March 4, 2022

Dear Conference Participants,

Welcome to Virginia Tech's 12th Annual Academic Advising Conference, Advising Matters.

The theme for this year's conference is “Advising Matters: Thriving through Change.” The global pandemic has impacted higher education, putting employees and students in a place of vast change. The 2022 conference theme was selected to highlight the dedication and resilience of the individuals in student support roles, as well as embrace change moving forward. The pandemic has brought on many challenges, but also taught us to welcome change and find the positive in every situation. Our recent experiences reiterate that colleges and universities must continually examine and recalibrate approaches to teaching, advising, and support services to support our students not only to persist, but thrive as they achieve their degree.

I am especially pleased to welcome our very own, Vice President of Student Affairs, Dr. Frank Shushok, to frame our discussion as the conference keynote speaker. As a scholar-practitioner, he is known for his profound commitment to student learning, his learning-centered leadership, his community-centered approach, his commitment to diversity and inclusivity, and his desire to help others reach their fullest potential. He has led significant Virginia Tech initiatives to provide holistic learning environments for students, including strengthening and expanding the university's living-learning communities, introducing a positive psychology and strengths-based approach in student affairs programs, and implementing the Aspirations for Student Learning.

We know an advisor's support, influence, and guidance is critical as students make intentional academic choices, build personal and professional skills, practice resilience, connect to resources, and move to their goal of graduation. Our advisors also help to shape departmental culture, elevating student needs and desires to faculty, staff, and administrators. Your connection with a student may make all the difference in that student's success. I hope the presentations and discussions across the conference will empower you in your work and will energize you for the remainder of the semester.
ADVISING MATTERS
CONFERENCE
THRIVING THROUGH CHANGE

03.04.22
THE INN AT VIRGINIA TECH AND SKELETON CONFERENCE CENTER
Registration and Continental Breakfast  8:00 - 8:30 AM
The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center

Welcome  8:30 - 9:00 AM
Lauren Thomas, Director for Academic Advising Initiatives

Opening Session  9:00 - 10:00 AM

Building and Sustaining a Culture of Care: Whatever it takes to support the individual success and well-being of every student

Mr. Frank Shushok, Jr., Ph.D. Virginia Tech, Virginia

Cultural change is almost always a grassroots endeavor—starting in classrooms, hallways, advising appointments and nowadays, Zoom sessions. You, in your role, are a game-changer for students and their families. You literally have the opportunity every day to change the course of history for good. In his talk, Frank will share why you are a powerful agent for cultural change and why that power is too often overlooked. Let’s start a movement where care and hope are abundant.

As Vice President for Student Affairs, Frank provides leadership and oversight for 25 departments with a budget of more than $164 million and a staff of more than 3,600 employees. In addition to his administrative responsibilities, Frank is an associate professor in the department of agricultural, leadership and community education and an affiliated faculty member in the higher education graduate program. From 2013-2018, he served as executive editor of About Campus, a national magazine that promotes strengthening the student learning experience in higher education.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

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CONFERENCE SPONSORS

- College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- College of Engineering
- College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences
- College of Architecture and Urban Studies
- Pamplin College of Business
- College of Science
- Division of Enrollment Management
- Office of Inclusion and Diversity
ExperienceVT as a Tool for Developmental Advising
Andrew Dolbin-MacNab, Virginia Tech
Matt Ebert, Virginia Tech
Janet Hilder, Virginia Tech
James Bridgeforth, Virginia Tech
Solitude
ExperienceVT is a Virginia Tech Student Affairs initiative to help students discover their strengths, clarify their goals, plan meaningful campus experiences, and take action toward their goals. ExperienceVT provides students with resources and coaching to help them create a personalized plan and engage in ongoing conversations that enable them to intentionally experience Virginia Tech. Academic advisors can play a central role in these conversations to encourage student engagement, promote self-actualization, and improve student well-being. This interactive presentation will give an overview of ExperienceVT, and explore how academic advisors can use this, and similar initiatives, to engage in developmental advising.

Thriving through changes on the pre-health journey: How advisors can support pre-health students as they navigate around roadblocks
Annie Laib Jenkins, Virginia Tech
Carol Robinson, Virginia Tech
Duck Pond
Student Dream: “Graduate high school. Get into college. Get into medical school. Become a doctor. Save lives.” Many students come to college with a dream of becoming a healthcare provider one day and a broad list of goals, but lacking the resources to capably navigate this pre-health journey and readjust when inevitable road bumps arise. In this session, Health Professions Advising will discuss some common avenues for pre-health students to adjust through academic and experiential roadblocks and will engage advisors in interactive conversation surrounding navigating difficult conversations without feeling like a “dream crusher.”

