The Impact of First-Generation Students Majoring in Technology and the Effects on Their Career Placement

Ryan N. Favors\(^1\) and E. Shirl Donaldson Ph.D\(^2\)
\(^1\)Office of Dean of Students, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907
\(^2\)College of Technology, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907

There has been a strong movement towards improving the numbers of students majoring and graduating from college in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. Since 2007, there has been a documented national increase in the enrollment of first-generation students seeing an increase from one out of five students enrolled in 2007 to one out of three students enrolled in 2012\(^1\). With this increase in first-generation student enrollment, the increase in enrollment will also impact students in STEM education. Typically first-generation students struggle with STEM fields from inadequate math preparation and not a strong understanding of STEM fields. Most students come from homes where the difference between engineering and technology are not fully understood leading most students majoring in engineering. With the first-generation student population, there has been an increase in students switching to technology from other STEM majors and thriving in that field leading to great careers. Students whose learning styles are related to a more kinesthetic or tactile approach tend to strive in the field of technology, which is a plausible reason why first-generation students tend to excel in the field of technology more. Our aim is to focus on the impact majoring in Technology has on first-generation students as well as furthering their careers in their field.