

# ADVISING MATTERS CONFERENCE

CLOSING THE GAP TO  
STUDENT SUCCESS



03.02.20

THE INN AT VIRGINIA TECH AND  
SKELTON CONFERENCE CENTER





# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Registration and Continental Breakfast | 8:00 - 8:30 AM  
The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center

Welcome | 8:30 - 9:00 AM

Dr. Kimberly Smith, Associate Vice Provost for Student Success Initiatives  
Dr. Menah Pratt-Clarke, Vice President for Diversity, Inclusion, and Strategic Affairs

Opening Session | 9:00 - 11:00 AM

## Fostering an Inclusive and Diverse Community through Academic Advising

Mr. Blane Harding, University of Nevada, Reno

Diversity is having a wide range of identities present and interactions based on a broad spectrum of demographic and cultural experiences. Inclusion puts the concept and practice of diversity into action by creating an environment that allows for the importance of the knowledge derived from life experience to be harnessed to create the best and most productive environment for our students. In order to facilitate student success it is necessary to build strong relationships with the students we serve.



Blane Harding currently is the Director of Advising, Recruitment, and Retention for the College of Science at the University of Nevada, Reno and from 2015-2017 was the Director of The Cultural Center at the University of Nevada Reno. Mr. Harding is also a consultant and has worked with over 50 institutions of higher learning across the country. He retired from Colorado State University, after 24 years of service, in 2012 where he served as the Director of Advising, Recruitment, and Retention for the College of Liberal Arts.

Break	11:00 - 11:15 AM	Break	1:45 - 2:00 PM
Concurrent Session I	11:15 AM - 12:15 PM	Concurrent Session II	2:00 - 3:00 PM
Lunch	12:15 - 1:15 PM	Break	3:00 - 3:15 PM
Student Panel	1:15 - 1:45 PM	Concurrent Session III	3:15 - 4:15 PM

## CONFERENCE SPONSORS

- College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- College of Engineering
- College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences
- College of Natural Resources and Environment
- College of Science
- Division of Student Affairs
- Office of Inclusion and Diversity



# CONCURRENT SESSION I

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM



## Mind the Gap: Exploration of Methods to Support International Students' Transition to College

Ms. Maia Greene-Havas, Virginia Tech

Dr. Homero Murzi, Virginia Tech

Latham Ballroom A

The transition to college can be a challenging time for all first-year students; beginning college in a different country adds another layer of barriers to navigate. Thankfully, there are strategies university professionals can implement to support international students as they transition to college. Semi-structured interviews regarding this transition period were conducted with twenty-one first-year international students in order to gain understanding and consequently provide informed support with the hope of increasing academic success. During this session we will review the prominent themes that emerged from our research and invite you to share your experiences working with international students.

## A Strength Based Approach to Advising and Coaching First Generation Students Navigating a Plan "B"

Dr. Donna Faltin, Virginia Tech

Latham Ballroom B

Navigating life-changing decisions can be challenging. When a student is required to change their major or career path due to a life event or unsuccessful course, it can be even more challenging. This presentation will utilize a strength based, anti-deficit framework to review the research findings on the strength and opportunities related to first generation students navigating major and career changes. Current research based advising and coaching strategies will be presented, including how to incorporate and collaborate with resources already on campus. Data on first generation students will be introduced. Proven strategies that can be implemented will be offered through an interactive participant activity.

## Navigating Mental Health: The Academic Advisor First Aid Kit

Mr. Seth Schroeder, Virginia Tech

Ms. Rachel Morgante-Richmeier, Virginia Tech  
Cascades

Academic Advisors are on the front-line of student contact at many institutions across the US, and are often times a student's first point-of-contact within the higher education system. With that being said, advisors are not therapists or counselors, but should recognize that an increasing number of college students are

living with mental illness. This facilitated workshop, with a guided discussion, is looking to engage academic advisors on the topic of mental wellness by putting together a Mental Health First Aid Kit. We will explore what the advisor's role is, as it pertains to students' mental health, and collaboratively create a "First Aid Kit" as to be better prepared to serve students in need.

