

KERIN A. HILKER-BALKISSOON

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Strategic higher education administrator with extensive experience leading student access, success, career, and engagement initiatives. Demonstrated expertise in academic affairs, student affairs, community engagement, strategic initiatives, and the development of inclusive, high-impact programs. Proven ability to build institutional and community partnerships, design and scale innovative initiatives, and align student-centered practice with broader organizational priorities. A collaborative and mission-driven leader known for advancing cross-functional efforts that strengthen belonging, persistence, and opportunity.

EDUCATION

The American College of Education, Indianapolis, IN	2023-Present
Doctoral Candidate - Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership	Expected 2027
Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) in Leadership	2023-2025
George Mason University, Fairfax, VA	2021-2022
C-Suite Executive Certificate, Costello College of Business	
George Washington University, Washington, DC	2000-2001
Counseling Licensure Core, School of Education and Human Development	
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD	1997-1999
Master of Science in Counseling, School of Education	
University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA	1991-1995
Bachelor of Science in Psychology, College of Natural Sciences	

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

Director of STEM Access, Outreach, and Career Pathways, 2025-Present

Director of Educational and Career Pathways, 2018-2025

Lead the development and implementation of college access, student success, and career readiness initiatives for the College of Science, with a focus on broadening participation, facilitating academic transitions, and preparing undergraduates for meaningful career pathways.

- Develop and sustain strategic partnerships with K-12 schools, community colleges, and non-profit organizations to expand college access, student success, and career attainment, including design and direction of the [VALHEN STEM Academy](#).
- Direct college-wide initiatives for students who transfer, supporting seamless academic transitions through articulation agreements and institutional partnerships, developing and launching the [College of Science Initiatives for Transfer Success](#), NOVA/Mason ADVANCE and Transfer VA statewide curricular cross-institutional articulation efforts.
- Design and lead first-year and upper-level residential learning communities, first year experience program, and student affinity groups to enhance student belonging and success.
- Oversee international enrollment pathways, including study abroad programs, global academic collaborations, and partnerships that enhance student educational exchange.
- Design and implement events, webinars, and high-impact experiences.
- Serve as PI/co-PI on multiple federal grants and foundation initiatives, including engagement of community-based and community college stakeholders as grant partners.
- Supervise staff and student employees, manage budgets and reporting requirements, and support continuous improvement through mixed-methods assessment.
- Leverage United Nations SDGs and Grand Challenges frameworks in instruction and initiatives.

Northern Virginia Community College, Annandale, VA

Director of College and Career Pathways/Assistant Professor, 2013-2018

- Expansion of prior role, leading College Pathway Initiatives unit of six award-winning initiatives supporting equity in college readiness, access, success, and completion for underserved populations.
- 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, appreciative, and holistic advising, early alert, multi-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 policies.
- 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 executives from 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 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, and J visa students.
- Chaired Disability Services Working Group, standardizing required documentation policy, accommodations determination, and accommodation language across six campuses.

AFFILIATIONS & COMMITTEES

- **Non-Profit Board Member:** Virginia Latino Higher Education Network: Friends in Need VA
- **Member:** Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD); National Association for the Study of Transfer Students (NISTS), National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), National STEM Community of Practice for Students with Disabilities, Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), SCHEV Project HOPE, Transfer Nation.
- **Faculty Advisor:** SACNAS - George Mason University Chapter; RISE Scholars.

- **Mason Committees:** Undergraduate Learning Supports Task Force, SCHEV Pell Self Study Task Force, Transfer Advisory Council; Recruitment Advisory Council; Student-Parent Task Force; University First Generation Student Success Task Force (tri-chair); Undocumented Student Task Force; Office of Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research (OSCAR) Ambassador; Programs and Events for Children Committee; Veterans Operations Committee.
- **Prior Relevant Affiliations/Committees:**
George Mason University: University Inclusive Excellence Task Force: College and Community Engagement Committee/K-12 and Community College Engagement Working Group (2020-21 co-chair). Mason/FamilyU Leadership Team (2020-2024)
Northern VA Community College: NOVA/Mason ADVANCE Admissions and Recruitment Task Force, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Deans of Students Working Group; Achieving the Dream Working Student Success Network 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, National College Access Network: Rapid Response Team, Raise DC Community Partnership for Post-Secondary Attainment Task Force, Northern VA Financial Empowerment Center Task Force (United Way).

CREDENTIALS & CERTIFICATIONS

- Certified Career Coach - MBTI Master Practitioner Certification: OKA Associates
- Clifton Strengths Campus Champion Certification: Gallup, Inc.
- Online/Hybrid Course Design: GMU Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning
- Course Redesign Academy: GMU Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning
- Title IX Investigator Training: Northern Virginia Community College
- Principles of Project Management: Northern Virginia Community College
- Building Strong and Ready Families (PREP) Program Facilitator: Granato Group
- Virginia Board of Counseling: QMHP and School Counselor license-eligible

COURSE DESIGN & INSTRUCTION

George Mason University (2018-Present)

- College of Science 100, Introduction to Science as a Profession (Course Designer)
- College of Science 120, Introduction to Research
- College of Science 300, Professional Preparation for STEM Disciplines (Course Designer)
- College of Science 302, College of Science Transfer Transition (Course Designer)
- College of Science 401, Discipline-Based Research in STEM (Course Designer)

