



# **Ohio College Counseling Association Virtual Conference**

**May 29th, 2026**

**8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

**Zoom**



# OCCA Virtual Conference Program

**5 General CEs Approved for Ohio Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists  
(CSWMFT Board)**

## **Overview**

Each session has a unique registration link and evaluation form. Registration is required to attend. Evaluation form completion is required for OCSWMFT CE credit or Certificate of Attendance. Certificates will be emailed to the email provided at registration. Any questions can be directed to [ohiocollegeca@gmail.com](mailto:ohiocollegeca@gmail.com).

<b>8:00 – 9:00 ET</b>	<b>Session 1 by Dr. Ashley Smith</b> <a href="#">Register</a>   <a href="#">Complete Evaluation</a>
<b>9:00 – 9:10 ET</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>9:10 – 10:10 ET</b>	<b>Session 2 by Dr. Kevin Duquette and Dr. Clewiston Challenger</b> <a href="#">Register</a>   <a href="#">Complete Evaluation</a>
<b>10:10 – 10:20 ET</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>10:20 – 11:20 ET</b>	<b>Session 3 by Katherine L. Swope</b> <a href="#">Register</a>   <a href="#">Complete Evaluation</a>
<b>11:20 – 11:30 ET</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>11:30 – 12:30 ET</b>	<b>Session 4 by Shannon O'Mara and Dr. Jessica Wiener</b> <a href="#">Register</a>   <a href="#">Complete Evaluation</a>
<b>12:30 – 1:10 ET</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>1:10 – 2:10 ET</b>	<b>Session 5 by Shannon O'Mara and Jessie Rock</b> <a href="#">Register</a>   <a href="#">Complete Evaluation</a>
<b>2:20 – 3:30 ET</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>3:30 – 4:30 ET</b>	<b>Session 6 by Ishita Sen</b> <a href="#">Register</a>   <a href="#">Complete Evaluation</a>

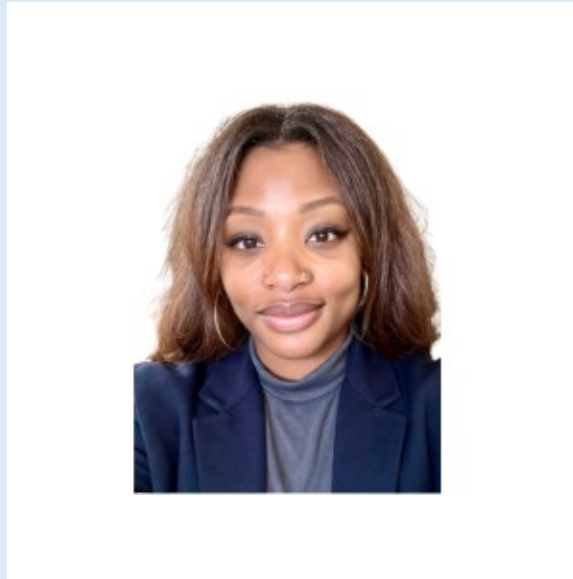
# Detailed Descriptions

**8:00 - 9:00 a.m. ET**

**Best Practices for College Counselors Working with Student-Athletes**

**Preapproved for 1 General CE**

***By Dr. Ashley Smith, PhD, LPC-S, NCC***



## **Presenter Biography:**

Dr. Ashley Smith started her professional counseling career in 2009, with experiences ranging from working with veterans, addictions, youth, psychiatric patients, and partial and intensive outpatient services. She has experiences working as a clinical supervisor, mental health therapist, behavioral health coordinator, and currently as a private practice owner of Rejuvenation Counseling and Adjunct Professor at The Chicago School.

Dr. Smith earned her PhD from Capella University in 2025, her Master's from Mississippi College in 2011 and her Bachelor's from Alcorn State University in 2008.

Dr. Smith's research experience is centered on mental health, intersectionality and college student-athletes. Dr. Smith's publications include: "The Described Experience of Intersectionality (The Combined Influence of Race, Social Class and Ethnicity) and Mental Health of Former Black College Student-Athletes."

Dr. Smith enjoys serving in her profession, teaching, public speaking and writing. Dr. Smith also enjoys reading, traveling, working out, giving back to the community and spending time with her husband and her 2 sons.

