

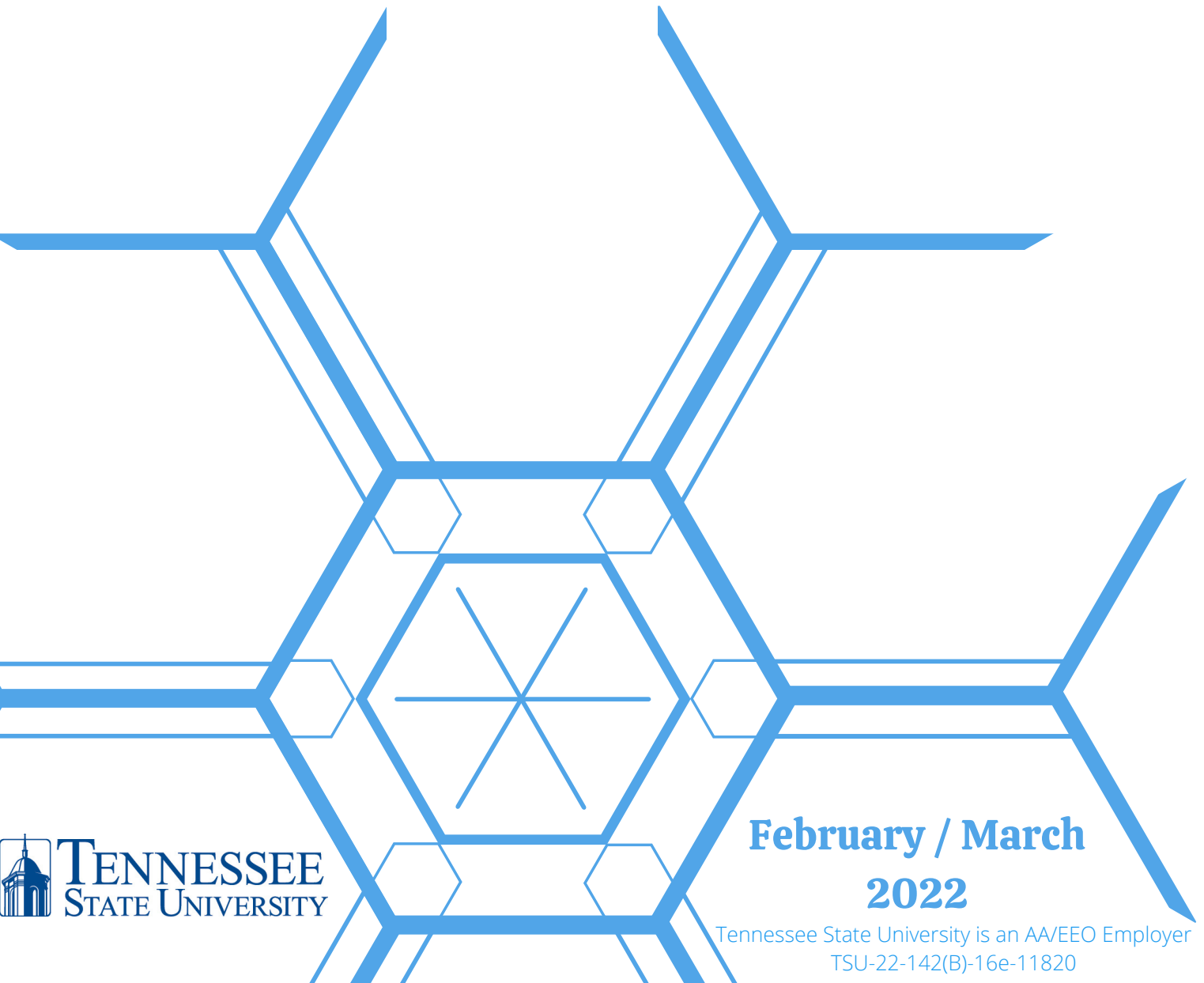
# Focus

A newsletter for first-generation students

*Taking a closer look at your success*

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***Inside This Issue: Black History Month, First-Gen Events, Podcast Announcement, & More News from The You First Project***



# From My Desk

## "We Are"

By Donald Perkins



We are locks, fades and waves....  
Fros, ponytails and braids...  
Hats flipped to the back with a pair of  
shades...  
We are confidence that commands  
attention.  
We own our short hair, curls, bald  
heads and extensions.  
We are fashion-forward/backwards...  
check out the transition.

We are focused and on a mission.  
We are business suits, jeans and tee...  
anything we desire.  
Whatever we're wearing.... our outfit is  
on fire...  
Or should I say fleek?  
We were born for this ...don't sweat  
the technique.

We are Phillies cap to the back...that  
kind of street...  
Jordan's. a pair of joggers and a white  
tee.  
We are corporate when we want to  
be...  
Or should I say more?  
We are confident to the core!  
Head up. Chest out...when we glide  
across the floor!

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We can turn corporate with a pair of  
khakis...  
And make a t-shirt and Tim's look  
classy.  
We are the epitome of sassy...  
We know how to tone it down and  
when to look flashy!  
Not that flashy that looks tacky...  
But that flashy that's neat.  
We leave footprints wherever we go...  
like a new pair of cleats.  
We bop to our own sound...and walk  
to our own beat.

We are.  
We are!

The black swag is incredible.  
And our presence is unforgettable!

Think about that!  
We are proud to be black!

