



Trailblazing Frontiers Symposium

May 18-20, 2026

*The **Trailblazing Frontiers Symposium** brings together student affairs professionals, administrators, and campus partners from across the Texas A&M University System to engage in meaningful dialogue around innovative approaches to student success, leadership development, and campus engagement. Through expert-led sessions, interactive workshops, and collaborative networking opportunities, participants will explore practical, student-centered strategies designed to strengthen institutional effectiveness and enhance the overall student experience. Hosted by **Texas A&M University-Kingsville**, the symposium serves as a systemwide convening space for leaders in student services and administration who are committed to advancing cross-institutional collaboration, sharing evidence-informed practices, and building sustainable partnerships that support student achievement.*

SYMPOSIUM LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the symposium, participants will be able to:

Professional Development:

- **Identify emerging and effective practices** in student affairs that support student engagement, persistence, wellbeing, and success.
- **Apply leadership and change-oriented strategies** to strengthen programs, teams, and services on their campuses.
- **Strengthen interpersonal and cross-functional collaboration skills** to improve cohesive delivery of services.
- **Deepen understanding of ethical standards and professional competencies** in student affairs to grow professionally.
- **Engage in reflective practice and lifelong learning** to sustain professional growth.

Student Engagement and Success:

- **Enhance the ability to design effective programs** to foster student engagement and persistence.
- **Learn how to use evidence-based practices** to inform continuous improvement and resource allocation.

Networking:

- **Expand professional networks and practical takeaways** that can be implemented within their current roles.
- **Use collaboration and cross-functional partnerships** to address complex student needs.

Motivation:

- **Reignite the passion for leading our profession** through advancing our collective commitment to the service of students.

MONDAY

Pre-Conference Workshop #1:

8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Steven H. Tallant Music Building 171

Decision Maker Training for Student Affairs Professionals

Presented by Marcy Tucker and Philip McLemore

The System Ethics & Compliance Office and the Office of General Counsel are pleased to offer a comprehensive, four-hour Decision-Maker Training for Student Affairs professionals who adjudicate sex-based or other civil rights student misconduct cases. This in-person training is a pre-conference session for the 2026 TAMUSA Symposium.

Pre-Conference Workshop #2:

8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Steven H. Tallant Music Building 158

A&M System Joint Student Success

Presented by: Dr. Shonda Gibson

Join colleagues from across the Texas A&M University System for a focused, half-day pre-conference dedicated to advancing student success through collaboration, strategy, and innovation. This interactive workshop will bring together campus leaders and teams to explore practical, system-wide approaches to supporting stopped-out students- those with prior college experience who have not yet completed a degree. Together, we will examine how institutions can more effectively re-engage these students and remove barriers to completion by aligning efforts across strategic course scheduling, course exchange and sharing, and targeted re-enrollment strategies.

Check-in

10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building Lobby

Opening / Welcome

1:00 PM – 1:45 PM

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Performance Hall

A warm orientation with remarks by Dr. Robert Vela, President of Texas A&M University-Kingsville, and entertainment by Grupo Herencia.

Keynote

1:45 PM – 2:45 PM

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Performance Hall

Presented by Tim Harding

Title: Pathways to Student Success Through Competency Development

This presentation examines shifts in higher education and the employment landscape, highlighting the role of strategic, institution-wide competency and skills development in advancing student success. Using the University of Tampa’s Spartan Ready initiative as a case example, it presents a comprehensive framework for integrating competency development and career readiness across curricular and co-curricular experiences through four foundational pillars that support academic achievement, career readiness, life preparedness, and social mobility.

Break/Snack Break

2:45 PM – 3:00 PM

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building Hallway

Affinity Groups – by Functional Area

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Dedicated opportunities for networking, collaboration, and conversation among peers from across the Texas A&M University System.

Assistant/Associate VPs	Tallant Building #158
Counseling	Tallant Building #171
Campus Life/Student Orgs	Tallant Building #173
Housing/Residence Life	Tallant Building #260
Student Rights and Responsibilities	Tallant Building #273
Rec Sports/Intramurals	Tallant Building #151
Career Services/Engagement	Tallant Building #152
Disability Services/Health Services	Tallant Building #156B
Specialized Student Services	Tallant Building #181
VPSA’s	Conference Room

Chancellor’s Student Advisory Council Follow-Up Discussion with Keynote: Tim Harding

3:00 PM – 3:45 PM

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building 200

System Updates: What’s Next: Asking “Why?” in What We Do.

