



Georgia Tech
Academic Advisors
Network

The Art of Advising



GEORGIA TECH ACADEMIC ADVISORS NETWORK

BEST PRACTICES CONFERENCE PROGRAM

May 19 | 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

Historic Academy of Medicine, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA

2025 BEST PRACTICES CONFERENCE

The Art of Advising

SCHEDULE OF THE DAY

May 19, 2025

8:00AM REGISTRATION OPENS | ROTUNDA

8:00AM CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST & COFFEE | CRYSTAL DINING ROOM

9:00AM WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO CONFERENCE | THEATER

Adrienne Hillman, GTAAN President

9:05AM KEYNOTE | THEATER

Dr. Damon P. Williams, Georgia Institute of Technology

10:20AM CONCURRENT SESSION GROUP #1

11:30AM CONCURRENT SESSION GROUP #2

12:30PM LUNCH | CRYSTAL DINING ROOM

1:40PM CONCURRENT SESSION GROUP #3

Affinity Groups

2:50PM CONCURRENT SESSION GROUP #4

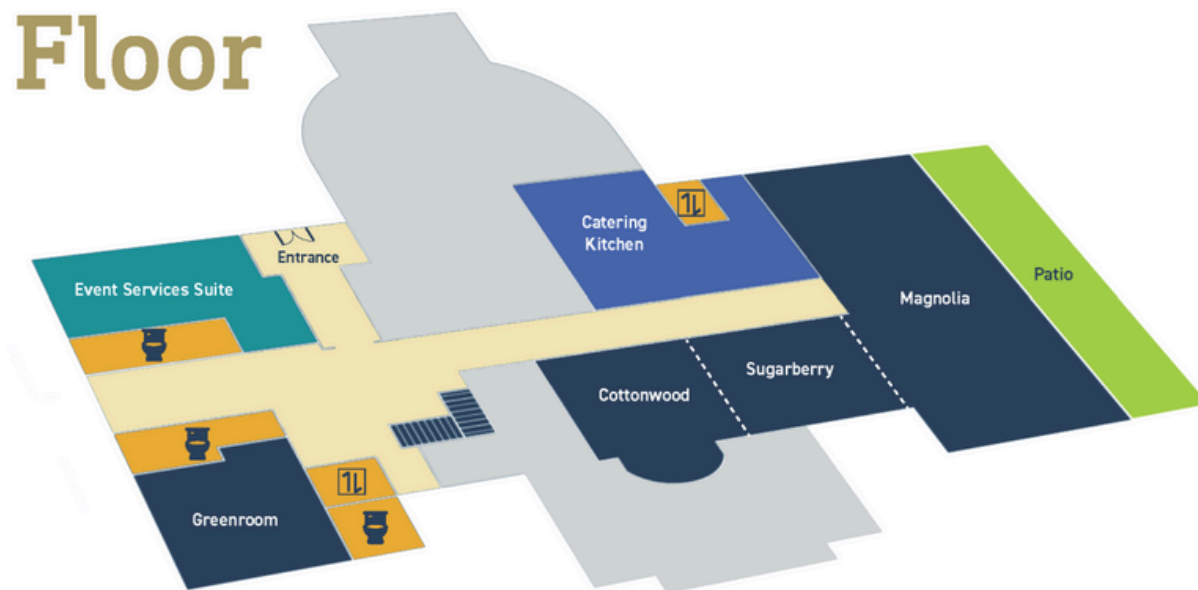
4:30PM CONFERENCE CONCLUDES



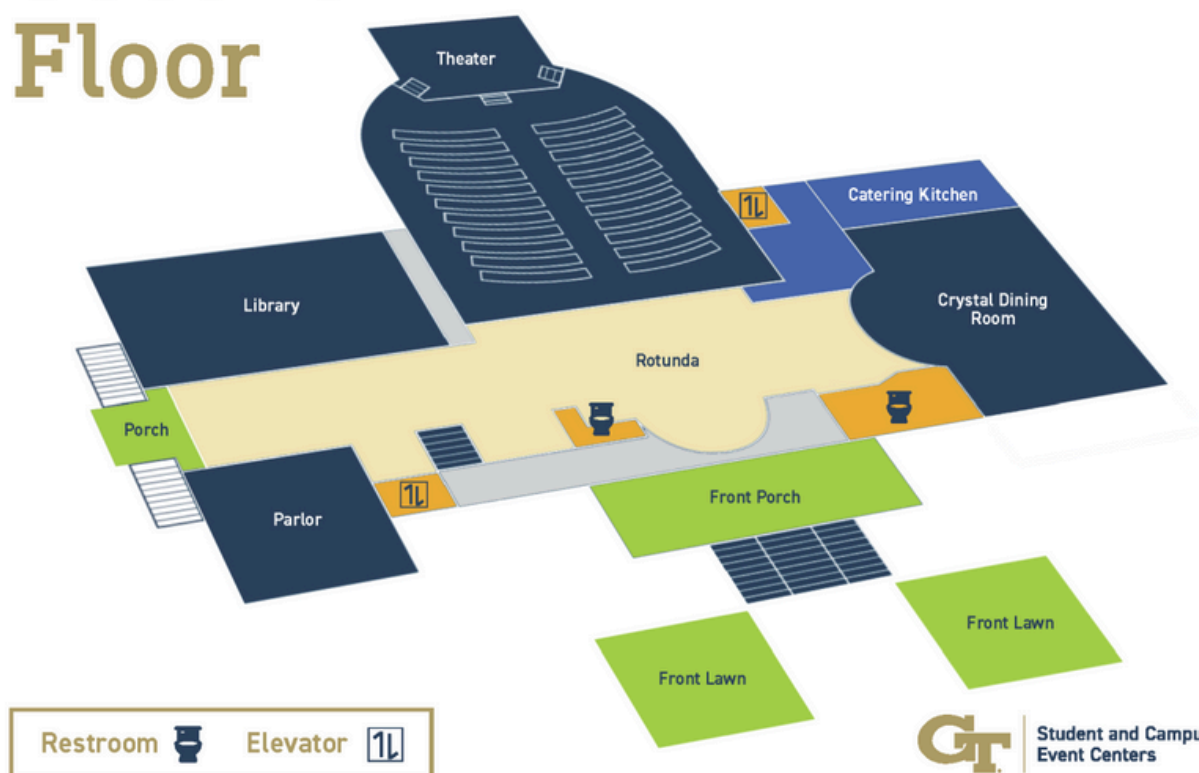
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First Floor



Second Floor



Restroom  Elevator 



Student and Campus
Event Centers

2025 BEST PRACTICES CONFERENCE

The Art of Advising

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

9:05AM | Theater



DR. DAMON P. WILLIAMS

*Associate Dean, College of Engineering (CoE) Outreach and Engagement
Georgia Institute of Technology*

Dr. Damon P. Williams is the inaugural Associate Dean for Outreach and Engagement within the College of Engineering (CoE) at the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech). A distinguished alumnus of Georgia Tech, Dr. Williams began his academic career as a faculty member in the H. Milton Stewart School of Industrial and Systems Engineering (ISyE), where he lectured in applied probability and operations analysis. His research interests center on the mathematical modeling of stochastic processes and their applications in reducing variability within engineering systems.

