

# KERIN A. HILKER-BALKISSOON

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Pronouns: She/Ela/Ella

[LinkedIn Profile](#)

## SUMMARY

**Inclusive excellence champion with 20+ years of experience engaging PK-12, community college, university, non-profit, global, and workforce partners in systemic change efforts to enhance college access, success and career attainment. Seeking to leverage extensive leadership in design and delivery of innovative curricular and programmatic solutions grounded in Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, integrating high impact educational practices to enhance career readiness; identity-affirming and asset-based relationship design; appreciative, developmental, holistic advising.**

## EDUCATION

**AMERICAN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**, Indianapolis, IN

**Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership: STEM Education**, *Expected May 2026*

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**, Fairfax, VA

**Executive Certificate, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer**

**GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**, Washington, DC

**Clinical Counseling Licensure Post-Master's Core**

**THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY**, Baltimore, MD

**Master of Science in Counseling**

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS**, Amherst, MA

**Bachelor of Science in Psychology**

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**, Fairfax, VA

**Director of Educational and Career Pathways, 2018 – Present**

Lead the strategy, development and execution of the following for Mason's College of Science:

- Create and lead innovative K-20 STEM access, enrollment, and student success initiatives with emphasis on equity, inclusion, and post-baccalaureate career attainment.
- Develop and maintain strategic partnerships with K-12, community colleges, and non-profit and educational organizations to support STEM access and inclusive excellence.
- Design and lead [Mason Science Programs for Transfer Equity and Success](#).
- Represent College of Science across multiple university-wide efforts to engage and support underserved and minoritized populations, including First Generation Task Force (2020-23 tri-chair), Student-Parent Working Group (2022 co-chair), NASPA First Scholars and FamilyU university leadership teams, Undocumented Student Working Group, and Transfer Advisory Council.
- Lead Mason Science transfer pathways efforts, to include NOVA/Mason ADVANCE and Transfer VA statewide curricular cross-institutional articulation efforts.
- Oversee international enrollment pathways efforts, to include study abroad, College of Science-Mason International Collaborative, and international development partnerships.
- Design and implement college access, outreach, and career pathways events, webinars, and summer experiences for underserved and minoritized K-12, community college, non-profit, and international student populations.
- Coordinate first-year and upper-level College of Science residential learning communities and embedded student affinity groups: Pre-Health Scholars, Sustainable Futures, and Rural and Diverse STEM Scholars.
- Develop and manage strategic partnerships programs and grant proposals, including budgets, project plans.
- Serve as PI/co-PI on multiple grant and foundation initiatives, including engagement of community-based and community college stakeholders as grant partners.

**NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE (NOVA), Annandale, VA**

**Executive Director of College and Career Pathways/Assistant Professor, 2013 – 2018**

- Expansion of prior role, leading College Pathway Initiatives unit of five award-winning regional/state initiatives supporting equity in college readiness, access, success, and completion for underserved populations: Pathway to the Baccalaureate, Pathway Connection, UndocuAlly/Dream.US, Elevating Parents in College (EPIC), Adult Career Pathways, and VCCS Great Expectations (NOVA branch).
- Developed and maintained strategic and collective impact partnerships across over 100 PK-16, non-profit, university, community, and workforce partners.
- Senior administrator of stand-alone student services unit of 60+ employees - faculty, counselors, academic advisors, recruitment and outreach specialists, and support staff, serving 10,000 students per year across six campuses and over 60 off-campus sites.
- Managed Pathway K-12 dual enrollment and co-enrollment with non-profit partners.
- Designed innovative “cradle to career” student success framework incorporating developmental and appreciative advising, early-alerts, mentoring, and intrusive supports.
- Developed and managed program and grant budgets, and monitored compliance with SACS, FERPA, Clery, Title IX, and other fiscal and administrative policy.
- Developed and implemented MOUs, grant proposals and reports, and monitored use and compliance of grant, institutional, and scholarship funding from external organizations
- Leveraged over \$2 million in external grants and special project funding.
- Programs received multiple awards and national recognition including the [Excelencia in Education Foundation](#), [Institute for Higher Education Policy](#), and the [Aspen Institute](#).

**Director, Pathway to the Baccalaureate Program/Instructor, 2005 - 2018**

- Co-developed and implemented operational model, pilot, and regional expansion of award-winning transfer initiative targeting underserved and minoritized students.
- Led the design of Pathway’s innovative collective impact service model that grew to 55 comprehensive and alternative K-12 sites, NOVA, and George Mason University.
- Facilitated MOUs and Executive Steering Committee sessions with regional K-12 superintendents, school board members, and executive leadership from NOVA and George Mason University.
- Expanded program from four to ten partners, and 300 to 8000+ students in seven years.
- Program showcased as national model by multiple organizations including [New America Foundation](#), [Washington Post](#), [The Advisory Board Community College Leadership Forum](#), [Opportunity Nation](#), and [White House Forum on Community Colleges](#).
- Provided extensive technical assistance to 20+ institutions across the US replicating Pathway model, including award-winning ACES program in Montgomery County, MD.

