

# REENA PATEL-VISWANATH, PH.D

Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Speech-Language Pathology  
College of Education  
University of West Georgia  
Carrollton, GA 30118  
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## EDUCATION

**Ph.D. in Higher Education Leadership and Administration** December 2020  
*University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC*

**Master of Arts in Education – Psychology** December 2011  
*Pepperdine University, Irvine, CA*

**Bachelor of Science in Psychology** August 2009  
*Stony Brook University - The State University of New York, Stony Brook, NY*

## CERTIFICATES/ SPECIALIZATIONS

**Certificate in Specialization in Leadership and Management** March 2023  
*Harvard Business School (Asynchronous)*  
*Certificate in Management Essentials*  
*Certificate in Power and Influence for Positive Impact*  
*Certificate in Strategy Execution*

**LifeBound Inclusive Coaching Certification and Licensure** May 2023

## RESEARCH INTEREST:

I am deeply committed to ensuring organizations obtain the greatest return on their investments through evidence-based, data-informed strategies. My scholarly interests center on understanding how institutions can foster more inclusive and supportive campus climates by recognizing and addressing the intersectional identities of college students—particularly the experiences of first-generation students—through the lens of asset-based pedagogy.

My work emphasizes institutional outcomes such as student retention, graduation rates, and identity development. I am particularly interested in exploring the structural and psychosocial factors that contribute to the imposter phenomenon, and I view the cultivation of psychological safety and a strong sense of belonging as foundational to student success.

As a scholar-practitioner, I am dedicated to producing and disseminating research that is both accessible and actionable, with the goal of informing institutional policy and practice. I am equally

engaged in program evaluation, strategic development, and organizational leadership as key avenues for driving systemic change.

## **TEACHING PHILOSOPHY:**

I approach teaching and mentoring as reciprocal processes: while I guide students in their academic development, I also learn from their diverse experiences and perspectives. My teaching leverages a multimodal and inclusive approach to address the varied learning styles and needs of diverse student populations. Ultimately, my work as an educator is driven by a deep commitment to providing high-quality, human-centered, and equitable learning experiences. I view teaching and mentoring not just as responsibilities, but as opportunities to empower, uplift, and prepare students to lead with purpose in their academic and professional lives.

## **ACADEMIC PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

### **Assistant Professor (Tenure-Track)**

**August 2024 - Current**

*University of West Georgia – College of Education – Carrollton, GA  
Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Speech Language Pathology*

### **Assistant Professor (Limited Term) & M.Ed Program Coordinator**

**August 2023 – July 2024**

*University of West Georgia – College of Education – Carrollton, GA  
Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Speech Language Pathology*

### **Assistant Professor (Tenure Track)**

**June 2020 - July 2023**

*Augusta University – College of Education and Human Development – Augusta, GA Department  
of Research, Counseling, and Curriculum*

## **HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE**

### **Student Affairs Coordinator**

**June 2016 - September 2017**

*University of South Carolina School of Law - Columbia, SC •*

Co-recruited, selected, and trained student assistants.

- Collaborated with Dean and Director to ensure high-quality student experience was achieved.
- Created role of, and served as, Mental Health Ambassador for Law School.
- Updated office procedures to produce a simple, intuitive, and empathic student experience.
- Created user friendly detailed guides on various institutional procedures.
- Implemented innovative programs based on student feedback to foster a sense of belonging on campus.
- Utilized existing resources to launch Mental Health Initiative on campus.
- Attended multiple professional development programs to gain knowledge on institutional functioning and available resources.
- Provided leadership training and financial management for over 30 student organizations.

- Advocated for students by serving as liaison between students, the law school, and university administration.
- Maintained current knowledge on student climate and higher education operation through continuing education, training, monitoring of industry publications, and engaging in conversation with various stakeholders.

