



Wisconsin College Personnel Association

Navigating the Digital Shift: Balancing Innovation with Intention

Thursday, October 22- Friday, October 23

Thursday, October 22nd

8:45-9:00 AM

Log-On & Welcome

Presented by the WCPA Board

Join the morning zoom for welcome information, tips to make the most of your virtual conference experience, and prepare for a full-day of discussions and development!

9:00-10:00 AM

Keynote: The Restorative Digital Life: Shifting from Technostress to Resilience

Presented by Nina Hersher, Co-Founder of the Digital Wellness Institute

The future of work won't be defined by artificial intelligence alone. It will be shaped by how humans learn to adapt, collaborate, and flourish alongside it. As artificial intelligence rapidly reshapes how we work, learn, communicate, and navigate daily life, colleges, universities, and the professionals who support them face a new challenge: not simply learning how to use AI, but learning how to thrive alongside it.

In this engaging and research-based keynote, Digital Wellbeing Expert Nina Hersher, MSW, will share how to build Digital Resilience in an era of constant technological change. Drawing on the latest research in neuroscience, psychology, wellbeing, and the validated Digital Flourishing® Model, participants will explore why humans naturally fear change and emerging technologies, how to move through that uncertainty with confidence, and how to embrace AI in ways that support innovation, mental health, productivity, physical wellbeing, meaningful human connection, and student success.

Participants will examine how AI is reshaping attention, learning, memory, decision making, creativity, and critical thinking while gaining practical strategies for using these tools intentionally rather than reactively. The session also explores the hidden costs of digital overload, why constant connectivity rarely provides true restoration, how to make thoughtful and ethical decisions about when AI should and should not be used, and why preserving authentic human presence remains essential for teaching, leadership, collaboration, and student support. Participants will also discover how cultivating "online oxygen" practices can replenish energy, strengthen focus, and support sustainable performance.

Optimistic, practical, and deeply human, this keynote provides a roadmap for navigating an era of constant connectivity while strengthening the skills needed to thrive in higher education, leadership, and life.

10:00-11:00 AM

Session 1A: Digital Fireside Chat w/ Nina Hersher

Presented by the Nina Hersher, Founder of the Digital Resilience Lab and Co-Founder of the Digital Wellness Institute

Continue the conversation with Nina Hersher!

Session 1B: Discerning Your Own Leadership Development Plan

Presented by Benjamin P. Correia-Harker, Marquette University

When thinking about leadership development, we often look to established programs or initiatives to tell us what competencies we need to be effective leaders. Yet we should be empowered to take our process into our own hands. Join us as we explore Boyatzis's self-directed learning model to determine your own leadership development path and create your own personalized plan.

11:00-11:15 AM

Conference Break

Physical Wellbeing

- Take a 10 minute walk
- Go to the restroom
- Do a quick 5-minute stretch

Social Wellbeing

- Chat with a co-worker about the conference
- Challenge another co-worker to share their upcoming weekend plans

Occupational Wellbeing

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- Take a quick look at next week's calendar and block time for wellness

11:15-12:15 PM

Session 2A: Swatting On Campus

Presented by Deb Newman & Laurie Svatek, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

On February 1 of this year, our University Police received a swatting call for a room in one of our residence halls. In this program, we will share the details of the incident, staffing and police response, debriefing and training subsequent to the event, and additional response development created as a result of this experience.

Session 2B: Intentional Community Building in Online Forms

Presented by Tori Svoboda, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

Have you ever sat through a webinar or online training and thought, "Ugh - not this again!"? In a time when professional development funds are more limited, many turn to online learning for their growth. WCPA has been a great leader in this regard, keeping costs low and offering a variety of ways to engage online. But haven't we all been in an online training where we entirely checked out?

We sought to intentionally build community online in the UW's Student Affairs Leadership Academy (SALA), now in its fourth year. SALA was born out of the Senior

Student Affairs Officers of the Universities of Wisconsin wanting to invest in their employees and build a pipeline of folks seeking leadership roles within the UWs. We hoped a year-long fellowship program might increase employee satisfaction/retention and connect folks across institutions and functional areas.

Each cohort of fellows has taught us something new about the multiple ways in which professionals enjoy (or not) extended online professional development. In this session, we share some of our lessons learned – both the highlights and the missteps. A panel of past participants will share what worked (or not) from their perspectives, and facilitators will share changes made over time to respond to that feedback.

12:15-1:00 PM

Lunch + WCPA Interest

Join the morning zoom for welcome information, tips to make the most of your virtual conference experience, and prepare for a full-day of discussions and development!