## **Session Description:**

College counselors will be provided aid in how to provide culturally responsive, developmentally informed, ethically grounded mental health support to college student athletes and evidenced-

informed best practices for effectively supporting student-athletes within clinical and supervisory settings. This includes building sound relationships with athletic departments, providing culturally appropriate services, and exploring unique psychological, academic, cultural, and identity-related factors that influence student-athletes, including performance pressure, injury and transition stress, time demands, stigma around seeking help and the intersection of athletic and personal identity.

**Registration Link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/oF7-SGncT5mvHz3DdNOKLg>

**Evaluation Link:**

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScmGrZAv0MapVdcPEgzifa3RSf8D2lGsiK1PjFQTTKPYfxR9w/viewform?usp=publish-editor>

**9:10 - 10:10 a.m. ET**

**Thriving in the Transition: An Intervention to Support Student-Athletes of Color in Their High School-to-College Transition**

**Preapproved for 1 General CE**

***By Dr. Kevin Duquette (he/him) and Dr. Clewiston Challenger, NCC (he/him)***



**Presenter Biographies:**

Dr. Kevin Duquette worked in rural, urban, and suburban schools as a High School English Teacher and Middle School Counselor prior to becoming a Counselor Educator and he is passionate about improving mental health support in K-12 schools. Kevin's scholarship has allowed him to present nationally, and publish in *Professional School Counseling*, *The Journal of Counseling and Development*, and *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, among others. Kevin's research focuses on school counselor identity, model school counseling programs, and equitable school counseling interventions for students of color. In his spare time, he is a diehard Pittsburgh Penguins fan, and enjoys playing guitar and drums.

Dr. Challenger is a former school counselor with more than 8 years of experience working with students and families of color in urban communities. He is an assistant professor of school counseling with over 9 years teaching in higher education with a strong focus on training and developing pre-service school counselors and therapists. Dr. Challenger is a former Division I student-athlete in the sport of football and has over 20 years of experience as an assistant football coach in all levels (youth, high school, and college). Dr. Challenger's research examines how students adjust to school, the high school-to-college transition, boys of color, student-athletes [of color], academic motivation, self-efficacy, mental health, and hazing (in sports, clubs, and organizations). Dr. Challenger has co-authored articles published in *Professional School Counseling*, *Journal of Education*, *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, and *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling*.

**Session Description:**

Student-athletes enter college with a level of advantage over non-student-athletes. On many campuses, being an athlete provides status, access, and resources not afforded to the general student body. Simultaneously, most college campuses are predominantly White, even when their athletic programs include many student-athletes of color—many from minoritized communities.

Given this unique dynamic, student-athletes of color entering college—particularly those attending predominantly White institutions (PWIs)—often encounter a complex set of challenges related to academic and social adjustment, racialized campus climates, identity development, while juggling the competing demands of collegiate athletics. Despite decades of research documenting these barriers, transition supports for this population remain limited, fragmented, and insufficiently culturally responsive.

This session introduces the College Transition Program for Student-Athletes (CTPSA), a psychoeducational, group-based model to support athletes of color in college settings. Grounded in Conley's Four Keys to College and Career Readiness (Conley, 2008) and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977), the CTPSA model addresses both the academic and psychosocial dimensions of college transition, with particular attention to the "hidden curriculum"—the lived experiences of student-athletes of color on PWI campuses.

The CTPSA is a conceptual model (and intervention) that offers support to student-athletes of color from the transition between high school and college all the way up through their eventual college graduation. Our session will emphasize how the CTPSA can be meaningfully utilized in college counseling practice, including outreach programming, retention initiatives, and collaboration with athletic departments and student support services. Presenters will outline the CTPSA framework, its theoretical foundations, group structure, and core curriculum areas such as academic support, athletic identity, racial and cultural identity development, mental health and wellness, social integration, and career exploration and transition. In addition, the session will share preliminary data from a pilot support program designed after the CTPSA conceptual model that was initiated with college athletes in the fall 2025 semester.

**Registration Link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/w4iwbjudRiawtyraHXS2Bw>

**Evaluation Link:** <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScBT56ZtPOPDP-CPgWD6e-vbUnCftPOrtDEnWEZyvwAKRbfMA/viewform?usp=publish-editor>

**10:20 - 11:20 a.m. ET**

**Political Stress Across Generations**

**Preapproved for 1 General CE**

***By Katherine L. Swope, M.Ed., LPCC-S***



**Presenter Biography:**

Katherine "Kat" Swope, M.Ed., LPCC-S is a licensed professional clinical counselor supervisor with over 17 years of experience in community mental health, clinical supervision, leadership, and advocacy. She is a doctoral student in Counselor Education and Supervision at National Louis University, where her scholarship focuses on political stress, counselor burnout, and the systemic factors impacting mental health practice across generations.

