

written...

NOT FINISHED.

HONORING OUR STORIES WHILE
SHAPING WHAT COMES NEXT

Southeastern Collegiate Recovery Communities Summit

May 22-24, 2026 | Athens, Georgia

Hosted by:



Collegiate Recovery
Community
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Conference Attendees,

Welcome to the 2026 Collegiate Recovery Summit. We are honored to welcome students in recovery, recovery support professionals, and those in various roles within student affairs who support recovering students.

Your diverse makeup marks an important milestone for this summit. For the first time, we have expanded beyond the collegiate recovery profession to intentionally bring together voices from the broader higher education well-being and recovery communities. Central to my own work in collegiate recovery is the belief that pursuing higher education and pursuing recovery are both transformative processes. No individual should ever have to choose one or the other. Each represents an ongoing journey of growth, discovery, and possibility. It is my hope that collegiate recovery will continue to grow in its impact.

Our desire for this weekend is twofold. First, we aim to inspire those of you in recovery to see higher education as an accessible and meaningful part of your continued journey. Whatever lived experience may have been part of your story prior to recovery does not exclude higher education as part of your next chapter. Second, we seek to highlight the critical role we all play in shaping campus environments which are supportive to recovery. By building and expanding recovery resources, our institutions open doors for students who may otherwise feel unseen. We may also prevent students from feeling that a window of opportunity has been slammed shut when all they require is a different way to approach taking care of themselves.

Throughout the summit our sessions will explore the power of personal narratives, deepen understanding of recovery processes, and examine the vital role of trauma-informed care in supporting students in various forms of recovery. We will offer guidance in advocacy for programming, and you will gain tools to begin or strengthen recovery efforts within your institutions and communities.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the presenters, community partners, and to the Fontaine family whose dedication has made this gathering possible. Commitment to this work continues to create pathways for connection and healing which makes recovery possible without sacrificing opportunities provided in pursuing higher education.

I encourage you to engage fully in this summit. Our theme is "Written, but not finished." Share your stories with each other, create connections, and get inspired. Recovery and education both require collaboration. There is so much possibility in the lives of each of our attendees in recovery. Like our individual stories, the future of collegiate recovery is still unfolding. I look forward to us all participating in its continuation.



Ayesha Al-Akhdar, MA, CPS-AD
Assistant Director Collegiate Recovery, Prevention, and Research

	TRACK/LOCATION	SPEAKER/PRESENTATION
6:00PM	Registration & Welcome Dinner <i>Dogwood Hall</i>	

	TRACK/LOCATION	SPEAKER/PRESENTATION
8:00AM	Registration & Breakfast Begins Opening Remarks <i>Dogwood Hall</i>	
9:00AM	TRACK A <i>Meeting Room F/G</i>	Merrill Norton, Pharm.D., D.Ph., CMAC, CCS <i>Tobacco & Vaping in Youth: Brain and Health Impacts</i>
	TRACK B <i>Mahler Hall</i>	Sydney Benator, RD, MSW <i>Eating Disorders and Internal Family Systems: A Path Toward Healing</i>
10:30AM	Coffee & Snacks <i>Hill Atrium</i>	
11:00AM	TRACK A <i>Meeting Room F/G</i>	Robert Ross, LCSW <i>What Grows in the Days Between: From Borrowed Voices to Your Own</i>
	TRACK B <i>Mahler Hall</i>	Kristina Canfield, Executive Director ARHE <i>Believing in Possibility: A Recovery Journey Through College, Community, and Change</i>
12:30PM	Lunch <i>Dogwood Hall</i>	
1:30PM	JOINT SESSION <i>Mahler Hall</i>	Dax Ovid, PhD <i>Neuroscience and Why Our Brains Do That: Replacing One Compulsive Behavior With Another</i>
2:30PM	Coffee & Snacks <i>Hill Atrium</i>	
3:00PM	TRACK A <i>Meeting Room F/G</i>	Bethany Hight, MPH, CHES <i>Cinema Signals: The Breakfast Club</i>
	TRACK B <i>Mahler Hall</i>	Stina Jacobs, PhD, LCSW <i>Trauma and Recovery "The Horse is Barking"</i>
5:30PM	Therapeutic Drum Circle <i>Tate Student Center #139</i>	Brandon Dooley <i>*15 Spots Available</i>

