



**FIRST2
NETWORK**

DEFINING FIRST-GENERATION STATUS

The new West Virginia Higher Education Funding Formula targets student persistence and graduation rates. Knowing who our first-generation students are allows us to track the persistence, and the impact of interventions designed to improve persistence, for these students. Our goal is to propose a state-wide definition for first-generation status in West Virginia and for all West Virginia colleges to collect this status information.

first2network.org



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WE ARE PROPOSING THE FOLLOWING DEFINITION:

**“NO CUSTODIAL PARENT OR GUARDIAN HAS COMPLETED
A 4 YEAR DEGREE IN THE US.”**

College degrees and certifications at all levels are valuable to the WV economy and to the individuals involved. However, a federal definition of first-generation status may qualify individuals for benefits, support services, scholarships, and educational stipends. For this reason, our proposed statewide definition of first-generation status aligns with federal definitions.

First2 recommends collecting more nuanced information, since students in level 4 are at higher risk than students in level 1:*

- **LEVEL 1 :** Custodial parents or guardians attended some college but did not complete a bachelors (4 year) degree.
- **LEVEL 2 :** Siblings attended college or completed a bachelors (4 year) degree; parents did not.
- **LEVEL 3 :** Extended family (grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins) attended college or completed a bachelors (4 year) degree; parents or siblings did not.
- **LEVEL 4 :** No one in immediate or extended family attended or completed college.

*Darrah, M., Humbert, R., & Stewart, G. (2022). Understanding levels of first-generationness. Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2022/03/02/first-gen-category-encompasses-varied-group-opinion>.



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