## Broadening Participation in Engineering Across Virginia: Using Research-Based Findings to Promote Student Support

Dr. Holly Matusovich, Virginia Tech

Dr. Isabel Bradburn, Virginia Tech

Dr. Cheryl Carrico, Virginia Tech  
Smithfield

To better understand college access and uptake patterns in Virginia, we conducted a mixed methods study of the gatekeepers (i.e., people, places, programs, and policies) that may explain demographic variations across high schools in student rates of enrolling in an engineering major at a four-year university. Through this workshop, we will share findings from our study and engage participants in discussions on ways to support students from different locales across the commonwealth. We will also discuss opportunities to increase and broaden enrollment in engineering, and four-year college enrollment in general, in Virginia through enhanced connections with high school systems.

## General Education: More Than Just a Checklist

Dr. Karen Watson, Virginia Tech

Drillfield

General Education has historically been seen as a checklist to get through and prescriptive advising often reinforces this belief. Virginia Tech's new general education program provides new pathways to move from checklist advising to making it an integral part of a student's education. For example, Pathways minors provide unique opportunities for students to deepen their knowledge and broaden their perspective while completing general education goals. Come and share experiences and brainstorm new methods of integrating general education into a student's academic experience.

# CONCURRENT SESSION II

2:00 - 3:00 PM



## Appreciative by Design: Using Appreciative Advising and Design Thinking with First Generation Students

Ms. Claire Childress, Virginia Tech  
Latham Ballroom A

How can we best prepare first generation students for their career journeys in today's ever changing, complex world? In this session, we will review Appreciative Advising and Design Thinking, taking a look at each of the six phases of appreciative advising. For each phase, career advising tips and activities will be discussed. We will also share design thinking activities and more ideas from the book, *Designing Your Life*, which will be woven into the phases of appreciative advising. Attendees will gain new ideas, tools and methods to better assist first generation students in creating career development plans.

## Evolving Advising Peers to Greater Success

Miss Krystal Johnson, UNC-Chapel Hill  
Latham Ballroom B

Do you have a peer program on your campus that you are hoping to update to the changing times in advising? Or do you hope to start one on your campus? If so, join us in an interactive presentation where we will share our journey of our evolving peer program, in *Academic Advising*, at UNC-Chapel Hill. We will share lessons learned, new additions to our programs, how the peers are impacting our work for student success and provide a space for sharing best practices and new ideas.

## Veterans in the Classroom

Mr. Juan G. Cordero, Virginia Tech  
Drillfield

Student veterans enter higher education with very different needs than most students. They tend to be older and nearly half have accompanying families. This session is designed to help advisors engage, understand, and support their veteran population as well as other military connected students as they transition from military life into academia. It will also cover the basics of GI Bill benefits so as to better understand the limitations and deadlines these students face.

## What Else Can You Do? Exploring Student Advocacy in Advising

Dr. Amanda Armstrong, Virginia Tech  
Smithfield

In a document outlining student affairs competency areas, two leading organizations (ACPA and NASPA, 2015) argued that practitioners should "advocate for change that [will] remove barriers to student success" (p. 28). Yet, practitioners have named several challenges and consequences of enacting social justice praxes and in serving as advocates for students. As an advisor, do you ever wonder what else you can do? In this session, we (advisors across years of experience) will reflect upon our understandings of "student advocacy"; review a case study and offer potential strategies; and discuss challenges and consequences of advocacy for advisors and students.

## The Answer for Transfer Students: Reducing Culture Shock

Ms. Sarah Bechtel, Virginia Tech  
Mr. Mohammad Sabbagh, Virginia Tech  
Cascades

Transfer students come from different backgrounds, some may be first-generation, have financial difficulties, non-traditional age, but most of them struggle to adjust to the culture at a four-year institution. While they all experience the same culture, they may have contributing factors that create their individualized shock. The key to minimize their shock starts with understanding their background by using active listening and developing a personalized advising approach. During this presentation, we will discuss the literature, identify transfer specific needs, and provide ways to refer them to appropriate resources by including anecdotes from current transfer students, handouts, and encouraging group discussions.





