



Thursday, May 21, 2026 | 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM | Johnson Center

advising.gmu.edu/for-advisors/symposium

The Mason Advising Symposium is open to all George Mason University staff, faculty, and graduate assistants. This symposium offers participants the 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.

The Mason Advising Symposium aims to provide advisors and our colleagues opportunities for:

- Fostering professional development
- Engaging with campus partners
- Establishing and maintaining rapport with students
- Collaborating with other advisors and building community
- Expanding knowledge of innovation and technology
- Enhancing wellness

Symposium Schedule

9:30 AM - 10:00 AM – Registration/Check-in & Breakfast (Dewberry Lobby)

10:00 AM - 10:20 AM – Welcome/Opening Remarks (Dewberry Hall)

Speaker: **Dr. Michelle Steiner** (she/her), Director of Undergraduate Academic Success, Undergraduate Education

10:30 AM - 11:20 AM – Breakout Session 1 (3rd Floor Meeting Rooms)

11:30 AM - 12:20 PM – Breakout Session 2 (3rd Floor Meeting Rooms)

12:30 PM - 2:00 PM – Lunch & Awards Ceremony (Dewberry Hall)

(For virtual attendees, the presentation will begin around 1:15 PM)

Presenters and Volunteers:

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

Julio Diaz-Carroll (he/him), Academic Advisor, College of Public Health

Joshua Fletcher (he/him), Senior Academic Advisor, College of Engineering and Computing

Jana Biever (she/her), Academic Advisor, Schar School of Policy and Government

Kate Keeney (she/her), Academic Advisor, College of Visual and Performing Arts

Carrie Ann Delaney (she/her), Academic Program Manager, College of Visual and Performing Arts

Sara Montiel (she/her), Associate Director of Student Services, School of Integrative Studies

Asha Sneed (she/her), Exploratory Academic Advisor, Undergraduate Education

2:00 PM - 4:00 PM – Afternoon Session (Dewberry Hall)

Agenda for the afternoon session:

- Presentation by the Higher Education Program
- Unit Updates
- Networking and professional development activity

Presenters and Volunteers:

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

Katie Richards (she/her), Senior Graduate Program Coordinator, School of Integrative Studies

Kate Keeney (she/her), Academic Advisor, College of Visual and Performing Arts

Jana Biever (she/her), Academic Advisor, Schar School of Policy and Government

Representatives of the colleges, schools, and programs for the Unit Updates

Breakout Session Information

Breakout Session 1

Studying at Mason's Campus in South Korea

Topic: **Study Abroad**

Location: **Meeting Room B**

Presenters:

Grace Lee (she/her), Mason Korea Coordinator, Office of the Provost

Jaxon Myers (he/him), Mason Korea Graduate Student Assistant, Office of the Provost

A discussion on the application process and the program requirements, as well as the advantages for Fairfax students to study at the Mason campus in S. Korea.

Advisors as Connectors: Helping Undergraduates Navigate Research Opportunities

Topic: ***Experiential Learning***

Location: **Meeting Room C**

Presenters:

Karen Lee (she/her), Assistant Director of OSCAR, Undergraduate Education

Jesse Guessford (he/him), Director of Curriculum and Initiatives, Undergraduate Education

Undergraduate research, scholarly, and creative activities are high impact practices in which students gain critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills, that they can take to graduate or professional school or into the workforce. The Office of Student Creative Activities and Research (OSCAR) is George Mason's hub for information and funding for undergraduate research and creative projects. During this session you will learn about the opportunities OSCAR provides, the benefits to undergraduate students, and how to help students access research and creative resources. There will be time to brainstorm effective ways to help students understand the value of undergraduate research and creative activities and how best to access OSCAR services.

Creating a Sense of Belonging in Academic Advising: Simple Practices That Work

Topic: ***Student Well-Being***

Location: **Meeting Room D**

Presenter: **Sarah Alharshan** (she/her), Academic Advisor, College of Engineering and Computing

This session explores practical strategies academic advisors can use to foster a sense of belonging among students. Drawing from international and U.S. advising experiences, the presentation highlights simple, low-effort practices such as creating welcoming advising environments and building meaningful connections with students. Participants will engage in a brief interactive activity to reflect on their current advising practices and identify actionable strategies they can implement immediately to enhance student engagement and support.

Advising Special Populations: A Student-Athlete Case Study

Topic: ***Special Student Populations***

Location: **Meeting Room E**

Presenters:

Collin Arthur (he him), Senior Academic Advisor, Costello College of Business

Charlie Ann Kerr (she/her), Academic Advisor, Costello College of Business

Academic advisors (and all departments at GMU) have limited time and resources to serve our students in the best way possible. In this session, presenters will share how partnership and coordination can result in better outcomes for students and advisors alike. This session will showcase how business academic advisors worked alongside athletic academic coordinators to better serve student-athletes during the registration period. Attendees will be prompted to reflect on "pain points" in their work with special student populations and discuss opportunities for outreach and access that are relevant to your advising role.

