



**32<sup>ND</sup>**

National Conference on  
**STUDENTS IN TRANSITION**

# CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Held Virtually | October 1 - 3, 2025



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER**

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA



Dear Conference Attendees,

On behalf of our team at the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (NRC) at the University of South Carolina, we’re excited to welcome you to the 32nd National Conference on Students in Transition. Whether you’re a returning attendee or joining us for the first time, we’re glad you’re here. This conference brings together a vibrant and international community of educators, researchers, and practitioners who are passionate about supporting students through the critical transitions that shape their college experiences. Your presence strengthens this network, and we look forward to the conversations, insights, and connections that will emerge over the next few days.

The SIT conference is a vital moment for us to come together and focus on the evolving needs of students as they navigate their educational journeys. In a time when higher education continues to face significant challenges—from shifting enrollment patterns to questions of higher education’s return on investment—this gathering offers a space to pause, reflect, and reimagine how we support student success.

We are proud to continue offering the SIT conference in a virtual format, which increases accessibility and allows for meaningful connections that might not otherwise be possible. Our team has thoughtfully designed a schedule that balances learning, professional development, and networking, and we hope you’ll take full advantage of the opportunities to engage with colleagues across institutions and geographies.

To help spark our thinking and deepen our conversations, we are honored to welcome two distinguished speakers. Dr. Peter Felten, Executive Director of the Center for Engaged Learning at Elon University, will share insights from his extensive research on relationship-rich education and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Dr. Heather Maietta, Associate Professor in the Higher Education Doctorate Program at Regis College and President of Career in Progress, brings a wealth of experience in career development and coaching. Her work challenges us to rethink how we support students’ career readiness during key transition points in college.

We’re grateful to our presenters and planning team for curating a rich slate of sessions that span assessment strategies, emerging research, and timely issues affecting students at multiple transition points. We’re glad you’re here and look forward to supporting you throughout the conference. If you have any questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to reach out to us at [fyeconf@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:fyeconf@mailbox.sc.edu).

Enjoy the conference!

Warmly,

*Kathleen J. Lehman*

Kathleen (Kate) J. Lehman  
Executive Director  
National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition



TABLE OF CONTENTS

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Conference Schedule ..... 3

Welcome ..... 4

Goals of the Conference ..... 4

General Information..... 5

Session Locations..... 5

Conference Evaluations..... 5

Session Formats ..... 5

Paul F. Fidler Research Grant Reviewers ..... 6

Staff Roster..... 7

International Advisory Board..... 7

National Advisory Board..... 7

Sponsors & Vendors..... 8

**Wednesday, October 1**

Conference Sessions ..... 10-12

Keynote Address

    Peter Felten ..... 10

**Thursday, October 2**

Conference Sessions ..... 16-18

**Friday, October 3**

Conference Sessions..... 19-21

Closing Session

    Heather Maietta ..... 21

Index of Presenters ..... 27-28

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY   OCTOBER 1		
9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Welcome & Keynote Address —	<b>Peter Felten</b>
11:15 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Conference Sessions	
THURSDAY   OCTOBER 2		
10:00 a.m. – 1:45 p.m.	Conference Sessions	
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Networking Session	
FRIDAY   OCTOBER 3		
10:00 a.m. – 1:45 p.m.	Conference Sessions	
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Closing Session —	<b>Heather Maietta</b>

THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® is a service mark of the University of South Carolina. A license may be granted to registered conference attendees and others upon written request to use the term THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® in association with educational programmatic approaches to enhance the first year developed as a result of participation in this conference series. This license is not transferable and does not apply to the use of the service mark in any other programs or on any other literature without the written approval of the University of South Carolina.

The University of South Carolina provides equal opportunity and affirmative action in education and employment for all qualified persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, or veteran status. The University of South Carolina System has designated as the ADA Title II, Section 504 and Title IX coordinator the Executive Assistant to the President for Equal Opportunity Programs. The Office of the Executive Assistant to the President is located 1600 Hampton Street Annex, Columbia, South Carolina; Telephone (803) 777-3854.

# WELCOME



## CORE COMMITMENTS

**Student Transitions:** Student transitions such as the first year of college, sophomore year, transfer experience, degree completion, and new graduate student experiences are critical junctures in the educational pipeline and unique opportunities for post-secondary student learning and development. We strive to set a standard of excellence for supporting student transitions and facilitating educational success for a diversity of students in the 21st century.

**Connection Between Research and Practice:** We believe that good practice in higher education must rely upon a foundation of high-quality research. Conversely, good research draws from and informs practices in our field. As such, the work of the National Resource Center advances and supports both scholarly practice and applied research.

**Inclusion:** We strive to create a supportive and professional environment where a diversity of viewpoints are recognized and considered in the ongoing dialogue on student transitions. One of the greatest strengths of the first-year experience and students in transition movement is its ability to cut across traditional boundaries in higher education and involve professionals from multiple sectors of education, institutional roles, and disciplinary perspectives as well as from a variety of personal backgrounds, institutional environments, and educational experiences.

**Collaboration:** Partnership and collaboration draw from the interdisciplinary nature of higher education, communicate an ongoing commitment to inclusion, and, ultimately, enhance the success of our efforts to support student transitions. The National Resource Center models effective collaboration and aims to create intentional and integrative connections between colleagues, units, organizations, systems, educational sectors, regions, and countries in support of student transition and success.

**Lifelong Learning:** We believe that all educators continue to be lifelong learners. We support a climate of intellectual curiosity and provide the tools and media to pursue professional development and an ongoing process of inquiry, exploration, and discovery.



## WELCOME TO THE 32<sup>ND</sup> NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON STUDENTS IN TRANSITION.

This conference is designed with a setting and structure intended to be as professionally enriching as it is individually pleasurable. We hope this will be a rewarding conference for you.

### GOALS OF THE CONFERENCE

The primary goal of the Students in Transition Conference is to assist highly motivated educators and administrators in institutions of higher education as they examine and develop strategies to change campus structures to enhance the learning and success of students in transition: first-year students, sophomores, transfers, and seniors. The conference format provides the opportunity to network and share concepts, ideas, research results, assessment strategies, and programmatic initiatives; and creates an experience sure to stimulate, motivate, and inspire.

### CONFERENCE SPONSOR

**National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition**

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina has as its mission to support and advance efforts to improve student learning and transitions into and through higher education. The Center achieves this mission by providing opportunities for the exchange of practical and theory-based information and ideas through the convening of conferences, online courses, and workshops; publishing monographs, a peer-reviewed journal, a newsletter, guides, and books; generating and supporting research and scholarship; hosting visiting scholars; and administering a web site and electronic listservs.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Interactive Schedule

In order to develop your personal schedule for the conference, download the Guidebook app on your iOS or Android device. Open Guidebook and click on “Schedule.” Once a session is selected, it will be loaded into the “My Schedule” icon on the main menu page.

### Session & Conference Evaluations

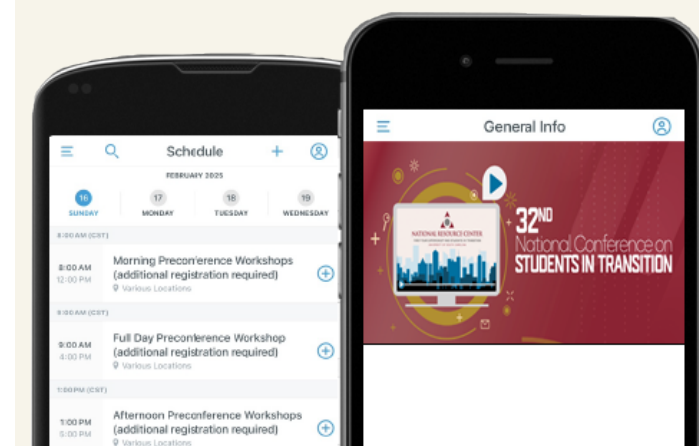
Session evaluations can be completed through the interactive scheduler, Guidebook. The session evaluation can be found at the bottom of the screen after the session description.

