

# UCCS

# FIRST-YEAR REGIONAL CONFERENCE

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# CONFERENCE PROGRAM

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Colorado Springs, Colorado

August 6th - 7th, 2025

Early Check-In: August 5th, 2025



## UCCS to Host Inaugural First-Year Experience Regional Conference Aug. 6-7

Colorado Springs, Colo. — The University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS) will host its first-ever First-Year Experience (FYE) Regional Conference August 6-7, 2025. Organized by the UCCS Gateway Program Seminar (GPS), the free conference will bring together higher education professionals to explore how institutions can build meaningful first-year experiences that help students thrive from day one.

The event begins the evening of Tuesday, Aug. 5 with check-in and a welcome social, followed by two full days of sessions and programming on Wednesday and Thursday, Aug. 6-7. All sessions will take place in person on the UCCS campus in Colorado Springs.

The theme of the conference is “Creating a Meaningful First-Year Experience” — with sessions and workshops exploring innovative practices in pedagogy, technology, student support, and curriculum design. The conference will feature presentations in formats ranging from roundtables and panel discussions to interactive workshops and poster sessions. Session topics will include how to build community and belonging, integrate flexibility and innovation into first-year programs, use AI and emerging technologies effectively, and design curricula that support meaningful student transformation.

“Bringing this event to UCCS is a milestone,” said Omar Montoya, Faculty Director, Gateway Program Seminar. “It provides a platform for educators and student affairs professionals to collaborate on helping students feel connected and engaged through their first-year and beyond. UCCS empowers students to find their place early in their college journey—academically, academically, socially, and professionally—and this conference lets us celebrate best practices, share ideas, and expand our impact on first-year programming beyond campus.”

Keynote speaker Matthew L. Sanders, professor of Communication Studies at Utah State University, will share insights from his nationally recognized work on student identity, learning design, and academic mindset. Sanders is the author of *Becoming a Learner: Realizing the Opportunity of Education*, a book widely adopted by first-year programs across the country for its engaging approach to helping students reflect on their role as active participants in the learning process.

Also delivering a keynote is Nicole Weis, Director of Community and Healing Programs at the Lyda Hill Institute for Human Resilience. With a background in trauma-informed care and program development, Weis brings a critical lens to the ways institutions can foster belonging and wellbeing during the pivotal first year. Her work highlights the role of healing-centered practices in student success and institutional transformation.

The conference is free to attend and open to educators, staff, and administrators from two- and four-year institutions across the region. Interested attendees and presenters are encouraged to register early. Registration is open now: 2025 First-Year Experience Regional Conference

Registration For event details and logistics, visit the GPS FYE Conference page

## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

\*ALL TIMES ARE LISTED IN MOUNTAIN STANDARD TIME

### TUESDAY: AUGUST 5TH, 2025

5:00pm - 6:30pm - **CLYDE'S GASTROPUB**

### WEDNESDAY: AUGUST 6TH, 2025

8:00am - 9:00am - **BERGER HALL**

9:00am - 10:00am - **BERGER HALL**

10:15am - 11:15am

11:30am - 1:00pm - **BERGER HALL**

12:00pm - 1:00pm - **BERGER HALL**

1:15pm - 2:15pm

2:30pm - 3:30pm

4:00pm - 5:30pm

### THURSDAY: AUGUST 7TH, 2025

8:00am - 9:00am - **BERGER HALL**

9:00am - 10:00am - **BERGER HALL**

10:15am - 11:15am

11:30am - 1:00pm - **BERGER HALL**

12:00pm - 1:00pm - **BERGER HALL**

1:15pm - 2:15pm

2:30pm - 3:30pm

3:45pm - 4:00pm

EARLY CONFERENCE CHECK IN & SOCIAL

CHECK IN & CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

INTRODUCTION: GPS ADMIN CHANCELLOR

SESSION A

LUNCH WITH KEY NOTE SPEAKER

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: **MATHEW SANDERS**

SESSION B

SESSION C

HORS D'OEUVRES SOCIAL

CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

PLENARY: **CODY PARISH & BRENN FAIR**

SESSION A

LUNCH WITH KEYNOTE SPEAKER

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: **NICOLE WEIS**

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CLOSING

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# FUNDAMENTAL VALUES



## GOALS OF THE CONFERENCE:

A forum for academic and students affair professionals to share ideas, resources, and engaging pedagogy that enhances their instruction of First Year Students.

## THEMATIC AREAS:

- Creating Community – Opportunities for collaborative learning
- Creating Flexibility – Fostering learning for the future
- Creating Innovation – Reframing students engagement
- Creating Change – Approaches to course design

## UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AT COLORADO SPRINGS

The history of the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs is as rich as Colorado itself. Founded in 1965, the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs shall be comprehensive baccalaureate and specialized graduate research university with selective admission standards.