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Performance Hall

Dr. James Hallmark, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, shares perspectives on recent federal, state, and system changes, placing these changes in the context of the continuing evolution of higher education in the United States. So, what’s next? The answers come in asking “why?”

Dinner / Entertainment / Networking Opportunities

5:15 PM – 6:30 PM-

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building Lobby and Room 160

Chancellor's Student Advisory Council Dinner
5:15 PM
El Dorado Restaurant, 704 N. 14th St., Kingsville

TUESDAY

Vice President Panel

9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Performance Hall

Senior Student Affairs Officers from across the A&M System discuss their professional journeys, challenges, and advice.

Breakout Session 1

10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

During breakout session 1, attendees may choose from the following concurrent sessions:

Chancellor's Student Advisory Council: WriteSea

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 200

Advancing Student Achievement: The PV Cares Student Success Model

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 158

Presenter(s): John Gardner, Prairie View A&M University

This presentation provides an in-depth overview of the PV Cares Student Success Model, a comprehensive, student-centered framework designed to enhance academic achievement, retention, and holistic development at Prairie View A&M University. Grounded in a culture of care and proactive engagement, the model integrates coordinated advising, early alert systems, data-informed decision-making, and cross-campus collaboration to ensure every student is supported from matriculation to graduation.

Attendees will explore how PV Cares leverages technology, strategic partnerships, and targeted interventions to identify and address barriers to student success. The session will also highlight key components of the model, including intrusive advising, career-readiness coaching, financial freedom counseling, personalized student outreach, and aligned academic and co-curricular support services.

Through real-world examples and institutional insights, participants will gain a deeper understanding of how PV Cares fosters a connected campus ecosystem that prioritizes belonging, accountability, and continuous improvement—ultimately driving increased student persistence, completion rates, and post-graduate readiness.

Artificial Intelligence, Authentic Empathy: Leveraging Technology to Navigate Tough Conversations

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 171

Presenter(s): Hannah Davis Kettman, Texas A&M University-Central Texas

Student affairs teams are asked to navigate complex situations every day, and it's not often you get the chance to rehearse them ahead of time. While we can't (and shouldn't) automate empathy, we can use technology to create a safe space to practice it. This hands-on workshop invites you to use available AI tools to mirror your department's toughest conversations. We will brainstorm friction points, create easy-to-use practice prompts, and discuss the privacy

guardrails necessary for ethical use. By the end of the session, you'll have the tools and resources you need to show up confidently for the students and teams you lead.

Learning Without Walls: Removing Barriers to Academic Support Services

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 173

Presenter(s): Chad Pettit, Texas A&M University-Central Texas

Students have unprecedented access to academic support services, yet utilization remains inconsistent and often dependent on instructor requirements rather than student initiative. This disconnect suggests a critical issue: access does not guarantee engagement.

This session examines the structural and cultural barriers that prevent students from effectively using academic support services. Drawing on experience from a centralized learning center serving a predominantly online and hybrid population, the presenter will highlight common friction points, including fragmented platforms, unclear service identity, inconsistent messaging, and limited integration within learning management systems.

Participants will explore practical strategies for reducing these barriers through streamlined access, embedded support within courses, and intentional collaboration with faculty and campus partners. This session emphasizes actionable approaches institutions can implement immediately to improve student engagement with existing support services.

Sustaining the Helpers: Leadership Strategies for Burnout Prevention and Consistent Student Care

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 151

Presenter(s): Briana Taylor, M.S., LPC-S, SEP, CIMHP; Courtney Thomas, LMSW, MBA, SEP, Texas A&M University-Texarkana

Counseling center staff operate in high demand, high touch environments that require sustained emotional presence, rapid decision making, and consistent care delivery. As students' needs grow in complexity and volume, many teams are experiencing increased strain, often addressed through individual coping strategies rather than systemic change. This session reframes burnout not as a personal shortcoming, but as a leadership and organizational challenge.