Supporting Students on Academic Probation: Advisor Praxis
Anya Work, Virginia Tech
Cascades
Academic probation can be a challenging and complex experience for students, however the support students on probation receive from their academic advisors is crucial to their success. Drawing from an extensive review of previous research and past experiences, session participants will increase their awareness of student perceptions of being on probation, effective strategies for student support, and how to cultivate an inclusive environment for students on academic probation. This discussion will serve as an opportunity for participants to practice collective self-reflection and reframe how they view students on academic probation with a focus on an asset-based view of student success.

Change for the Better: Embedding Centrally Trained Advisors into Departments
Vivek Shastry, Virginia Tech
Melanie Sontheimer, Virginia Tech
Sarah Bechtel, Virginia Tech
Smithfield
The College of Science (COS) experienced turmoil during Summer 2021 with a transition of academic advisors in one of their largest departments. To alleviate the hardship and stress of advising on the remaining two advisors (1 professional; 1 faculty), the College of Science leadership stepped in to mitigate the crisis. Through strategic planning, teamwork, and collaboration, a plan was devised to take on the challenge ensuring no student was left behind. Unanticipated problems arose during this transition which led to reevaluating our academic advising onboarding and orientation process. During this presentation, we will provide anecdotes and have a group discussion.
Staying Where We Belong: Building resilience and sense of belonging by creating inclusive environments through informed advising
Teresa Wilson, Virginia Tech
Solitude
Research into first-generation students reveals a positive correlation between their sense of belonging and retention and persistence to graduation rates. Quality advising and mentors create a student’s bond to the institution and develop a strong sense of belonging. Being inclusive in our advising practice helps to build/enhance students’ resilience and agency to achieve their goals. This presentation shares inclusive practice points and explains the theory that informs these practices.

Reframing Struggle: Advising First-Year Students through a College-Readiness Approach
Christina Fabrey, Virginia Tech
Amber Smith, Virginia Tech
Cascades
Students transitioning from high school often struggle in the less structured college environment. Even selective college admissions offices that measure academic eligibility well can be less adept at measuring non-cognitive skills. In this session, we will discuss executive functions, college and career readiness skills, and how to apply developmental advising techniques to support first-year students in improving their academic performance and college experience. Participants will leave the workshop with practical strategies to use with students to identify college readiness concerns, support common first-year student transitional issues, and reframe academic challenges toward post-secondary success.

Reading Your Email Could be a Full Time Job: Communicating Efficiently with a Large Advising Caseload
Christina Minford, Virginia Tech
Courtney Glass, Virginia Tech
Duck Pond
In the age of social media, we’re connected all the time, overwhelmed, inboxes are unmanageable, and it’s easy to tune out communications. Students are no different than advisors. How do you ensure students are getting the information to succeed in college? With a focus on first-generation students and incoming first-year and transfer students, we’ve devised a communication plan to highlight essential information to promote student success, retention, and engagement. Participants will learn about our communication plan for a large advising caseload.

Mitigating Campus Violence: An Academic Advisor’s Role in Preventing Sexual Violence and Hazing at Virginia Tech
Kayla Goodwin, Virginia Tech
Abbey Rowe Erwin, Virginia Tech
Shannon Shastry, Virginia Tech
Chelsea J. Cleary, Virginia Tech
David Andrews, Virginia Tech
Smithfield
Sexual violence and hazing are pervasive on college campuses across the United States, and a recent study has identified potential overlaps of these two forms of interpersonal violence. Extensive literature supports the need for collaborative efforts amongst campus professionals, including academic advisors, to effectively eradicate campus violence. As trusted mentors to college students, academic advisors are in a unique position to identify risk, intervene accordingly, and support prevention efforts regarding sexual violence and hazing. This session will examine how academic advisors can support the collective efforts of creating a safer environment for students at Virginia Tech.

So you want to study abroad...now what?
Maureen Deisinger, Virginia Tech
Marielle Wijnands, Virginia Tech
Drillfield
This session is a re-vamped edition of our 2021 presentation, perfect for a seasoned advisor wanting a refresher or someone new to VT wanting to learn the basics. Has a student ever told you they’re interested in studying abroad, but you weren’t quite sure how to best support them? In this session, presenters from the Global Education Office will introduce the basics of study abroad at VT, discuss how academic advisors complement the GEO, and share updates to GEO advising resources including new credit transfer database collaborations with the Registrar’s office. We will also address important COVID-19 safety approval process updates. Attendees will discuss good practices for initial study abroad advising through scenarios. This session is useful for advisors who are new to international education as well as those who already have a strong understanding.
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.