## Building Skills for Resiliency: VT Student Conduct Gets to the Core of Student Success

Mrs. Tamara Cherry-Clarke, Virginia Tech  
Latham Ballroom A

Helping students align their core values and beliefs can shift their understanding of purpose, success, and build resiliency. VT Student Conduct meets students where they are developmentally, using student engagement and activities to move them forward on the journey to self-understanding and integrity. This session will share practices used to engage students in understanding who they are and how that may or may not be aligned with the behaviors they are demonstrating. Attendees will also learn about activities used to get students back on the path to student success and degree completion. These tools can be adapted to any area.

## Journey to Success: Academic Interventions

Ms. Sarah Stanfield, UNC-Chapel Hill  
Latham Ballroom B

This session will describe how the UNC-CH Eligibility Team has created a coordinated culture of care to support students facing academic struggles. This team works to reaffirm students' capacity for success, and dispel the myth that struggles aren't a part of successful stories. The presentation details our academic intervention for Warning and Academic Probation students. By sharing the details of our intervention, the session will show how our team has increased retention rates through holistic support for the unique needs of students from marginalized populations, and provide tips for how professionals can create similar programming at their home institutions.

## Closing the Gap to the Pre-Health Dream: Effectively Advising Pre-Health Students on Their Paths Toward Professional School Goals

Mrs. Annie Laib Jenkins, Virginia Tech  
Ms. Carol Robinson, Virginia Tech  
Cascades

Many students express interest in pursuing a healthcare profession. However, students may not have the cultural capital to turn that interest into a reality without support from campus partners. For these students, the gap between their dreams and their current position may seem insurmountable. Because pre-professional advising and academic advising intersect greatly, academic advisors are likely to find themselves engaged in pre-health

conversations regularly, regardless of their confidence and training in navigating such conversations. This presentation aims to enable advisors to navigate pre-health conversations effectively to help students bridge the gap from undergraduate to professional student.

## Busting the Myth: Transfer Students Don't Need Transitional Programs

Mrs. Nasim Schwab, Virginia Tech  
Smithfield

Transfer students have already been in college, right? So they know how to be a successful college student, right? Not always true at a 4-year institution. The transfer student's transition is often overlooked because of the assumption that they do not need first year transitional experiences. However, transfer students encounter barriers when transferring from one institution to another regardless of size and institution type. This session will cover the implementation and success of transitional programs designed to better engage Virginia Tech's transfer student population. Participants will hear from current VT transfer students and leave with a transfer student support tool kit.

## Advising First Generation Immigrant Students

Mr. Sachiel Mondesir, Virginia Tech  
Drillfield

A presentation based on personal experience as well as fifteen years working with first generation college students from immigrant families, mainly the Caribbean, Central and South America, and the African continent. This presentation is to shed some light on some of the challenges (and opportunities) immigrant students and first generation Americans face as first generation college students. Participants will have an opportunity to not only learn about this group of students, but also share their own experiences working with this population.





# 2019-2020 UNDERGRADUATE ADVISING TRAVEL GRANT

Virginia Tech makes intentional efforts to support the professional development of its advisors by providing funds to support the development of faculty, professional, and staff advisors who serve undergraduate students in an advising capacity. Each recipient below has been awarded a \$500 professional development grant to assist with expenses related to advising conferences and events.



**Amanda Armstrong**  
Pamplin College of  
Business



**Andrew Dolbin-MacNab**  
College of Liberal Arts and  
Human Sciences



**Maia Greene-Havas**  
Engineering Education

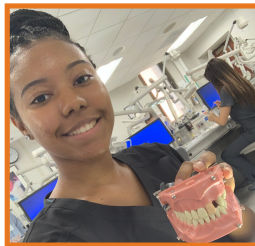


**Paula Van Curen**  
Industrial Systems  
Engineering



## MEET OUR STUDENT PANEL

To bridge the gap for student success the Office of Academic Advising Initiatives (AAI) hosts student-led programs to support advising technology, academic planning, and transfer student transitions. The students featured on the panel are involved in leadership positions within the office of AAI, as well as involved in the greater Virginia Tech community.