Participants will explore how leaders in student affairs, particularly within counseling services, can design systems that both support staff well-being and ensure consistent, equitable care for students. The session will introduce practical, scalable strategies related to workload management, reflective supervision, team based clinical practices, and shared service frameworks. Through real world examples and guided reflection, attendees will identify opportunities to shift from reactive support models to proactive, sustainable team structures.

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Identify key contributors to burnout in high demand counseling environments and distinguish between individual and systemic factors.
2. Describe leadership practices that support staff in high touch roles, including structural, emotional, and cultural supports.
3. Apply team-based strategies that promote consistency in student care, such as shared frameworks, protocols, and collaborative practices.
4. Evaluate their own team or unit to identify one actionable systems level change that can improve both staff sustainability and student support.

Clothing Confidence: Engaging Students through Campus Collaboration

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 152

Presenter(s): Jo Elda Castillo-Alaniz, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Curious how to get more students interested in your Professional Clothing Closet? Join us to hear how Academic Student Success, Student Health & Wellness, and Student Engagement & Campus Life teamed up to create exciting events and boost student participation. Hear insights from student leaders and our intern, plus key results from our latest survey. Walk away with fresh ideas to energize your own campus services!

Utilizing LLC's (Living Learning Communities) as collaboration tools for Recruitment, Retention, and Student Engagement and Success

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 156B

Presenter(s): WTAMU Campus Community and Engagement, Office of Residential Living, West Texas A&M University

In this session the presenters will explore the development of LLC's within WTAMU's Residential Living community. Beginning as individual "Meta Majors" focusing on individual majors, WT's LLC's are continuing to evolve into communities built around the six individual colleges that make up the university. The presentation will discuss the challenges and opportunities, both internal and external, surrounding LLC's and their impact on students.

Building While Leading: Navigating Early-Career Leadership in Student Affairs

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 181

Presenter(s): Kailee Bennett, East Texas A&M University

Early-career professionals in student affairs are increasingly called to lead programs, manage partnerships, and support students in meaningful ways, often while still developing their own professional identity. This session explores the realities of being a "young builder" in the field: leading without extensive experience, establishing credibility across campus, and navigating complex responsibilities early in one's career.

Grounded in student development theory, including Alexander Astin's theory of involvement, this session reframes early-career leadership as a critical period of growth, innovation, and impact. Participants will explore how emerging professionals can effectively lead from their current roles, build strong relationships across campus, and contribute to student success while continuing to learn and evolve.

Through reflection and practical strategies, this session highlights how institutions can better support early-career professionals and how those professionals can confidently step into leadership as they shape the future of student affairs.

Breakout Session 2

11:00 AM – 11:50 PM

During breakout session 1, attendees may choose from the following concurrent sessions:

Chancellor's Student Advisory Council: WriteSea

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 200

Making CENTS of Student Success: Embedding Financial Literacy Across Student Affairs

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 158

Presenter: David Galvan, Texas A&M University-San Antonio

Financial stress is often a major barrier to student success, impacting retention, academic performance and overall well-being. This session will highlight both the why and the how of embedding financial education into the broader student experience. Participants will explore practical, scalable strategies to integrate financial literacy into key functional areas of Student Affairs such as orientation, FYS, and residence life to name a few. Participants will learn how to incorporate financial education into existing programs, create meaningful cross department collaborations and develop proactive approaches that meet students where they are.

Feedback That Moves Fast: Turning Student Voice into Immediate Impact

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 171

Presenter(s): Michele Skinner, Texas A&M University System, Jai Chitkara, KTech

This session explores how the Texas A&M University System is implementing KTech to collect real-time student feedback on support services such as residential housing and orientation with future projects in advising, veteran affairs, and other areas. Presenters will share strategies for scaling implementation across multiple campuses, overcoming common barriers, and using data to drive continuous improvement. Attendees will gain practical approaches for enhancing student engagement and service quality through timely, actionable feedback.

Stronger Together: Strategies for Building Better Partnerships and Increasing Student Retention *Dr.*

Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 173

Presenter: Dr. Cynthia Alvarado-Stinson, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Increasing retention and engagement has become an area that is continuously changing, is there anything more we can do? As an institution of higher education, we are aware that retention is a shared responsibility across campus. Partnering with the same resources our students seek, increases this momentum.

The following session will highlight how an academic college at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, built a new level of connectivity across campus and increased retention numbers. The presenter will share how with careful and strategic planning, the college was able to identify campus resources and build partnerships with 20 departments plus 4 academic colleges. Student feedback data is also included to highlight the influence of new programs and development of meaningful connections.