Dr. Williams is an award-winning educator known for his ability to translate abstract theoretical concepts into real-world engineering applications, a skill that has earned him widespread recognition among students and colleagues alike.

In addition to these initiatives, Dr. Williams manages several critical departments within the College of Engineering. His work in these areas supports the college's mission of student success by honoring that students are our top priority. A native of Ellicott City, Maryland, Dr. Williams earned his Bachelor of Science in Industrial and Systems Engineering, summa cum laude, from Georgia Tech in 2002. He pursued his graduate studies at the University of Michigan, earning both his Master of Science and Ph.D. in Industrial and Operations Engineering.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Dr. Williams takes pride in his family, which he regards as his most meaningful achievement. He is the devoted husband of the Rev. Dr. Khalia J. Williams, Associate Dean of Worship and Spiritual Formation and Associate Professor of Worship at Emory University's Candler School of Theology. Together, they are the proud parents of two sons.



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BEST PRACTICES SESSION SCHEDULE

CONCURRENT SESSIONS GROUP #1

10:20AM

LIBRARY | **REAL TALK: HOW THE HECK DO WE COMMUNICATE WITH GEN Z STUDENTS**

Grace Brockway, Juan Velasquez Tercero, Melissa Woodall, and Tavner Poage | University of North Georgia

This session explores strategies for communicating with Generation Z (Gen Z). Gen Z, as digital natives, has unique communication preferences, requiring advisors to navigate for meaningful engagement. Therefore, advising philosophies must adapt to incorporate solutions that mitigate communication gaps and barriers. This session will provide practical insights and innovative approaches for improving communication by leveraging existing technologies and recognizing the evolving dynamics of technology shaping Gen Z's preferences. By directly addressing these challenges, educators and institutions can establish more inclusive and effective communication strategies, fostering a positive, collaborative learning environment for all students.

