



Preliminary Conference Program – Early Career Track

Thursday, July 10, 2025

8:00-9:00am: Breakfast and Welcoming Remarks

9:00-9:30am: NAGAP Uncovered: A sneak peek into what you need to know



Dr. Naronda Wright, NAGAP President, Associate Dean of Graduate Student Services, Georgia Southern University

NAGAP is the only professional organization devoted exclusively to the concerns of individuals working in the graduate enrollment management environment. The mission is to engage and advance Graduate Enrollment Management Professionals by promoting excellence and collaboration through education, research, and professional development. This session will provide knowledge of NAGAP as an association and a general overview of graduate enrollment management.

Learning outcomes:

- List three NAGAP member benefits.
- Identify locations of NAGAP resources.
- List three areas of graduate enrollment management.

9:30-10:30am: Facilitated Connection Activity

One of the advantages of a smaller professional development event is having time to form more meaningful connections with new colleagues. In this high-energy facilitated session, you'll start learning from your colleagues and reflecting on your own work.

Learning outcomes:

- Meet at least three new colleagues you want to follow up with later on
- Identify personal challenges and wins and share with others
- Get actionable advice from your peers

10:45-11:30am: Campus Law 101: Navigating Legal Issues in Higher Ed



Carrie Ryan Gallia, Senior Associate General Counsel, University of Minnesota

Navigating the complex world of higher education law can be daunting for administrators, faculty, and staff. This session, Campus Law 101, offers a comprehensive overview of the most pressing legal issues facing campuses today. Attendees will gain an understanding of key legal concepts and regulations, including Title IX compliance, student rights, discrimination laws, free speech, and liability concerns. With practical insights and real-world examples, this session will provide the tools needed to handle legal challenges, mitigate risks, and foster a legally sound campus environment. Whether you are new to higher education or looking to refresh your knowledge, this session is designed to equip you with essential legal knowledge for navigating the campus landscape confidently and effectively.

Learning Outcomes:

- Overview of core legal principles impacting higher education
- Understanding student rights and responsibilities
- Navigating Title IX compliance and gender equity issues
- Addressing discrimination, harassment, and inclusion challenges
- Managing free speech concerns on campus
- Minimizing legal risks in higher education environments

11:30am-12:15pm: Intro to Graduate Financial Aid



Sage Dunne, Assistant Director and Dr. Julie Collins, Assistant Dean, Office of Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid, Northwestern University

With financial aid and the cost of graduate degrees in the media's spotlight, it's important to understand financial aid in the graduate enrollment management industry. This presentation will cover financial aid basics, following the journey from prospective applicant to enrolled student. You'll see how graduate financial aid differs from undergraduate financial aid, and we'll provide perspectives on empowering students to make an informed decision on investing in graduate school.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understanding the variety of financial aid options available for graduate students
- Navigating the FAFSA process and eligibility criteria for graduate-level aid

- Exploring institutional funding opportunities, including fellowships and assistantships
- Providing effective guidance and support to students throughout the financial aid process
- Addressing common challenges in graduate financial aid administration

12:15-1:15pm: Lunch

1:15-3:15pm: Cultivating Diversity: The Essentials of Equitable Graduate Admissions



Dr. Lisa Abston, Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Director of the Sloan UCEM, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

This session examines equitable graduate admissions processes that promote diversity and inclusion. Through interactive discussions and practical strategies, participants will investigate systemic biases, review research on conventional admissions practices and their shortcomings, and explore equity-minded holistic review as an alternative approach.

Learning outcomes:

- Identify and analyze the barriers that contribute to inequity in graduate admissions.
- Explore methods for assessing applicants beyond traditional metrics, such as GPA and test scores.
- Integrate transparent processes into their admissions strategies.

3:30-4:30pm: Motivational Interviewing as a Tool for “Best Fit” Recruiting



Teresa Renn, Associate Dean, Graduate Admission and Success, Le Moyne College

Enrolling in graduate school is a life-changing decision for prospective students and their loved ones. It is no surprise that this type of investment (both in time and finances) requires a certain level of discernment. This presentation will introduce participants to motivational interviewing techniques that can help clarify goals, determine best fit and support applicants through their decision-making process.

