

North Carolina Council of Graduate Schools (NCCGS) Annual Meeting 2024

Friday, November 15

7:30-8:30am: Registration & Breakfast

Sponsored by Liaison

7:45-8:30am: Presentation by Liaison

Carolina Ballroom E & F

8:30-9:30am: Welcome Remarks – Dr. Robin Coger, Provost, East Carolina University

Carolina Ballroom E & F

Followed by Plenary Session TBD

Dr. Kathleen Cox, Associate Dean, Graduate School, East Carolina University

Dr. Debra Jackson, Dean, Graduate School, East Carolina University

9:30-9:45am: Break

9:45-10:45 am: Breakout Session 1

- **The Art of Engagement: Creative Social Media Strategies for Graduate Schools: Ms. Nicole Hodges, Public Communications Officer, North Carolina Central University**

Carolina Ballroom A

In an era where digital presence is crucial, the role of creativity in social media strategies for graduate schools cannot be overstated. This session will delve into how innovative approaches can transform graduate school promotion. Attendees will explore effective methods for crafting engaging and dynamic content that resonates with prospective students and enhances brand visibility. The session will also cover strategies for leveraging various digital platforms to maximize recruitment efforts, ensuring your institution stands out in a crowded marketplace. Through practical examples and creative case studies, participants will learn how to harness the power of social media to maintain a strong, influential presence. Discover how to keep your institution top-of-mind with prospective students and how to creatively navigate the evolving digital landscape to achieve your recruitment and engagement goals.

- **Holistic Admissions Framework: A Strategic Approach to Graduate and Professional Enrollment Management: Ms. Natalie Larson, Director of Graduate Admissions, Elon University and Alexandria Duffney, Dean of Graduate Admissions, Elon University**

Carolina Ballroom B

This session explores the strategic integration of holistic admissions with a focus on identification and assessment of desired Experiences, Attributes, and Metrics (EAMs) in admissions policies, applicable to diverse graduate programs.

- **Professional Development with a Purpose: Dr. Rhonda Sutton, Assistant Dean for Professional Development, North Carolina State University**

Carolina Ballroom C

Graduate students often underestimate the value of engaging in professional development during their academic experience. They may sign up for workshops but fail to attend. Their perception may be that they have “no time” to engage in extra-curricular activities. Or they may simply be unaware of how developing their professional skills promotes their future career success. To address these challenges, the Professional Development team at North Carolina State University's Graduate School has initiated an enhanced strategy to promote the purpose of professional development. Through the identification of five competencies, the development of a new registration system, the implementation of certificates, the focus on offering cohort-based programs, and the creation of a Competencies Assessment, the Professional Development team has created a focus that is developmental and strategic.

Learning Outcomes

- Identify how to communicate the “why”, “what” and “how” of professional development.
- Discover how to link elements of a professional development strategy into a cohesive approach.
- Ascertain ways campus-based collaborations can enhance engagement in professional development programs.
- Establish approaches for promoting community among graduate students

10:45-11:00am: Break

11:00–12:00pm: Breakout Session 2

- **A beginner's guide to refining the process of turning a potential applicant into a graduate, utilizing the “In, Through, & Out”:** Mr. Brian Wayne, Graduate Program Recruiter, Elizabeth City State University
Carolina Ballroom A
The “In, Through, & Out method” offers a comprehensive framework for transforming potential applicants into successful graduates. “In” focuses on attracting prospective students by implementing targeted marketing strategies, engaging campus events, and personalized communication that highlights the institution's unique strengths and community. Next, “Through” ensures students navigate their academic journey successfully by providing robust support services such as orientation, academic advising, tutoring, and extracurricular involvement, fostering a sense of belonging and engagement. Finally, “Out” prepares students for life after graduation by offering career services, internships, networking opportunities, and alumni support, ensuring they are equipped with the skills and connections necessary for a successful transition into the workforce. This method emphasizes a holistic approach that nurtures students at every stage of their educational experience.
- **Supercharging your marketing and recruitment strategies with AI:** Mr. Gregory Hedgepeth, Director of Marketing and Communication, North Carolina State University
Carolina Ballroom B
In an era of continuous technological advancement, AI has become a transformative force in various sectors, including higher education. This presentation will explore how AI-powered tools and strategies are revolutionizing marketing and recruitment processes and how they can be used to further promote graduate education. By embracing the power of AI, institutions can enhance their outreach efforts, build the ideal student personas, personalize communication with prospective students, and automate tasks along the decision making journey. We will discuss practical applications such as predictive analytics for identifying potential applicants, AI-driven chatbots for real-time engagement, and personalized content creation to appeal to diverse student demographics. Additionally, we will address ethical considerations and best practices for integrating AI into marketing and recruitment strategies. Attendees will leave with actionable insights and a roadmap for leveraging AI to increase program awareness, enhance the student experience and boost enrollment at their institutions.
- **Thriving in Diversity: Empowering Well-being for Neurodivergent and Underrepresented Graduate Students:** Dr. Yan Li, Associate Dean for Graduate Programs, Duke University and Dr. Melissa Bostrom, Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Professional Development, Duke University
Carolina Ballroom C
Many of us are seeking ways to provide support for graduate student wellness. Recognizing that every student's wellness is important, we also know that certain groups within our graduate student population may need additional strategies to be fully connected with campus and community resources that support their wellness. In this presentation, learn about approaches to supporting neurodivergent graduate students and students from underrepresented minorities. We will also address some strategies for synthesizing wellness approaches for these groups with professional development programming. Our presenters are a licensed psychologist who worked with the university counseling & psychological services for over a decade before transitioning to lead a graduate student affairs unit, as well as an assistant dean for graduate student professional development.