Kat's professional interests include counselor advocacy, supervision and training, trauma-informed care, grief and loss, and the ethical implications of sociopolitical stressors on clients and clinicians alike. She is the founder of WillowRoot Wellness Collective, an up and coming counseling practice grounded in resilience, accessibility, and social justice-informed care. Her work integrates evidence-based practice with lived experience, emphasizing sustainability and wellness for helping professionals.

Kat is also the author of work in progress, *Home in the Chaos: Finding Your Way Back to Yourself*, a reflective and practical resource exploring grounding, resilience, and meaning-making in times of overwhelm. She is passionate about mentoring emerging counselors, fostering courageous conversations, and advancing advocacy within the counseling profession.

**Session Description:**

Political stress has become a persistent and clinically relevant factor affecting college students, counselors, and supervisors across campus settings. Drawing from the framework outlined in *Beyond Red and Blue: Caring for Our Minds in a Politically Charged America*, this presentation offers college counselors and counselor educators an evidence-informed, people-first approach

to understanding and responding to political stress without reinforcing polarization or ethical boundary violations.

This session explores how chronic exposure to political conflict activates the nervous system, contributes to anxiety, irritability, sleep disruption, compassion fatigue, and relational strain, and increasingly presents in counseling centers and supervision settings. Participants will learn to conceptualize political stress as a shared human stress response rather than a partisan issue, allowing counselors to remain grounded, ethically neutral, and clinically effective while working with diverse student populations.

For college counselors, the presentation provides practical, immediately applicable strategies for helping clients regulate physiological arousal, reduce doomscrolling behaviors, strengthen values-based coping, and preserve relationships across ideological differences. Tools such as nervous system regulation techniques, media boundary setting, values clarification, and structured dialogue approaches will be discussed as interventions that support student resilience, agency, and psychological flexibility within a campus climate often marked by heightened tension and uncertainty.

For those involved in supervision and training, the session addresses how political stress impacts supervisee functioning, countertransference, burnout risk, and ethical decision-making. Supervisors will gain guidance on how to normalize political stress reactions, model complexity-friendly language, support supervisees in maintaining professional boundaries, and foster reflective supervision conversations without engaging in political persuasion. Emphasis is placed on protecting the therapeutic alliance, supporting supervisee wellness, and sustaining empathy in prolonged periods of sociopolitical strain.

Throughout the program, participants are invited to shift from binary "us versus them" thinking toward relational, values-driven practice that prioritizes dignity, connection, and nervous system regulation. By the end of the session, attendees will leave with a clear conceptual framework and a set of concrete strategies they can integrate into individual counseling, group work, and supervision to better support students and emerging counselors navigating political stress on today's campuses.

**Registration Link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/y7lxzVx2Q5ixpTasWjG4fw>

**Evaluation Link:** <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdCUWD4OGRzhCXa9t02a-nxGn2rDIY6Rr5zmfC3IUvyfYNsHw/viewform?usp=publish-editor>

**11:30 - 12:30 p.m. ET**

**Trauma-Informed Care and Supporting College Students with Disordered Eating and Body Image Concerns**

**Preapproved for 1 General CE**

***By Shannon O'Mara, CT (she/her/hers) and Dr. Jessica Wiener, PhD, LPCC-S (she/her/hers)***



**Presenter Biographies:**

Shannon O'Mara is currently a 988 Lifeline worker who has supported callers of all ages with various presenting concerns, including suicidal ideation, homicidal ideation, non-suicidal self-injury, and disordered eating. She is currently a counselor trainee at the University of Akron, specializing in child and adolescent counseling. She achieved certification as a Peer Recovery Supporter through the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health based upon her own lived experience with disordered eating. Shannon has also been published in the field of eating disorder treatment and has presented on body image/eating disorder-related content at several conferences. She is actively co-facilitating a qualitative study on the topic of perinatal eating disorders. She is dedicated to early intervention, holistic treatment strategies, and advocacy to promote client-centered continuity of care across disciplines.