During this interactive presentation, participants will engage in discussions on resources and map out functional areas that can develop into partnerships on their own campuses, which include: Student Affairs, Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management. Participants will also develop a better understanding for the use of student evaluations and utilizing this feedback to build those connections with students as well.

By the end of this session, participants will be able to successfully enhance their ability to sharpen their interpersonal skills and increase collaboration opportunities and enhance their abilities to design effective opportunities to foster student engagement and persistence.

Connected Staff, Connected Students.

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 151

Presenters: Cindy Rios, M.S.; Juan Olivo, M.S., East Texas A&M University

This session examines how a strong internal culture among professional staff can transform the student experience. By prioritizing connection, trust, and consistency, the Office of Student Engagement at ETAMU models care, clear communication, and shared responsibility, creating an environment where students feel known, valued, and comfortable seeking help.

This foundation enables a proactive, intrusive advising approach rooted in relationships rather than compliance. Through regular check-ins, coordinated communication, and attention to students' academic, personal, and leadership needs, students experience consistent support across programs and team members. Participants will gain practical strategies to build connected systems that reduce confusion, improve follow-through, and ensure support feels accessible, cohesive, and student-centered.

Architects of Persistence: A Blueprint for Leveraging Data-Informed AI and Human Support Across the Student Journey

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 152

Presenters: Dr. Jason E. Saladiner; Dr. Jeffrey Glick, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Students experience college as one journey, yet institutions often support that journey through disconnected offices, fragmented interventions, and isolated moments of care. This session presents a transferable blueprint for how Student Affairs can architect persistence conditions across the student journey by aligning behavioral data, data-informed AI, and high-touch human support into one connected ecosystem.

Using Texas A&M University-Kingsville's emerging Potential to Professional model as a case study, participants will explore six touch points across the student journey: early career exploration and NACE competency introduction, faculty engagement in first-year and gateway experiences, student health and wellness partnerships, academic success coaching and peer mentoring, scalable outreach systems, and capstone competency articulation, all working together to transform support into momentum.

The core premise is simple: connection becomes activation, activation becomes momentum. Participants will also examine how this work extends beyond entry and persistence into capstone experiences where students articulate competencies, strengths, and professional identity, creating a coherent developmental pathway from first semester exploration to career-ready graduation. By aligning institutional action with how students are wired, campuses can create scalable systems where AI multiplies reach, human relationships build trust, and cross-functional teams across the academic and co-curricular journey guide students from early potential to professional readiness.

Brainstorming for Student Engagement: How to Turn Ideas Into Campus Programs

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 156B

Presenter: Katelyn Garza, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Brainstorming is often viewed as a creative process, but in reality, it is one of the most practical tools Student Affairs professionals can use to solve problems, increase engagement, and create memorable student experiences. Drawing from a background in engineering research and

development, this session explores how brainstorming techniques used in innovation-focused industries can be adapted to higher education.

Participants will learn practical brainstorming methods that can be used individually or with teams to generate event ideas, solve campus challenges, and improve programs. The session will also address the importance of experimentation, why low attendance does not automatically mean failure, and how assessment data can help guide future decisions. Attendees will leave with strategies for finding inspiration from peer institutions, building collaborative networks for idea sharing, and turning creative concepts into action.

Building Ideal Team Players: Strengthening Collaboration and Culture

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 181

Presenter: Katherine Burke; Melanie Nelson, Texas A&M University-Texarkana

This session will explore the three core principles of The Ideal Team Player by Patrick Lencioni, focusing on the three virtues of effective team members: humble, hungry, and smart. Through discussion and practical application, participants will identify and develop those qualities that drive collaboration, accountability, and organizational success into building stronger, more cohesive, and high-performing work environments.

Lunch / Break

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building Lobby and Room 160

Breakout Session 3

1:00 PM – 1:50 PM

Chancellor's Student Advisory Council: Orientation

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 200

Academic Recovery Program -- Collaboration for Students At Risk

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 158

Presenter: Cathe Nutter, Texas A&M University-Texarkana

This session discusses academic recovery programs as collaborations between student affairs, academic affairs, and academic advising. We focus on the student in academic jeopardy and build a program to support their academic success. We discuss the key elements to a solid program (the identification of roadblocks and barriers, how to help a student consider ways to overcome those obstacles, and true academic support based on the student's answers to those questions and others) and how we connect to ensure the student has multiple supports. Academic Recovery may be a class, or it may be an advising intervention, or it may be a series of meetings and conversations, but it is never a single-entity endeavor. It requires collaboration, cross-campus support, and a village approach to supporting students.

