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Lake Superior State University Receives First-gen Forward Designation;
National Honor for Commitment to First-generation Student Success

SAULT STE. MARIE, MI (March 2, 2020) - The Center for First-generation Student Success, an initiative of NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education and The Suder Foundation, recently announced their 2020-21 cohort of First-gen Forward Institutions. The First-gen 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.

At Lake Superior State University, a majority of our students are first generation (over 60%). Forward provides opportunities for a large impact not only through programming and education, but to create a comfortable atmosphere for first generation students to thrive in a higher education environment. Lake Superior State University has the distinction of being ranked #1 as Michigan’s most affordable university, and the #14 most affordable university in the U.S., with over 90% of our students receiving scholarships and financial aid and offering a one-rate tuition to all students around the globe. LSSU, although a four-year degree granting university, also offers a wide range of associate degrees and acts as a community college for the Eastern Upper Peninsula.

Lake Superior State University was ranked as the #3 public university in Michigan by the 2020 WalletHub college rankings which heavily emphasizes the social mobility of students. With a high frequency of first generation students, we are changing generations of lives for our graduates.

“The Center is so pleased to welcome Lake Superior State University into the 2020-21 cohort of First-gen Forward institutions. Through the application process, it was evident that Lake Superior State University 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.

“As a first-generation college student myself, the success I have enjoyed throughout my career could not have occurred without the extra attention I received when I was an undergraduate. Working with first-generation students to enable their academic success is now one of my top priorities as president of Lake Superior State University. We very much appreciate the recognition the university is receiving from NASPA in our efforts in helping first-generation students from Michigan and throughout the country,” said LSSU President Rodney S. Hanley.

As a First-gen 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-gen Forward

Workshop to be held in Baltimore 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-gen Forward is an exciting opportunity for Lake Superior State University 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-gen Forward cohort and know Lake Superior State University will be a significant contributor,” offered Dr. Kevin Kruger, president and CEO of NASPA.

To learn more about first-generation efforts at Lake Superior State University, visit lssu.edu/lakersuccess or contact **Sharmay Wood, Director of Campus Life and Laker Success**. 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.