## STUDENT FOCUS:

We value students and never forget that students are our reason for being. We consider students and student outcomes in all the decisions we make. We provide a supportive environment in order to create lasting and significant educational experiences for every student.

## INTEGRATION:

We value the integration of teaching with research and creative work. Scholarship enriches teaching and teaches enriches scholarships. We see these activities as interdependent, allowing for synergies that benefit students, faculty, and all members of the university community.

## INNOVATION:

We value innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit. We are creative problem solvers in the classroom, in our research, and in our campus operations. We are catalysts for economic, social, and cultural changes in our communities. We provide opportunities for our community members to develop the skills of innovation and creative expression.

## COLLABORATION:

We value collaboration and teamwork as absolutely necessary for success in today's world. We model collaboration in our research, teaching, and campus operations. We actively seek opportunities to collaborate and engage with organization's.

# STAFF ROSTER

## OMAR MONTOYA

Faculty Director

## JULIANA BIGELOW

GPS Program  
Coordinator

## OLIVIA DE ANDA

Digital Content  
Admin

## YESENIA CRUZ

**GARDUNO**  
Lead Peer  
Leader

## SESSION FORMATS

### ROUNDTABLE

A roundtable is a 60–90 minute discussion with 6–12 expert participants and a moderator who guides the conversation. To ensure balance input, no one person dominates. Topics are defined in advance to allow for preparation and focus dialogue.

### PANEL DISCUSSION

A panel discussion is a live conversation among experts who share diverse perspectives on a topic, typically in front of an audience. Its goal is to offer valuable insights and takeaways through engaging, interactive dialogue.

### WORKSHOP

Workshops are interactive, topic-focused sessions that promote deep learning through hands-on activities and expert-led discussions. They offer attendees a chance to explore subjects in greater depth within the conference setting.

### TRADITIONAL ORAL PRESENTATION

Traditional oral presentations involve delivering a talk to an audience using slides or other visual aids. They are typically structured with an introduction, methods, results, and conclusion.

### POSTER PRESENTATION

A poster presentation is a formal, research-based presentation of your work. A poster presentation provides a visual representation of your research through text, charts, graphs, and other visual aids. A poster presentation allows viewers to read your research material at their own leisure and to interact with you— perhaps asking questions about your methods or your findings.

# UCCS FIRST-YEAR REGIONAL CONFERENCE

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## **SPONSORS**

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Colorado Springs, Colorado  
August 6th - 7th, 2025



# SPONSORS

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

ALL PARTICIPANTS ARE INVITED TO SHOWCASE THEIR SERVICES TO ENHANCE THE FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE.

### HELEN AND ARTHUR E. JOHNSON BETH-EL COLLEGE OF NURSING & HEALTH SCIENCES

At the Helen and Arthur E. Johnson Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences, students become equipped for a career in today's ever-evolving healthcare and human performance landscapes.

### UCCS COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING APPLIED SCIENCE

The UCCS College of Engineering and Applied Science (EAS) produces highly qualified undergraduate and graduate students with technical depth and competence to satisfy workforce needs. Students gain technical skills and hands-on experience through research, design projects, teamwork, and internships, enhancing job prospects.

### UCCS COLLEGE OF PUBLIC SERVICE

The UCCS College of Public Service (CPS), formerly the School of Public Affairs, is a leading public administration school in the Rocky Mountain West, offering degrees in public administration, criminal justice, social work, and more.

### UCCS COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

The UCCS College of Business provides future-focused education to drive economic and workforce growth locally and globally. We offer lifelong learning through innovative, tech-driven programs in a supportive and experiential environment. By connecting students, alumni, and businesses, we foster a strong community and culture of success. Our impactful research aims to make a meaningful difference.

### UCCS COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

The UCCS College of Education prepares teachers, leaders, and counselors who embrace equity, inquiry, and innovation. We prepare exceptional education and counseling professionals through evidence-based practice, continuous growth, and innovative technology. Committed to inclusion and belonging, we collaborate across campus and the community to drive meaningful change and enhance institutional effectiveness.

### UCCS COLLEGE OF LETTERS, ARTS, & SCIENCES

The College of Letters, Arts & Sciences (LAS) offers diverse, interdisciplinary programs across sciences, humanities, and arts. Award-winning faculty support students through a wide range of degrees, from undergraduate to doctoral, grounded in strong academics and vibrant research.

# SPONSORS

## THE MOSAIC OFFICE

**FIRST2GO:** Designed to recognize, celebrate, and establish community for first-generation college students at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. With over 20% of UCCS undergrads identifying as first-generation, First2Go offers a space for connection, support, and celebration to come alongside students through their college journey.