Dr. Jessica Wiener is a licensed professional clinical counselor in the State of Ohio with a supervisor designation. She specializes in marriage and couples counseling and postpartum concerns, as well as working with college-aged students. Jessica is a full-time faculty member at The University of Akron's Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program and also has a private practice. She enjoys supervising students and clinicians new to the field. Her research areas include creative therapies, child and adolescent trauma, and grief. Jessica has presented for online conferences for The Association for Creativity in Counseling and for The University of the Cumberlands virtual conference.

**Session Description:**

Disordered eating and body image concerns are increasingly prevalent among college students and are often rooted in trauma, chronic stress, and efforts to control body image in response to internal and external pressures. For many students, behaviors related to food, exercise, and appearance become ways to manage distress or regain a sense of control over how their bodies look, feel, or are perceived by others. In campus environments shaped by academic pressure, social comparison, and cultural expectations around appearance, controlling food intake, exercise, or body image can become a way for students to manage distress and reclaim a sense of stability. Students may also face eating-related concerns as a response to the transitional period of entering college/campus culture and traumatic events occurring prior to and during this transition.

This session explores control as a coping strategy through a trauma-informed lens, emphasizing how disordered eating and body image concerns are frequently rooted in unmet emotional needs rather than appearance alone. Participants will examine how traditional interventions that focus on compliance or symptom reduction may unintentionally reinforce control dynamics, increasing resistance and shame. Instead, this presentation highlights trauma-informed approaches that prioritize safety, choice, collaboration, and empowerment.

Counselors working with college students have a responsibility to work alongside students who are utilizing control as a coping tool and support efforts to thrive amidst the college experience. Attendees will gain practical strategies for supporting students by recognizing control-driven behaviors and fostering environments that promote autonomy, body respect, and self-compassion. Emphasis will be placed on restoring agency, fostering psychological safety, and supporting sustainable healing.

**Registration Link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/6d-Zp4UUSlihoFnoRlcb0A>

**Evaluation Link:** <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe B1cOEwqMf48w-Ykqv8b5tFcSdkmLQSuDAUxLyemmBazW7Q/viewform?usp=publish-editor>

**12:30 - 1:10 p.m. ET**

**LUNCH**

**1:10 - 2:10 p.m. ET**

**Meeting the Needs Behind NSSI: Counseling College Students Toward Thriving**

**Preapproved for 1 General CE**

***By Shannon O'Mara, CT (she/her/hers) and Jessie Rock, LPC***



**Presenter Biographies:**

Shannon O'Mara is currently a 988 Lifeline worker who has supported callers of all ages with various presenting concerns, including suicidal ideation, homicidal ideation, NSSI, and disordered eating. She is currently a counselor trainee studying to work with clients facing high-risk challenges, including NSSI. She achieved certification as a Peer Recovery Supporter through the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health. Shannon has also been published in the field of eating disorder treatment and has presented on NSSI-related content at The 2025 Spring Ohio Counseling Association Conference.

Jessie Rock, LPC, has been working with eating disorders in higher levels of care for 3 years. She started as a technician while in graduate school and has been an eating disorder therapist for 1.5 years. Jessie graduated with her undergraduate degree from Walsh University in 2021 and earned her Master's degree in 2024. Jessie was a lifetime athlete, playing D2 collegiate softball for 5 seasons (2017–2022).

**Session Description:**

Non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) is a common and often misunderstood coping strategy among college students. While the behavior itself is concerning, focusing solely on risk management or symptom reduction can not only inadvertently miss what NSSI is doing for students, but may also increase shame, secrecy, or disengagement from counseling. This session invites college counselors to shift from a behavior-focused response to a function-focused, trauma-informed approach that centers understanding, collaboration, and empowerment.

Participants will explore the primary functions NSSI serves for college students, including emotional regulation, grounding, self-punishment, communication of distress, and regaining a sense of control. Drawing from trauma-informed principles, the presentation will examine how

developmental stressors, invalidating environments, and past trauma shape students' engagement in NSSI as a means of coping during the college years.

The session will offer practical strategies for assessing the function of NSSI in ways that reduce shame and strengthen the therapeutic alliance. Counselors will learn language and questions that validate students' lived experiences without endorsing self-harm, as well as approaches for collaboratively identifying safer, function-matched alternatives to NSSI. Emphasis will be placed on balancing safety considerations with autonomy, choice, and respect for students' readiness for change.