**Registrar and Academic Services Coordinator**

**May 2014 - June 2016**

*University of South Carolina School of Law - Columbia, SC*

- Ensured high quality customer service within the Office of the Registrar.
- Co-Directed the creation & maintenance of the official academic calendars.
- Analyzed, designed, and enforced principles and rules which ensure optimum match of course offerings with facilities and faculty/student needs and the equitable distribution of campus teaching and learning spaces.
- Prepared courses for registration period by entering highly detailed information to online system.
- Shifted multiple office procedures to online methods to improve efficiency and user experience.
- Managed high level assignments and allocation of registrar resources, including negotiating, and coordinating programs and initiatives that involve staff in other departments.
- Established short-term office goals and long-term operational objectives.
- Worked collaboratively with leaders across departments in creating and recommending standards, best practices, and related policies/procedures.

**Instructor**

**June 2015 - December 2015**

*University of South Carolina- Columbia, SC*

- Taught University 101 course focused on helping students successfully transition to campus.
- Implemented research-based activities to promote sense of belonging on campus.
- Collaborated with students and peer mentor to gain insight and refine course content.
- Assisted students in developing critical thinking skills and clarify personal goals.
- Presented course insight and findings to Director for future refinement.
- Ensured high-quality meaningful experience was delivered to students through constant refinement based on student feedback and research.

**Project Coordinator**

**June 2012 - April 2014**

*University of South Carolina – Arnold School of Public Health – Columbia, SC*

- Managed 2.5 million dollar grant funded study from inception to completion.
- Aligned benchmarks to long term project objectives, purpose, and scope.
- Identified key stakeholders and discussed shared expectations.
- Ensured participants received highest quality experience through informal and formal feedback.
- Collaborated with various stakeholders to discuss integrated project plan.
- Successfully executed longitudinal study by managing team from distractions, proactively identifying issues and facilitate unanticipated issue resolution.

- Lead team through project changes to ensure key milestones.
- Biweekly or monthly lunch meetings with various members to build community.
- Created, implemented, and trained staff on data organization management system.
- Generated and presented project reports for weekly and bi-annual stakeholder meetings.
- Monitored ongoing progress of project by measuring actual performance against scheduled performance.
- Communicated with project members regularly to stay current on project status and minimize potential roadblocks.

## **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

### ***Editorial Board: Publication Reviewer***

Impacting Education: Journal on Transforming Professional Practice 2025-present

Journal of Education Human Resources: 2024 - present

Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice: 2022 – present

Journal of First-Generation College Student Success: 2022 – present

Journal of First Year Experience and Students in Transition: 2022-present

### ***Proposal Reviewer***

UWG Faculty Seed Grant Proposal Reviewer: 2026

UWG Innovations in Pedagogy Proposal Reviewer: 2025

NASPA #CelebrateFirstGen Grant Reviewer: 2025

NASPA Emerging Faculty Leader Academy Candidate Reviewer: 2024

NASPA Annual Conference Reviewer: 2025, 2024 and 2023

NASPA Racial Equity and Social Change Conference: 2023

NASPA SACSA Region III Conference: 2023

American Educational Research Association: 2023

### ***Committee Membership / Active Participant***

AACTE - Holmes Program: 2017-2020

AACTE - Holmes Preconference Planning Committee: 2020

University of South Carolina College of Education Inaugural National First-Generation

College Student Celebration Committee: 2019

University of South Carolina Critical Race Theory Summer Institute Graduate Student

Coordinator: 2019

AACTE Historian Elect for Holmes National Honor Council: 2019

First-Generation College Student Group Steering Committee: 2018-2019

## **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) American Educational Research Association (AERA)

## **COLLEGE, DEPARTMENT, & UNIVERSITY SERVICE**

**University of West Georgia**

**Co-Chair:** College of Education Faculty Development, Mentoring, and Retention (FDMR) Committee :2024-2028

**Major Projects Lead:** Clinical Faculty Promotion Guidelines, Research and Teaching Series, and Walk and Talks.

**COE At-Large Faculty Senate Member:** 2024-present

Member: Faculty Affairs Committee: 2024-present

Member: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Committee: 2023- present

Member: College of Education Faculty Development, Mentoring, and Retention (FDMR)

