

Eliza Keener, Dept of Engineering Technology, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV 26554, and Landon Brewer, Dept of Natural Sciences, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV 26554. Benefits of First2 Network immersive bridge programs at Fairmont State University.

The First2 Network's Immersion program at Fairmont State University provides a college bridge experience for incoming students in science, technology and engineering and math (STEM). The First2 Network's goal is to guide and assist rural, first-generation, and other underrepresented STEM college students. The summer immersion bridge experience immerses students into college life. Students stay in dorms and learn what it's like to be away from home while engaging in a program which includes real research projects in collaboration with professors and peer mentors, introductions to campus resources, and social events. This program helps students get acclimated to college, making it an easier adjustment. The immersive experience also provides connections and a safe space that students can go to when they have questions or need help.

As students who attended the immersive program during the summer of 2022, we can say that it helped us greatly. Not only did we learn about all the resources on campus, but we got real lab experience. We were lab partners conducting analytical chemistry research on lead in paint. We performed all the lab work with supervision and guidance from chemistry professors and lab assistants. At the end of the 2 weeks, we presented our research to students, faculty, and family members. This immersion program was resume and experience building, that helped us make connections with our peers that have persisted throughout our first year.