1:00-2:00 PM

Session 3A: Believed, Affirmed, & Seen: A Holistic Coaching Model for Supporting First Generation, Low-Income Students

Presented by Amanda Markwardt, Marquette University

Today, student success requires us to be “all hands on deck”. It’s everyone’s job. This is especially true for institutions seeking to remedy equity gaps affecting first-generation, low-income students who navigate complex institutional systems while managing cultural, financial, academic, and personal barriers.

This presentation introduces the Urban Scholars Program Success Coaching Model at Marquette University, a holistic approach to supporting students from enrollment through graduation. The model, grounded in Marquette’s Jesuit values, centers students’ well-being, goals, and development while ensuring students always have a trusted advocate and guide throughout their college journey. Success coaching functions as a complementary layer to academic advising by addressing the whole student through personalized support, accountability, skill development, career readiness, leadership growth, and strategic campus connection.

Participants will explore how this coaching model supports students experiencing imposter syndrome, culture shock, transition challenges, academic barriers, and the

hidden curriculum of higher education. The presentation highlights the practical structure of coaching touch points across academic years, methods of proactive outreach, and wraparound support through collaborative partnerships across campus departments.

Session 3B: Find Your Footing with AI: A Practical Guide for Student Affairs Professionals with Lots of Questions

Presented by Eric Jessup-Anger, UW-Milwaukee

Most student affairs professionals don't come to AI through a strategic decision to embrace new technology. They come through a colleague who showed them something useful, a moment of necessity, or a workshop that finally made it feel approachable. And most arrive with the same questions: Is it okay to use this for my work? Am I doing it right? Am I behind?

This session starts there — with the questions practitioners are actually carrying — and spends fifty minutes answering them honestly.

Drawing on three-plus years of applied AI use in student affairs and higher education contexts, this session offers a practical, student-affairs-specific framework for when AI genuinely helps, when it requires care, and when it doesn't belong. Participants will learn four things AI does well in daily professional practice, how to navigate student data and FERPA considerations, where to draw clear lines around grading and student-facing work, and a single accountability principle worth applying to every AI interaction.

The session is designed for entry and mid-level professionals who may have used AI for basic tasks but are uncertain how to use it more intentionally — or who have held back because they weren't sure it was appropriate. No prior AI expertise is required. The goal is not to convert skeptics or inspire enthusiasts. It is to give thoughtful practitioners a clear enough framework that the uncertainty is replaced by judgment.

2:00-2:10 PM

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2:10-3:10 PM

Session 4A: Flip the Script: Leveraging Technology in Prevention Education to Empower Active Bystanders

Presented by Alex Nelson, University of Wisconsin-Madison

What if bystander intervention education felt less like compliance and more like a real-life decision-making challenge? UW-Madison Violence Prevention staff will share their experience flipping the script on traditional prevention education by integrating personality-based bystander roles and an immersive virtual choose-your-own-adventure practice scenario activity. Attendees will demo the activity and leave with practical strategies for creating engaging, data-informed prevention curricula that empower students to intervene with confidence.

Session 4B: Building the Next Generation

Presented by Jacqueline Bonneville, University of Wisconsin-Stout Polytechnic

Robin Jens, M.S. Ed., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Tonya Schmidt, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Quincy Chapman, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

This session is designed for students who may be interested in learning more about the world of Student Affairs and also for professionals to consider what is and is no longer happening on their campus to educate students regarding this career option. This presentation will be a quick share out of what is happening at UW-Stout Polytechnic, UW-Whitewater, UW-Milwaukee and UW-Eau Claire and where we go from here. We will also be showcasing the NASPA toolkit as a resource.

3:10-4:00 PM

Kumospace Network Social

Connect with colleagues on Kumospace, a virtual networking and office platform, learn about new positions, initiatives across campus, and your colleagues from other schools!

Friday, October 23rd

8:45-9:00 AM

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Endnote: Growing Up Amid AI: Developmental Considerations for Working with Students Today

Presented by Gabriel Velez, Associate Professor-Marquette University

In 2026, it is clear that AI has permeated young people's lives in many diverse ways. Many are using these technologies in their education, even as some of those same students and their peers feel uncertainty and even anger about the impacts on their lives and futures. Supporting students through these challenging times can be difficult. In this session, Dr. Gabriel Velez, a developmental psychologist whose work spans K-12 and higher education, discusses lessons from empirical research and our broader understanding of the dynamics of adolescence and emerging adulthood to help support work with students on college campuses.

10:00-11:00 AM

Session 5A: Building Belonging: Lessons from Research Development

Presented by Gabriel Velez, Marquette University

Whether a student feels a sense of belonging on a college campus is deeply related to their well-being, success, and thriving. It, therefore, has implications for key questions facing higher education and college personnel, from student success to mental health. The challenges to building belonging are substantial and often engage with common experiences across different colleges and individuals, as well as individual intricacies and dynamics.

