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CONTACT:

Richard Blake
Rblake@ufsa.ufl.edu

CONTACT:

Center for First-generation Student Success, NASPA
First-gencenter@naspa.org

University of Florida Receives First Forward Designation; National Honor for Commitment to First-generation Student Success

Gainesville, FL (May 2, 2019) - The Center for First-generation Student Success, an initiative of NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education and The Suder Foundation, recently announced their inaugural cohort of First Forward Institutions. The First Forward designation recognizes institutions of higher education who have demonstrated a commitment to improving experiences and advancing outcomes of first-generation college students. Selected institutions receive professional development, community-building experiences, and a first look at the Center’s research and resources.

The University of Florida’s Office of First-Generation Student Success provides UF first-generation students with opportunities and resources to navigate towards a successful college experience. Programming offered aims to increase the success of all first-generation students at UF through developing college success strategies, building academic and professional confidence, understanding their first-generation identity, and connecting students to peer and professional mentors as well as campus resources.

“The Center is so pleased to welcome the University of Florida into our inaugural cohort of First Forward institutions. Through the application process, it was evident that the University of Florida is not only taking steps to serve first-generation students but is prepared to make a long-term commitment and employ strategies for significant scaling and important advances in the future,” said Dr. Sarah E. Whitley, senior director of the Center for First-generation Student Success.

“We are honored to be selected as a First Forward institution. The mission of our office is to boldly reimagine how it serves and celebrates first-generation students, being a member of the inaugural cohort certainly helps us with that charge. Our team looks forward to connecting with our colleagues share how collectively we can empower first-generation students, not only at UF, but nationwide.” said Leslie Pendleton, Senior Director of Retention and Success Initiatives for the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Florida.

As a First Forward Institution, select faculty and staff will be afforded multiple opportunities to engage with peer and aspirational institutions who are also creating environments that improve the experiences and

outcomes of first-generation students. Selected institutions will send representatives to the First Forward Workshop to be held in Orlando in June and will participate in monthly phone calls, virtual professional development, goal setting, blog development, annual reporting, and more. After two successful years in the program, institutions are eligible to apply for the Advisory leadership designation.

“First Forward is an exciting opportunity for the University of Florida to join an elite community of professionals prepared to share evidence-based practices and resources, troubleshoot challenges, generate knowledge, and continue to advance the success of first-generation students across the country. We are excited to see a groundswell of activity from the First Forward cohort and know the University of Florida will be a significant contributor,” offered Dr. Kevin Kruger, president of NASPA.

To learn more about first-generation efforts at the University of Florida visit firstgeneration.ufsa.ufl.edu. To learn more about the Center for First-generation Student Success, visit firstgen.naspa.org.

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.