

Impact of a Networked Improvement Community's Interventions on STEM Student Persistence. Review of Results and a Call to Action.

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Abstract

It is well known that high impact practices such as student learning communities and peer-mentoring, early engagement in research and faculty-student relationship building can have a positive influence on undergraduate student engagement and retention in their chosen field of study. The First2 Network is a Networked Improvement Community comprised of students, faculty, staff and administrators from eight higher education institutions in West Virginia and one in Kentucky, that has, over the past six years, engaged in creating interventions to implement and test these high impact practices with the aim of doubling the graduation rate of first-generation and other underrepresented STEM students. Relying on data collected, mostly from WVU, we see very promising outcomes on the persistence of STEM majors. These results will be shared. However, our data story is incomplete as there is no mechanism to sort data on first-generation status across all universities and colleges in the state. The value of this information and its inclusion in a future state funding formula will be explored.