An Overall Conference Evaluation Form will be available to complete online after the conference. Please take a few minutes to complete the evaluation. The information you provide is used to evaluate the conference and to improve future conferences; therefore, your comments are extremely important. The link for the evaluation will be included in a conference follow-up email message.

# SIT25

find us on  
**guidebook**

In order to develop your personal schedule for the conference, download the Guidebook app on your iPhone, iPod touch, iPad, Android phone, Android tablet or a Kindle Fire. Open Guidebook app and click on “Schedule.” Once a session is selected, it will be loaded into the “My Schedule” icon on the main menu page.



## SESSION FORMATS

The sessions presented at this conference are in six formats. The alpha designation with the session numbers indicates the session type.

### Concurrent Sessions

These sessions allow for 30-45 minutes of formal presentation and 15-20 minutes of discussion.

**(CR) Research** – These sessions are on quantitative or qualitative research that has been conducted on issues addressing student transitions.

**(CT) Trends & Issues** – These sessions address emerging trends, current issues, and broad concepts.

**(CI) Assessed Institutional Initiative** – These sessions address and highlight specific programs/initiatives that have been instituted, assessed, and shown to be successful on a particular campus.

**(CP) Assessed Programmatic Approaches** – These sessions present on a specific programmatic approach at a single institution.

### (FD) Facilitated Discussions

These sessions promote open discussion around a significant or major issue or theme. Rather than making a formal presentation, session facilitators will encourage and maintain substantive discussion.

### (V) Vendor Presentations

These sessions allow conference vendors to showcase products and share information on services provided by the company/organization.



PAUL P. FIDLER RESEARCH GRANT REVIEWERS

Bryce Bunting Brigham Young University	Rachel Smith Iowa State University	Rosie Perez University of Michigan
Amy Baldwin University of Central Arkansas	Michael Redd Kennesaw State University	Joseph Kitchen University of Southern California
Christine Curtis University of the Bahamas	Kirsten Kennedy University of South Carolina	Rachel Beech Miami University
Masha Krsmanovic University of Southern Mississippi	Ben Johnson Utah Valley University	Chantra Nhien University of California, Los Angeles
Katharine Pei Washington University in St. Louis	Brian Le University of California, Los Angeles	Steven Girardot Georgia Tech
Brad Bostian Central Piedmont Community College	Yancey Gulley Western Carolina University	Coleman Simpson North Carolina State University
Jeff Thomas Midlands Technical College	Jed Kenedy York University (Canada)	Jacob Okumu Ohio University
Stephanie Foote Gardner Institute	Keah Tandon University of South Carolina	Radja Chinoun North Carolina State University
Sandy Greene University of South Carolina	Katie Hopkins University of South Carolina	
Rebecca Campbell New Mexico State University	Lorelle Burton University of Southern Queensland (Australia)	
Catherine Hartman North Carolina State University		

JOHN N. GARDNER INSTITUTIONAL EXCELLENCE FOR STUDENTS IN TRANSITION AWARDS

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition would like to congratulate the recipients of the Institutional Excellence for Students in Transition Awards to the University of South Alabama’s Second Year Experience (SYE) program.

PROPOSAL REVIEWERS

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition would like to thank everyone who served as a proposal reviewer. The participation of our reviewers is instrumental in the success of this conference.

STAFF ROSTER

**J. Rex Tolliver**  
Vice President for Student Affairs and Academic Support

**Silvia Patricia Rios Husain**  
Associate Vice President for Student Success

**Dan Friedman**  
Assistant Vice President for University 101 Programs & the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition

***National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition***

**Kate Lehman**  
Executive Director

**Rosa Thorn-Jones**  
Administrative Specialist

***Resources and External Relations***

**Sean Cleary**  
Assistant Director for Resources and External Relations

**Michael Hood**  
Program Coordinator for Conferences & Continuing Education

***Research and Grants***

**Jarrett Warshaw**  
Assistant Director for Research and Grants

**Kevin Wenger**  
Research Analyst

**Jamil Johnson**  
Scholar-in-Residence

**Cade Crenshaw**  
Coordinator for Resources and External Relations

***Conferences and Continuing Education***

**Krystal Reynolds**  
Assistant Director for Conferences & Continuing Education

***University 101 Programs***

**Emily Boardman**  
Program Coordinator for Partnerships

**Julia Clark-Spohn**  
Administrative Assistant

**Caroline Elliott**  
Program Coordinator for Peer Leadership

**Callyn Fahey**  
Assistant Director for Peer Leadership

**Sandy Greene**  
Associate Director for Peer Leadership and Partnerships

**Bella Grille**  
Graduate Assistant for University 101 Programs

**Katie Hopkins**  
Associate Director for Faculty Development and Resources

**Brandi Moore**  
Assistant Director for Resources

**Katie Morton**  
Assistant Director for Faculty Development

**Dustin Roberts**  
Associate Director for Administration

**Madison Wilke**  
Academic Course Scheduler

**Dominique Harris**  
Program Coordinator

***Student Assistants***  
Luke Shelton, Paige Bervine-Burke, Sloan Meyers, Hailee Connors, Jackson DeLoach, Lauren Cameron, Catherine Evans, Emma Collins, Trinity Singleton

***Center Fellows***  
John N. Gardner  
**Founding Director and Senior Fellow**

Mary Stuart Hunter  
**Senior Fellow**

Jennifer R. Keup  
**Senior Fellow**

Betsy O. Barefoot,  
Dorothy S. Fidler, Jean M. Henscheid,  
Richard H. Mullendore, Randy L. Swing

INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Abdulaziz Alfehaid <i>Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (Saudi Arabia)</i>	<i>Network (EFYE)</i>
Hala Al-Najjar <i>American University of Kuwait (Kuwait)</i>	Annsilla Nyar <i>South African National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (SANRC)</i>
Christine Curtis <i>University of the Bahamas (Bahamas)</i>	Pinar Özbek <i>Koç University (Turkey)</i>
Robert Kenedy <i>York University (Canada)</i>	Marisol Silva Laya <i>Ibero-American University (Mexico)</i>
Karen Nelson <i>University of the Sunshine Coast (Australia)</i>	Herman Van de Mosselear <i>Artesis Plantijn University College, Antwerp (Belgium)</i>
Dianne Nutt <i>European First-Year Experience</i>	Reiko Yamada <i>Doshisha University (Japan)</i>

NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Amy Baldwin <i>University of Central Arkansas</i>	Julie McLaughlin <i>Cincinnati State Technical and Community College</i>
Denise Bartell <i>Kent State University</i>	Katharine Pei <i>Washington University at St. Louis</i>
Bryce Bunting <i>Brigham Young University</i>	Rosemary Perez <i>University of Michigan</i>
Steven Girardot <i>Georgia Institute of Technology</i>	Scott Peska <i>Waubensee Community College</i>
Needham Yancey Gulley <i>Western Carolina University</i>	Hope Rivers <i>Piedmont Technical College</i>
Nia Haydel <i>Complete College America</i>	Bernie Savarese <i>University of Tennessee</i>
Masha Krsmanovic <i>University of Southern Mississippi</i>	James K. Winfield <i>Southern New Hampshire University</i>
Janet L. Marling <i>NISTS</i>	



# SPONSOR & VENDOR INFORMATION

The National Conference on Students in Transition welcomes our participating sponsors and vendors.



