

Virginia Tech Graduate Education Conference

Presenter Biographies

Dr. Janice Austin is the Assistant Dean and Director of Graduate Admissions and Academic Progress. Prior to her appointment as Director, Janice served as an Admissions and Academic Progress processor and, later, the Enrollment Coordinator at the Graduate School. Janice earned her Ph.D. in Educational Research and Evaluation at Virginia Tech in 2017. She earned a master's degree in Higher Education Student Affairs from Virginia Tech and a bachelor's degree in Religious Studies from Lynchburg College. Janice enjoys spending time with Jonathan, her husband, and her two sons, Joshua and Jordan. She also loves watching college football and traveling.

Katie Beach is an Assistant Director in Career and Professional Development where she serves as the liaison to the College of Science and the Graduate School as a member of the STEM Career Network, which also serves the students in the College of Engineering. She began her time at Virginia Tech 11 years ago working as an athletic trainer for various Division I teams. She began her journey into career development working for two years as a Health Professions Advisor. This opened her eyes to career advising and she had the opportunity to transition into her current role. Katie obtained her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees from East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina and is a perfect example that your career is truly a journey.

Dr. Karen P. DePauw is Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education and tenured Professor in the Departments of Sociology and Human Nutrition, Foods & Exercise at Virginia Tech. Her major accomplishments at VT include success in building a strong and diverse graduate community; the establishment of the award-winning Graduate Life Center (GLC); the signature academic initiative known as Transformative Graduate Education (TGE); and national recognition for her leadership in innovative use of technology in graduate education. She received the first Debra W. Stewart Award for outstanding leadership in graduate education from the Council of Graduate Schools and the Outstanding Contributions to Graduate Education Award from the Council of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS). In 2015, Virginia Tech honored her with the Presidential Principles of Community Award in recognition of her international leadership in inclusive graduate education. Dr. DePauw has held several leadership roles in graduate education, including: founding member and Facilitator/Chair for the Virginia Council of Graduate School (VCGS), President of the Council of Southern Graduate Schools, Chair of the 2010 Board of Directors of the Council of Graduate Schools, and Chair of the GRE Board (2013-2014). She has been a panelist, speaker, and presenter at regional affiliates (CSGS, WAGS), national meetings and workshops (CGS, NSF IGERT, Advance/NSF), and international conferences.

Monika Gibson, assistant dean and director of graduate student services at Virginia Tech, is responsible for the development, management and delivery of services and programs that build community, support the professional development and network-building of graduate students, and improve the quality of their lives. She has worked in various professional positions at three higher education institutions in Hungary and the U.S. She has extensive experience in managing change, developing and implementing policies and programs, advising students and organizations, planning and executing large and small events, and giving presentations. She played a key role in the establishment of the award-winning Graduate Life Center at Donaldson Brown in 2005. Monika earned a bachelor's degree in hotel and restaurant management in Hungary and a master's degree in educational leadership and policy studies in the United States.

Cathy Grimes is the communications manager for the Virginia Tech Graduate School. Prior to joining the university, she spent 20 years as a reporter, editor, social media manager and project coordinator at several news organizations, most recently with the Daily Press Media Group in Newport News, Virginia. She studied education policy, social media, ethics, and governance as a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University, and was an award-winning journalist for the Seattle Times Company. She has served as a coach and mentor in newsrooms, and has taught classes and presented seminars on journalism at Harvard, Washington State and Hampton universities, the College of William and Mary, and Whitman College. As a long-time member of the Education Writers Association, she has served on the organization's national board of directors and several advisory committees. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Washington.

Sam Harbison currently serves as the Assistant Director of Residence Life at Virginia Tech. She earned her master's degree in Counseling: Student Affairs and her bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies: Learning & Pedagogy. Sam loves working with graduate students and underserved populations. As a first generation college student herself, Sam quickly identified her passion for assisting students throughout their college career. In her free time she enjoys painting, baking, spending time with family, and being outdoors.

