Scholars supports institutional desire to scale programmatic initiatives to support first-generation students throughout the student lifecycle and beyond. First Scholars draws upon carefully crafted institution-focused and student-centered actionable outcomes designed to deliver these results and provides a complete ecosystem of processes, tools, and guidance designed to work within the University of Minnesota Crookston's specific environment.

UMN Crookston joins 31 institutions in building upon already successful programmatic elements for broad scaling while creating systemic cultural shifts that address first-generation student success with intentionality. First Scholars aligns clearly defined, measurable goals with institutional data to identify gaps, track progress, and create systems allowing leadership to make informed choices resulting in improved student outcomes, strengthened enrollment management, collaborative programming, and preservation of resources.

This year, the Student Success Center created two student success intern positions. One of their focus areas has been to increase programming for our first-generation student population. In addition to celebrating National First-Generation College Celebration Day, we also planned monthly events to bring first-generation students together to build a sense of community and belonging on-campus. We are looking forward to this upcoming year so that we can build more collaborative partnerships across campus.

"The landscape of first-generation student initiatives is continually shifting alongside the ever-changing needs of our communities, nation, and global society. As part of the First Scholars Network, UMN Crookston will become a key partner in driving systemic change and looking to the future of first-generation student success," said Dr. Sarah E. Whitley, senior director of the Center for First-generation Student Success.

"To be a part of the inaugural cohort of the First Scholars' Network is an honor. As a member of the Network, we will have access to experts who engage in this work to support us as we seek to create institution-wide change. As a first-generation college graduate, I know all too well how not having institutional support impacts student success. As a First Scholars' institution, we get to join a Network that is centering first-generation college students and their success. There is much work to be done, but we are committed and look forward to engaging in this work" explained Lamesha Brown, Director of Student Success and Advising.

First Scholars institutions will partner with the Center for a two-year experience that will provide:

- Expert Guidance and tailored resources converging to support institution-wide systemic transformation and provide on-time, first-generation thought-leader expertise;
- An integrated framework that combines evidence-based and targeted solutions to propel institution-wide systemic transformation and confidently scale holistic student support across the academic career of first-generation students;
- Robust inventory, assessment, and reporting structures focused on first-generation student support and institutional cultural shifts;
- Scalable initiatives and programmatic toolkits customizable to the institution that address the immediate needs of administrators and practitioners; and,
- Structured, cross-collaborative learning with institutional partners from across the higher education landscape.

"First Scholars provides a unique balance of bringing first-generation student initiative scaling into focus while drilling down into how UMN Crookston recalibrates institutional systems to elevate potential and advance outcomes for first-generation students. This approach positions UMN Crookston to be a leader in first-generation student success," said Dr. Kevin Kruger, president of NASPA.

NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education is the leading association for the advancement, health, and sustainability of the student affairs profession. Its work provides high-quality professional development, advocacy, and research for 15,000 members in all 50 states, 25 countries, and 8 U.S. territories. Visit naspa.org for more information.

The Center for First-generation Student Success is the premier source of evidence-based practices, professional development, and knowledge creation for the higher education community to advance the success of first-generation students. Through four strategic priority areas, the Center drives higher education innovation and advocacy for first-generation student success.

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