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS:** The International Affairs at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs supports international education. The office provides services within the following areas: Education Abroad; International Student and Scholar Services; support to colleges and schools for international partnership development; and international opportunities

## THE MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIR DIVISION - MCCORD-HERBST STUDENT VETERAN CENTER

We are deeply committed to supporting our veterans, active-duty service members, and military families, and to making our campus a place where we can support those who have dedicated their lives to supporting our country. We strive to ensure that they receive the support, respect, and care they need to thrive.

## T. ROWE PRICE CAREER AND INNOVATION CENTER

The T. Rowe Price Career and Innovation Center is a seamless connection of career service professionals located at University Center 114. We serve students from freshman year through graduation and beyond. Whether you are interested in selecting the right major, exploring career options, looking for a part-time job or internship, or preparing for an interview, our team is here to help you.

## THE EXCEL CENTERS

The Excel Center Directors recognize that enhancing student wellness means focusing on the whole student and addressing multiple factors, including academic, social, physical, and mental. Each Excel Center provides outstanding academic support, social space for students to study or meet with friends and relax, and free snacks and coffee.

## OFFICE OF STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

We're the Office of Student Employment, and we strive to efficiently and transparently link students with employment opportunities that enhance their college education and transferable work skills while assisting them in paying for college. We act to cultivate mutually beneficial relationships between the university, its students, and the community as a whole.



## **GALLOGLY RECREATION AND WELLNESS CENTER**

UCCS is leading the way in collegiate wellness by having Campus Recreation, Health Services, Mental Health Services, Nutrition Services, and Wellness Promotion together in the expanded Gallogly Recreation and Wellness Center. This innovative model provides integrated and collaborative services and programming to help enhance students' health and wellness.

## **DISABILITY SERVICES**

Disability Services provides leadership to the University by facilitating equal access to all institutional opportunities for students with documented disabilities, temporary medical and pregnancy-related conditions through accommodations and individual services in line with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) and other current legislation.

## **THE ACADEMIC ADVISING OFFICE**

Academic Advising is committed to the mission and vision of UCCS to advance knowledge, integrate student learning, and provide life-enriching experiences. Academic Advising provides high-quality, personalized, and comprehensive advising by partnering with students and the campus community to empower students to take ownership of their education and be successful in college.

## **THE ORIENTATION OFFICE**

Designed to help new members of the UCCS community adapt to their new environments with support and guidance.

## **PRE-COLLEGIATE SUPPORT AND SUCCESS CENTER**

We work with middle and high school diverse, first generation, and military connected students. Our programming is intended to prepare students academically, socially, and emotionally for their postsecondary journeys. Navigating the complex world of colleges and universities can be intimidating.

## **STUDENT AFFAIRS IN HIGHER EDUCATION MASTER'S PROGRAM**

The MA in Leadership with a concentration in Student Affairs in Higher Education is designed to develop transformational leaders in student affairs operations in colleges and universities. The weekend-based program occurs mainly on Saturdays, with integrated online professional development opportunities.

## **THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

UCCS has been a cornerstone of excellence in graduate education, offering a supportive and inclusive community. Whether you're a working professional seeking to advance your career or an aspiring scholar pursuing academic passion, UCCS provides a nurturing environment tailored to your needs.

**GPS 3010: FOR VETERANS AND NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS,  
THE POSSIBILITIES ARE NEEDLESS - POSTER SESSION**

**DELYN WINTERS**

**UC 126**

This presentation will highlight the three most important concepts we cover in GPS 3010 Transitions: Belonging, Purpose and Identity. Students explore these concepts in relation to their time of service or their unique circumstance as they become university students for the first time. This population of students is typically older and more experienced than traditional freshmen, so we focus on other needs, like available services, applying for benefits, and outside resources. We'll show you how we incorporate mindfulness, meditation, guest speakers, field trips and walking discussions along with fun activities like the climbing wall and making sushi to help these students pivot from a military or service career into academia.

**CAREERS, CLASSROOMS, AND COMMUNITY - WORKSHOP**

**MISTY EVANS**

**UC 309**

In today's evolving job market, foundational soft skills are crucial for student success. At the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (UCCS), the T. Rowe Price Faculty Career Fellows Program aims to integrate career and self-development into academics through co-curricular instruction. This proposal outlines how UCCS courses can align with the National Association for Colleges and Employers (NACE) competencies—such as communication, leadership, and critical thinking—by partnering with community organizations and businesses. Through job shadowing, internships, and volunteer work, students will gain real-world experience and build key professional skills. The initiative emphasizes course integration, campus-wide career development, and strategic partnerships to prepare students for the global workforce.

**FIRST-YEAR CONNECTIONS, THE STUDENTS'  
PERSPECTIVE - TRADITIONAL PRESENTATION**

**KATHRINE PAGET**

**UC 303**

First-year seminars and learning communities aim to foster student connections and a sense of belonging—key to academic success and retention. At Brigham Young University, all students take a required first-year seminar, some embedded in learning communities. Led by faculty and supported by peer mentors, these seminars promote academic and social integration. To explore how students form connections in these courses, focus groups were conducted with participants from both stand-alone and learning community sections. Findings revealed stronger faculty connections in stand-alone sections and stronger peer connections in learning communities. Students also shared suggestions to enhance inclusivity and impact, which will inform this presentation.