The Heart of the Harvest: Cultivating Organizational Cultures of Development in Service-Driven Teams

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 171

Presenter: Myles Lofland, Texas A&M University-San Antonio

This session explores key issues and challenges facing student affairs teams in culture creation and leadership, particularly during times when staff development is difficult to fund and turnover is seemingly constant.

Attendees of this session will learn:

1. Data on Current Pain Points: Participants will examine the critical barriers to team development, such as high turnover rates and the "starvation cycle," where minimal overhead spending on staff development actually decreases organizational effectiveness.
2. The Impact of Manager and Team Engagement: Participants will learn what over half a century's worth of data on leadership and management says about gaining the most from a team.
3. A Leadership Primer: Participants will learn basic principles and characteristics of four prominent and tested leadership styles today, identifying if any resonate with them and how they may look further into them for implementation with their teams.
4. Practical, Low-Cost Development Tools: Participants will learn actionable strategies for cultivating a culture of growth even with limited resources.

Ultimately, this session aims to help leaders reconnect with their purpose and apply change-oriented strategies that sustain effective service delivery and professional growth.

From Events to Impact: Using Data to Design Meaningful Student Engagement

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 173

Presenter: Jessica Gamez, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Student engagement is often evaluated through attendance, but attendance alone does not provide enough insight to guide intentional programming. This session explores how student affairs professionals can use data-informed decision making to better understand student needs, motivations, and behaviors when designing engagement opportunities.

Grounded in established theories of student involvement, integration, and belonging, this presentation connects research to practice by examining how engagement efforts can be intentionally designed to foster connection and meaningful participation. Drawing from real-world programming experiences, participants will explore how data such as attendance trends, student feedback, and engagement drivers can inform more strategic and responsive event planning.

This session will highlight practical approaches to collecting and interpreting engagement data, identifying what resonates with students, and aligning programming efforts with the goal of creating inclusive and engaging campus experiences. Participants will leave with actionable strategies to move beyond assumptions and toward more intentional, data-informed student engagement practices.

Exploring the Career Frontier: An Introduction to WriteSea

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 151

Presenter: Brandon Mitchell, WriteSea

This engaging breakout session offers a high-level introduction to WriteSea, an AI-powered platform designed to support student career readiness.

Participants will explore how WriteSea helps students craft résumés, prepare for interviews, and

navigate career pathways with greater confidence. Through a guided walkthrough and live demonstration, attendees will gain insight into how institutions are integrating innovative, technology-driven tools to better support students from enrollment through job placement.

This session provides a forward-looking perspective on how AI is reshaping career services and student success, offering practical ideas and inspiration for enhancing career readiness initiatives on your campus.

Understanding the Role of OGC - Office of General Counsel

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Recital Hall

Presenter(s): Alexandra Naismith; Jacob Becker; Philip McLemore, Texas A&M University System Office of General Counsel

In this session, attendees will have the opportunity to meet three of the attorneys in the Student Affairs Section of the Office of General Counsel. This informal session will include discussion of the proper role of OGC, including common misconceptions about OGC (Yes, the lawyers are here to help!), as well as an exploration into the day-to-day life of a higher education attorney. The session will also cover the basic legal concepts all student affairs professionals should know on day 1 (or day 1,000) on the job.

What Working in NYC during 9/11 Taught Me About Student Affairs

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 152

Presenter: Rosalinda Garcia, Texas A&M International University

In moments of crisis, student affairs professionals are often called to lead without precedent, guidance, or complete information. As the 25th anniversary of September 11 approaches, this session offers a timely opportunity to reflect on what it means to support students when normal systems break down.

Drawing on her experience overseeing multiple residence halls in New York City during 9/11, along with her current role as a Vice President within the Texas A&M System, the presenter combines storytelling with practical reflection. Participants will hear a firsthand account of navigating that day in real time, alongside an exploration of how student affairs professionals can effectively support students during large-scale, high-impact events. The session highlights lessons learned and offers insights that remain highly relevant for today's campus environments.

