

# MASON ADVISING SYMPOSIUM 2024

*Innovation and Transformation – Expanding the World of Advising*

Wednesday, May 15, 2024 | 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM | Johnson Center

[advising.gmu.edu/for-advisors/symposium](https://advising.gmu.edu/for-advisors/symposium)

The inaugural Mason Advising Symposium is open to all George Mason University staff, faculty, and graduate assistants. This symposium aims to provide attendees with an opportunity to explore what it means to be an academic advisor at Mason, the diverse facets of advising at Mason, and what our campus partners want advisors to know.

## Schedule & Session Information

9:45 AM - 10:15 AM – Registration (Ground Floor, in front of Dewberry)

10:15 AM - 10:30 AM – Welcome/Opening Remarks (Dewberry Hall)

Zoom link: <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/92324792912?pwd=ZURJZ24wNGs4NEV2MVQrREF5YVZkdz09>

Speaker: **Dr. Keith Renshaw** (he/him), Senior Associate Provost, Undergraduate Education

10:45 AM - 11:30 AM – Morning Breakout Session (3rd Floor Meeting Rooms)

- **You Can't Pour from an Empty Cup: Strategies and Resources to Improve Advisor Well-being**

In-person location: **Meeting Room B**

Zoom link: **in-person only**

Presenters:

**I-Chun (Nicky) Wu** (she/her), Academic Advisor, Honors College

**Ashley D Marshall-Lanier** (she/her), Academic Advisor, Honors College

**Gabriela Guzman** (she/ella), Academic Advisor, Honors College

College academic advisors play a critical role in providing educational support and individualized attention to promote student success. Advisors are expected to communicate degree requirements and policies, deliver accurate information, offer effective solutions and resources, all while embodying empathy, care, and

compassion. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the demand for such emotional labor, leading to a surge in physical and emotional health symptoms among student-facing faculty and staff, including exhaustion, anxiety, stress, and burnout. Despite the substantial focus and resources dedicated to student mental health, this session seizes the opportunity to focus on the professional well-being of faculty and staff, with a dedicated focus on academic advisors. Through engaging activities and discussions, participants will learn to define their own well-being, identify factors or sources contributing to occupational burnout, explore self-care strategies and resources, and collaboratively build a supportive network for the well-being of academic advisors.

- **Transforming Mason Core Requirements into Meaningful Learning Journeys**

In-person location: **Meeting Room C**

Zoom link: <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/95339542638?pwd=UTV0T0FSL3k2cndUMEljVUI0MStSUT09>

Presenters:

**Laura Poms** (she/her), Mason Core Director, Undergraduate Education

**Courtney Adams Wooten** (she/her), Associate Chair, English, CHSS

**Thomas Polk** (he/him), Director, Writing Across the Curriculum, The Stearns Center

Do your students view Mason Core requirements as just another series of boxes to check on their way to earning an undergraduate degree? Do you experience resistance from students who don't see why they must take a bunch of seemingly unrelated classes? This session focuses on concrete steps you can take to help your students navigate Mason Core requirements and select Mason Core courses that directly relate to your students' personal interests and career goals. This session provides an overview of Mason Core, including the new enhancements and our unique vertical writing curriculum, and specifically addresses how the coursework maps onto the key skills employers expect to see in their new hires. At the conclusion of the session, attendees will have a working knowledge of how the Mason Core curriculum works and a set of open-ended questions to use with students to help them identify Mason Core courses that best meet their needs.

- **Pre-Orientation: How to Leverage Technology for Student Learning While Minimizing Information Overload**

In-person location: **Meeting Room D**

Zoom link: <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/98299940445?pwd=NmdoQWZaeFVra0hyd3BGZTBjdENmZz09>

Presenter: **Grey Williams** (they/she), Academic Advisor, Costello College of Business

Orientation is, for most students, the introduction they receive to the university, major, and support network. As advisors, our prerogative during Orientation is to not only introduce ourselves and the services we provide throughout their time at George Mason, but also to inform them of policies, procedures and their curriculum that will set them up for success post-graduation. Advisors are incredibly knowledgeable in our departments and course content, and it can be extremely difficult to diffuse the amount of information we want students informed on and make it engaging to listen to. Orientation days are long for everyone involved, so how can we break up the information to improve engagement, but also retention of that information over a longer period? This presentation will explore the Costello College of Business's changes to our Pre-Orientation format and the yielded results, and how Pre-Orientation has impacted the advising portion of university Orientation.

- **Work Smarter, Not Harder: Developing Your Communication Plan**

In-person location: **Meeting Room E**

Zoom link: **in-person only**

Presenters:

**Catherine Wright**, Undergraduate Program Director, Communication, CHSS

**Kristin Tyburczy** (she/her), Undergraduate Program Coordinator, Criminology, CHSS

With the high student to advisor ratios common in higher education, it can be impossible to engage in comprehensive one-on-one advising with every student each semester in addition to other required job duties. So, how can advisors better engage with their students without overwhelming themselves? The presenters will discuss how utilizing a communication plan can help advisors more efficiently manage their time and better support their students.

During the session, attendees will develop one new outreach initiative that they can implement in their units. Attendees will also receive access to resources, such as sample communication plans, email templates and social media tips, to help them develop student outreach initiatives in the future.

