



ADVISING MATTERS CONFERENCE

**Change for the  
Better:**

**Embedding  
Centrally Trained  
Advisors into  
Departments**

March 4, 2022





# Meet the Presenters



**VIVEK SHASTRY**

Assistant Director of  
Undergraduate Advising



**MELANIE SONTHEIMER**

Academic Advisor



**SARAH BECHTEL**

Assistant Director for Advising & Academic Initiatives

# Agenda

What you need to know

01 Introductions

02 College of Science

03 Goals

04 Implementation

05 What Happened

06 What We Learned

07 Going Forward

08 Our Approach

09 Discussion/Questions

# COLLEGE OF SCIENCE STRUCTURE

Department	Advisor/Department	Students/Department
College of Science	72 academic advisors	4,829 students
Biological Sciences	14 advisors (3 professional advisors, 11 faculty advisors)	1,482 students
Chemistry	12 advisors (11 faculty advisors, 1 undergraduate coordinator)	250 students
Economics	1 professional advisor	268 students
Geosciences	1 professional advisor	80 students
Mathematics	28 faculty advisors	236 students

\*Student numbers as of Fall 2021 Census  
(9/20/2021)

# COLLEGE OF SCIENCE STRUCTURE

Department	Advisor/Department	Students/Department
Physics	2 professional advisors	247 students
Psychology	3 advisors (2 professional advisors, 1 faculty advisor)	687 students
Statistics	1 professional advisor	96 students
Academy of Integrated Science	3 professional advisors	705 students
School of Neuroscience	3 professional advisors	702 students
Explore Science	2 professional advisors	76 students

\*Student numbers as of Fall 2021 Census  
(9/20/2021)

# Goals

☒ Opportunity for cross-training

☒ Back-up emergency advisors

☐ Consistent training and communication

☐ Become "One Team" with one reporting structure to COS Dean's Office

# Implementation

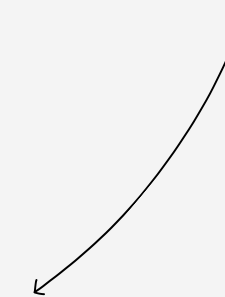
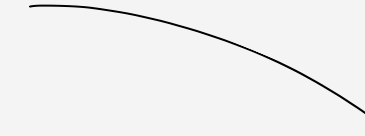
May 2021  
2 new lines  
Biological  
Sciences/Psychology  
**Phase 1**

July 2021  
Turmoil in Biological  
Sciences  
**Phase 2**

July 2021  
Strategic plan developed  
to diminish turmoil  
**Phase 3**

September 2021  
Hiring of 4 new  
academic advisors  
**Phase 4**

September 2021  
Embedding 2/4 new  
academic advisors  
**Phase 5**



# What Happened

O1

**July 2021**  
Transition of  
academic advisors

..... 2 academic  
advisors departed  
from biological  
sciences during  
orientation

O2

**July 2021**  
Plan for handling  
incoming biological  
sciences students

..... Michel: 58 students  
Kristy: 41 students  
Susan: 120 students  
Melanie: 121 students  
Vivek: 101 students

O3

**August 2021**  
Orientation Academic  
Advising Experience

..... Worked with 441  
FY incoming  
students.  
No documentation  
for expected  
credits

O4

**September 2021**  
Hiring of new  
academic advisors

..... Hired two new  
academic advisors in  
biological sciences  
and embedded them  
directly in the  
department



# What We Learned



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## Revamp Summer Orientation (Academic Advising)

Need to identify a method in which incoming students expected credits/courses are documented and in one location for all advisors access

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## Develop an Onboarding Program

A formal, organized, and structured training program needed to be created for new academic advisors to supplement training already on campus

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## Centrally Train Prior to Embedding in Department

In order to have consistent training, all new onboarding is be completed in and from the COS Dean's Office Advising Team





# Going Forward



# Our Approach

## Revamp Summer Orientation (Academic Advising)

All incoming students required to complete COS Expected Credits/Courses Form and academic advisors to upload to Navigate

## Develop an Onboarding Program

Developed onboarding program for internal/external VT employees. Provides context for academic advising at VT, campus resources, networking with colleagues, academic policies, scenarios, and more!