From Silos to Systems: Transforming Campus Mental Health Together

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 181

Presenter(s): Michele Skinner, Texas A&M University System

This session highlights how the Texas A&M University System has partnered with the Jed Foundation to implement a comprehensive, systemwide approach to student mental health. Presenters will share the structure of the four-year model, lessons learned from coordinating efforts across multiple campuses, and strategies for engaging stakeholders beyond counseling centers. A counseling director from Texas A&M University-Kingsville will provide a campus perspective on implementation and impact. Attendees will gain practical ideas for scaling and sustaining mental health initiatives across their own institutions.

Beyond the Counseling Center: Designing an Integrated Campus Crisis Response Model

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 156B

Presenter(s): Dr. Diana Ortega, Caris Thetford, Tarleton State University

Over the past several years, many institutions have experienced a significant increase in both the volume and complexity of student crisis situations. Traditional models—which often rely heavily on counseling services to respond to crises and guide institutional response—are frequently insufficient to meet the scale and scope of need.

This session will explore the development of a coordinated, multi-system approach to campus crisis response that integrates counseling services, dean of students operations, CARE (Behavioral Intervention Team) processes, Residence Life, and University Police. Drawing on a multi-year institutional case study, presenters will outline how a previously-fragmented and fragile system was redesigned to improve coordination, clarify roles, and strengthen real-time response to complex student situations.

A central focus of this work has been redefining the role of counseling services within crisis response—shifting away from expectations that counseling functions as a first-response or dispatch system, and toward a model where clinical services operate as one component of a broader, coordinated response structure. This shift, combined with the development of case management capacity and evolution of CARE processes, has allowed for more appropriate role alignment across units. It has also informed the evolution of leadership structures, including the shift of a vacant AVP role to an AVP for Student Wellbeing and elevation of a Chief Mental Health Officer function to provide more coordinated oversight of crisis response, student support systems, and institutional wellbeing strategy.

Other key components include the implementation of shared crisis definitions and response protocols across clinical, residence life, dean of students, and law enforcement partners; departmental and divisional restructuring to better align staffing with demand; intentional coordination between conduct and support functions; and the use of CARE processes to facilitate information sharing and case management. The session will also address common challenges, including staffing constraints, cross-functional communication, and aligning response approaches across units with different roles and responsibilities.

Participants will leave with practical strategies for strengthening coordination across departments, improving crisis response infrastructure, and adapting systems to meet increasing demand. The session will emphasize that effective crisis response extends beyond any single office and requires a coordinated, role-defined approach that supports both student wellbeing and institutional risk management.

Chancellor’s Student Advisory Council: Orientation

2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building 200

Affinity Groups – by Functional Area

2:00 PM – 2:45 PM

Assistant/Associate VPs
Counseling

Tallant Building #158
Tallant Building #171

Campus Life/Student Orgs	Tallant Building #173
Housing/Residence Life	Tallant Building #260
Student Rights and Responsibilities	Tallant Building #273
Rec Sports/Intramurals	Tallant Building #151
Career Services/Engagement	Tallant Building #152
Disability Services/Health Services	Tallant Building #156B
Specialized Student Services	Tallant Building #181
CSAC	Tallant Building #200
VPSA's	Conference Room

Chancellor's Student Advisory Council: Campus Tour

2:00 PM – 2:45 PM

Break/Snack Break

2:00 PM – 2:45 PM

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building Hallway

Affinity Groups – by Functional Area

3:00 PM – 3:50 PM

Assistant/Associate VPs	Tallant Building #158
Counseling	Tallant Building #171
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Specialized Student Services	Tallant Building #181
CSAC	Tallant Building #200
VPSA's	Conference Room

Chancellor's Student Advisory Council: Student Panel

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building 200

Breakout Session 4

4:00 PM – 4:50 PM

From Silos to Synergy: Building a Campus-Wide First-Gen Initiative

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 158

Presenters: Dr. Cynthia Alvarado-Stinson, Alejandra Amaya, Veronica Arellano, Veronica De Leon, Dr. Hector Vasquez, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

As institutions continue to expand support for first-generation college students, many are exploring ways to create more visible and coordinated efforts. At Texas A&M University–Kingsville (TAMUK), a cross-functional team of student affairs and academic partners came together to design and implement the university’s first campus-wide National First-Generation Week, creating a unified initiative grounded in collaboration, visibility, and student belonging.

