

# CORNERSTONE CONVERSATIONS

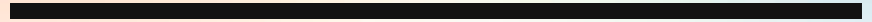
SAN FRANCISCO, CA | OCTOBER 24-27



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ASSOCIATION FOR  
Orientation • Transition • Retention  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION



# SPEAKERS' WORKSHOP

THURSDAY, APRIL 24TH



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# TODAY'S AGENDA

- Cornerstone Conversations
- Exploring Cornerstones
- Application/Speaker Timeline
- Speaker Prompts & Reflections
- Questions & Answers



# S&SI CO-CHAIRS



**BRAM STONE**  
*Syracuse University*



**GAIL DESHIELDS**  
*Towson University*



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# CORNERSTONE CONVERSATIONS

Cornerstone Conversations is a short-form speaker series capturing the inextricable connection between the personal and professional aspects of our work within orientation, transition, and retention within the context of higher education. Four individuals will have the opportunity to share a relevant experience connecting to one of our conference cornerstones and identify a meaningful takeaway (or thesis) on how their personal and professional work embodies one of the endless possibilities of these tenets of our work. Similar to past NODA Talk experiences, speakers will have 7-9 minutes to share their story, knowledge, and perspectives as they pertain to their specific cornerstone, representing their own experience as one voice within the NODA community.



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# OUR FOUR CORNERSTONES

**Community:** Strengthen the sense of community among orientation, transition, and retention professionals and campus stakeholders, emphasizing collaboration and shared values.

**Innovation:** Foster a culture of creativity and forward-thinking approaches in orientation, transition, and retention practices.

**Progression:** Promote continuous improvement and development in orientation, transition, and retention practices.

**Representation:** Ensure that orientation, transition, and retention programs are accessible and engage all campus and community stakeholders.



# APPLICATION & SPEAKER TIMELINE

## Speaker Application Timeline

Monday, July 7th - Application Closes

Monday, August 8th - Application Updates

## Speaker Preparation Timeline

Late August 2025 - 2:1 Check-In w. Co-Chairs

Mid-September 2025 - Collective Cornerstone Conversation Speakers Meeting

Early October 2025 - Cornerstone Conversation Speakers Practice Run

October 2025 - Present your Cornerstone Conversation at NODAC 2025!



# SPEAKER PROMPTS

*How do intersecting identities among professionals and students enrich our sense of community within orientation, transition, and retention work?*

- Reflect on experiences where collaboration across differences led to new forms of connection, belonging, or mutual learning.

*How have you challenged normative “the way we’ve always done it” attitudes to experiment with creative approaches?*

- Reflect on strategies or mindsets that enabled innovation and a culture of risk-taking in your work.

*Looking back at your own leadership journey, what key experiences or environments contributed most to your professional growth—and how might these inform the development of others?*

- What has helped you or your department move from static “one-size-fits-all” programming to more responsive, evolving approaches?

*What barriers to access or belonging do minoritized students and professionals face in your environment, and how are you working to dismantle them?*

- How do your current orientation and retention practices engage and reflect the full diversity of your campus and community stakeholders?







# Q&A TIME

Thank You!

Questions? Email Gail via email at  
[gdeshields@towson.edu](mailto:gdeshields@towson.edu)



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