Saturday, May 23

	TRACK/LOCATION	SPEAKER/PRESENTATION
8:00AM	Breakfast Begins <i>Dogwood Hall</i>	
9:00AM	TRACK A <i>Meeting Room F/G</i> TRACK B <i>Mahler Hall</i>	Barbara Powers, MFA <i>Movement and Creativity as Lifelines: Simple Embodied Practices for Regulation and Recovery</i> Merrill Norton, Pharm.D., D.Ph., CMAC, CCS <i>The Fire Storm of Drug Use Trends: A Dilemma for the American Public</i>
10:30AM	Coffee & Snacks <i>Hill Atrium</i>	
11:00AM	JOINT SESSION <i>Mahler Hall</i>	Rachelle Ellis, MA, ATR, CHWC <i>Restorative Justice in Recovery Communities and Recovery Pathways</i>
12:30PM	Lunch <i>Dogwood Hall</i>	
1:30PM	JOINT SESSION <i>Mahler Hall</i>	Stina Jacobs, PhD, LCSW <i>Recovery Pathways: Missed Opportunities for Trauma-Informed Care</i>
3:00PM	Coffee & Snacks <i>Hill Atrium</i>	
3:30PM	TRACK A <i>Meeting Room F/G</i> TRACK B <i>Mahler Hall</i>	Kat Bien, LMSW, CPSS <i>Becoming Someone You've Never Seen Before</i> Kristina Canfield, M.Ed. <i>Supporting Emerging Adults: Strategies for Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery</i>
5:30PM	Therapeutic Drum Circle <i>Tate Student Center #139</i>	Brandon Dooley <i>*15 Spots Available</i>

Sunday, May 24

	TRACK/LOCATION	PARKING INFORMATION
10:00AM	Closing Brunch with Regional Awards Closing Remarks <i>Georgia Museum of Art</i> <i>Atrium: 90 Carlton Street, Athens, GA 30602</i>	The Performing Arts Center (PAC) parking deck and the surface lot adjacent to the Performing Arts Center / Hugh Hodgson School of Music offer ample parking within a short walk of the Georgia Museum of Art. Accessible parking is available in the small deck attached to the museum.



Sydney Benator, LCSW

Sydney (they/them) is a therapist at Getting Real Counseling Center, as well as a registered dietitian and social worker, specializing in the intersections of eating disorders, neurodiversity, queer and LGBTQ+ populations, and complex PTSD. Their work is rooted in creating therapeutic spaces where all parts of a person feel welcome, heard, and understood. Sydney takes a holistic, trauma-informed approach to care, integrating Internal Family Systems (Level 1 certified), EMDR (basic trained), somatic, and attachment-based therapies. They are particularly passionate about helping clients examine and deconstruct internalized beliefs, supporting the development of more authentic and compassionate relationships with food, body, and self. Drawing from both clinical expertise and a deeply human perspective, Sydney incorporates nervous system education, creativity, and experiential practices—including humor, art, movement, and writing—to support embodied healing. Their work emphasizes that while the process of reconnection can be challenging, it can also be flexible, collaborative, and even joyful.



Kat Bien, LMSW, CPSS

Kat is the Collegiate Recovery Program Coordinator at Greenville Technical College, a social worker, and a professional in recovery. Drawing on her lived experience as a first-generation college graduate and her clinical background as an addiction counselor, Kat is deeply committed to advancing recovery-informed, equitable access to higher education. She is passionate about the role of education in strengthening recovery, expanding opportunity, and fostering long-term student success. When not working, Kat enjoys spending time with her wonderful husband and dogs, exploring nature, and engaging in a million different hobbies.