**MEET OUR STUDENT PANEL**

The Office of Academic Advising Initiatives hosts a student-led panel to discuss the unique strategies students have used to overcome challenging times. The student panelists are engaged in Student Success Initiatives and the larger campus community.

- **Alyssa McCormick**
  - Accounting and Information Systems
  - Senior

- **Jacob Curry**
  - Communications
  - Sophomore

- **Brianna Brown**
  - Psychology
  - Sophomore

- **Ross Wunibald**
  - Management
  - Senior

- **Javier Ortiz Alvarado**
  - Chemistry
  - Senior

- **Julie Burger**
  - College of Natural Resources and Environment

- **Paige Johnson**
  - Computer Science

- **Joseph Welsh**
  - Pamplin College of Business

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Academic Advising Initiatives is proud to announce their Academic Advising Academy (AAA) Spring 2022 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.

Wynnie Avent II  
College of Science  
Dean’s Office

Carolyn Ballard  
Department of Human Development & Family Services

Sarah Bechtel  
College of Science  
Dean’s Office

Jenene Belcher  
Real Estate

Jennifer Bradley  
Computer Science

Grace Burden  
College of Science  
Dean’s Office

Leigh Anne Byrd  
Computer Science

Robin Cooley  
College of Science  
Dean’s Office

Joseph Daniel  
University Studies and Scholarship Support

Ginger Dempsey  
Agriculture Leadership Community Education

Rebekah DeToma  
College of Science  
Dean’s Office

Karen Drake-Whitney  
School of Plant and Environmental Sciences

Page Fetter  
University Studies and Scholarship Support

Hillary Gaskins  
Pamplin College of Business

Kayla Goodwin  
Communication

Cathy Hill  
Mechanical Engineering - Graduate Level

Amy Kokkinakos  
Chemistry

Sarah Kurtz  
Higher Education Student

Helen Pegler  
Pamplin College of Business

Melanie Sontheimer  
College of Science  
Dean’s Office

Taylor Swan  
Psychology

Haley Tucker  
Neuroscience

Ryan Underwood  
Computer Science

Joseph Welsh  
Pamplin College of Business
The Academic Advisor Mentor Program (AAMP) has been created to enhance the professional development of Virginia Tech’s academic advisors. This program strives to create an engaged community of professional academic advisors at Virginia Tech and provide participants with information and resources that can be incorporated into their advising curriculum to meet the needs of their unique student populations. Mentors guide mentees in developing professional goals and provide tailored support to each of their mentees. This program aims to create an engaged community of professional advisors at Virginia Tech.

MEET OUR SPRING MENTORS

Dana McGuire
Assistant Director
Academic Advising
Natural Resources & Environment
The Advising Center

Marlena Lester
Director
Academic Advising
College of Engineering

Paige Johnson
Director
Undergraduate Programs
Computer Science

Vivek Shastry
Assistant Director
Undergraduate Advising
College of Science

Vern Ferguson
Academic Advisor
Architecture & Design
Congratulations to our 2022 Advising Award Winners!

2022 Alumni Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Academic Advising
Helene Goetz
University Studies & Scholarship Support

“I want my students to always know I celebrate their diversity, embrace their individuality, and appreciate their gifts. We are in this together. I am their biggest ally and supporter, but they are responsible and accountable for the path they choose. I do not make their decisions for them. I’m a guide, their travel agent. They tell me where they want to go and together, we will figure out the best path for success.”

2022 Alumni Award for Excellence in Graduate Academic Advising
Holly Matusovich,
Engineering Education

“Quality advising for graduate students is a passion of mine. I see graduate student advising as the most critical aspect of graduate student success and I aim to make a difference on small and large scales through my own research and practice. It has been rewarding to see my graduate students thrive in their post-dissertation experiences and I have really appreciated how many of them stay engaged with my research group and connect with me on a regular basis.”

2022 Provost’s Award for Excellence in Advising
Holly Belcher
Philosophy, Politics, and Economics

“I am here to help, to listen without judgement, to empathize, to offer my time and resources, and to be a steadfast support system through one’s next step into adulthood. I strive to never make my advisees feel rushed, unheard, overlooked, or misunderstood. Doing so, in any other developmental phase of life would simply be viewed as a form of neglect, which can potentially put at risk one’s overall growth and well-being.”

www.advising.vt.edu
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