Committee:2023-2024 **Augusta University**

First-Generation Affinity Group: 2022-2023

Future Georgia Educators Day - Faculty Panel: 2022

AAUP Faculty of Color Task Force: 2022-2023

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Task Force: 2022-2023

Ed.S Program Steering Committee: 2022-2023

Augusta University Days of Service: 2022

Undergraduate Research Symposium Judge: 2021

## **FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS**

NASPA Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Leadership Academy: 2023\*\*

Obama Foundation Leaders USA Program: 2023\*

NASPA Emerging Leaders Academy Award: 2023

National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity Faculty Success Program: 2022

GlobalMindEd First-Generation Student Scholarship: 2019

AACTE Holmes Scholar Fellowship Recipient: 2017

University of South Carolina Discover 3-Minute Thesis Heat Winner and Finalist: *"Exploring the effects of a cohort-based program on URM student's first year academic success."*: 2019

*\*denotes applied and not funded*

*\*\*denotes applied, accepted, and unable to attend*

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

**HESA 9211: Organizational Theory\*\*\***

*Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Speech Language Pathology – University of West Georgia*

**HESA 9214: Analysis of Higher Education Literature\*\*\***

*Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Speech Language Pathology – University of West Georgia*

**HESA 9217: Diversity Issues in Higher Education\*\*\***

*Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Speech Language Pathology – University of West Georgia*

**HESA 9225: Directed Doctoral Research\*\*\***

*Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Speech Language Pathology – University of West Georgia*

**HESA 9999 – E23: Dissertation Course\*\*\***

*Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Speech Language Pathology – University of West Georgia*

**HESA 9999 – E06: Dissertation Course\*\*\***

*Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Speech Language Pathology – University of West Georgia*

**HESA 9999 – E08: Research Portfolio / Dissertation Course\*\*\***

*Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Speech Language Pathology – University of West Georgia*

**HESA 9999 – E09: Dissertation Course\*\*\***

*Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Speech Language Pathology – University of West Georgia*

**HESA 9999 – E10: Dissertation Course\*\*\***

*Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Speech Language Pathology – University of West Georgia*

**EDUC 2110: Investigating Critical and Contemporary Issues in Education\***

*Department of Research, Counseling, and Curriculum - Augusta University*

**EDUC 6021: Intro to Educational Research\*\***

*Department of Research, Counseling, and Curriculum - Augusta University*

**EDUC 7004: Philosophy of Education\*\***

*Department of Research, Counseling, and Curriculum - Augusta University*

**EDUC 7021: Educational Research\*\***

*Department of Research, Counseling, and Curriculum - Augusta University*

**UNIV 101: The Student in the University\***

*Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support - University of South Carolina - Columbia*

*\* denotes undergraduate course / synchronous teaching*

*\*\* denotes Ed.S Course / asynchronous teaching*

*\*\*\*denotes Ed.D Course / asynchronous teaching*

**ADVISING, SUPERVISION, AND MENTORING**

**Chair of dissertation committees (2023 – 2025 & Graduated):** 1) James Allen Jr., 2) Valerie Calhoun, 3) Travis Chambers, 4) Melanie Fox, 5) Austina Jordan, 6) Jodi Kennedy, 7) Alyssa

O’Keefe, 8) Mayland Reilly, 9) Josh Robinson, 10) Rebecca Ann Showalter, & 11) Andrea Williams.

**Chair of dissertation committees (2023 – current & Successful Proposal Defenses):** 1) Albert Acheampong, 2) Michael Baumhardt, 3) Shayla Bennett, 4) David Blake, 5) Jaydale Codrington-Poyotte, 6) Jamia Danzy, 7) Brandi Elliott, 8) Rhonda Griffin, 9) Orris Knight Sims, 10) Rachel Lawrence, 11) Travis Liggins, 12) Michael Little, 13) Stephanie McLeskey, 14) Ana Merloiu, 25) Camille Rivera, 16) Phillip Simmo, 17) Sarah Patneuaude, 18) Clarissa Staten, 19) Monifa Skelton, 20) Jessica Wiggins, & 21) Stephen Wyatt.