Dr. Bryan Hanson is the Ombudsperson for the Graduate School at Virginia Tech. Working as a mediator, facilitator, consultant, educator, and ombuds, Bryan has over ten years of experience helping people work through the conflicts that impact their life. Prior to working with the graduate school community at Virginia Tech, Bryan spent nine plus years teaching and helping manage a graduate program focused on conflict resolution. This role allowed Bryan to deeply understand the experiences had by those within the graduate school community as they try to manage the many conflicts that may come up within their life and academic work. Outside of the office, Bryan loves to spend his free time with his family exploring the beauty of Southwest Virginia.

Dr. Bill Huckle, a faculty member in the College of Veterinary Medicine, joined the Graduate School as Associate Dean and Director of Interdisciplinary Graduate Education in 2017. In this role, he facilitates operations of 14 IGEPs (Interdisciplinary Graduate Education Programs), and counsels students drawn to the Graduate School's innovative Individualized Interdisciplinary PhD program. Along with colleagues in the Graduate School and Offices of the University Registrar and Provost, he supports individual faculty members and graduate program directors in the process of developing graduate courses, certificates, and curricula associated with the wide variety of advanced degrees offered at Virginia Tech. Dr. Huckle teaches the "Citizen Scholar" course, a component of the Graduate School's Transformative Graduate Education Initiative, and, in his home academic unit, teaches physiology and cell biology to students in the DVM program and to undergraduates in biomedical engineering. His research interests center on cardiovascular diseases.

Dr. Rita Klein is a senior staff psychologist at the Cook Counseling Center of Virginia Tech. She works with the wide range of problems undergraduate and graduate students present. Dr. Klein provides group therapy to undergraduate and graduate students through an interpersonal process group that focuses on understanding oneself and others, and through a Dialectical Behavior Therapy skill-building group. She sees graduate students in her office at a satellite facility of the Cook Counseling Center and in the Graduate Life Center. Dr. Klein holds a Ph.D. from Fordham University and is a licensed clinical psychologist. In her spare time Dr. Klein enjoys traveling the world, nature and outdoor activities such as hiking, skiing, and jogging.

Clayton Kolb has served as the Associate Director of Union Services within Student Engagement and Campus Life at Virginia Tech since July of 2015. Previously, he has worked at Northern State University in Aberdeen, South Dakota and Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Florida, spending time in academic advising, the registrar's office, student activities, leadership development, first year experience, multicultural affairs, student organization advising, welcome week orientation, recreational sports, and most recently union operations, event planning, and production services. Clayton has also taught within these universities and has been an adjunct professor for Southern New Hampshire University for the past four years. He has his B.A. in Social Work and Public Relations and M.S. in Organizational Leadership; he hopes to complete his Ed.D. in Educational Leadership with an emphasis in Higher Education Administration this summer.

Jennifer Lawrence is the Director of the Writing Center at Virginia Tech, where she has been an instructor in the English Department for fifteen years. In addition to teaching the tutor-training course, she often teaches a first-year composition section of all second language learners. Her hobbies (somewhat predictably) include reading and writing, but also jogging, pottery, and yoga.

Kacy Lawrence serves as the Director of Assessment and Strategic Data Initiatives in the Virginia Tech Graduate School. In this role, Lawrence serves as a strategic data expert in the Graduate School, researching, analyzing, and making recommendations regarding complex issues using data and benchmarking activities. Additionally, she analyzes and reports data identified as vital to the Graduate School's strategic goals to relevant stakeholders. Lawrence has a bachelor's degree from Villanova University and a master's degree from George Washington University.

Eric Margiotta serves as the Associate Director for Facility Management in Student Engagement and Campus Life. He oversees maintenance, housekeeping, renovation and construction, assessment, tenant relations, and emergency planning for the Graduate Life Center, Johnston Student Center, and Squires Student Center. He seeks to provide environments where serendipitous encounters can happen and students can create community. A natural collaborator and strategic thinker, Eric is energized by working with colleagues on campus and beyond. He is an enthusiastic member of ACUI, an organization where he feels both affirmed and challenged to be better in his work. In his free time, Eric enjoys spending time with his wife and children.

Dr. Christian Matheis directs the Graduate School's recruitment efforts in coordination with the university's graduate programs, and manages inclusion and diversity programs. He also serves as a visiting assistant professor in the School of Public and International Affairs at Virginia Tech. His teaching and research concentrations include topics such as solidarity, refugees, feminism, race, indigeneity, power and policy, and global justice. He also provides training in areas of human relations facilitation, intergroup dialogue, grassroots direct-action organizing, and on other topics. He received a Ph.D. from Virginia Tech, and earned both a master's degree in Applied Ethics and a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Oregon State University.