Northern Virginia Community College (2001-2018)

- 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 INCLUDES DDLP**
UL-ASSIST/RISE Scholars: co-Principal Investigator, 2023-2026
- **National Science Foundation Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program**
RARE in STEM: co-Principal Investigator: 2021-Present

- **National Science Foundation S-STEM**
Rural and Diverse Scholars Program: co-Principal Investigator 2019-2023
- **International Development Institute**
Global STEM Scholars Program: Principal Investigator: 2018-Present

Northern Virginia Community College

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

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

- **Bridging College and Career for Underserved Students:** 2025 VALHEN Encuentro
- **Realizing the Vision: Lessons Learned from Both Sides of the Transfer Pathway:** Keynote Address, 2025 Student Affairs Symposium, Northern Virginia Community College
- **A Case for Life Design: STEM Career Pathways:** 2024 National Conference on Students in Transition
- **Conexiones: Elevating the Latine Voice on Campus,** 2024 VALHEN Encuentro, 2024 University Life Symposium
- **Leveraging the First Year Learning Community to Enhance STEM-Sector Career Readiness and Student Success:** 2023 ICON-BITS Innovative Teaching Strategies
- **Transfer Career Capital: The Secret Sauce to Equitable Career Outcomes for Students Who Transfer:** 2023 NISTS National Conference, 2023 Ohio State Transfer Council, 2023 NACADA National Conference
- **Courageous Conversations: Exploring the Impact of Our Intersecting Identities** (Plenary Session): NISTS 2023 National Conference
- **Supporting Well-Being Among Homeless and Housing-Insecure College Students:** 2022 SCHEV Project HOPE Symposium
- **Harnessing Family Engagement to Enhance Student Success,** 2022 VALHEN Encuentro
- **Engaging STEM Transfer Students in Undergraduate Research:** 2021 NISTS National Conference; 2020 Innovations in Teaching & Learning Conference
- **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
- **Supporting Rural and Diverse STEM Scholars:** NSF/AAAS S-STEM Symposia (Poster Presentation)
- **Leveraging Social Capital to Enhance Post-Secondary Success:** 2019 Moving the Needle Conference, 2015 NASPA Student Success Conferences
- **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
- **A Pathway to the Baccalaureate:** 2016 Community College Futures Assembly, NACADA 2010 National Conference; 2008 National School Boards Association Conference

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Hilker-Balkissoon, K., Nagalia, R., & Seshaiyer, P. (2024). Leveraging the first-year learning community to enhance STEM-sector career readiness and student success. In *Perspective and strategies on new age education and creative learning: Proceedings of 2nd International Conference on Best Innovative Teaching Strategies*, BITS Pilani. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3701-7_27
- Hilker-Balkissoon, K. & Seshaiyer, P. (2024). Career pathways by design: An innovative framework to enhance professional preparation for STEM transfer students. In Maietta, H. & Gardner, P. (Eds.) (2024). *Ensuring success for transfer students: The importance of career and professional development* (pp. 89-106). National Resource Center on the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.
- 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. (Eds.). (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.
- Hilker-Balkissoon, K. (2008) Pathway to the Baccalaureate. In *Transition matters: Community college to bachelor's degree* (2007). Testimony to the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED502595.pdf>

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- 2024 Patriot Pathbreaker Award, Outstanding Achievement, George Mason University
- 2020 Dean's Award: Diversity and Inclusion, George Mason University
- 2020 Transfer Champion-Catalyst, National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students
- 2016 Associate Level |Example of Excelencia!, Excelencia in Education Foundation
- 2016 & 2018 Bellwether Award Finalist: Community College Futures Assembly
- 2013 Best Student Advocate Award: Northern Virginia Community College
- 2010 Outstanding Service to the College Award: Northern Virginia Community College
- 2008 Virginia Excellence in Education Award, Virginia Tech School of Education

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Languages:** Fluent in Portuguese; intermediate conversational proficiency in Spanish.
- **Student Success Expertise:** Nationally recognized subject-matter expert in advancing outcomes for underserved student populations, including first-generation, Latine, transfer, international, and student-parent communities.
- **Innovative Program Design:** Skilled in designing and implementing data-informed initiatives that support the student lifecycle.
- **Professional Learning and Capacity Building:** Extensive experience developing and leading professional development for faculty, staff, and external partners.
- **Transformational Leadership:** Proven track record of leading large, cross-functional teams through organizational restructuring, strategic planning, and culture change.
- **Integrated Pedagogy and Student Affairs Practice:** Adept at aligning curricular and co-curricular strategies to identify and address barriers to student access, belonging, and success.
- **Operational Management:** Strong expertise in project coordination, grant writing and administration, and fiscal oversight in higher education settings.
- **Cross-Cultural Communication:** Experienced facilitator and presenter with strengths in building rapport across diverse audiences and fostering inclusive dialogue.
- **Assessment and Evaluation:** Background in developing and applying mixed-methods and qualitative evaluation models for continuous improvement and accountability.
- **Gallup CliftonStrengths:** [Strategic](#), [Input](#), [Ideation](#), [Adaptability](#), [Connectedness](#)