**Dissertation Committee Member (Graduated):** Matthew Hipps.

**Dissertation Chair (In Progress; Pre-Proposal):** Chinyere Turner & Briana Tyler.

## **GRANTS AWARDED**

2023 Faculty Development Grant: Augusta University.

Amount: \$5,000

Augusta University Education Innovation Fund (EIF) Grant: Learning by Doing.

Amount: \$1,000

Augusta University College of Education and Human Development Internal Grants Program.

Amount: \$750

## **GRANTS SUBMITTED**

2023 NASPA Channing Briggs Small Research Grant: *Supporting Our Future by Supporting First Generation Faculty of Color in Academia*

Amount: \$5,000

2022 NASPA National First-Generation College Student Day Celebration Grant

Amount: \$500

2018 SPARC Graduate Research Grant: Support to Promote Advancement of Research and Creativity (University of South Carolina). *An Investigation of The Impostor Phenomenon Epidemic Among First-generation College Students* [Coinvestigator: Dr. Susan Bon]

Amount: \$20,000

## **BOOK CHAPTERS**

Jackson, T. & Patel-Viswanath, R. (*Accepted – Revisions Stage*). *Funding Public Higher Education in the United States*.

Patel-Viswanath, R. & Jackson, T. (*Accepted – Revisions Stage*). “Helping Them Win On and Off the field: A Case for Intersectionality When Considering a First-Generation Black Male College Student Athletes.” *Critical Praxis of College Men and Masculinities: Experiences at the Intersections*. Information Age Publishing.

Patel-Viswanath, R. & Bryson, B.S. (June 2024). ‘An Intersectional, Asset-Based Approach to Advising First-Generation College Students of Color.’ *Differentiated Academic Advising Strategies for Students Beyond the Margins*. Rowman and Littlefield.

## **PRESENTATIONS, ARTICLE PUBLICATIONS, & WORKSHOPS**

Patel-Viswanath, R. (Under Revisions). “*High-Achieving First-Generation, Low-Income, and Historically Marginalized College Students Graduation Outcomes Based on Level of Parental Exposure to College*.” *Journal of First-generation Student Success*.

Free, R., Patel-Viswanath, Jackson, T. (Fall 2025). *Institutional Characteristics as Predictors of Modality Enrollment*. *The Community College Enterprise*.

Calhoun, V., Patel-Viswanath (November 2025). “*Persistence Through Connection: Illuminating the Lived Experiences of Black Male College Graduates*.” 2025 SACSA with NASPA Region III Annual Conference.

Free, R., Patel-Viswanath, Jackson, T. (November 2024). “*Institutional Characteristics Predict Modality Enrollment at Select Community College*.” University of West Georgia Graduate Research Symposium.

Jordan, A., Brock, J, Patel-Viswanath (October 2024). “*Supervising Students—Faculty Librarian Experiences*.” 2024 Student Employment in Academic Libraries (SEAL) Symposium 2024.

Patel-Viswanath, R. (May 2024). “*Utilizing Online Platforms To Enhance the Online Doctoral Experience*.” 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Innovations in Pedagogy Conference – University of West Georgia. Carrollton, GA.

Patel-Viswanath, R., Buckman, D., Perryman, T., Jackson, T., & Brock, J. (April 2024). “*A Possible Solution to the ABD Phenomenon: UWG’s Innovative Approach to Doctoral Dissertation Hours*.” 2024 University System of Georgia Teaching & Learning Conference. Athens, GA.

Patel-Viswanath, R. (November 2023). “*How You Define First-Generation College Student Matters*.” Supporting First-Generation Students in Higher Education Conference - Ogelthorpe University. Brookhaven, GA.

Patel-Viswanath, R. (June 2023). *Culturally Inclusive Coaching Within Higher Education Workshop*. GlobalMinded Conference. Denver, CO.

Patel-Viswanath, R. (June 2023). *Supporting Diverse Student Success: Interventions, Strategies, and Measurement*. GlobalMinded Conference. Denver, CO.