Through case examples and applied discussion, participants will practice translating functional understanding into individualized treatment planning within the realities of college counseling settings, including time-limited models of care. By reframing NSSI as a signal rather than a failure, counselors can better support students in developing sustainable coping strategies that promote resilience, growth, and thriving amid the complexities of college life. This session is designed for college counseling professionals seeking a compassionate, clinically grounded framework for working effectively with students who engage in NSSI.

**Registration Link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/qAPv2AZ-SyO4Jmw36gRgdA>

**Evaluation Link:** [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScQgv-Zya7Zjfc\\_OQfHpwE9y31n0080ctGN-AB3pAd1RFZ9sw/viewform?usp=dialog](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScQgv-Zya7Zjfc_OQfHpwE9y31n0080ctGN-AB3pAd1RFZ9sw/viewform?usp=dialog)

**3:30 - 4:30 p.m. ET**

**Eating Disorders in South Asian College Students**

**1 CE if approved via post-event submission**

***By Ishita Sen (She/Her)***



**Presenter Biography:**

Ishita Sen is a graduate student in the Master of Science in Counselling program at Nova Southeastern University, with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a minor in Criminology from the University of South Florida. Her academic and professional interests focus on trauma-informed care, dissociative disorders, emergency mental health, and the intersection of clinical practice and research.

Ishita has experience in academic research, hospital-based clinical settings, and community-focused mental health work. She has supported psychology and behavioural research through university research labs and has worked in structured healthcare environments assisting with patient coordination, documentation, and safety-focused care. Her work is informed by a strong commitment to ethical practice, cultural sensitivity, and advocacy for underserved populations.

Through her training and professional experiences, Ishita aims to contribute to the field of counselling through evidence based practice, research dissemination, and interdisciplinary collaboration. She is particularly interested in advancing conversations around trauma, dissociation, and high acuity mental health care.

**Session Description:**

Eating disorders (EDs) among South Asian college students are frequently under recognised, under diagnosed, and under treated due to cultural stigma, somatic presentations, and limited cultural responsiveness in assessment tools and clinical frameworks. This paper presentation examines the unique sociocultural, familial, and systemic factors influencing the development, expression, and help-seeking behaviours related to eating disorders in South Asian college students.

A central focus of this presentation is the cultural contradiction within many South Asian communities in which food plays a primary role in social connection, hospitality, and familial bonding, while thinness and appearance based ideals are simultaneously emphasised. Cultural norms often encourage frequent consumption of calorie dense, sugary, or high fat foods as an expression of care and belonging, yet young people—particularly women—may experience overt or subtle body shaming for not meeting narrow standards of "skinniness." This paradox creates a double bind in which refusal to eat may be interpreted as disrespectful, while weight gain may be met with criticism, surveillance, or moral judgment. These dynamics can contribute to disordered eating behaviours, secrecy around food, body dissatisfaction, and internalised shame.

The presentation will also address how masculinity and body ideals affect South Asian men and masculine presenting students, whose experiences with disordered eating are often overlooked. Cultural expectations emphasising strength, leanness, muscularity, and emotional restraint may discourage help seeking and contribute to compulsive exercise, restrictive eating, or supplement misuse. Additionally, eating disorder symptoms in South Asian men may be minimised or reframed as discipline or fitness, further delaying identification and treatment.

Drawing from existing research and culturally informed clinical frameworks, this session explores how collectivist family structures, intergenerational trauma, acculturation stress, academic pressure, gendered expectations, and stigma surrounding mental health shape symptom presentation and engagement with care. Particular attention is given to how eating disorders may present atypically in South Asian students, including somatic complaints, normalisation of distress, and reluctance to disclose symptoms.

The presenters will discuss barriers faced by college counsellors and supervisors, including cultural misunderstandings, ethical considerations related to family involvement, and challenges in culturally responsive assessment. Evidence based, trauma informed strategies for culturally humble assessment and intervention will be provided to enhance early identification, improve treatment engagement, and support equitable care within college counselling settings.

**Registration Link:** [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/1QY1\\_9GhRI2QrCoM4ADDig](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/1QY1_9GhRI2QrCoM4ADDig)

**Evaluation Link:**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf4Vb\\_gR3Z58Q8Z8WgU2uBBMmhGKim3AX\\_Is\\_ETijWa1aWL8Q/viewform?usp=dialog](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf4Vb_gR3Z58Q8Z8WgU2uBBMmhGKim3AX_Is_ETijWa1aWL8Q/viewform?usp=dialog)