Learning Outcomes:

- Articulate some of the common decision-making barriers for graduate prospects and applicants;
- Identify the common themes (at least two) in motivational interview techniques;
- Articulate appropriate (or inappropriate) uses of motivational interviewing techniques in everyday recruiting conversations.

5:30-7:00pm Reception and Networking

Friday, July 11, 2025

8:00-9:00am: Breakfast and Day Two Welcome

9:00-10:30am: Reimagining Recruitment & Communication: Strategies to Connect with Today's Students



Jennifer Lonchar, Co-Founder, AmbioEdu and Matt Byerly, Executive Director of Brand Strategy, AmbioEdu

Today's students are more savvy, more digitally connected, and more skeptical than ever before—which means yesterday's playbook won't cut it. Reimagining Recruitment & Communication is designed for enrollment and marketing professionals looking to modernize their approach and meet students where they are. In this session, we'll explore current trends in student behavior, digital media consumption, and communication preferences—with a spotlight on why video-first, omnichannel strategies are key to success. We'll unpack foundational strategies for building more intentional and inclusive messaging, collaborating across departments, and using data to inform how and when you engage students. Whether you're crafting emails, social content, programmatic landing pages, or advertising, you'll leave with a framework to build an integrated plan that supports students from awareness to enrollment.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand where and how prospective students are engaging with content today—and why video must come first
- Build inclusive messaging that reflects and resonates with diverse populations, and non-traditional prospects
- Collaborate across marketing, admissions, and with faculty for greater alignment and impact
- Use CRM tools and behavioral data to map and optimize your communication strategy
- Prioritize authenticity and consistency across every channel
- Create a framework for testing, learning, and evolving your outreach in real time

10:45am-12:15pm: More than just counting students: How we know what we do (and do it well)



Mary Odden, Data Manager/Analyst, University at Buffalo

"Going beyond the daily tasks that make up the ""how"" of Graduate Enrollment - this workshop is for new professionals eager to learn more about the ""why."" In this session, participants will learn about how Goals and Outcomes drive a department's actions and assessments, how to select appropriate assessments based on those outcomes, and how the choices we make in storing data today will impact our understanding of student enrollment for years to come. What we will be doing in the workshop:

- A brief lecture to provide definitions
- Group practice matching assessment types to data types
- Small group work designing assessments based on provided problem scenarios
- Large group discussion on data governance.

Learning Outcomes:

- Recall the elements of effective outcomes
- Identify which assessments collect what kind of data
- Discuss implications of good and poor data governance protocol

12:15-1:15pm Lunch and Networking with NAGAP Board Members

1:15-1:55pm No Stupid Questions Q & A Panel

This is your chance to ask all your burning questions in a judgement-free space! Our panel of experts can give advice, clarify information, define confusing terminology, and help you solve problems you are seeing in your work.

Learning Outcomes:

- Fill any gaps in knowledge that may have come about during the other sessions
- Solicit actionable advice from experts
- Brainstorm solutions to problems you are facing in your work

2:00-2:45pm What's the Plan? Shaping a Steadfast Career Development Plan



Teisha Johnson, Senior Director of Admissions, Illinois College of Optometry

Many GEM professionals didn't set out with a clear plan to build careers in graduate education—but that doesn't mean you can't start taking a more intentional approach now. Whether you're looking to grow within graduate enrollment management or preparing for your next professional move, this session will provide practical activities and insights to help you create a personalized career development plan. You'll walk away with tools to build a career that is both fulfilling and meaningful.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understanding the basic components of a career development plan.
- Practice techniques to develop professional goals, which can be used as a foundation for regular practice of revising and updating your career development plan.
- Assess potential gaps in skills or experience and develop strategies to address them.

2:45-3:00pm: Closing Remarks and Final Activity