**MentorPRO**  
MentorPRO connects students with mentors who act as personal navigators, providing proactive support and guidance during the transition to and through higher education. Built on research demonstrating the importance of goal-focused mentorships, MentorPRO connects students to personalized resources, while receiving supportive guidance from a mentor through an all-in-one secure platform.



**Pathify**  
Pathify is the leading provider of modern student engagement solutions, revolutionizing student journeys from prospect to alumni (and beyond!). Pathify connects clients with a modern, cloud-based platform that enhances digital campus experiences with personalized dashboards, resources, support services and more.



**National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition**  
The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition is the trusted expert, internationally recognized leader, and clearinghouse for scholarship, policy, and best practice for all postsecondary student transitions.



**Innovative Educators**  
Innovative Educators partners with colleges and universities to improve student success, retention, and engagement. For over 20 years, we have supported higher education professionals with tools and resources that help students thrive—from orientation and first-year experience programs to academic success, wellness, and professional development initiatives. Our platforms provide flexible, online solutions designed to meet the evolving needs of today's learners while empowering institutions to foster inclusive, student-centered communities. Contact Fred Scott: fred@ieinfo.org

*Thank you to our sponsor!*



SIT25

33rd National Conference on

STUDENTS IN TRANSITION

2026

STAY TUNED FOR MORE DETAILS!

RESOURCES ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Promoting Belonging, Growth Mindset, and Resilience to Foster Student Success  
Amy Baldwin, Bryce Bunting, Doug Daugherty, Latoya Lewis, and Tim Steenbergh  
ISBN 978-1-942072-37-9. 154 pages. **\$30.00**

Paths to Learning:  
Teaching for Engagement in College  
Barbara F. Tobolowsky, Editor  
ISBN 978-1-889271-92-7. 177 pages. **\$30.00**

A Faculty and Staff Guide on Supporting Sophomore Student Success  
Julie Tetley and Molly Schallers  
ISBN 978-1-942072-62-1. 32 pages. **\$6.00**

SAVE 20% & FREE SHIPPING on orders placed through OCT 10. Code: SIT25

Place your order at [WWW.NRCPUBS.COM](http://WWW.NRCPUBS.COM)

Welcome & Keynote Address

9:30 a.m. — 11:00 a.m.

Peter Felten. Ph.D.

Elon University

Connections are everything: How Trusting Relationships Drive Student Success

Research demonstrates that student relationships with faculty, staff, and peers are crucial to academic success and personal well-being for all students in higher education. Students in transition may face challenges establishing such connections as they move between institutions. Drawing on almost 500 interviews with students, faculty, and staff at colleges and universities across the country — and on new research about trust in higher education — this session will explore relationships as a practical, flexible, scalable, and humane approach to ensuring that all students experience welcome and care, become inspired to learn, and explore the big questions that matter for their lives and our communities.of Student Engagement (NSSE) and is a fellow of the Gardner Institute.



11:15 a.m. — 12:15 p.m.

CP - Institutionalizing Life Design to Support Students in Transition

Lauren Gatto  
Jenna Heath

University of Nevada Las Vegas

UNLV embedded Life Design principles across campus to support students in transition, from first-time freshmen to transfer students. Following training by the Stanford Life Design Lab, an interdisciplinary subcommittee implemented concepts in advising, peer mentorship, and academia. This session will showcase how Life Design tools were used in key transition points, including shifts from high school to college and during upperclassman years, such as reframing mindsets, which have been used to enhance student decision-making, major affirmation, and overall well-being. Presenters will share assessment data, implementation strategies, and campus-wide outcomes, offering actionable takeaways for integrating Life Design at other institutions.

FD - Together We Built It: A First-Gen Center Dream Realized

Shelley Dempsey  
Silvia Patricia Rios Husain

University of South Carolina

In just one year, the University of South Carolina launched a comprehensive First-Generation Center to support over 7,000 first-gen students. This session will explore the Center's development, including strategic planning, collaborative campus partnerships, and key initiatives such as a living-learning community, mentoring program, and annual symposium. Presenters will share lessons learned, data-informed practices, and strategies for building cross-campus support. Attendees will leave with actionable insights to create or enhance first-gen support structures on their own campuses, grounded in research and student voice. Join us to learn how vision, collaboration, and urgency turned into a thriving student success hub.



CP - Fostering Success: Wrap-Around Support for Second-Year Students

Autumn Courtney

University of South Alabama

The University of South Alabama's Second Year Experience (SYE) program addresses the critical second-year transition, a period when many students struggle with academic direction, motivation, and connection. SYE provides a wrap-around model that integrates faculty mentoring, peer leadership, academic coaching, career exploration, and signature events designed to build identity and belonging. Through strong cross-campus collaboration and continuous assessment, the program has increased persistence from year two to year three while transforming campus culture. This session shares strategies, lessons learned, and scalable practices to help institutions design impactful programs that support students in second year and beyond..

CR - Leveling the Playing Field: Socioeconomic Impact on Student Persistence

Dana Tribble

Arkansas Tech University

Kathryn "Sky" Tomlinson

Grand Canyon University

Abby Speights-Hass

Arkansas State University

A southern U.S. state ranks low in educational attainment, with high poverty and low median household income influencing postsecondary outcomes. Our planned mixed-methods study will explore low-income students' experiences at two public universities to identify barriers to persistence. Our research aims to uncover gaps in awareness and access to scholarships, financial aid, and support services. The findings will provide insights to improve retention through targeted interventions and enhanced education on financial resources, ultimately working to level the playing field for underserved student populations.

FD - Career Ready: A Design Thinking Framework for Students

Kevin Schwemmin  
Jillian Morley

Utah State University

Career development is a continuous transition, not a one-time decision. At Utah State University, we've implemented a life design approach—rooted in Stanford's design thinking principles—to support students at every stage of their academic and career journey. This session will explore how we meet students where they are at each year of college that fosters curiosity, reflection, and action. Attendees will gain practical tools to help students navigate uncertainty, connect their experiences, and become Career Ready with confidence and purpose.

12:45 p.m. — 1:45 p.m.

CR - Exploring Senior-Year Transition for Women in a Post-Dobbs Sociopolitical Context

Abby Lukens

Tulane University

Using a qualitative, interpretive phenomenological research design and a Possible Selves theoretical framework, the purpose of this study is to explore Senior-Year Transition, or the impending transition out of college, for cisgender women in their final year of college. Additionally, this session will help attendees understand how women envision their future career and life roles in a post-Dobbs sociopolitical context. The presenter will share study background, theoretical framework, research design, methods, findings, and implications for theory and practice.

CT - Re-thinking the Common Read: Meeting Students' Most Pressing Need

Matthew Sanders

Utah State University

Common reading programs are ubiquitous. Books cover a vast number of topics that we review in exhibit halls and in committee. But what's the most important thing a student entering college should read first as they onboard to our institutions? Is it a book within a series of rotating topics? This session details how Utah State University moved away from rotating topics and author visits and established a common read that teaches institutional mission, creates a common language of learning, and establishes a culture of retention and completion among students and faculty year after year.

CT - Transforming Student Learning: Integrating Research and Writing with Studio Pedagogy

Elizabeth Stephan  
Gabe Gossett

Western Washington University

Western Libraries developed a peer-to-peer teaching and learning support model by combining the Writing Center and Research Services, creating the Hacherl Research & Writing Studio (Studio). We will outline the ten-year timeline of the Studio, focusing on the impact peer-to-peer work on students, including approaches to personalizing learning for students on all aspects of the inquiry process: research, reading, and writing, with a focus to help students develop agency over their own learning. This approach of integrating support for literacies uses a studio-based pedagogy designed to meet students at their point of need as those needs arise.