COTTONWOOD | **USING FIRST-YEAR AND TRANSITION SEMINARS AS ADVISING & RETENTION TOOLS**

Chris Lundy and Sudie Davis | Georgia Tech

First-year and transition seminars are common courses on campus that aid in student success. At our institution, we use these seminars to assess student retention and graduation. Specifically, our seminar course has shown to be a crucial contribution to retention and graduation for our transfer student population. In our session, we will outline assignments for our transfer seminar course as well as provide assessment data that show how critical this course is not only to sense of belonging, but also to retention and graduation rates. We will also demonstrate how this course is a factor in our school's academic advising practices.

MAGNOLIA | THE ART OF EXPLORATORY ADVISING

Devoni Williams, Dr. Emmie Cass, and Nicole Leonard | Georgia Tech

The transition from high school to college, or even from one institution of higher learning to another, is filled with plans and opportunity. This time is also filled with choice. As students navigate the curricular requirements of their major of choice, some realize that reality does not align with their academic expectations. In such situations, students are presented with a choice that may impact the trajectory of the remainder of the academic journey. This is where exploratory advising, a reflective process that aligns students' interests, skills, goals, and passions, can bridge the gap between perception and reality.

LIBRARY | BEYOND THE GAME: INTEGRATING ATHLETICS INTO CAMPUS*Lauryn Harris, Cheyenne Jones, and Valerie Billstrom | Georgia Tech*

This presentation will provide an in-depth look at Georgia Tech's student-athlete academic support services, focusing on relationships with campus and communication with faculty. Attendees will gain insights into how Georgia Tech Athletic Association bridges the gap between athletics and campus. The discussion will include perspectives from key academic advisors and support staff who play a vital role in ensuring student success through campus partnerships.

COTTONWOOD | AN ADVISOR'S GUIDE TO TRAUMA INFORMED CARE: ADOPTING TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES WITHIN HIGHER ED ADVISING SPACES*Sarah Moore | Agnes Scott College*

Trauma Informed Care is an approach welcomed by many nonprofit professionals, social workers, attorneys, and medical professionals, with the purpose of recognizing the prevalence and impact of trauma in an effort to create an environment that provides safety and healing. Despite its widespread value, Trauma Informed Care is seldom discussed in a higher education advising context. The purpose of this presentation is to help the audience understand that Trauma Informed Care can, and should, play a role in the work we do as advisors. This presentation will explore the basics of trauma and its aid in human survival since our origin as a species, the core principles of Trauma-Informed Care, and how these principles can be, and already are, implemented in our office and institutional policies and practices.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS GROUP #2 CONTINUED

11:30AM

MAGNOLIA | **TALKING TO STUDENTS ABOUT FAILURE**

Anna Holcomb and Widaly's Santiago | Georgia Tech

Talking about the “f word” with students never easy, but failure is inherent to the college experience as our students undergo rapid self-discovery and intellectual development. As the path to college focuses intensely on achievement, students do not often enter our campuses with the reflective framework necessary to recognize the opportunity of failure. In this session, attendees will develop a skillset to help their students navigate setbacks and become more comfortable embracing failure themselves. Our goal is to provide participants with tangible takeaways for immediate utilization in their own practice to talk to their students about failure and cultivate resilience.

THEATER | **WHEN PAY GOES LOW, WE GO HIGH: SETTING BOUNDARIES, USING HELPFUL TOOLS, AND OFFICE-LED PRACTICES TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY AND MORALE**

Kayla Whitter | Agnes Scott College

Cost of living is increasing and higher education continues to be a consistently low-paid profession. How do we continue to make it all worth it? This interactive session will discuss how to incorporate helpful technology and tools into daily advising and administrative practices, while also providing tips for greater self-care options, wellness benefits, and high office morale to keep the work meaningful and the stress low. This session is great for advisors and advising administrators.

AFFINITY GROUPS

1:40PM

Connect with fellow advisors who share similar experiences, backgrounds, or areas of interest in our Affinity Group Session. These groups provide a space to foster community, support, and professional development through shared conversations and insights. Whether you're looking to discuss common challenges, celebrate successes, or exchange strategies, affinity groups offer a valuable opportunity to build connections and inspire action within the advising community.