Kristina Canfield, M.Ed.

Kristina Canfield is the Executive Director for the Association of Recovery in Higher Education (ARHE). Kristina attended Ohio University in Athens, Ohio where she earned both her bachelor's degree in History and a master's degree in College Student Personnel. During her time at Ohio University, Kristina helped to establish the Collegiate Recovery Community in order to assist students in or seeking recovery from substance use disorders on that campus. After graduation, she worked in an inpatient treatment facility where she continued to gain valuable experience in the continuum of care for substance use disorders. Previously, she was employed as the program coordinator for the Collegiate Recovery Program (CRP) at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and as the Substance Abuse Prevention & Recovery Coordinator for The University of Alabama at Birmingham. Kristina is very passionate about the field of collegiate recovery and prior to her current role, she worked closely with ARHE as Conference Manager for the ARHE/ARS/AAPG National Conference, Secretary of the Advisory Council, and Project Lead for two grant projects focused on advancing the field of collegiate recovery. Her vision is that one day, every institution of higher education offers support for students in or seeking recovery so that they feel supported no matter their chosen path of recovery.



Brandon Dooley, CPS-AD, TDI

Dooley has been in recovery from drugs and alcohol since December 1st, 2020. Music has always been central to his life and a source of strength. No matter what was going on or where he was, Dooley always had a group of folks he played music with. In November 2024, he discovered the djembe and saw it as a tool for musicians and non-musicians to connect equally. In January of 2025, Dooley trained in Therapeutic Drumming at Youth Villages Inner Harbor Campus in Douglasville, GA, studying West African rhythms and culture, and graduated in December. Since May 2025, Dooley has been facilitating groups and sharing the non-verbal experience of blending music and community. It's not at all about being perfect, it's about being together.



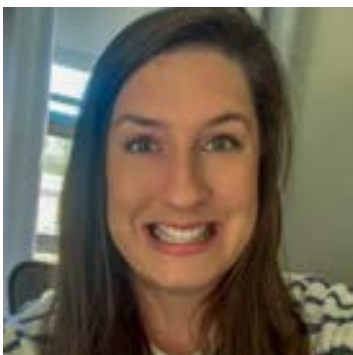
T. Rachelle Ellis, MA, ATR, CHWC

Rachelle Ellis is a passionate advocate and human services professional who greatly values the role they play in helping students build the necessary skills to successfully navigate life challenges and build resilience. Rachelle's guiding belief as a case manager and advocate is that all people have a right to information, autonomy, and support, so that they can be empowered to make informed decisions. Before joining the Health Promotion team, Rachelle worked as a Behavioral Health Counselor in the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. When not at work, Rachelle values time with family and friends, vegetable and herb gardening, hiking, watercolor painting, drawing, creating collages, and taking trips to the mountains.



Bethany Hight, MPH, CHES

Bethany Hight has worked for The Fontaine Center for three years as the Interpersonal Violence Prevention & Well-Being Coordinator. She enjoys engaging with college students to create meaningful conversations and skill-building education. She runs and facilitates the U Matter Upstander Intervention Programming at the University of Georgia which provides students with the skills to safely intervene and create a safer campus. She has a Master's in Public Health and brings a background in developing interactive student-centered programming.



Stina Jacobs, LMSW, CCTS-I

Stina is a graduate of The University of Southern Mississippi and has experience in both research and clinical practice. At this time, Stina is a doctoral candidate in Social Work through Tulane University, New Orleans. With over thirty conference presentations and reoccurring guest lecturer invitations, Stina aims to stay informed with the latest literature and evidenced based practices. Stina is a licensed therapist, certified clinical trauma specialist, and the Program Director of the family center with Mississippi Drug and Alcohol Treatment Center. Stina is an authorized EMDR therapist and actively participates in a consultation group. As a clinician and researcher, it is her goal to influence breaking the stigma attached to substance use disorders and mental illness.



