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**FirstGen Forward releases fifth and final national landscape brief on support programs for first-generation students**

*“Designing & Delivering Support for First-gen College Students: Practitioner & Student Perspectives” is the fifth research brief in the landscape analyses series.*

**WASHINGTON, DC (November 17, 2025)** - [FirstGen Forward](#), formerly the Center for First-generation Student Success, today announced the release of [“Designing & Delivering Support for First-gen College Students: Practitioner & Student Perspectives,”](#) the final installment in its national landscape analyses series, [First-generation Student Success: A Landscape Analysis of Programs, Services, and Perspectives in Higher Education.](#)

The movement to support and celebrate first-generation students is growing, and our data show that more four- and two-year institutions have designated an office or a point person to stand as the cornerstone of support for first-gen college students. Seventy percent of four-year institutions and fifty percent of two-year institutions now report having designated a particular office as the primary support (up from 48% and 29% respectively). Sixty-six percent of four-year institutions and fifty percent of two-year institutions also currently report having identified a point person.

“This data shows that more and more institutions are realizing that support for first-generation students must be intentional,” said Dr. Melinda Mechur Karp, founder and principal of Phase Two Advisory. “It shows that when colleges and universities commit to supporting first-gen students, they can have a wide-ranging impact.”

Key findings from the brief include:

- More colleges are designating clear offices or point people for this work, because doing so makes the work visible and provides both advocacy and accountability.
- Two-year institutions report having a designated office or point person at lower rates than four-year institutions, perhaps because the large majority of their students are first-generation.

- Students benefit from formal offices and personnel because they can find support more easily.
- TRIO programs remain a key provider of first-gen student support, raising important considerations for practitioners and administrators in the current sociopolitical context.
- Programming to support first-generation student career development and identity formation remains underdeveloped.

“It’s tremendously inspiring that the data shows so many institutions cementing their support for first-generation students,” said FirstGen Forward President Dr. Stephanie J. Bannister. “And listening to the experiences and perspectives of students demonstrates that there are still so many opportunities to strengthen and tailor the specific programs that make up that support.”

The brief also emphasizes the utility of continually updating and buttressing the programs used to support first-generation students based on their experiences and feedback.

The updated series reflects an evolving higher education landscape shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, economic shifts, and political pressures. It aims to provide a current, data-informed foundation for institutions that strive to support first-generation students.

To read the briefs or other publications, or to learn more about FirstGen Forward, visit [firstgenforward.org](https://firstgenforward.org).

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## **ABOUT FIRSTGEN FORWARD**

FirstGen Forward (FGF) is transforming higher education to drive first-generation student success effectively and equitably across education, career, and life. We provide data, training, and expertise to a growing network of colleges and universities around the country to scale and sustain the important work of serving first-generation students. FirstGen Forward 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.

## **ABOUT PHASE TWO ADVISORY**

Phase Two Advisory works with colleges, foundations, and improvement networks to translate research evidence into equity-forward reform strategies. We provide strategic planning and implementation support, just-in-time research, and professional learning opportunities to leaders and practitioners throughout the higher education sector as they shepherd transformative change.