**Disability Services & International Student Counselor/Instructor, 2001 – 2005**

- Provided academic, career, and personal counseling to general community college student population and taught multiple sections of SDV 100: College Success Skills.
- Managed and served caseloads of disability services-affiliated and F, G, J visa students.
- Chaired Disability Services Working Group, standardizing required documentation policy, accommodations determination, and accommodation language to increase equity.
- Developed and facilitated new student orientations and programming.

**THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, Washington, DC**

**Undergraduate Academic Advisor, Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, 1999 – 2001**

- Provided academic advising, degree audits, and career support to CCAS undergraduates.
- Managed CCAS Summer Orientation Advising for first-time matriculating freshmen.
- Developed and facilitated Faculty Advisor Trainings and led Peer Mentoring Initiative.
- Coordinated CCAS Service-Learning and Internship for Credit Program.
- Led Freshman Advising Workshop curriculum redesign.

## AFFILIATIONS & COMMITTEES

- Board Member: Virginia Latino Higher Education Network; Board Member: Friends in Need Virginia; Transfer VA: Equity & Inclusion Team; Aspen Institute ASCEND Network: Higher Education Task Force.
- Member of NISTS-National Association for the Study of Transfer Students, NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) and NACADA Social Justice Advising Community, DO-IT National Community of Practice (Students with Disabilities).
- Member/Faculty Advisor for Volunteers Around the World – Medical Chapter.
- Mason Committees: Transfer Advisory Council (TRAC); Recruitment Advisory Council; Mason/FamilyU Leadership Team; Student-Parent Task Force (co-chair); University First Generation Student Success Working Group (tri-chair); Undocumented Student Working Group; OSCAR Ambassador & URSP Program Review Working Group; College of Science (COS) Inclusive Excellence Undergraduate Subcommittee (chair); COS Emergency Funds Committee; Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence (ARIE) - College and Community Engagement Committee and K-12 and Community College Engagement Working Group (2020-21 co-chair).
- Prior Relevant Affiliations/Committees: Northern VA Community College (NVCC) ADVANCE Admissions and Recruitment Task Force, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Deans of Students Working Group; Achieving the Dream WSSN College Steering Committee, Ad Hoc Student Mental Health Advisory Committee (chair), Credit for Prior Learning Committee, NVCC/Jobs for the Future STEM Career Pathways Task Force. Regional/National Committees: Virginia Community College System College Readiness Task Force, SCHEV/Project HOPE, National College Access Network: Rapid Response Team, Raise DC: Community Partnership for Post-Secondary Attainment Task Force, Northern Virginia Financial Empowerment Center Task Force (United Way).

## TRAININGS AND CERTIFICATIONS

- The Employer’s Guide to Sustainability: LinkedIn Learning (2022)
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace Certificate: USF Muma (2021)
- Clifton Strengths Campus Champion Certification: Gallup, Inc. (2020)
- Unconscious Bias: LinkedIn Learning (2020)
- Online/Hybrid Course Design: Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning (2020)
- Course ReDesign Academy: Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning (2019)
- Title IX Investigator Training: Northern Virginia Community College (2018)
- Exploring Race Workshop Series: Northern Virginia Community College (2015)
- Principles of Project Management: Northern Virginia Community College (2014)

## COURSE INSTRUCTION

### George Mason University

- College of Science 100, Introduction to Science as a Profession (Designer)
- College of Science 300, Professional Preparation for STEM Disciplines (Co-Designer)
- University Studies 302, College of Science Transfer Transition

### Northern Virginia Community College

- Student Development (SDV) 100, College Success Skills
- Student Development (SDV) 107, Career Education
- Student Development (SDV) 299, Supervised Study (Experiential Learning)

**SELECTED  
GRANT AWARDS**

**George Mason University**

- **National Science Foundation Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program**  
RARE in STEM co-Principal Investigator: 2021-2025
- **National Science Foundation S-STEM**  
Rural and Diverse Student Scholars Program: co-Principal Investigator 2019-2022
- **International Development Institute**  
Global STEM Scholars Program: Principal Investigator: 2018-2024

**Northern Virginia Community College**

- **Jack Kent Cooke Foundation College Access & Excellence Program**  
Pathway to the Baccalaureate Program: Principal Investigator: 2008-2018
- **Washington Area Women's Foundation Stepping Stones Initiative**  
Elevating Parents in College Program: Principal Investigator: 2015-2018
- **Fairfax County Community Services Block Grant**  
Adult Career Pathways Program: Principal Investigator: 2012-2017
- **US Department of Labor TAACCCT**  
Credentials to Careers Program: Senior Personnel 2012-2016