Merrill Norton, Pharm. D., D.Ph., CMAC, CCS

*Dr. Merrill Norton is an EMMY winning Clinical Associate Professor Emeritus of the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy with his specialty areas to include psychopharmacology and addiction pharmacy. He was most recently honored by the Georgia Addiction Counselors Association's Board of Directors and Certification Board with being bestowed the first Certified Master Addiction Counselor (CMAC) credential in the state. His recently updated book, *Understanding Substance Use Disorders Pharmacology*, has been used to train thousands of mental health professionals nationally and his latest book, and *The Pharmacist's Guide to Opioid Use Disorders* was released in December 2018. Dr. Norton completed his undergraduate and graduate work at the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy. He accomplished a three-year addiction medicine fellowship under the direction of Douglas Talbott MD at Ridgeview Institute and has state, national, and international credentials in the treatment of mentally ill/addicted/chronic pain individuals. He has also been a faculty member of the Fairleigh-Dickinson University Postdoctoral Training Program in the Masters of Psychopharmacology, Alliant International University of San Francisco College of Psychology, University of Georgia School of Continuing Education, and Berry College in the areas of Psychopharmacology and Addiction Pharmacy. His areas of specialty in addiction pharmacy are the management of chronic pain in the substance use disordered patient and the neuroscience of substance use disorders. Since his recent retirement from UGA, Dr. Norton's primary focus is to provide the latest scientific information to communities, educators, healthcare professionals, prevention specialists, treatment providers, and especially families, on the diseases of substance use disorders.*



Dax Ovid, PhD

Dr. Ovid is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology at the University of Georgia, College of Veterinary Medicine. They study discipline-based education research in biology, focusing on the new undergraduate major in Biomedical Physiology. Their research group focuses on who is represented in our curriculum, what we say that shapes classroom learning environments, and how we can engage science students in cross-cultural humility and advocacy for a more equitable society. Dr. Ovid completed a postdoc with San Francisco State University and has a PhD in Integrative Biology from UC Berkeley. They like to meet new people, practice electric guitar and to be outdoors (when it's not too humid)!



Barbara Powers, MFA

Barbara Powers is a Senior Lecturer of Dance at the University of Georgia, where she directs the University of Georgia Dance Company Concert and teaches ballet, contemporary, jazz, yoga, dance appreciation, and practicing wellness. She holds a B.F.A. from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and an M.F.A. from the University of Washington. Her research explores the intersections of dance, wellness, community, and creativity. She has presented nationally and internationally at the IADMS iConference, Healthy Dancer Canada Conference, Association of Contemplative Mind in Higher Education, National Dance Education Organization, and the Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy. Her scholarship has also been published in Dance Education in Practice. Ms. Powers has performed professionally with Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company, the Radio City Christmas Spectacular as a Rockette, Li-Chiao Ping Dance, the Catey Ott Dance Collective, and Skybetter and Associates. She holds certifications in vinyasa and restorative yoga, Pilates mat, and meditation instruction, and is the co-founder and director of the Art of Wellness Living Learning Community at the University of Georgia.



Robert Ross, LCSW

Robert is a clinical social worker that has been working in the mental health field since 1996. During his thirty years, he has worked direct care, case management, administration, trainer, and as a therapist. Regardless of his position, he has held strong belief in the power of self-determination and supporting people to find their voice on their terms. As a strong advocate for harm reduction approaches, Robert has worked with students from the UGA CRC, both during his time working at UGA and now in his role as a group psychotherapy practice owner.