## Centrally Train Prior to Embedding in Department

All new academic advisors are hired in the COS Dean's Office and then embedded in a department. New hires participate in comprehensive 14-business day onboarding program and attend weekly meetings in COS Dean's office

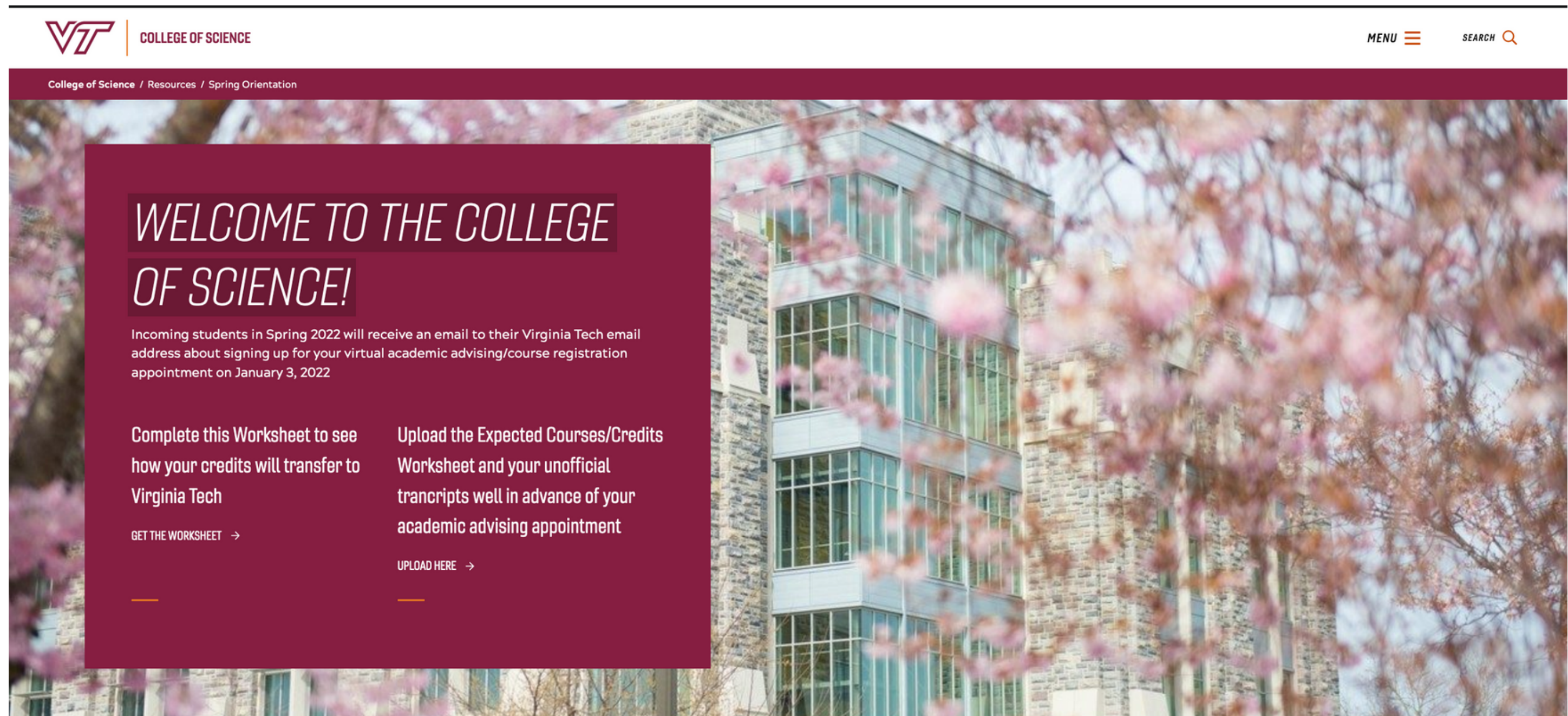




# Orientation

Creation of central location for students to upload unofficial transcripts

Students complete and upload the COS Expected Credits/Courses Worksheet





# Onboarding Program

College of Science Academic Advisor Onboarding  
New Academic Advisor  
North End Center, Suite 4300



## Friday, January 14 (Day 5)

8:00-8:15 AM	Get Settled
8:15-9:30 AM	Review Department of School of Neuroscience website ( <a href="https://neuroscience.vt.edu/">https://neuroscience.vt.edu/</a> )
10:00-10:45 AM	Meet with Zack Underwood (Newman Library, Room 419) (Director, University Studies and Scholarship Support) Overview of transitional advising and services provided to COS undergraduate students
11:15-11:45 AM	Meet with Sarah Bechtel (Room 4315) Overview of role and services provided to COS
12:00-1:00 PM	Lunch
1:00-2:30 PM	Meet with Vivek Shastry (Room 4307) Date of Graduation (DoG) vs. Date of Entry (DoE) Introduction to Checksheets General Education Pathways Concepts Curriculum for Liberal Education
3:00-5:00 PM	Meet with Neuroscience team (Sandy Hall, Room 204) Begin reviewing Neuroscience Checksheets Review nuances of the programs

