

Speaker: Dr. Justin Jernigan

Title: Guiding Students through Meta-Majors to Reduce Choice Paralysis

Audience: Faculty/Advisor

Topic: Advising Strategies for Supporting Meta-Major Selection

Project track: Curricular Engagement

Objectives:

- Equip faculty/advisors with strategies for helping undecided students select meta-majors based on interests and aptitudes.
- Practice using structured conversation frameworks to guide students in making proactive academic choices.
- Develop resources for consistent messaging on meta-majors to reduce choice paralysis and support persistence.

Session Description

Students entering higher education institutions in most cases need some level of support to identify an appropriate degree program that aligns with their goals and interests and that will prepare them for a rewarding career. In many cases, students may be presented with an extensive menu of degree program options without the needed support, such that they begin to feel overwhelmed with the requirement to select a major. Some may choose a field of study based on the advice or expectations of family or peers, but for the majority of new first-year students who lack experience with higher education systems and terminology, many of whom also lack a support structure that could provide helpful guidance at home, the result may unfortunately be a sense of “choice paralysis.” For these students, it is often a challenge to make any choice at all, leading them to enter their educational journey “undeclared.”

Because students without declared majors are more likely to take courses that will not count toward degree completion, many institutions have developed "meta-majors" or academic focus areas for first-year students that guide students to take courses that will count toward a broad range of majors within a related set of degree programs. In this workshop, we will consider together how proactive advising and the use of key strategies and tools can help faculty and advisors to guide students in selecting a meta-major that best fits their preparation, interests, and goals.

Speaker Bio

Dr. Justin Jernigan has served as Interim Associate Provost for Academic Programs at Georgia Gwinnett College since August 2024. Prior to his current role, he served as Dean of Student Success at GGC for four years and Dean of Transitional Studies for four years prior to that. He holds a M.A. in Linguistics from the University of Florida and earned his Ph.D. in Multilingual-Multicultural Education (Applied Linguistics) from Florida State University in 2007. In addition to his administrative work, service and research, Jernigan is an Associate Professor of Linguistics and teaches primarily English composition at GGC, where he has been since July 2007.

Materials and/or Links:

https://www.laregents.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Guiding-Students-through-Meta-Majors-Handout_Jernigan_TD.docx