This session will highlight how a diverse group of campus professionals moved from isolated/siloed efforts to a shared, strategic approach to supporting first-generation students. Presenters will share key strategies for building a cross-campus committee, aligning goals across divisions, and coordinating programming that engaged over 500 participants, including students, faculty, and staff. Evaluation data and participant feedback will be used to demonstrate the impact of this collaborative model on student engagement and sense of belonging.

Designed as an interactive, practice-based session, this session will engage participants in guided small-group discussions and activities to reflect on their own institutional contexts. Attendees will identify opportunities for collaboration across functional areas, map existing support systems, and begin developing actionable ideas to create more connected and coordinated support for students on their campuses.

By the end of the session, participants will leave with practical strategies, a collaborative framework, and initial steps to strengthen cross-campus partnerships that enhance first-generation student success.

Leading at the Frontier: Using AI as a Thought Partner in Student Affairs Work

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 171

Presenter: Trisha Harjono, East Texas A&M University

Artificial intelligence is becoming a regular presence in higher education, but many student affairs professionals are still figuring out how—and whether—it fits into their work. This session explores AI not as a shortcut or replacement for professional judgment, but as a thought partner that can support clearer thinking, better planning, and more intentional leadership.

Grounded in real student affairs contexts such as supervising student leaders, advising organizations, planning programs, and managing competing priorities, this session focuses on how professionals can use AI to think through ideas rather than generate final answers. Participants will explore simple strategies for using AI to brainstorm, organize information, clarify goals, and identify blind spots—while maintaining responsibility, ethics, and care for campus culture.

The session also addresses important boundaries. Participants will discuss where AI is helpful, where it falls short, and why human understanding, relationships, and context still matter deeply in student affairs work. Attention will be given to helping staff model thoughtful AI use for students and guide student leaders toward responsible, reflective decision-making.

Attendees will leave with practical examples, conversation prompts, and reflection techniques they can immediately apply in their own roles. This session invites student affairs professionals

to lead confidently at a new frontier—using innovation to enhance, not replace, the core values of the work.

A Real Canva-sation Starter: Using Canva AI to Move from Info to Outreach

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 173

Presenter: Hannah Davis Ketteman, Texas A&M University-Central Texas

Are you tired of your outreach looking like every other flyer on campus? Move past AI-generated templates to create original Canva content to boost engagement for your events. In this hands-on workshop, you'll take on a student-affairs design challenge, exploring Canva tools like Magic Studio, AI Builder, and built-in accessibility checks to scale your reach while maintaining personal connection. Whether you're a Canva pro or a beginner, you'll leave with practical ideas and the power to turn boring information into meaningful invitation.

Note: The presenter asks that attendees bring their own devices with an active Canva account, as it will be a hands-on workshop.

The Civic Frontier: Strengthening Dialogue and Discourse on Campus

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 151

Presenters: Dr. Shonda Gibson, Texas A&M University System

As campuses navigate increasingly complex social and cultural landscapes, the ability to foster meaningful, respectful dialogue is emerging as a critical frontier in student success and community building. This interactive breakout session seeks to provide an introduction and to gain feedback from student affairs professionals on their level of interest and campus readiness as we consider a systemwide initiative around this topic.

Participants will hear brief highlights of emerging practices and partnerships, including work with the Constructive Dialogue Institute, that are equipping students, faculty, and staff with the skills to engage across differences with curiosity, empathy, and purpose.

Moving beyond presentation, attendees will step into the role of a campus design team. Through guided discussion and collaborative activities, participants will reflect on their own campus context, identify opportunities and challenges, and begin shaping what a meaningful, locally grounded approach to constructive dialogue could look like.

Grounded in the “Trailblazing Frontiers” theme, this session emphasizes exploration, co-creation, and forward-thinking design. Attendees will engage in peer exchange, share insights across institutions, and contribute to a broader vision for how civic discourse can be advanced in ways that are both scalable and adaptable.

Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of how constructive dialogue initiatives can be introduced, adapted, and sustained on their campuses, while also helping shape a potential systemwide approach for the Texas A&M University System.