**Tati-Ana Campbell**  
Advising Ambassador



**Angelo Perez**  
Transfer Experience LLC  
President



**Brianna Sclafani**  
Advising Ambassador



**Kiara Scott**  
Student in UNIV 2984  
Transfer Course



**Destiny Simmons-Harper**  
Lead Peer Mentor for Hokie  
Connect Transfer Peer  
Mentor Program

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# SPRING 2020 ACADEMIC ADVISING ACADEMY

Academic Advising Initiatives is proud to announce their Academic Advising Academy (AAA) Spring 2020 cohort! The AAA is a multilevel, semester-long training and development program for academic advisors at Virginia Tech that was created to help advisors at all levels of experience augment their advising skills. Each cohort of participants is provided with the data, tools, and resources needed to conduct meaningful and relevant academic advising with students to assist student achievement and transition to the university.



**Leanne Brownlee-Bowen**  
Pamplin College of  
Business



**Julia Burger**  
Meteorology



**Ally Clement**  
Academic Advising  
Initiatives



**Andrew Dolbin-MacNab**  
College of Liberal Arts  
and Human Sciences



**Heath Furrow**  
History



**Kurt Hoffman**  
Psychology



**Maggie Johnson**  
Industrial Systems  
Engineering



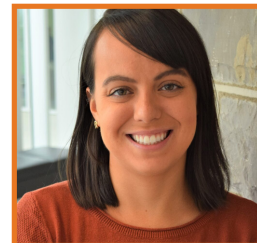
**Emily Metzgar**  
Aerospace and Ocean  
Engineering



**Erika Perdue**  
Economics



**Mohammad Sabbagh**  
Neuroscience



**Allison Silknetter**  
Academic Advising  
Initiatives

## OUR ADVISING MISSION AT VIRGINIA TECH

### Definition

Advising at Virginia Tech is a collaborative process between student and advisor leading to the exchange of information that encourages the individual student to make responsible academic and career decisions.

### Philosophy

Virginia Tech demonstrates a commitment to advising through recognizing and supporting the needs of students and advisors. Each undergraduate student at the University is provided information and assistance, which aids the individual student in making responsible academic and career decisions. Each advisor is provided the necessary tools to respond to student needs and the opportunity to be recognized and rewarded for exemplary advising. Virginia Tech, in support of this philosophy will provide student-focused advising and assist students in developing skills that lead them to take active responsibility for the advising process.





*Congratulations*

**TO OUR 2020 ADVISING AWARD WINNERS!**



2020 Alumni Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Academic Advising  
Ms. Maia Greene-Havas,  
Engineering Education, College of Engineering

"I value the importance of demonstrating cultural appreciation when working with students and colleagues, and I advocate for the equity of policies and procedures whenever possible. I work to create an environment in which each student feels welcomed and respected. With diversity comes the opportunity to hold meaningful discussions that can greatly increase awareness and understanding when carried out appropriately."

2020 Provost's Award for Excellence in Advising  
Mr. Vern Ferguson,  
School of Architecture and Design, College of Architecture and Urban Studies

"Advising matters because students are not able to see the bigger picture when they stress over the little things. Sometimes presenting alternative plans of study helps a student to narrow in on the subjects or areas of study in which they wish to excel. Our job as advisors is to allow students' dreams to become reality while keeping them focused on both the probable and practical."



2020 Alumni Award for Excellence in Graduate Academic Advising  
Dr. Kostas Triantis,  
Industrial and Systems Engineering, College of Engineering

"In the end, what makes a difference for me as an advisor, is my dedication to the potential success of each graduate student. This means spending the time, providing encouragement, listening to the desires and aspirations of each student, and challenging each student to reach her/his potential."

2020 Award for Excellence in Career Advising  
Dr. Olga Isengildina Massa,  
Agricultural and Applied Economics, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

"The best and the most gratifying part of my job as a University Professor is to see my students succeed. However, the path to success is not always straight forward and requires additional efforts and resources to help students find their passion and career path. I try to make every effort to help students discover, embrace, and pursue careers in commodity marketing and price risk management."



[www.advising.vt.edu](http://www.advising.vt.edu)



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