



2025 NACRAO Annual Conference

Bosselman Conference Center - Grand Island, NE

Island Getaway

Get to Know Your Presenters



Presentation

Relationships Matter - We will delve into the fundamental cause of our existence, relationships. The session will focus on how positive relationships between people (such as families, scholars, leaders, co-workers, providers and community partners) can lead to hope, resilience, and positive outcomes. Through a combination of small and large group activities, we will engage participants in building relationships.

Keynote Speaker Peter Ferguson

With a career spanning 25 years across multiple industries, Peter Ferguson has expertise in adult and youth development, leadership, inclusion, belonging, and engagement, including K-12, post-secondary, for-profit, nonprofit, governmental, supplemental agencies, community, and funders.

His life is not by the why but by the purpose of empowering, educating, and engaging. This purpose focuses on helping individuals and organizations recognize their and others' value through relationships that matter.

A graduate of Hastings College (Hastings, NE), alumni affectionately refer to it as the Harvard of the Midwest. He is the founder and primary belief officer of Peter Ferguson BHS, LLC, founded on the belief that all deserve Relationship A's in their life through action and love. He hosts weekly 93.7 The Ticket "Bigger Than the Score" and is the Coordinator of Culture, Inclusion, and Scholar Development for Lincoln Public Schools and Assistant Supervisor of Recruitment. He continues to honor his late mother, a 40-year educator, as a champion in the fight against Alzheimer's. Additionally, his work is featured in the Heartland Emmy-nominated Lincoln Public Schools Documentary "We Will Not Be Silent." Ferguson is a connoisseur of gas station food and mocha drinks. He and his wife, Stephanie, are proud parents to their daughter Jaden.



Keynote Speaker

Amelia-Marie Altstadt



Amelia-Marie K. Altstadt, M.A. (they/she) is a PhD student in Disability Studies at the University of Illinois Chicago and a Pipeline to An Inclusive Faculty Fellow. Originally from San Diego, California (Kumeyaay land), they research disability arts and culture, children of disabled adults (CODISA), and higher education. Amelia-Marie currently leads access work in several disability arts and culture projects with Bodies of Work and coordinates the Coalition for Autistic and Neurodivergent Students (CANS). Prior to starting their PhD they were living in and loving Nebraska, earning her Master's in Educational Administration from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) while working in the field of student affairs. As the Coordinator for UNL's University Honors Program she focused on equity-based approaches to admissions, recruitment, and yield of high-achieving underserved students, building on experiences working for the Nebraska College Preparatory Academy. In 2024, Amelia-Marie received a Disability Visibility Fellowship for The Unexpected Shape Writing Academy, and in 2022, they received the Disability Leadership Award from the American College Personnel Association's Coalition for Disability. They have two very cuddly cats and enjoy seeing local theatre.

www.ameliamariewoo.com

Presentation

Prospective students and community members are constantly assessing whether your institution of higher education is a place where they can truly thrive. Disabled people and people who share their lives with people with disabilities are also already attending your institutions, figuring out how to survive and thrive. In this keynote, Amelia-Marie shares her journey through higher education as the child of disabled adults and as a disabled person herself, reflecting on both the struggles and the joys. With a background in higher education student affairs and disability studies, she offers more than a personal story— she challenges how we think about disability and mental health, while equipping you with practical, actionable guidance to better support those with disability cultural experiences.



AACRAO Representative Dr. Connie Shipman Newsome



Dr. Connie enjoys the study of leadership and the privilege to impact others through encouragement and exhortation to be the best version of one's authentic self. During her career, with over 20 years in higher education administration and preceding years in non-profit management, her main focus has been on process improvement, managing teams, and creating professional development opportunities that lead to proper team and organizational fit. Her recent professional passions include the study of behavioral and communication drivers, leading to a certification in the John Maxwell D.I.S.C. Method of Behavioral Analysis.

In her current position of Director of Registrar Services, she worked diligently to transition the department to a paperless division, created a pathway for electronic transcripts, presented an environment aesthetically pleasing as a "safe space" for students hailing from various areas of diversity, and has continually focused on process improvements throughout her career, to the benefit of the respective department, team processes, and organization as a whole.

Finally, having always lived a busy life between work, personal, and school commitments, Dr. Newsome became intentional about self-care during her doctoral journey. However, it was just in 2023 that she coined the phrase "beneficial selfishness," which she lovingly defines as the concept of taking ownership of one's own well-being, to the benefit of self and with the goal of positive engagement with one's inner and outer circles. Beneficial selfishness is important because it impacts how we show up each day and moments within each day. Engaging the concept does not have to be long nor deep, it only needs to be impactful, leaving you feeling restored, a better version of yourself, every time.

Dr. Newsome holds a B.S. and an MPA, both from East Carolina University; she also holds an Ed. D. in Educational Leadership, with a focus in Higher Education Administration, from Argosy University. She appreciates time to periodically blog and write articles, write poetry, watch action movies with her husband and Schnoodle, and fellowship around good food with beloved family and friends.

AACRAO Role: Vice President at Large - Board of Directors & President Elect