CR - Familial Testimonios and Transfer Pathways: Illuminating Latina/o/x Experiences in Post-Transfer Spaces

Ivan Valdovinos

University of California San Diego

Latina/o/x families play an essential but often overlooked role in the transfer experiences of community college students. This session presents qualitative findings from familial testimonios and student platicas that capture the lived realities of navigating the community college to university transition. Insights reveal how families reconceptualize support roles and how institutions can integrate these perspectives to create a more inclusive Transfer Receptive Culture.

CI - Supporting Students in Middle Years: USC Sophomore & Junior Experiences

Kimberly Dressler

University of South Carolina

The University of South Carolina has been conducting qualitative and quantitative assessments of the sophomore and junior student populations on the USC campus for years. What are the common experiences of students in the middle years of college? What are the biggest challenges they face and what do they most look forward to? Based on this feedback, what is the institution doing to actively support students inside and outside of the classroom during these years? We'll cover this data and the SophoMORE and Junior Year Success programs and how they have developed over the years!

CP - Online Curricula and Student Transitions: Supporting Entry/Exit in Politicized Contexts

Rebecca Flynn  
K. McClure

Georgia Gwinnett College

This session explores how a minority-serving public college in Georgia is developing online curricula to support students at key transitional moments: entry into college through first-year English and General Education courses and exit from college via a capstone experience in Integrative Studies. We share strategies for designing equitable, asynchronous courses that integrate modular design, AI-integrity instruction, and culturally responsive pedagogy. We also discuss institutional and political barriers to innovation, including skepticism about online learning and increasing restrictions on DEI content. Participants will reflect on how to design inclusive online transitions amid heightened pressures on academic freedom and instructional autonomy.

2:00 p.m. — 3:00 p.m.

CP - Best Practices for Student Onboarding and Transitions

John Haller

University of Miami

This session will describe best practices for student onboarding and transition. It involves the development of a pre-orientation program that reduced summer melt, the development of a Federal Work Study program targeting lower income students that reduced student attrition, the creation of a transitional advising office, the development of a first-year seminar that facilitated student transitions and increased student retention, as well as the development of a quantitative retention tool that identified at-risk students.



## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1

### CT - The Power of Reflection: Applying Five R's for Student Success

**Laurie Hazard**

*New England Institute of Technology*

Student success practitioners play a vital role in fostering students' long-term academic achievement. This session introduces the Five Rs for Student Success—Recognize, Reach, Realize, Remove, and Results—a reflective framework designed to support first-year students as they navigate the transition to college. Grounded in research and practice, the framework emphasizes deep reflection, encouraging the development of self-awareness, emotional intelligence, self-advocacy, and problem-solving. By helping students reflect on their experiences, process challenges, and identify internal and external factors affecting their success, practitioners can empower them to take ownership of their growth and build the skills necessary for lasting academic success.

### CR - First-Generation, Second-Year Students of Color: Portraits Of Belonging

**Autumn Fabricant**

*California State University, Northridge*

This study explores first-generation, second-year college Students of Color's experiences with sense of belonging and validation at a public, four-year HSI in southern California and uses community cultural wealth and HSI servingness as frameworks. Using portraiture methodology with embedded participatory photography methods, I co-created four participant portraits to uplift the participants' stories. Central themes emerged around family and social networks, navigating to resist barriers, belonging and validation, and second-year experiences. This research provides tangible suggestions for universities to better serve this student population to advance equity in higher education.

### FD - Seen, Connected, and Supported: Cultivating First-Gen-Friendly Campuses

**LaNae' Budden**

**Melissa Kupfer**

*University of South Carolina*

Approximately one-third of all college students in the United States are first-generation. This session explores how faculty and staff can leverage asset-based approaches to empower first-generation students and foster their success. Participants will gain insights into the strengths these students possess and their characteristics, reflect on ways to use a belonging framework to create a supportive campus environment, and share innovative initiatives that enhance first-generation student outcomes. Join us for a highly participatory session to exchange ideas and develop strategies that ensure all first-generation college students feel seen, connected, and supported at your institution. Together, we can cultivate first-gen-friendly campuses.

### CT - Take 15: Launching a Data-Driven Credit Momentum Campaign

**Cassie Walizer**

**Nichole, Mann**

**Complete College America**

**Bill Torgler**

*Univeristy of Akron*

The University of Akron revitalized its “Finish in Time” initiative as a comprehensive “Take 15” campaign to address declining credit completion rates. With only 23.3% of first-time, first-year students completing 15+ credits and first year credit accumulation 21% below peer institutions, the university implemented a multi-faceted approach combining academic support, social integration, and strategic communication. This session examines the campaign's development using institutional data analysis, student surveys, and Complete College America consultation. Presenters will share implementation strategies, communication tactics, and early outcomes while providing actionable frameworks for institutions seeking to improve credit momentum and graduation rates through systematic campaign approaches.

### CR - Transitions Through Academic Standing: The Student Experience

**Oress Fiona Pratt-MacDonald**

**Taylor Pluta**

**Clare Grzegorzewski**

**Becky Matz**

*University of Michigan*

Receiving notice of academic disciplinary action can be incredibly destabilizing. One thing, however, is certain: this is a transitional period in which students require immense support from their institution. In Fall 2023, the University of Michigan's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts adopted an asset-based approach to their 'academic standing' policy. Twenty-five students were interviewed to explore their experiences under the new system. In this session, the discoveries discussed will provide insight into how students felt during this transitional period as well as opportunities for institutional- and practitioner-based support.

### CT - Voices from the Field: Celebrating Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)Oress Fiona Pratt-MacDonald

**Jamil D. Johnson**

*University of South Carolina*

**Tasha Carson**

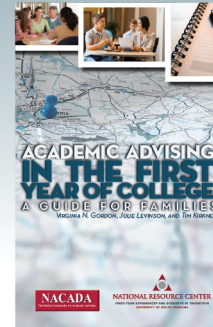
*HBCU Advocate, Higher Education Administrator and Leader*

**Amanda Williams**

*Florida A&M University*

Are you passionate about HBCUs? Have you heard about the “special sauce” that creates a sense of belonging for student success at HBCUs? Join us for an engaging session as we celebrate the HBCU student experiences and the impact of staff, faculty, and community. Moderated by Dr. Jamil D. Johnson, the session will engage participants with findings supported by grant funds from the Advising Success Network (ASN). HBCUs apply a student-focused holistic approach to student success that extends beyond the classroom. Dr. Johnson will also discuss his upcoming edited book “Celebrating Students and their Experiences at HBCUs,” with powerful chapters written by HBCUs faculty, staff, and graduate students.

## GUIDES FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES



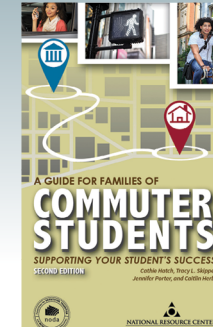
### Academic Advising in the First-Year of College

*A Guide for Families*

Virginia N. Gordon, Julie Levinson, and Tim Kirkner

A joint publication with NACADA, the Global Community for Academic Advising

ISBN 978-1-889271-94-1. 30 pages. **\$6 each.**  
**\$4.50 each when purchased in 100-unit lots.**



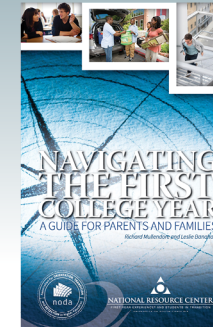
### A Guide for Families of Commuter Students

*Supporting Your Student's Success (2nd ed.)*

Cathie Hatch, Tracy L. Skipper, Jennifer Porter, and Caitlin Herby

A joint publication with NODA, the Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education

ISBN 978-1-942072-11-9. 36 pages. **\$6 each.**  
**\$4.50 each when purchased in 100-unit lots.**



### Navigating the First College Year

*A Guide for Parents and Families*

Richard Mullendore and Leslie Banahan

A joint publication with NODA, the Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education

ISBN 978-1-889271-91-0. 32 pages. **\$6 each.**  
**\$4.50 each when purchased in 100-unit lots.**

SAVE **20% & FREE SHIPPING** on orders placed through **OCT 10**. Code: **SIT25**

Place your order at **WWW.NRCPUBS.COM**



# Journal

OF THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE & STUDENTS IN TRANSITION

A semiannual refereed journal providing current research and scholarship on significant student transitions. The primary purpose of the *Journal* is to disseminate empirical research findings on student transition issues, including:

- Explorations into the academic, personal, and social experiences—such as outcomes related to success, learning, and development—of students at a range of transition points throughout the college years;
- Transition issues unique to specific populations (e.g., nontraditional, traditional, historically underrepresented students, transfer students, commuters, part-time students); and
- Explorations of faculty development, curriculum, and pedagogical innovations connected to any of the transitions identified above.