Breakout Session 2

Lessons from 20 Years of the China 1+2+1 Program: What Advisors Need to Know

Topic: ***International Students***

Location: **Meeting Room B**

Presenters:

Rachel Spence (she/her), Academic Manager, Global Education Office

Mary Getsey Bernier (she/her), Undergraduate Coordinator, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

In 2004, George Mason joined other US universities in the China 1+2+1 program. After more than 20 years of supporting and advising almost 700 students, we've learned a few things that advisors across the university can apply to working with other Chinese and international students. Presenters will share facts about the program, statistics on Chinese students in the US, and common trends we've observed. Facilitators will lead participants in conversation about their own observations, challenges, and success stories. References will be provided from both NAFSA: Association of International Educators and NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising.

Holistic Advising and Career Conversations in Uncertain Times

Topic: ***Career Advising***

Location: **Meeting Room C**

Presenters:

Amy Vaillancourt Mandt (she/they), Academic Advisor, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Carolyn Kleiman (she/her), Career Advisor, University Career Services

Academic advisors are uniquely positioned to support both the academic and professional development of our students. Current and prospective students often ask about the potential viability of their degrees in the job market. "Do students in your program get hired in their field after graduation?" and "How do I get an internship?" In this interactive workshop from academic advisors and University Career Services, we will consider the current job market for entry-level professionals and identify the resources students may need to be successful. This includes a review of the NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) Environmental Scan for 2026 and discussion of the role of AI in the employment marketplace. Together, we'll identify practical strategies that support academic advisors in helping students connect their academic experiences to skill development and career pathways. Advisors will leave with actionable and sustainable approaches to integrate skills-based career conversations into holistic advising.

In Full Color: Where Advising Meets Well-Being

Topic: ***Advisor Well-Being***

Location: **Meeting Room D**

Presenters:

Ashley Korman (she/her), Assistant Director, Center for the Advancement of Well-Being

Zareena Khan (she/her), Assistant Director, Center for the Advancement of Well-Being

Learn about well-being at George Mason and the range of programs the Center for the Advancement of Well-Being (CWB) offers to support advisors, faculty, staff, and students. This session highlights practical

CWB resources that advisors can use to support their own well-being and share with students. Participants will also engage in Colors & Connections, a program through The Foundation for Art & Healing, featuring a simple art activity and conversations that foster authentic connection and creative self-expression. No artistic experience required. The session is designed to help advisors feel more connected to themselves, to one another, and to the broader culture of care at George Mason.

Creating Trauma-Informed Pathways to Student Success in Higher Education

Topic: **Student Well-Being**

Location: **Meeting Room E**

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

Childhood trauma, or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), can have lasting effects on students' emotional, cognitive, and academic development. As more students enter college with histories of trauma, higher education professionals are increasingly called upon to provide support that goes beyond traditional demographic-based services. This session explores how trauma impacts learning and development, and how institutions can respond with compassion and effectiveness. Participants will gain insights into the neurological and behavioral effects of trauma and learn how trauma-informed practices can foster safe, inclusive environments that promote healing and academic success.

Please complete the evaluation form after each session to provide feedback to the presenters.

2026 MAS Breakout Session Evaluation: <https://forms.office.com/r/ZYg9VS1ZB6>



Symposium Committee

Symposium Chair: Sylvia Lee, Academic Advisor Coordinator, Undergraduate Education

Planning Committee:

Jana Bieber, Academic Advisor, Schar School of Policy and Government

Kate Keeney, Academic Advisor, College of Visual and Performing Arts

Symposium Volunteers

Latifah Abubakr
Tatiana Angulo
Jana Bieber
Carrie Ann Delaney
Julio Diaz-Carroll

Vicki Dominick
Jordan Emely
Joshua Fletcher
Kate Keeney
Jason King

Ann Ludwick
Jill Manuel
Sara Montiel
Asha Sneed
Antonio Stewart

Kristin Tyburczy
DaFran Ware
Maria Wilkins
Grey Williams
Jess Yon

Thank you to all the volunteers, presenters, and participants of the 2026 Mason Advising Symposium!

Special thanks to

Dr. Michelle Steiner, Heather Madnick, Tiffany Crossgrove

Dr. Keith Renshaw and Office of the Provost

The Academic Advisor Awards Selection Committee

DaFran Ware, Rachel Kranz, and the College of Engineering and Computing

The Higher Education Program in the School of Integrative Studies

University Events, Event Services, Chartwells, and John Boal Photography

Questions? Please contact aaa@gmu.edu.



Undergraduate Education
**OFFICE OF
ACADEMIC ADVISING**
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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: <https://forms.office.com/r/aPzsPRSaZY>

**2026 Mason Advising Symposium
Experience Survey**