In this session, Dr. Gabriel Velez shares insights from his own work and other recent research in this area in an interactive workshop. His research has focused on underrepresented and minoritized students, but also engaged with questions specific to STEM, mental health, and the transition to college. Participants will share their experiences and challenges in building belonging on their campuses, learn current best practices and insights, and then work in small groups to develop action steps they can implement in their settings. College personnel will have the opportunity to learn from others and from the research literature, as well as think through potential ways to navigate the complexities of their specific work.

Session 5B: CybOrganization: Cultivating Intentional Institutions

Presented by Paul Belanger, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

The standard approach to technological adoption asks what technology enables and what it makes more efficient. But technology doesn't merely change what we do or how we do it; it tunes our values, expectations, and imagined possibilities alike. With AI increasingly mediating cognitive work, often through informal and invisible practices, these interactions can impact the role of expertise, the formation of professional identity, the expression of institutional values, and even the kinds of thinking our workplaces encourage in unintended ways. Intentional institutions, however, strive to make these transformations visible enough for members to participate in shaping, questioning, and revising them. This session provides a framework for our conscious participation in this recursive cyborganization, allowing us to better cultivate the conditions for open experimentation, align incentives with institutional values, share emerging practices, and treat technological adoption not simply as the pursuit of efficiency, but as a process that helps determine what our institutions and the people within them become.

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Session 6A: Technology Trusted, Tested, & Thought Provoking: Human-Centered Innovation in Student Affairs

Presented by Adam Ludwig, University of Wisconsin-Stout Polytechnic

Higher education professionals are increasingly asked to adopt new technologies while remaining grounded in the human-centered values and practices that define student affairs. How can we embrace innovation with intention?

This session explores three emerging initiatives from University Housing at UW-Stout Polytechnic: using student spending data to support financial wellness interventions, deploying a Copilot-powered "Housing Buddy" to expand access to housing knowledge and resources, and partnering with an Extended Reality (XR) Lab to explore immersive applications for staff training, residence hall tours, and student wellbeing. Rather than just focusing on the technology itself, we will also consider a central question: What human outcome are we trying to improve?

Through practical examples, lessons learned, and opportunities for discussion, participants will explore how data, AI, and XR can be leveraged to enhance the student experience. Attendees will leave with a simple framework for evaluating emerging technologies through a student affairs lens and ideas they can adapt, challenge, and build upon within their own institutional contexts.

Session 6B: Resilience Within: Turning Adversity into Strength

Presented by Hannah Mauch, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

We hear the word resilience a lot, but what does it *really* mean to be resilient? How can we cultivate resilience in our everyday lives one step at a time? In this session we will explore the difference between simply surviving life's challenges, and using adversity as an opportunity for growth, and turning that growth into strength. Attendees will leave with a renewed perspective on resilience and actionable tools to help them navigate life's storms, bounce back from setbacks, and discover the strength to keep moving forward.

12:15-1:00 PM

WCPA Business Meeting (Members Welcome!)

Moderated by the WCPA Board

The Wisconsin College Personnel Association will conduct their annual business meeting. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend.

1:00-2:00 PM

Session 7A: Stories of Success: Career Paths in Student Affairs

Presented by Benjamin P. Correia-Harker, Zack Kohlwey, & Kiera Brimmer, Marquette University

Engaging in student affairs can be an enriching part of a student's campus experience. Thus, working in the student affairs field can be a rewarding experience. Yet, discerning paths into, the timing of when to pursue graduate degrees, and considerations for navigating paths in the field can be challenging. Join us as we discuss varying pathways to and through careers in student affairs.

Session 7B: Lets Log-In & Lock-In! Authentic Student Connections through Online Orientation Engagement

Presented by Maddie Wiles-Wagner, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

As colleges and universities continue to expand digital engagement opportunities, creating meaningful connections in online orientation environments has become more important than ever. In this interactive session, the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

will share innovative strategies used during GB Orientation (GBO) to transform virtual engagement from passive participation into authentic student connection. Participants will explore how intentional online programming, digital community-building techniques, peer-led interactions, and strategic communication can foster belonging before students ever step foot on campus. Attendees will leave with practical ideas, adaptable tools, and creative approaches for increasing engagement, strengthening student confidence, and helping new students feel connected, supported, and ready to thrive from their very first login.

2:00-3:00 PM

Closing Discussion + Next Steps

Presented by WCPA Board

Join the morning zoom for welcome information, tips to make the most of your virtual conference experience, and prepare for a full-day of discussions and development!