Built by Students, Backed by Strategy: Inside the Javelina Content Collective

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 152

Presenters: Adriana Garza-Flores; Krystal Emery, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

If your social media content looks polished but isn't connecting, the problem might not be your strategy, it might be your voice. Today's audiences expect content that feels real, immediate,

and student driven. In this session, discover how the Javelina Content Collective empowers students to create authentic content that resonates and cultivates a sense of belonging, while still aligning with institutional goals. You'll learn how to structure a student creator team, maintain quality and brand alignment, and consistently produce content that performs.

Pathway to the Top- How eleven Title Changes Got me to VP

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 181

Presenter: Chris Thomas, West Texas A&M University

I would like to share my insight, advice, and mistakes as a person who has been able to move to successively higher positions at various institutions.

The Funnel Is Not a Department: Rethinking Enrollment Across the Student Lifecycle

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Room 156B

Presenter: Dra. Loida Gonzalez Utley

Enrollment is often viewed as the responsibility of admissions offices, yet student success—and ultimately institutional sustainability—depends on a far broader, more integrated approach. This session challenges traditional silos by reframing enrollment as a shared, campus-wide responsibility that spans the full student lifecycle: from prospect to applicant, enrolled student, graduate, and engaged alum.

Drawing on the outcomes of a strategic partnership with ReUp Education, this presentation highlights how re-engaging stop-out students is not solely an enrollment function, but a coordinated effort deeply rooted in Student Affairs collaboration. Through intentional alignment across advising, student support services, and enrollment management, institutions can create seamless pathways that support persistence, re-entry, and completion.

Participants will explore the concept of the “student funnel” as a continuous, institution-wide ecosystem rather than a linear admissions process. Using real examples and outcomes, this session will demonstrate how cross-functional collaboration drives measurable enrollment growth and student success.

Ultimately, this presentation invites Student Affairs professionals to reflect on their role within the enrollment ecosystem and challenges attendees to consider: How does your work directly impact whether a student enrolls, persists, and graduates?

Break

5:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Saddle up, y'all!

Rodeo Roundup

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

J K Northway Exposition Center and Rodeo Grounds

501 Escondido Rd, Kingsville, TX 78363

We are excited to have you in Kingsville for the A&M Symposium! TAMUK is hosting a demonstration rodeo at our exposition center, featuring the Texas A&M University-Kingsville Rodeo Team and more!

Here's what we have in store:

- A Yellowstone costume contest!
 - Free Food trucks for dinner!
 - Free Rodeo activities (Think mechanical bull, axe throwing, photoboosts, etc.)
 - Vendors for all to visit!
 - Performers, in addition to the rodeo!
-

WEDNESDAY

Office of General Counsel Session: Sign of the Times—Navigating Higher Ed’s Legal Landscape

9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Performance Hall

At the RELLIS campus in Bryan, Texas, attendees of the 2025 symposium answered the hard legal questions with a little help from their friend, the Legal Eagle. In 2026, the Legal Eagle is back, and he’s partnering with a new friend to help save your student affairs team from legal headaches. This session will cover hot topics in higher education law and explore the complexities of working with student organizations in today’s legal environment.

Affinity Group – by Institution

10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

Intentional collaborative conversations to further engage in dialogue about how to take student success, leadership development, and campus engagement activities to your home institution.

Texas A&M University- Texarkana	Tallant Building #158
East Texas A&M University	Tallant Building #171
Texas A&M International University	Tallant Building #173
Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi	Tallant Building #260
Tarleton State University	Tallant Building #273
Texas A&M University (Includes COP, Qatar, Rellis)	Tallant Building #151
West Texas A&M University	Tallant Building #152
Texas A&M University- Central Texas	Tallant Building #156B
Prairie View A&M University	Tallant Building #181
Texas A&M University- San Antonio	Recital Hall
Texas A&M University- Galveston	Conference Room
Texas A&M University- Kingsville	Performance Hall

Passing the Torch

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Performance Hall

Join us for closing thoughts and for the formal “Passing of the Torch” to Texas A&M University- Texarkana, the host institution for the 2027 Texas A&M University System Student Affairs Symposium

Lunch

12:00 PM- *Grab and Go*

Dr. Steven H. Tallant Music Building, Hallway