Scott Steehler serves as a Residential Learning Coordinator in Housing and Residence Life. He is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the residence hall located on the upper floors of the Graduate Life Center. Scott collaborates regularly with the Graduate School's Student Services staff focusing on the graduate student experience as well as the supervision of the Graduate Fellows. He serves as a Student Conduct hearing officer, advises the GLC Hall Council, and leads various initiatives within Housing and Residence Life. In addition to the Graduate Life Center, Scott is also responsible for the supervision of two additional residence halls, Vawter and Barringer. Outside of work, Scott spends as much time as possible with his two-year old Corgi and family who live nearby in the Roanoke Valley.

Lauren Surface is the Graduate Student Services Manager in the Graduate School, where she has planned a variety of social and professional development events for graduate students over the past 12 years. She co-supervises the GLC Fellows, working in collaboration with Housing and Residence Life to support graduate students who live in the GLC and also providing opportunities for all graduate students to connect with each other. As a native of the New River Valley, Lauren enjoys meeting students and helping them feel at home in the community. She received her bachelor's degree in Communications with a tv/radio emphasis from Milligan College and her master's degree in business from Radford University. She enjoys spending time with her husband and two sons, playing softball, and running.

Anthony Szczurek is a Ph.D. candidate in the ASPECT program. He received his master's in international affairs from the New School. His research focuses on India's temporal framing of its climate change politics. He served as a graduate assistant in the student services office of the Graduate School in the 2017-18 academic year, developing and organizing a professional development workshop series and social events for students and is a member of the organizing team for this conference.

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Student Presenters

Joanie Banks-Hunt is a 3rd year Ph.D. student in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis on education psychology. She has also earned two master of science degrees from Stanford University in electrical engineering and engineering management. Prior to enrolling at Virginia Tech in August 2015, she was a high school teacher of mathematics and engineering, and Sophomore Dean at Menlo School in Atherton, California. Her accomplishments include: pioneering curriculum and fund-raising for three flagship programs: Applied Science and Engineering, M-BEST (a STEM program for girls in grades 6-12), and Diversity (Engineering) Design Day. Today, she is a Graduate Honor System panelist and mentors young girls of color in California, Detroit, South Carolina, and Botswana, Africa, in her areas of passion—engineering, mathematics, and design thinking. She is a GA in the Center of Teaching and Excellence (formerly CIDER).

Anne Hilborn got her Ph.D. in wildlife conservation at Virginia Tech in 2017 and worked on the hunting behavior of cheetahs in East Africa. During her doctoral studies, she got involved with science communication on Twitter and was involved in starting and/or promoting hashtags such as #fieldworkfail, #bestspots, #bestcarcass, and #cuteoff that helped bring attention to the glories of biodiversity and highlight the lighter side of being a scientist and doing science. She has taught workshops on using social media for science communication at the Center for Communicating Science at Virginia Tech, and is starting a postdoc at UC Riverside in the fall, where she will be creating online ecology classes.

Jordan Laney is a doctoral candidate in the ASPECT program and Presidential Pathways Teaching Fellow at Virginia Tech. She is a member of the Edward A Bouchet Society, member of the Appalachian Studies Association Steering Committee (2017-2021), a Berea College Appalachian Sound Archives Fellow (2016), co-chair of Young Appalachian Leaders and Learners (Y'ALL), a Founding Fellow of the GrATE and co-editor emeritus of SPECTRA. Her work interrogates the culture of politics using feminist methodologies and theories of space and place. As a first-generation college student, Laney values the classroom as a transformative space. In addition to teaching, researching, and listening to music, Jordan enjoys yoga and is working towards her instructor certification.

Darren Maczka is a Ph.D. candidate in engineering education at Virginia Tech with a certificate in women and gender studies and an M.Eng. in electrical engineering, also from Virginia Tech. His current research focus is on barriers to inclusion in computer science that contribute to the lack of representation in the discipline. Darren has been recognized as a Fellow of the Virginia Tech Graduate Academy for Teaching Excellence and plays an active role in developing and facilitating events and workshops to support graduate teaching. Darren believes that engineering instruction must fully embrace aspects of race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and other markers that have historically separated who engineering is for and who can become an engineer. He strives to develop strategies and materials to help engineering instructors and students value the complex interactions between politics, society, and engineering design.