To submit or subscribe, please visit [www.sc.edu/fye/journal](http://www.sc.edu/fye/journal)





10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

CI - A Comprehensive Analysis of Taiwan’s Mentorship-Based FYE Program

Meng-Huang Lee  
Shu-Min Lin  
Yu-Chuan Fu  
Yu-Wen Wang

Shih Chien University

This study examines Taiwan’s mentorship-based First Year Experience (FYE) program at Shih Chien University, integrating American FYE principles with traditional mentorship systems. Analyzing 1,519 Fall 2024 freshmen through academic system data, the study found only 34.6% program completion rates. Completers demonstrated superior academic performance (interquartile range 58-80 vs 28-75 points) and attendance (zero vs 12 hours absences). Module analysis revealed implementation imbalance favoring Professional Orientation (45.02%). Findings prompted institutional reforms including policy shifts toward Transition Adaptation, increased mentor compensation, and establishment of a Freshman Transition Support Center, providing evidence for effective mentorship-FYE integration in Taiwan higher education contexts.

CT - Navigating Coursework & Parenthood: Supporting Undergraduate Student-Parents in Higher Education

Jessica Moniz  
Tiffani Riggers-Piehl

University of Missouri-Kansas City

Student-parent enrollment has grown to more than 3 million, with one in five undergraduates classifying as students with children. Nevertheless, changes in enrollment have not increased campus support services and Student-parents often navigate the transition to higher education independently. Overwhelmed with their parental roles, Student-parents have a greater risk of dropout than nonparenting undergraduates. Uninformed of the challenges Student-parents face, college campuses provide insufficient resources and services to improve their retention and graduation rates. This session will highlight social and academic hurdles for Student-parents. Participants will exchange strategies and perspectives to boost Student-parent retention as they transition through higher education.

CR - Obstacles and Opportunities in Rural College Students’ Career Development

Krista Soria  
Kyle Znamenak

University of Idaho

Undergraduates who grow up in rural communities face systemic disadvantages that can compromise their career development. Utilizing survey data from undergraduates attending 300+ 2- and 4-year colleges and universities (n = 6,000), we examined whether there were statistically significant (p < .05) differences between rural and suburban/urban students’ participation in a variety of career development activities in high school or college. We further analyzed whether those career development activities were associated with rural college students’ work capital and critical cultural wealth. The results reveal both disparities and opportunities to leverage specific career development activities to bolster rural students’ career-related outcomes.

CP - Reimagining the First Steps-The Power of a 3-Part Orientation Experience

Kim Cooney  
Alexandra Jabara Johnston

Gwynedd Mercy Universitye

Grounded in research, qualitative and quantitative assessment, and a growth mindset, Gwynedd Mercy University redesigned the new student and family experience through the Ready, Set, Griffins! Orientation program which includes three parts: Griffin Ready (a one-day program focused on acclimation, registration, and essential services), Griffin Set (online modules providing resources and guidance throughout the summer), and Griffins! (August Orientation focused on academic success, community building, and mission integration). Developed through the lens of student development theory, the intentional changes provided more opportunities for students and families to be informed, supported, and prepared for a successful transition into the Griffin community.

CT - Supporting the Transfer Journey: Building a Strong Transfer Program

Jonathan Acosta  
Nick Zimmerman

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Sheila Schoessler

Metropolitan Community College

Transfer students often face fragmented pathways and silos that hinder their progress from community colleges to universities. In 2022 Metropolitan Community College and the University of Nebraska at Omaha developed the MetroMavs Program-- which evolved from a scholarship into an intentional, full life cycle support program that spans from enrollment in community college to graduation from the four-year university. This presentation explores how we provide co-advising, a dedicated scholarship, transition support, and learning community supports to guide students every step of the way. We will review the program’s history, share data, and discuss how this program supports students through transition.

CT - Supporting First-Generation Student Engagement in the 21st Century

Jamil D. Johnson

Univeristy of South Carolina

I did not think graduate school was a possibility. My whole life I was always told, what I could not achieve... now I know what I can achieve. I am first-generation success! Join us for an engaging discussion of Ronald E. McNair Program Scholars highlighting their critical counternarratives through higher education as first-generation students of color under the mentorship of Dr. Johnson. This session will apply the themes of (a) mentoring, (b) undergraduate research/high-impact practices, (c) advising, and (d) sense of belonging, as practices to support first-generation student success.

11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

CT - Breaking Barriers, Building Belonging: A First-Gen Seminar Model

Jocelyne Alfaro-Ruiz

East Carolina University

First-generation college students face unique and often invisible barriers to success, from navigating institutional systems to managing cultural expectations. This session explores a first-year seminar course intentionally designed for first-generation students and taught by first-generation instructors. Grounded in research on social and cultural capital, the course offers a “how-to-college” approach that centers identity, belonging, and empowerment. Participants will gain insight into course design, student impact, and strategies for adapting this model on their own campuses to better support first-generation student success.

CI - Peer-guided Second Year Success: Supporting a Year-long Transition

David Waddell

University of Central Arkansas

Brigham Young University’s Second-Year Success (SYS) program supports sophomore students who are at risk of not graduating. These students face challenges like low GPA, lack of major clarity, course withdrawals, financial strain, and mental health issues. This program pairs participating students with a trained peer “guide,” to help them define their own vision for success and then walk with them through academic, personal, and professional challenges. Students consistently reported feeling seen, heard, supported, and more hopeful and confident about their future. Data also suggest an increase in GPA and decreased withdrawal and discontinuance rates.

CT - Small Nudges, Big Wins: Wise Interventions for College Success

Amy Baldwin

University of Central Arkansas

This interactive breakout session introduces participants to the powerful world of “wise interventions”—brief, targeted strategies that create lasting improvements in student motivation, belonging, and academic performance. Drawing from social psychology research, these seemingly small classroom practices can dramatically shift student outcomes by addressing underlying psychological barriers to success. Participants will explore evidence-based interventions including values affirmation exercises, growth mindset prompts, and belonging uncertainty activities that have been proven effective across diverse college populations. Through real classroom examples, attendees will learn how to implement these low-cost, high-impact strategies that help students overcome stereotype threat, imposter syndrome, and academic anxiety.