Patel-Viswanath, R. (April 2023). *"I Was a High-Achieving First-Generation College Student: Let's Talk About That!"* NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education Annual Conference, Boston, MA.

Patel-Viswanath, R., Bon, S. (April 2023). *"I'm First-Generation, Low-Income, and Historically Marginalized. Like Actually First-Generation."* NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education Annual Conference, Boston, MA.

Patel-Viswanath, R., Bon, S. (January 2023). *"I'm First-Generation, Low-Income, and Historically Marginalized. Like Actually First-Generation."* NASPA Georgia Drive-In Conference – Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA.

Patel-Viswanath, R. (November 2022). *"First Generation Faculty Panel."* National First Generation College Student Celebration - Augusta University. (Invited Faculty Speaker).

Viswanath, R. (October 2022). *"Asset-Based Pedagogy to Promote First-Generation College Students Academic Performance."* Oktoberfest: A Symposium on Teaching at University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

Anders, A., & Patel-Viswanath, R. (April 2022) *"Let's Talk About It: AsianCrit."* Invited Guest Lecturer for CRT Course at University of South Columbia College of Education, Columbia, SC.

Flood, L., Moreno, R., Viswanath, R., Rychly, R., & Linville, D. (February 2022) *"What is an Ed.S for? Examining the Purpose and Potential of the Specialist Degree."* Presentation at 2022 Critical Questions in Education Conference, Charleston, SC.

Viswanath, R., (February 2022) *"The First-Generation Student Is In: The Invisible Identity In Your Classroom."* 2022 Impacting Student Learning Conference, Augusta University, Augusta, GA.

Anders, A., Cook, D., & Patel-Viswanath, R. (October 2021). *"Critical Race Theory, CRT & Education, Asian Crit, DisCrit, LatCrit, Tribal Crit."* 2021 Educational Inquiry for Equity and Justice Symposium at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

Patel-Viswanath, R. & Yao, C.W. (2020). *Intersections of International and FirstGeneration Status: A Case for Collaborative Institutional Effort.* Diversity Abroad:Global Impact Exchange.

Patel-Viswanath, R. (February 2020). *"The Doctoral Journey, Beyond First Year."* Panel member at American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Holmes Scholar Pre-Conference, Atlanta, GA.

- Patel-Viswanath, R., Bryan, M., & Jackson, M. (February 2020). *"Preparing URM Teachers at a PWI: An Exploratory Case Study of a Cohort-Based Program."* 2020 American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Holmes Scholar Pre-Conference, Atlanta, GA.
- Patel-Viswanath, R., Jackson, M., Bryan, M. (February 2020). *"How the College of Education at the University of South Carolina is Helping Solve the Teacher Crisis in the State."* American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Holmes Scholar Pre-Conference, Atlanta, GA.
- Patel-Viswanath, R., Bryan, M., Jackson, M. (April 2019). *"Exploring the Effects of a Cohort-Based Program on URM Student's First-Year Academic Success."* University of South Carolina Discover 3-Minute Thesis Competition, Columbia, S.C.
- Platt, S., & Patel-Viswanath, R. (2019). Guest Lecturer: Organization, Leadership, and Finance Course at University of South Columbia College of Education, Columbia, SC.
- Patel-Viswanath, R. (2020 & 2019) Reflection on Critical Race Theory Course and Action Research Project. Graduate Student panel member during Critical Race Theory course at University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.
- Patel-Viswanath, R. (2019) Reflection on Critical Race Theory Course and Action Research Project. Graduate Student panel member during Critical Race Theory course at University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.
- Patel-Viswanath, R., & Bon, S. (June 2019). *"Faking It Until They Do or Do Not Make It: Examining the Imposter Phenomenon as a Post-Secondary Completion Barrier for First-Generation College Students."* GlobalMindEd Conference, Denver, CO.
- Bon, S., Patel-Viswanath, R., Bryan, M., Platt, S. (November 2018). *"Giving Voice to a Silent Dream Killer: Examining the Imposter Phenomenon as a Post-Secondary Completion Barrier for First-Generation Students."* Association for the Study of Higher Education Conference, Tampa, FL.