We are.  
We are...  
Piercing through the night...like  
shinning bright stars!

# First-Gen at the Forefront

Nearly half of undergraduates are first-generation students, and it's important to share their stories because all of them matter.

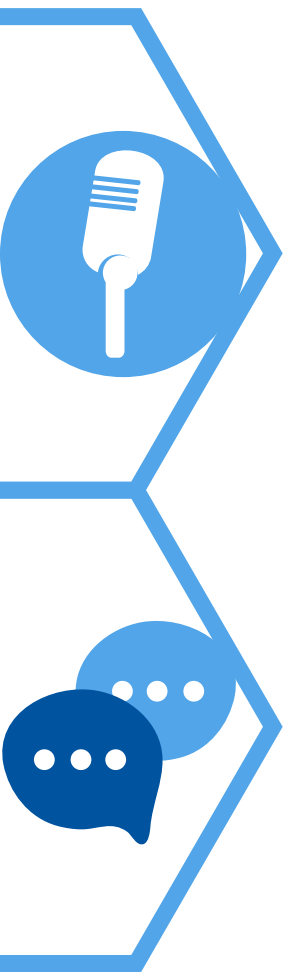


Meet Kristin Gray, a Chicago native and the youngest among her 16 siblings. As the Assistant Director for First Year Experience, we shine a light on her first-gen experience. Ms. Gray attended Northern Illinois University, completing her B.A. in Family Therapy and her Master's in Counseling Adult and Higher Education Administration back-to-back. Of those days, she says, "My college experience was different than my peers': I was unable to call home for help," and she also did not have access to support services, like those offered by The You First Project. Resources were tight, and while she was raising her child and learning, she told herself, "Kristin, she can't be what she doesn't see." That's part of why her personal quote is "I had to create a life I didn't see."

So she set a strong example for her daughter: "I had to create the person I wanted to be. Nothing was given to me; I worked tirelessly for everything I have. I found strength in the face of adversity. I was carried and covered by grace and my mother's prayers. If mom couldn't do anything else, she prayed for me daily!" Being a first-generation student shaped Ms. Gray's perspective on life and work, by teaching her to "have a genuine heart, be compassionate, exude servant leadership, mentor, lend a smile and hand." She summarizes her experience with this last bit of wisdom: "remain humble and be the person you needed when you were going through it." At some point, everyone is "going through it" and needs someone to help them through, just like Kristin Gray implies. We would have loved to support Kristin Gray when she was in school, and we certainly would appreciate getting to know you and help you along your academic, personal, and professional journeys. Thanks again to Ms. Gray for sharing her story, and thank you for reading!

# Can We Pique Your Interest?

The You First Project has many exciting projects in the works, and we would love to share them with you!



During Spring 2022, our team will debut 3 podcast episodes about the first-generation college student experience. Check out the episodes on our [website](#) as we release them!

Power Hour talks are back! Join us on [Instagram Live](#) for conversations on important topics like managing your mental wellness and pursuing your goals successfully.



Would you be interested in joining a club dedicated to first-generation students? We would love to hear from you! This QR code takes you to a brief survey asking about your interest.



# What's Going On?

Times and locations to be announced on social media and our [website!](#)

## February

February 25th

Chat & Chill - Relax, Relate, Release  
*Learn about and practice self-care before midterm season!*

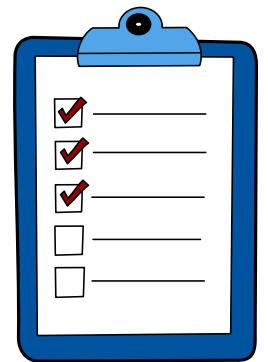
## March

March 21st

Power Hour: Getting to Your Goals  
*A discussion on how to accomplish short- and long-term goals.*

March 25th

Personal Definition of Success  
*Map out your vision and aspirations for 2022 and beyond.*



## April

April 8th

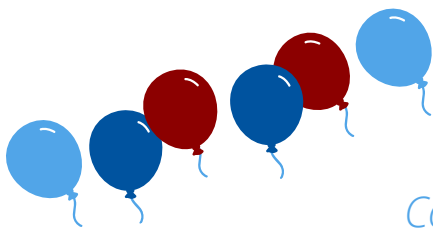
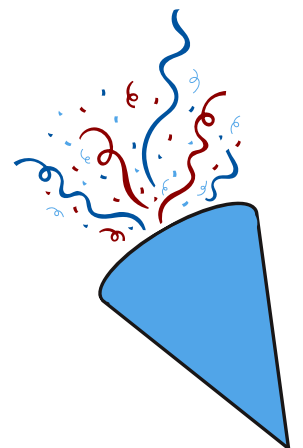
The Grow Up

*Prepare for the next step in your college journey as an upcoming upperclassman!*

April 22nd

You Did It! Celebration

*Congratulate yourself and your peers on making it through the 2021-2022 academic year!*



# Stay In the Know

Observe Black History Month with these opportunities!

Watch this year's [The Great Debate](#), featuring TSU students and staff!

Watch TSU's [33rd Annual African-American Read-In!](#)

Be prepared for future events, such as the [Annual Africa Conference!](#)

February 28

Midterms Week

Check out [P.A.S.S. Tutoring](#)

May 2

Final Exams Week

March 1

Registration Starts for Fall 2022



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Get updates on events and resources by connecting with us on social media!