CT - External Change, Internal Transition and Growth: Holistically Supporting Transfer

Melissa Granum  
Lisa Roker

Thomas Norman

South Dakota State University

At our university, transfer students are recognized as a unique population navigating significant external changes while experiencing internal transitions regarding purpose, confidence, and belonging. In response, we have implemented holistic framework designed to meet their academic, social, and emotional needs, as well as using a strengths-based approach. This includes intentional advising, community-building initiatives, and a dedicated course that fosters personal growth and resilience. When transfer students receive comprehensive support, they are more likely to persist, engage meaningfully, and reach their academic and career goals. Such efforts contribute directly to improved retention and overall satisfaction for this important student population

CT - The Power of Presence

Curtis Pernel

University of South Carolina

Despite attention on high-impact practices (HIPs), many do not resonate with first-generation Black male college students. This session discusses how presence, intentionality, and cultural responsiveness can turn HIPs into tools for affirmation and success. Drawing on research and experiences at a large public institution, I will share frameworks and strategies for reimagining HIPs through identity and belonging. We'll explore making experiences like study abroad and undergraduate research accessible and culturally relevant. Participants will gain actionable tools to enhance retention, engagement, and leadership development for Black male scholars.

CP - Measuring the Magic of Team Traditions

Susi Abboud

Mary Jordan

Brown University

What makes student leaders feel connected to the past, present, and future of a program? This session will explore how piloting and assessing new traditions during student leader training can enhance feelings of value, inclusion, and connection, while building community and team pride. This session is ideal for supervisors of large student leader teams seeking to boost excitement, culture, morale, and retention.

CI – Bridge Over Troubled Water: Program Growth in Adversity

Rebecca Willoughby

Commonwealth University

At Commonwealth University, our summer bridge program serves admitted students demonstrating the need of additional support and preparation for success in their college experience. This presentation will show the changes implemented and markers of success in a summer bridge program on a roller coaster: coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic while simultaneously entering into a college merger. Between 2020 and 2024, utilizing and modifying the University of Richmond model of themed academic workshops as the centerpiece of the program led to increases in student academic success and retention during a tumultuous time in the University's history.



12:45 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

**CT - Empowering Student Success: Developing Self-Efficacy, Confidence, & EQ though Leadership**

**Gabrielly Cordon-Ayala**

**Michael Mears**

*Florida SouthWestern State College*

Leadership development serves as a powerful catalyst for student growth and development. This session highlights how structured leadership roles and personalized training at Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW) cultivate self-efficacy, confidence, and emotional intelligence. Participants will explore proven strategies, student testimonials, and adaptable models that foster inclusive, impactful leadership development. Learn how to create accessible leadership pathways that help students thrive academically, personally, and professionally. Through real-world examples and interactive discussion, attendees will leave with tools to implement or enhance leadership initiatives that empower diverse student populations and support successful transitions across higher education.

**CT - Passion Projects: Genius Hour as a Catalyst for Purposeful Learning**

**Brad Garner**

*Indiana Wesleyan University*

What happens when students are given time to pursue what truly sparks their curiosity? This session explores the transformative potential of Genius Hour in higher education, a student-driven approach that invites learners to explore passion projects within academic contexts. Participants will discover how Genius Hour fosters autonomy, creativity, and deeper engagement—while still aligning with course objectives. Practical strategies, inspiring examples, and adaptable frameworks will be shared to help faculty implement this powerful model in any discipline. Join us to reimagine learning as a space where curiosity thrives and students become co-creators of their educational journey.

**FD - Implementing a Peer Coaching Program for Non-Traditional, Online Students**

**Mageda Nader**

**Rebecka DeRoos**

**Marnie Chapman**

**Grace Rollerz**

*University of Alaska Southeast--Sitka Campus*

Gather with UAS-Sitka Campus staff and faculty to hear about the unique challenges our rural and online Alaskan students face, and how a peer coaching initiative helped alleviate them. This discussion delves into our unique embedded tutor approach that emphasizes individualized support and empowers students to take ownership of their academic and personal growth. Is peer coaching just a student service? How can we cater to dual enrollment, first-generation, English as a second language, students who are parents, and other diverse demographics? Have your own peer coaching/mentoring initiative? Please join us to share and learn together!

**CP - LIFTing the Second Year: A Co-Active Approach to Sophomore Success**

**Franklin Ard**

**Krystal Gongora**

*Kennesaw State University*

The sophomore year is often a neglected phase in the student success journey, at times marked by identity uncertainty, declining motivation, and weakened social connections. This session outlines the integrated approach developed by Kennesaw State University's Academic Coaching and Support (ACS) department to support second-year students through individualized coaching, targeted programming, priority outreach, and strategic partnerships. Presenters will share a coaching-based framework for fostering belonging, purpose, and persistence during this critical transition year. Attendees will leave with adaptable strategies for designing intentional support models that bridge the momentum gap between first-year experience initiatives and major-specific support systems.

**CT - Enhancing the Transition Experience for First-Year Students with Disabilities**

**Jordan Garner**

*University of Cincinnati*

First-year students with disabilities face unique challenges during the transition from high school to college, including navigating disability service offices, understanding their legal rights, and advocating for their own needs. This session explores common barriers students with disabilities encounter, highlight insights from student experience data and journey mapping, and provides actionable strategies for educators and support staff. Participants will leave with tools and recommendations for fostering a more inclusive, accessible, and empowering transition experience.

**CR - Empowered Student Leaders: Black Males' Resilience, Identity, & Success**

**Sara Bailey**

*Coastal Carolina University*

This presentation explores the leadership experiences of Black male students at a predominantly white institution. Through narrative inquiry, the study highlights how student leadership shaped their identity, resilience, and success. Grounded in Self-Authorship Theory, Critical Race Theory, and the Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework, findings reveal leadership as a site of transformation and representation. The concept of Empowered Student Leadership emerges, offering practical and theoretical implications for supporting Black male students. Recommendations for higher education institutions and professionals will be discussed.

Networking Session

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Join us for an engaging virtual networking session designed to foster meaningful small-group conversations. Through guided questions and facilitated discussion, attendees will have the opportunity to reflect on key conference takeaways, exchange ideas, and explore shared trends and challenges in the field. Whether you're looking to deepen your learning, collaborate with peers, or expand your professional network, this session offers a valuable space to connect and grow. Come ready to share your insights, listen actively, and build relationships that extend beyond the conference.

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**CT - Navigating the New Era: AI's Impact on the College Experience**

**Michael Hood**

**Krystal Reynolds**

*University of South Carolina/National Resource Center for First-Year Experience and Students in Transition*

This presentation explores how artificial intelligence is impacting the college student's experience as it relates to professional, personal, and educational life. From personalized learning tools and to preparing for an interview at their dream internships, AI is transforming how students learn and engage. We'll examine the data to understand what is currently happening, discuss the impacts, what we might see in the future, what we can do now, and share practical takeaways for attendees and their institutions that can be implemented immediately.

**CR - 5 Tips For Online Recruitment, Orientation & Retention Of Transfer Students**

**Fred Scott**

*Innovative Educators*

Transfer students are an often overlooked population despite comprising a significant portion of today's undergraduate student body. This session explores how institutions can build intentional onboarding and support strategies to ease the transition for transfer students. Drawing on national research and institutional case studies, we will share five evidence-based practices that promote academic and social integration. Attendees will gain insights into challenges unique to transfer students and how tailored orientation and transition programs can foster belonging and persistence. Participants will leave with adaptable examples of holistic, relationship-based approaches designed to support transfer students from enrollment through graduation.

**CP - Revising a Comprehensive Curriculum for Second Year Student Success**

**Julie Schultz**

**Caitlyn Tietje**

*The Ohio State University*

The Second-year Transformational Experience Program (STEP) supports nearly 3,000 students annually at a large public institution. The program was developed to address the unique needs of second-year students, provide mentoring and access to High Impact Practices. As the program passed its 10th anniversary, evolving student needs including AI advancements, generational differences, and post-pandemic approaches to community building prompted a curriculum update. Presenters will discuss findings from a literature review, second-year student needs assessment, and focus groups, and how these findings informed the revised curriculum, including learning outcomes, required topics, and lesson plans.