Rebekah Martin is a fifth-year PhD student in civil and environmental engineering. Her research examines the intersection of chemistry and microbiology in the drinking water within buildings. She was a member of the Flint Water Study team at Virginia Tech. After a Legionnaires disease outbreak in Flint MI that was caused by one of the pathogens she had been studying, her work shifted to more closely examine the interplay between corrosion by-products and Legionella persistence. Rebekah has also been involved in the Graduate Student Assembly, a panelist and then investigator in the Graduate Honor System, the Graduate Academy of Teaching Excellence, Preparing the Future Professoriate, and the Global Perspectives Program.

Leigh McKagen is a Ph.D. candidate in the Alliance for Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Thought (ASPECT) at Virginia Tech. Leigh's research blends imperial history with cultural studies, postcolonial, and ecofeminist theory to critically examine American science fiction television. She teaches courses in world history and empire for the History Department. Beyond academia, Leigh and her husband have an almost four-year-old daughter who is very enthusiastic that "Mommy is getting a Ph.D.," even if she is not quite sure what that entails beyond large stacks of books and an office on campus.

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Karen Raymond is a fourth-year doctoral candidate in the counselor education and supervision program. She is a licensed professional counselor in the state of North Carolina and a National Certified Counselor with over ten years of professional experience. Karen is currently the president of the Roanoke Chapter of the Virginia Counseling Association. When not working on her research, providing service to the profession, or teaching, Karen enjoys spending time with her husband, Christian, and their beloved pets. Her hobbies include creative arts, cooking, and reading.

Siddhartha Roy is an Environmental Engineer and Postdoctoral Research Scientist at Virginia Tech who works at the nexus of water quality, public health and environmental justice. He and his team's work uncovering the Flint, Michigan Water Crisis have been discussed in *The New York Times*, *BBC World Service*, *ABC News*, *Mother Jones*, *Science News*, the PBS NOVA documentary "Poisoned Water" and elsewhere. His writings have appeared in magazines and his TED talk, "Science in service to the public good," has been viewed over a million times worldwide. Sid received a Ph.D. in civil and environmental engineering from Virginia Tech where he studied corrosion failures in drinking water infrastructure, served as the student leader for the Flint Water Study research team, and was the Virginia Tech 2017 Graduate Student of the Year.

Faith Skiles is an active mom and grandma as well as a third year Ph.D. student in ASPECT (the Alliance for Social, Political, Ethical and Cultural Thought). She received an M.A. in history from Virginia Tech and a B.A. in history from Mary Baldwin College. Her research interests include: cross-cultural studies, gender studies, feminist theories of space/place, Korean and East Asian history, and American religious history.

Martina V. Svyantek is a doctoral candidate in a self-designed and highly-individualized interdisciplinary program exploring disability identity situated within higher education. Her research focuses on disability-related institutional policies and campus activism, including observations on the accessibility of digital and physical spaces created by campuses. She earned her bachelor of science in civil engineering in 2011 from Auburn University, complemented by her master's degree from Virginia Tech in May 2018. Martina curates an ePortfolio detailing her varied experiences at martinasvyantek.com, tweets into the internet void from @svyantek, and generally keeps to herself in large crowds. Martina aspires to continue working with the discipline-agnostic view of learning, research, and impactful service that has developed during graduate school, weaving together connections and resources to strengthen community around disability identities within higher education.

Jennifer Turner is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology with a concentration in Women's and Gender Studies. Her research interests are the intersection of race, gender and work; family; social reproduction; and political economy. Her dissertation focuses on the ways in which low-income Black single mothers interpret the intersection of race, work, and motherhood/mothering. During her time at Virginia Tech, Jennifer has been involved with the Graduate School in numerous ways. In addition to serving as a delegate for the Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) for two years, Jennifer is also an associate in the Graduate Academy for Teaching Excellence (GrATE) and a member of the Virginia Tech chapter of the Edward A. Bouchet Graduate Honor Society.