TRACK A

TRACK B

JOINT SESSION

TOBACCO & VAPING IN YOUTH: BRAIN AND HEALTH IMPACTS

This ninety-minute educational seminar explores the current landscape of tobacco and vaping use among youth. It will unpack the most recent statistics, differentiate between product types, and spotlight how use affects the developing brain and body, with a special focus on maternal consequences

Merrill Norton Pharm.D., D.Ph., CMAC, CCS

EATING DISORDERS AND INTERNAL FAMILY SYSTEMS: A PATH TOWARD HEALING

In this session, participants will learn the basics of identifying and understanding the eating disorder and disordered eating continuum, the Internal Family Systems (IFS) model, and how IFS can be used as a path toward recovery. The session will include active experiential activities to help participants understand their own parts related to food and body image while providing new tools to better support themselves and their clients.

Sydney Benator, RD, MSW

WHAT GROWS IN THE DAYS BETWEEN: FROM BORROWED VOICES TO YOUR OWN

An opportunity to explore what it means to author your story. Finding connections between you and your peers to better understand the strengths you already possess and how to move from the external to the internal. Borrowing from Baxter-Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship and Narrative Therapy techniques, Robert will provide an interactive session that will require engagement, honesty, humility, compassion, and most of all humor on your part to help explore the parts of you that deserve to have its story begun.

Robert Ross, LCSW

BELIEVING IN POSSIBILITY: A RECOVERY JOURNEY THROUGH COLLEGE, COMMUNITY, AND CHANGE

In this dynamic and heartfelt opening keynote, Kristina Canfield shares her personal journey through substance use disorder and recovery as a first-generation college student navigating the powerful, and often misleading, societal narratives about the "college experience." From being a high-achieving student facing early struggles with depression, to entering recovery at 21 without a peer network who truly understood her age and context, Kristina's story highlights both the challenges and the transformative power of community.

With authenticity and humor, she takes audiences through pivotal moments: confronting the impact of media-driven college culture, finding her way in traditional recovery spaces where she didn't quite "fit," overcoming the barriers of the criminal justice system, and refusing to give up on education and herself. Through the support of community members who believed in her and access to critical services like housing, detox, and counseling, Kristina not only sustained her recovery but went on to become a national leader in collegiate recovery.

This keynote sets an energetic and inspiring tone for the summit, reminding professionals why their work matters and how belief, connection, and persistence can change the trajectory of a young person's life.

Kristina Canfield M.Ed.

NEUROSCIENCE AND WHY OUR BRAINS DO THAT: REPLACING ONE COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR WITH ANOTHER

Presentation Abstract Unavailable

Dax Ovid, PhD

TRACK A

TRACK B

JOINT SESSION

CINEMA SIGNALS: THE BREAKFAST CLUB

*Lights, camera, communication! Step into the work of cinema with “Cinema Signals”, an interactive program that explores the world of communication through the magic of movies and TV. During this session, we will focus on clips of an 80s classic *The Breakfast Club*. We will discuss interpersonal dynamics, accountability, healthy support, and managing conflict!*

Bethany Hight, MPH, CHES

TRAUMA AND RECOVERY: “THE HORSE IS BARKING”

This presentation explores the powerful connection between trauma and substance use disorders through a metaphor of “The Horse is Barking”—a signal that something abnormal is happening beneath the surface. Rather than viewing substance use or other self-destructive behaviors as the problem, participants will learn to recognize these behaviors as indicators that something has gone wrong or that deep pain remains unaddressed.

Grounded in trauma-informed principles, this session will examine the neurobiological and psychological links between trauma and addiction, highlighting how survival responses manifest in the lives of individuals. Participants will gain practical tools to identify and respond to trauma-related behaviors with curiosity, compassion, and clinical skill (when necessary). This presentation invites a shift in perspective from “what’s wrong with you?” to “what happened to you?” Participants will also be provided with a list of common resources to increase their understanding of trauma and SUDs. Stina utilizes an experiential approach to facilitate psychoeducation.