**CI - Bridging Transitions Through Community Action, Learning, and Leadership**

**Elizabeth Dysart**

**Dilcia Erazo**

*SUNY Old Westbury*

The session will explore how the Community Action, Learning and Leadership (CALL) is embedded in students' campus life, increasing retention, fostering belonging, and providing structured opportunities to practice social responsibility during college and beyond. Attendees will learn about CALL's community-based learning, its collaborations across campus and its impact on students. We can also talk about how other colleges can adapt the CALL model in ways that make sense for their own campus.

**CT - Discovering Your Purpose: A Journey for Students in Transition**

**Megan Cayton**

*University of North Carolina Greensboro*

The question "What do you want to be when you grow up?" often limits our perspective to familiar occupations. This session transcends that narrow view, guiding attendees to articulate a personal purpose statement that serves something greater than themselves. Through interactive activities and practical tools, participants will embark on a journey of self-discovery, exploring their values, strengths, and passions to uncover their unique contribution to the world. This isn't about choosing a job; it's about defining your impact and finding meaningful direction in life.

**CT - Jaguar Program: 5 Pillars of Learning**

**Angelica Hill**

**Elizabeth Huggins**

*Augusta University*

Jaguar Jumpstart Summer Program (JJSP) is Augusta University's FYE bridge program uniquely designed for entering first-year students who are at risk academically. Students who participate in the program receive a "jumpstart" to college life-academically, socially, and personally. JJSP students experience a supportive Living/Learning community for all four years of their academic journey. We collaborate with Campus Partners to engage students in a transactional and transformative experience with 5 Pillars of Learning: • Professional Development • Student Wellness • Digital Literacy • Community Engagement • Academic Success Our goal is to help students transition from high school to college and beyond!



CI -Rural Community College Students’ Use of Support Services Post-Hurricane Helene

Kaitlin Newhouse  
Sam Dotson  
*Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research*

In September 2024, Hurricane Helene hit western North Carolina, causing extensive damage to rural communities where students were already facing economic hardship. Three community colleges in western North Carolina collaborated on an initiative earlier that year through the Rural Postsecondary Education and Economic Development program (RPED): Foothills FORWARD, which provided students with access to new support services, including success coaching, Single Stop, and TimelyCare. Findings from the mixed-methods evaluation of the initiative highlight the importance of human-centered student support services over online support platforms, and inform our recommendations for colleges to build resiliency during transitions such as disaster recovery.

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

CI - From Data to Dialogue: Using Surveys to Personalize Orientation Experiences

Katie Lesperance  
Maddie Wiles  
*University of Wisconsin-Green Bay*

At the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay, orientation is more than a welcome—it’s a launchpad for meaningful connection. This session explores how UWGB leverages a robust pre-orientation survey to design intentional, personalized experiences for incoming students and their guests. By analyzing survey responses prior to orientation, our team identifies individual needs, interests, and concerns, allowing us to tailor 1:1 advising appointments and curated touchpoints that foster a sense of belonging from day one. Attendees will gain insight into our data-informed approach, see how survey results directly shape orientation content, and learn strategies for scaling personalized engagement in their programs.

FD - Transfer Students Are Not Like the Others!

Linda Samek  
*Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges & Universities*

Throughout a grant-supported project that facilitates the transfer of students from community colleges to private four-year universities, we have become convinced that orientation is a critical step in transfer student success. In this session, the presenter will share emerging best practices that are being implemented across our participant campuses, and is hoping that participants will also contribute their work in this area. We know that transfer students are not like first-time first-year freshmen, nor are they like traditional native commuter students. What then are ways to ensure their success with services that meet their unique needs? Join the conversation!.

CP - Amplifying Adult Learner Transition Through a Differentiated Wellbeing Care Strategy

Brett Bruner  
*Wichita State University*

Adult learners are a growing group in higher education. Understanding their unique experiences and challenges is crucial for their success. Colleges must recognize their needs and design targeted strategies to support their arrival and/or return to campus. This session will explore how Wichita State University leveraged a differentiated wellbeing care approach to support adult learner transitions into higher education through their nationally-recognized Adult Learner Community& Connections program.

CR - Peer Leadership and Career Readiness Skills

Katie Morton  
Lauren Epps  
Callyn Fahey  
*University of South Carolina*

Peer leaders are an important component of first-year seminars. While much research has been done on the impact of peer leaders on the students they support, less information exists about the impact of the experience on the peer leaders themselves. This session will showcase the findings of a study on peer leaders at the University of South Carolina and how serving in their role impacted them, and specifically their career readiness skills.

12:45 a.m. – 1:45 p.m.

CT - Student Advisory Boards as Peer Outreach: Supporting Students Through Transitions

Kelly DeShazo  
Helen Le  
*University of South Carolina*

This session explores how the Student Advisory Board (SAB) at the University of South Carolina supports students through critical academic transitions--from high school entry to major changes and transfer pathways. Emphasizing underrepresented voices, the peer-led SAB promotes campus belonging, academic access, and persistence. Presenters will share how SAB operates as a strategic outreach model and offer practical, adaptable strategies for leveraging student leadership to close equity gaps and boost engagement. Attendees will leave with a replicable framework to build their own student advisory board—making this session a valuable opportunity for institutions seeking to enhance success through peer-driven support.

CT - Transaction to Transformation: Updated CAS Standards for Transfer Student Success

Emily Kittrell  
Janet Marling  
Judith Brauer  
*National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students*

The field of transfer has evolved dramatically since 2010, and so have the professional standards that guide our work. Join us for an introduction to the newly revised CAS Standards for Transfer Student Programs and Services—a complete overhaul that reflects current research, expands relevance beyond traditional transfer offices, and emphasizes student-centered approaches to learning mobility. Learn how these standards, when viewed through the lens of the entire transfer student lifecycle, can inform your professional practice, strengthen campus collaboration, and help you advocate for the mobile learners you serve, regardless of your functional area or role.them, and specifically their career readiness skills.

CI - Early Warning Indicator and Intervention System Promoting Student Success

Joseph Barnett  
Dexter Asuncion  
Erica Chun  
*Hawaii Pacific University*

This session reports on a course performance early warning indicator and associated intervention system implemented at Hawai i Pacific University (Honolulu, HI) from fall 2023 to spring 2025 and first and second-year undergraduate students’ success. The study utilized a quasi-experimental posttest only non-equivalent groups design in academic year 2023-2024, which was replicated with a new cohort in academic year 2024-2025. Intervention participants had better outcomes than students who did not participate with respect grade point average and retention rates. Ex post facto observational study indicated engagement with academic support services was a mediating variable of interest.

CT - Supporting the Transition: A College Readiness Curriculum for Neurodivergent Students

Toni Schexnyder  
*Franklin Academy*

What skills can neurodivergent students develop before they arrive on campus—and how can higher education professionals build on that foundation? This session introduces a five-course College & Career Readiness curriculum that equips students with tools in executive functioning, self-advocacy, emotional regulation, and postsecondary planning. Designed at the high school level, the curriculum fosters self-awareness and independence across academic and campus life. Attendees will gain insight into students’ transition preparation and explore ways to create more responsive, coordinated supports in college environments.

CT - Belonging and Barriers: The First-Gen College Transition

Naira Bishop  
*Florida Southwestern State College*

This session explores the first-year college experience through the lens of a first-generation Hispanic student. Growing up in a household with no family guidance and little guidance from school, the transition was filled with confusion and challenges. This personal narrative is paired with research on the unique barriers faced by first-gen students, including cultural differences, identity struggles, and feelings of isolation. By sharing my journey from confusion to resilience, I hope to inspire institutions to recognize and support the unique struggles first-generation students face, fostering a true sense of belonging.