College of Science Academic Advisor Onboarding  
New Academic Advisor  
North End Center, Suite 4300

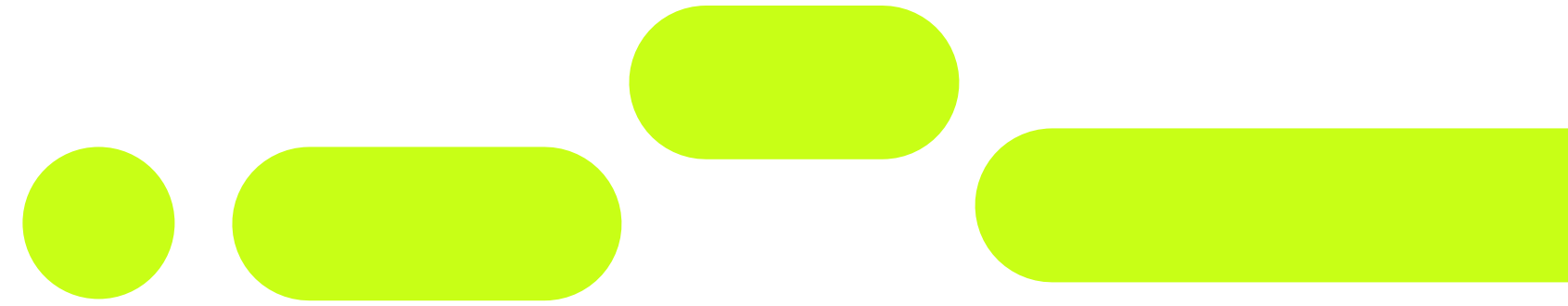


## Monday, January 24 (Day 10)

8:00-8:15 AM	Get Settled
8:15-8:45 AM	Review Emails
8:45-10:00 AM	Meet with Vivek Shastry (Room 4307) Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) Training Running and reading a DARS Report Using Checksheets along with DARS
10:00-10:30 AM	Meet with Dr. Kristin Phillips (Zoom) ( <a href="https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/8530620620">https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/8530620620</a> ) (Assistant Professor, Director of Undergraduate Programs – School of Neuroscience) Introduction and Overview of Role
11:00-12:00 PM	Meet with Vivek (Room 4307) Review Hokie Spa Faculty & Advisor Student Menu Student Schedule & Grades Menu New Student Orientation Menu List of all Advisees with Email Addresses
12:00-1:00 PM	Lunch
1:00-1:45 PM	Meet with Lauren Thomas (Zoom) ( <a href="https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/4474907898">https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/4474907898</a> ) (Director, Academic Advising Initiatives Office) Overview of the team and services provided to COS undergraduate students
2:00-3:15 PM	Meet with Vivek Shastry (Room 4307) Change of Majors & Deadlines Process for adding/dropping secondary majors/minors/options Restricted Majors Transitional Advising/Conversations about students changing majors
3:30-4:30 PM	Meet with Sarah Bechtel (Room 4315) Navigate Scenarios



# Weekly Meetings



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Advising Scenarios

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Navigate Scenarios

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Discuss Benefits of  
NACADA Membership

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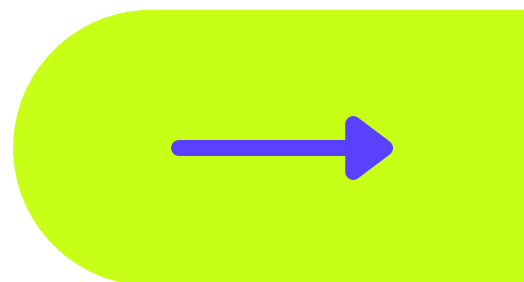
Advising Technology

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Discussion of Student  
Concerns

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Tours of Campus Offices



# Embedding Status

2021-2022

## TASKS

JUNE

JULY

AUG.

SEPT.

OCT.

NOV.

DEC.

JAN.

FEB.

Initial Embed. Advisors Pos.

Transition of BIOL Advisors

Transition of Melanie's Role

3 New advisors for BIOL

Hired COS Asst. Director

New advisor for BIOL

New advisor for NEUR

Hiring Advisor for AIS

Hiring Advisor for CHEM



# Pair & Share-Group Discussion

**Share the advising structure in your unit.**

**How would you have handled the situation with academic advisors leaving during orientation?**

**What is one thing you plan to take back to your unit?**





**Thank you!**

Feel free to approach us if you have any questions.

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Vivek Shastry [vshastry@vt.edu](mailto:vshastry@vt.edu)