## 11:45 AM - 1:15 PM – Lunch & Awards Ceremony (Dewberry Hall)

(For virtual attendees, the presentation will begin at 12:00 PM)

Zoom Link: <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/91802537012?pwd=eWxZeXFSTk5Sb25zb3ZWcGVXREVadz09>

Presenters and Volunteers:

**Sylvia Lee** (she/they), Academic Advisor Coordinator, Undergraduate Education

**Vanessa Correa** (she/her), Director of Advising, Honors College

**Assad Khan** (he/him), Director of Undergraduate Student Affairs, College of Science

**Dr. Ryan Braun** (he/him), Director of Undergraduate Academic Success, Undergraduate Education

**Madeline Portnoy** (she/her), FAVS Academic Advisor and Admissions Coordinator, CVPA

**Shabnam Rezaei** (she/her), Senior Academic Advisor, Costello College of Business

## 1:15 PM - 2:00 PM – Get Ready for Patriot Connect (Dewberry Hall)

Zoom Link: <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/91802537012?pwd=eWxZeXFSTk5Sb25zb3ZWcGVXREVadz09>

Members of the Salesforce Project Management Team and Accenture will be joining us for this panel and presentation to discuss the Patriot Connect initiative.

## 2:15 PM - 3:00 PM – Afternoon Breakout Session (3rd Floor Meeting Rooms)

- **Students with Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma Informed Practices**

In-person location: **Meeting Room B**

Zoom link: <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/94774405127?pwd=MDdGQjV4UVh5K0JIMGY0SFJCNXRZUT09>

Presenter: **Jill Manuel** (she/her), Exploratory Academic Advisor, Undergraduate Education

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have been linked to an array of physical and mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and lower levels of educational attainment. ACEs also present as factors in the increased number of students seeking treatment at university and college mental health agencies (Wright et al., 2009). With an understanding of the effects of ACEs, and the implications on post-secondary education, the American College Health Association (ACHA) has called for increased awareness of ACEs among higher education leadership, and trauma-informed training for faculty and staff (Hoch et al., 2015). This session explores the science behind the impacts of early childhood trauma as well as the ways in which institutions of higher learning can respond to the need for increased levels of support.

- **Advisor Burnout and Turnover: What's Onboarding Got to Do With It?**

In-person location: **Meeting Room C**

Zoom link: <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/93695607985?pwd=Q0NCczRoV05nRDdHSStNN2xtQmhhdz09>

Presenter: **Vanessa Correa** (she/her), Director of Advising, Honors College

Academic Advising is widely regarded as being a central component to the success of college students (Hawthorne, Zhang, & Cooper, 2022). Unfortunately, it is also widely known that advisor turnover rates are high (Solon, McGill, & Jensen, 2022). This raises the following question: Can advisor turnover be mitigated by addressing their well-being during the onboarding process? With an emphasis on acclimating the advisor to their role and taking into account their well-being and professional development goals, can we help retain Advisors? This presentation will focus on the onboarding process of six advisors over a period of four years, emphasizing an individualized approach to onboarding. Challenges faced by the administrator and advisors during this process will also be discussed, as well as lessons learned. Participants will have the opportunity to share their own onboarding processes, and ways they can make changes to the onboarding processes for their colleagues and/or direct reports.

- **Pre-Health 101: Advising Pre-Health Students at Mason**

In-person location: **Meeting Room D**

Zoom link: <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/93359039556?pwd=RkdrQTFIZENZU1pobXY5YkxTYWVMUT09>

Presenter: **Maria Wilkins** (she/her), Health Professions Advising Coordinator, Undergraduate Education

Applying to medical school is well-known to be difficult and competitive, but it goes beyond just achieving a high score on the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test). Application requirements include prerequisites, letters of recommendation, essays, standardized exams, and hours of clinical and non-clinical experiences in order to apply competitively. Fortunately, Health Professions Advising exists here at Mason to support these students on their pursuit to health professional schools like medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and more. In this session, participants will be introduced to Health Professions Advising and our approach to ensuring our applicants at Mason are prepared for that journey.

# Symposium Committee Chairs

**Planning Committee Co-Chairs:** Sylvia Lee, UE & Keanah Turner, COS

**Program Committee Co-Chairs:** Shabnam Rezai, CCB & Stormi Ryan, CEHD

**Marketing Committee Chair:** Grey Williams, CCB

**Logistics Committee Chair:** Keanah Turner, COS

**Evaluations Committee Chair:** Dr. Carrie Ann Delaney, CVPA

## Symposium Volunteers

Elli Ambros, CHSS	Mike Hurley, CHSS	Antonio D. Stewart, UE
Jana Biever, Schar	Emma Klainberg, Carter	Kayla Turner, CEHD
Vanessa Correa, Honors	Smriti K. Patwardhan, CEC	Lauren Wagner, CVPA
Jada Crocker, CHSS	Madeline Portnoy, CVPA	Lori Yi, OUR
Julio A. Diaz, CPH	Tiffany Sandstrum, CEHD	Lubna Zia-Uddin, UE
	Asha Sneed, UE	

**Thank you to all the committee chairs, volunteers, presenters, and participants of our inaugural Mason Advising Symposium!**

**Special thanks to Dr. Keith Renshaw, Dr. Ryan Braun, Heather Madnick, Jeremiah Garcia, Hafza Mohamed, the Academic Advisor Awards Selection Committee, Assad Khan, DaFran Ware, Daniel Minot, Vanessa Correa, Barbara Snyder, CECiL, Office of Fellowships, GMU Human Resources, Office of University Events, and Sodexo Catering.**

Questions? Please contact [aaa@gmu.edu](mailto:aaa@gmu.edu).



Office of  
Academic Advising

**Thank you for participating in this year's symposium! Please take a moment to complete the survey about your experience at the event.**

Survey Link: [bit.ly/2024AdvSymp](https://bit.ly/2024AdvSymp)

**2024 Mason Advising Symposium  
Experience Survey**