Stina Jacobs, PhD, LCSW

MOVEMENT AND CREATIVITY AS LIFELINES: SIMPLE EMBODIED PRACTICES FOR REGULATION AND RECOVERY

This session introduces accessible movement and creative practices that can support emotional regulation, self-awareness, and resilience—both in recovery and in everyday life. Grounded in dance wellness and informed by somatic approaches to stress and trauma, the presentation explores the body as a resource not only for processing experience when words are not enough, but also for shifting emotional states, releasing tension, and supporting the body’s natural regulatory systems. Participants will engage in guided, low-barrier movement and creative exercises designed to support grounding, emotional expression, and reconnection to self. No prior movement experience is required.

Barbara Powers, MFA

THE FIRE STORM OF DRUG USE TRENDS: A DILEMMA FOR THE AMERICAN PUBLIC

This talk is to assist professionals in helping America overcome the firestorm of the top 10 drug trends in the US. Based on a public health model, three types of strategies to prevent drug use can be discerned: primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. Primary prevention programs (anticipation and prevention of the occurrence of drug abuse) have mostly been directed to elementary grade school children in general. Secondary prevention (aiming at the discontinuation of infrequent drug-use) the stage (or stepping-stone) shifts from sociocultural influences to the individual at risk for a substance use disorder. Tertiary prevention (preventing the retaking of substances after achieving abstinence), research evaluating programs for prevention of abuse of alcohol and other drugs indicates a limited staying power. Professionals can provide all three types of prevention to their communities with the proper training and desire.

Merrill Norton, Pharm.D., D.Ph., CMAC, CCS

TRACK A

TRACK B

JOINT SESSION

BRAVE SPACES: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN COLLEGIATE RECOVERY SETTINGS

Participants will learn basic concepts of restorative justice, from its indigenous roots to contemporary applications in higher education and specifically recovery spaces. Participants will learn how restorative justice conferences, community building circles, and circles of support and accountability can be used in collegiate recovery programs to address harm, create and sustain connections, and to collaboratively support students through structure and accountability.

Rachelle Ellis, MA, ATR, CHWC

RECOVERY PATHWAYS: MISSED OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

This presentation explores how recovery pathways for individuals affected by trauma are often disrupted by missed opportunities within care systems. It highlights gaps in recognizing trauma, responding appropriately, and providing consistent, trauma-informed support. The discussion emphasizes how these missed moments can impact long-term recovery and well-being, while pointing toward more effective, compassionate approaches.

Stina Jacobs, PhD, LCSW

BECOMING SOMEONE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE

What happens when you don't have a model for who you're becoming? Major growth, such as entering recovery or pursuing upward mobility, often requires stepping into unfamiliar spaces that challenge old identities, reshape relationships, and test confidence and belonging. This session explores how to navigate change when the next chapter looks nothing like what came before, or when you don't yet see yourself reflected in the places you're going. Participants will gain tools for building internal validation, grounding during moments of doubt, and honoring the past while intentionally shaping an identity aligned with who they are becoming.

Kat Bien, LMSW, CPSS

SUPPORTING EMERGING ADULTS: STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION, TREATMENT, AND RECOVERY

Emerging adulthood (roughly ages 18–25) is a distinct developmental stage marked by rapid change, identity exploration, and increased autonomy, making it both a period of risk and tremendous opportunity. This in-depth, interactive session equips participants with the knowledge and tools to effectively support emerging adults in prevention, treatment, and recovery contexts.

Drawing on more than 15 years of experience working with college students and young adults, Kristina provides a comprehensive introduction to this population, ensuring a shared baseline understanding across disciplines. The session explores what makes emerging adults unique, how developmental theory intersects with substance use prevention and treatment, and the critical skill sets professionals need to engage this age group effectively. Participants will examine real-world strategies and resources, including collegiate recovery programs, and discuss practical ways to build supportive systems that align with young adults' developmental needs, values, and lived experiences.

Kristina Canfield, M.Ed.