LIBRARY | TRANSFER STUDENTS

Led by Sudie Davis, Academic Advisor II for the H. Milton Stewart School of Industrial and Systems Engineering at Georgia Tech, and Barbara Howard, Academic Advisor II for the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Georgia Tech

COTTONWOOD | FIRST GEN STUDENTS

Led by Nicole Leonard, Assistant Director for Exploratory Advising, Academic Success & Advising at Georgia Tech

MAGNOLIA | SELF-CARE/MENTAL HEALTH

Led by Vonya Miller, Academic Advisor II for the School of Building Construction at Georgia Tech

LIBRARY | ANCHORING YOUR INSTITUTION'S TRANSFER ECOSYSTEM: COMMUNICATION, CONNECTION, AND COLLABORATION

Cassie Thomas and Brian Garsh | Georgia Tech

Students experience their institution holistically and seldom differentiate between structural or organizational divisions (Keeling, Underhile & Wall, 2007). Creating an ecosystem of support is necessary to minimize transfer shock and to ensure transfer students thrive during the transition between institutions (Hills, 1965; Marling, 2025). An asset-based approach to supporting transfer students is a valuable lens through which administrators and practitioners can facilitate the development of institutional transfer ecosystems. This session will equip participants with the knowledge to identify elements of their campus' transfer ecosystem and plan tangible ways they can increase collaborations to improve transfer student success.

COTTONWOOD | OPTIMIZING THE ADVISING CLASSROOM VISIT

Elizabeth Chaplin and David Marsh | Kennesaw State University

This presentation focuses on best practices for advising information sessions during a classroom visit and the recalibration of the advising session for optimal results. We will cover the original session, the presentation's effectiveness, and the steps to address gaps in the content. We refocused our spotlight from a broad range of campus resources to information integral to a good advising session. In the improved session we directly prompt students to reflect on their performance. Strategies for their degree progression and student engagement are highlighted. We will discuss data that supports the changes made to our first-year classroom advising information sessions.

MAGNOLIA | **LEVELING UP: EMPOWERING STUDENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION FROM UNDERGRADUATE TO GRADUATE STUDIES**

Anastasia Lagmay | Georgia Tech

This presentation focuses on empowering students as they transition from undergraduate to graduate education by fostering a supportive community. Emphasizing mental health and wellness, the presentation will explore strategies to manage stress and promote well-being during this critical time. Key components include regular semester check-ins, progress charts to track milestones, and providing essential resources for academic and personal success. Open communication will be highlighted as a crucial element for seeking support and navigating challenges. By creating a network of encouragement and guidance, this presentation aims to ensure students thrive both academically and personally throughout their graduate journey.

BEST PRACTICES EVALUATIONS & FEEDBACK

SESSION EVALUATIONS

https://gatech.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0wEVuhuQ4bYjp1s

Please take a moment to evaluate the sessions that you attended today and provide feedback to presenters.

GTAAN BEST PRACTICES CONFERENCE EVALUATION

https://gatech.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3Dj5MKZJRpRkrjM

How did we do? Please take this brief survey to provide feedback on your experience with GTAAN's 2025 Best Practices Conference. Your feedback will help us in planning and hosting future Best Practices events.

Help us in our efforts to reduce waste from today's event!

**PLEASE RETURN YOUR MAGNETIC NAME TAG HOLDER
BEFORE LEAVING THE CONFERENCE TODAY**

Drop it off in one of the return baskets on your way out.



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THANK YOU!

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE 2025 GTAAN BEST PRACTICES CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

This year's Best Practices Conference would not have been possible without the hard work and commitment of the 2025 GTAAN Best Practices Conference Planning Committee. Your passion for enhancing academic advising and your unwavering dedication to student success have helped bring this event to life. Thank you for your vision, creativity, and teamwork!

2025 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Lauren Allen
Lenna Applebee
Susan Belmonte
Amanda Blocker
Emmie Cass
Sudie Davis
Adrienne Hillman
Barbara Howard
Anastasia Lagmay
Nicole Leonard

Sametria Matthews
Vonya Miller
Davis Palubeski
Ellen Riley
Jessica Sherrington
Jalana Smith
Haley Steele
Lorett Swank
Ashlee Toomey-Flinn



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