Closing & Keynote Address

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Heather Maietta, Ed.D.  
*Regis College*

Networks Across Transitions: How Relationships Shape Lifelong Growth

Across education and careers, transitions are inevitable—but relationships are the constant thread that binds them together. At every age and stage of career growth, the role and value of our relationships shift. What we contribute to and what we gain from our networks directly shapes how we move through and navigate the evolving role of career in our lives.

By understanding our relational needs in moments of career transition, we can better align with our networks. When this happens, relationships become not just sources of support but catalysts for growth across the career lifespan.She lives in Westford with her husband Bill, children, Emily and Jack, Dug the dog, and Teddy the cat.



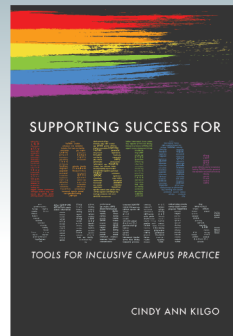
## RESOURCES ON THE COLLEGE STUDENT EXPERIENCE



**From Disability to Diversity**  
*College Success for Students with Learning Disabilities, ADHD, and Autism Spectrum Disorder*  
Lynne C. Shea, Linda Hecker, and Adam R. Lalor  
ISBN: 978-1-942072-29-4. 144 pages. **\$30.00**



**Academic Recovery**  
*Supporting Students on Academic Probation*  
Michael T. Dial, Editor  
ISBN: 978-1-942072-59-1. 265 pages. **\$30.00**



**Supporting Success for LGBTQ+ Students**  
*Tools for Inclusive Campus Practice*  
Cindy Ann Kilgo  
ISBN 978-1-942072-33-1. 112 pages. **\$25.00**

SAVE **20% & FREE SHIPPING** on orders placed through **OCT 10**. Code: **SIT25**

Place your order at **WWW.NRCPUBS.COM**

Join us in congratulating...

**2025-2026 Paul P. Fidler Research Grant Recipient**



**Counting the Cost: An Exploratory Analysis of Student Debt, Perceived College Value, and Financial Stability for Graduating Seniors**



**Angie Miller Ph.D.**  
Indiana University Bloomington



**Matthew Ison Ph.D.**  
Western Michigan University



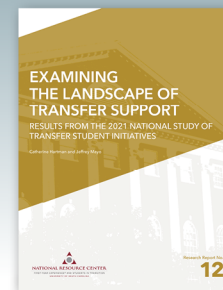
**Candace Henry Ph.D.**  
University of South Florida

The Paul P. Fidler Research Grant is designed to encourage the development and dissemination of knowledge that has the potential to improve the experiences of college students in transition. The grant is named in memory of Dr. Paul P. Fidler, a faculty member at the University of South Carolina, whose pioneering research on student learning and success had a vital impact on work being done to promote the success of all students in transition.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3

**SIT25**

## RESEARCH ON COLLEGE TRANSITION EXPERIENCES

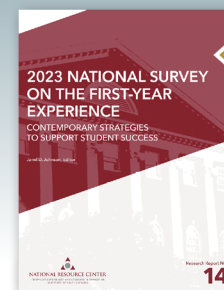


**Research Reports on College Transitions No. 12**  
**Examining the Landscape of Transfer Support**  
*Results from the 2021 National Study of Transfer Student Initiatives*  
Catherine Hartman and Jeffrey Mayo  
ISBN 978-1-942072-74-4. 152 pages. **\$29.95**

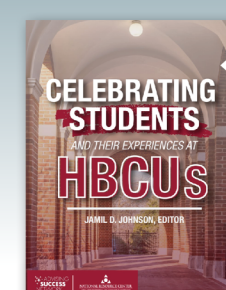


**Research Reports on College Transitions No. 13**  
**Toward Peer Leadership as a High-Impact Practice**  
*Insights from the U.S. Data in the 2023 International Survey of Peer Leaders*  
Bryce Bunting and Dallin George Young, Editors  
978-1-942072-77-5. 150 pages. **\$29.95**

## RESEARCH ON COLLEGE TRANSITION EXPERIENCES



**Research Reports on College Transitions No. 14**  
**2023 National Survey on The First-Year Experience**  
*Contemporary Strategies to Support Student Success*  
4-volume open access publication  
Volumes 1-3 coming this fall;  
Volume 4 coming January 2026



**Research Reports on College Transitions No. 15**  
**Celebrating Students and Their Experiences at HBCUs**  
Jamil D. Johnson, Editor  
Open access publication  
Published November 2025

SAVE **20% & FREE SHIPPING** on orders placed through **OCT 10**. Code: **SIT25**

Place your order at **WWW.NRCPUBS.COM**

FRIDAY



# John N. Gardner Institutional Excellence for Students in Transition

## Award

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition is committed to setting the standard for excellence in supporting students at critical junctures in the educational pipeline beyond the first year. We also seek to promote intentional and integrative connections within and across institutions and educational sectors to enhance the student transition experience. The award will be presented annually to institutions that have designed and implemented outstanding collaborative initiatives enhancing the entire undergraduate experience. Award recipients will have demonstrated the effectiveness of the initiative in supporting student success, learning, and development at a variety of transition points and in responding to unique institutional needs.

### Each award recipient will receive:

- Recognition at the 32<sup>nd</sup> National Conference on Students in Transition, including the presentation of a plaque during the conference, a half-page announcement in the conference program, and slide(s) highlighting award recipients in multimedia presentations during plenary sessions
- One complimentary registration to the 32<sup>nd</sup> National Conference on Students in Transition to include all conference sessions and preconference workshops (on a space-available basis).
- Presentation of a poster session during the conference featuring components of the award-winning initiative(s) and institution
- Recognition in a national higher education media outlet; in the National Resource Center's online newsletter (*Insights for College Transitions*); and on the Center's web page, listservs (i.e., SOPH List, SYE List, TYE, and GRAD List), and social media channels
- Distribution of press releases recognizing award recipients to national, regional, and institutional higher education media outlets



More information regarding the award will be available at [www.sc.edu/fye](http://www.sc.edu/fye)

# John N. Gardner Institutional Excellence for Students in Transition

## Award

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition would like to congratulate the recipient of the **John N. Gardner Institutional Excellence for Students in Transition Award**.



*The University of South Alabama's  
Second Year Experience program*



More information regarding the award will be available at [www.sc.edu/fye](http://www.sc.edu/fye)

# Insights

## FOR COLLEGE TRANSITIONS

Formerly *e-Source*, *Insights for College Transitions* is a free online resource that emphasizes evidence-based strategies for practitioner-scholars who support first-year students and students in transition inside and outside the classroom.

*Insights* is accepting Spring 2026 article submissions through  
December 12 for the following columns:

- Making the Case: Revisiting the Why
- First-Year Seminar Pedagogical Practices
- Featured Programs
- Research & Assessment



Learn more > [insights.sc.edu/fye/insights](http://insights.sc.edu/fye/insights)







# INDEX OF PRESENTERS

NAME	INSTITUTION
Scott, Fred	Innovative Educators
Soria, Krista	University of Idaho
Speights-Hass, Abby	Arkansas State University
Stephan, Elizabeth	Western Washington University
Tietje, Caitlyn	The Ohio State University
Tomlinson, Kathryn Sky	Grand Canyon University
Torgler, Bill	University of Akron
Tribble, Dana	Arkansas Tech University
Valdovinos, Ivan	University of California San Diego
Waddell, David	Brigham Young University
Walizer, Cassie	Complete College America
Wiles, Maddie	University of Wisconsin-Green Bay
Williams, Amanda	Florida A&M University
Willoughby, Rebecca	Commonwealth University
Zimmerman, Nick	University of Nebraska at Omaha
Znamenak, Kyle	University of Idaho