**SELECTED  
PRESENTATIONS**

- Leveraging the First Year Learning Community to Enhance STEM-Sector Career Readiness and Student Success: 2023 International Conference on Best Innovative Teaching Strategies
- Transfer Career Capital: The Secret Sauce to Equitable Career Outcomes for Students Who Transfer: 2023 NISTS National Conference
- Courageous Conversations: Exploring the Impact of Our Intersecting Identities (Plenary Panel): NISTS 2023 National Conference
- Supporting Well-Being Among Homeless and Housing-Insecure College Students: 2021 & 2022 State Higher Education Council of Virginia (SCHEV) Project HOPE Symposium
- Serving the Whole Student: Basic Needs and Intrusive Supports, Harnessing Social Capital and Family Engagement to Enhance Student Success, 2022 VALHEN Encuentro
- Engaging STEM Transfer Students in Undergraduate Research: 2021 NISTS National Conference; 2021 University Life Symposium; 2020 Innovations in Teaching & Learning
- Integrating Career, Global and Experiential Learning: A STEAM Case Study: 2020 Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference
- Elevating Parents in College: 2020 University Life Symposium, 2019 NACADA Drive-In; 2018 League for Innovation in the Community College Innovations Conference; 2018 Community College Futures Assembly (Finalist Program)
- Supporting Rural and Diverse STEM Scholars: NSF/AAAS S-STEM Symposia
- Global STEM Scholars: 2019 NAFSA International Conference
- Leveraging Social Capital to Enhance Post-Secondary Success: 2019 Moving the Needle Conference, 2015 NASPA Student Success Conferences
- A Pathway to the Baccalaureate: 2008 National School Boards Association Conference, 2018 Community College Futures Assembly, NACADA 2010 National Conference
- From Guided Pathways to Regional Talent Ecosystem - Keynote Panelist with Davis Jenkins (CCRC, Columbia University): 2017 American Association of Community Colleges Pathways Institute; 2017 Moving the Needle Conference
- Strategic Partnership Development and Planning (2016): Aspen Institute ASCEND Network Post-Secondary Symposium
- What Works in Latino Higher Education Panel (2016): Accelerating Latino Student Success Institute, Excelencia in Education Foundation
- Pathway to the Baccalaureate. Transition Matters: Community College to Bachelor's Degree (2007). Testimony to the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance  
Testimony available from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED502595.pdf>

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS & COLLABORATIONS

- Hilker-Balkissoon, K., Nagalia, R., and Seshaiyer, P. (2023, February 9-11). Leveraging the First Year Learning Community to Enhance STEM-Sector Career Readiness and Student Success [Paper presentation]. ICON-BITS 2023, Pilani, India. <https://discovery.bits-pilani.ac.in/iconbits2023/index.html>
- Hilker-Balkissoon, K. and Seshaiyer, P. (in press) "Career pathways by design: An innovative framework to enhance professional preparation for STEM Transfer Students" *Ensuring Success for Transfer Students: The Importance of Career and Professional Development*.
- Hilker-Balkissoon, K. and Seshaiyer, P. (2021) George Mason University - The Scientific Community of Transfer Researchers: Holistic Career Readiness for STEM Undergraduate Students Who Transfer. In Fountain, C. and Portillo, I. (Ed.). (2021). *Career advising as a tool for student success and educational equity*. (pp. 15-22). University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition.
- Coles A, Keane L. Affording to Finish: Strategies to Improve Students' Financial Health and College Completion. Boston, MA: uAspire; 2017 May. 37 pages. Available from: [https://www.uaspire.org/BlankSite/media/uaspire/affording\\_to\\_finish\\_2017.pdf](https://www.uaspire.org/BlankSite/media/uaspire/affording_to_finish_2017.pdf) (Quoted Collaborator)
- Whitmire R., Esch C. Pathway to the Baccalaureate: How One Community College is Helping Underprepared Students Succeed. Washington, DC: New America Foundation; 2010 April. 17 pages. Available from: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED544671> (Quoted Collaborator)

## AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Dean's Award in Diversity and Inclusion, George Mason University College of Science
- Transfer Champion-Catalyst Award, National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students
- Associate Level ;Example of Excelencia!, Excelencia in Education Foundation
- Bellwether Award Finalist: Community College Futures Assembly (2016 & 2018)
- "You Rock" Best Student Advocate Award: NOVA Pathway Student Advisory Council
- Outstanding Service to the College Award: Northern Virginia Community College
- Virginia Excellence in Education Award, Virginia Tech School of Education

## PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- Languages: Portuguese (fluent) and Spanish (intermediate conversational).
- Subject-matter expert in supporting underserved student populations – national recognition for efforts supporting transfer, Latinx, and student-parent populations.
- Fluency with data-driven decision-making, lifecycle intervention and initiative design supporting underserved and minoritized student populations.
- Extensive experience developing and administering professional development programming to faculty/staff and external stakeholders.
- Experience with guiding large, diverse teams through reorganization and culture change
- Effectively leverage team empathy and tenacity to identify, elevate and dismantle barriers to student access, equity, and inclusion.
- Strong project management and evaluation background.
- Cross-cultural communication, presentation, facilitation, and rapport-building skills.
- Exceptional global and intercultural fluency.

## CLIFTON STRENGTHS

[Strategic](#), [Input](#), [Ideation](#), [Adaptability](#), [Connectedness](#)