12:00–1:00pm: Lunch Sponsored by ETS
Carolina Ballroom E & F

1:00-2:00pm: Breakout Session 3

- **Frontline Communication Panel Discussion**
East Carolina University: Mrs. Ashlee Lancaster, Graduate Admissions, Mrs. Karen Rupp, Associate Director of Graduate Programs, Thomas D. Arthur Graduate School of Business, Mr. Quinten Robinson, Graduate Admissions, Mrs. Lisa Thomas, Academic Advisor, Department of Nutrition Science, and Mrs. Mack Keenan, Director of Outreach, College of Health & Human Performance
Carolina Ballroom A
Potential and current students who feel important and cared about are more likely to apply, enroll and share positive things about your university. A panel of staff members from across the East Carolina University campus will share positive communication strategies based on relatable scenarios to help build an understanding on how to effectively communicate with students and colleagues alike.

- **Are You Student Ready? Strategies and Data Usage to Support Student Success: Dr. Jim Harper, Associate Dean, School of Graduate Studies, North Carolina Central University, and Dr. Art Munin, AVP Enrollment Management Solutions, Liaison**
Carolina Ballroom B

This session will cover strategies to support student success and how to capture and leverage data in this endeavor.

- **Supporting the Overlooked: Strategies for Engaging Distance Education Graduate Students: Dr. Aura Young, University of North Carolina Charlotte and Ms. Anna Ouchchy, University of North Carolina Wilmington**
Carolina Ballroom C

Distance education graduate students form a population that is often overlooked despite the unique academic and social challenges they tend to face. Fully online learners make up a large percentage of the graduate student body at the presenters' institutions, but their specific needs are just beginning to be understood. Although research focused on distance education graduate students is limited, this presentation will begin by sharing current findings on distance learners, including their characteristics as a population and best practices for supporting them. We will then present strategies we have employed to engage distance learners at our respective institutions. Our areas of focus include identifying distance learners, creating relevant programming, providing essential resources, addressing oversights, building community, and training faculty to better support their students. Finally, we will open the floor to discussion and questions so that participants can share what they are doing to support the needs of distance education students at their institutions.

2:00-2:15pm: Break

2:15-3:15pm: Breakout Session 4

- **Plotting a Course towards Faster Admission Decisions: Ms. Kathy Giddings, Director of Graduate Admissions, University of North Carolina Charlotte**
Carolina Ballroom A

How long does it take for your applicants to receive an admissions decision once their application is complete, and why should you care? Where are the bottlenecks in the review process, and what can you do about it? Hear examples of how to leverage technology to automate parts of the process, make revisions to the application to gather better information, and collaborate with program directors to encourage change.

- **Diversifying enrollment with international students: why and how: Mrs. Hayley Hardenbrook, International Admissions & Recruitment Manager, North Carolina State University, and Mrs. Kathy Knudson, Director of International Enrollment & Engagement, East Carolina University**
Carolina Ballroom B

The impending enrollment cliff has been a regular topic amongst higher education officials for years. With this event slated to hit undergraduate programs by 2025, it is anticipated that graduate schools will begin feeling the impact by 2029. We know we need to diversify our recruitment efforts to combat the decline in eligible US-based students. This session will be theoretical and practical. We will discuss relevant data in international recruitment, the challenges of a decentralized graduate model, factors that influence international student choice, and examples of implementing a recruitment strategy from two universities.

- **The Done Dissertation Blueprint: Best Practices for Dissertation Chairing and Doctoral Student Success: Dr. Ramon Goings, Associate Professor, University of Maryland, and Dr. Patricia Virella, Assistant Professor, Montclair State University**
Carolina Ballroom C

Doctoral student attrition is a glaring issue in graduate education with approximately 57% of doctoral students who enter a program earn their degree. The dissertation process, an often-touted mysterious phase within doctoral education, is a critical juncture influencing student attrition. Despite this reality, formal training for dissertation chairs remains absent leaving students to navigate this phase with a "sink or swim" approach. To address doctoral student attrition at the dissertation phase, the Done Dissertation Velocity Program was created, offering comprehensive support that has guided over 150 dissertation writers to successful completion across STEM, humanities, and social science disciplines. This presentation will provide graduate faculty and administrators with mentoring and dissertation chairing strategies drawn from the program's success. Additionally, strategies will be shared for doctoral students on how to navigate the dissertation process.

3:30pm: NC Council of Graduate Schools Membership Business Meeting (All are invited)

Carolina Ballroom E & F