## FROM TOP OF THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS TO STRUGGLING COLLEGE FRESHMAN - STRATEGIES & PREVENTION - TRADITIONAL PRESENTATION

NIKKI MYERS

UC 307

High school students with an honors, advanced placement, and CU Gold dual enrollment courses can enter their first semester at UCCS and experience culture shock as they make the transition from top-of-the-class to encountering new university challenges. Some students have the capacity for deep complexity and challenge in their coursework, and an additional learning disability where they qualify in Colorado as "twice-exceptional", with specific needs for flexibility and accommodation. This session will provide specific tools for awareness and course strategies that instructors can use to help these students find their footing quickly and excel in their college work.

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6<sup>TH</sup>**  
**SESSION B - 1:15pm-2:15pm**

**FYE 2025**

### TEACHING FRIST YEAR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS - ROUNDTABLE

KARYLYE ENKLER

UC 126

Starting college can be especially challenging for first-year international students as they adjust to a new education system, language, and culture. This session offers practical, inclusive teaching strategies to better support these students in the classroom. We'll address common challenges—like participation norms, language barriers, and cultural views on academic integrity—and share actionable solutions such as clearer assignment design, inclusive syllabi language, and thoughtful feedback. Ideal for faculty and staff working with first-year students, this session provides concrete tools to help international students feel supported, confident, and able to thrive.

### ASKING TOO MUCH?: FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS AND SCHOLARLY SOURCES - WORKSHOP

NORAH MAZEL, LIZ BROWN & MIKAYLA SAXON

UC 303

This workshop invites participants to explore two key questions: "Should first-year students be required to use scholarly articles?" and "How can instructors introduce them in supportive ways?" Through hands-on analysis of unfamiliar articles, attendees will experience the challenges students face and reflect on their own assignment practices. Facilitators will share adaptable, scaffolded assignments that ease students into using scholarly sources. The session concludes with a collaborative activity to revise a traditional research prompt. Participants will leave with practical strategies and a clearer understanding of how to help first-year students engage with scholarly work.

## **AUTO-MONSTRUMOGRAPHY: A HORROR STUDIES PROJECT FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS - WORKSHOP**

**DEKA SPEARS & CODY PARISH**

**UC 122**

College can feel like a monster under the bed for many first-year students. To help them identify and address key challenges, we created the Auto-Monstrumography—a two-part project where students define a personal "monster" (a university-related struggle), create a multimodal profile of it, and develop strategies to overcome it using campus resources and success habits. This workshop will cover the project's structure, share student samples and outcomes, and involve attendees in activities used to support the assignment. An open discussion on first-year pedagogy and classroom strategies will follow.

## **SOS: A SKILL-BUILDING FRAMEWORK FOR THRIVING IN COLLEGE - TRADITIONAL PRESENTATION**

**KRISTI WEB**

**UC 122**

The transition to college can be challenging, affecting students' academics, wellbeing, and social adjustment. To support them, UCCS Wellness Promotion and Case Management developed the Skills for Optimizing Student Success (SOS) program, focused on four key areas: social connection, self-care, study skills, and sleep health. This session will outline the program's first-year development, implementation, and outcomes, as well as plans for expansion through first-year initiatives and peer leader partnerships. Attendees will leave with practical tools to support student success through wellness-focused, skill-building strategies.

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6<sup>TH</sup>**  
**SESSION C - 2:30pm-3:30pm**

**FYE 2025**

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE: A TOOL FOR BELONGING AND RETENTION - INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION**

**LILLIAN HOGAN & FATIMA SANI**

**UC 126**

This presentation will explore the importance of customer service excellence within higher education. We will discuss how many college students leave institutions because of how they're treated by the faculty and staff. There will be an emphasis on retention in terms of recruiting and retention. We'll then go into the 360 Care program being established at UCCS and its principles. This program aims to garner a reputation at UCCS for quality service that makes students feel welcome at all levels - from the dining locations to individual apartments to deans and campus leadership.

# ENGINEERING CURIOSITY: FRESHMAN INNOVATION THROUGH HANDS ON LEARNING - WORKSHOP

LYNNANE GEORGE & JONAH SCHMIDT

UC 303

How can we spark and sustain curiosity in students? This interactive workshop shares how a redesigned first-year Aerospace Engineering course uses hands-on, project-based learning to shift student engagement from passive to active. Through weekly interactive lectures and labs, students collaborate to solve real-world problems—building curiosity, creativity, and ownership from the start. Participants will leave with adaptable strategies to bring student-driven, experiential learning into any discipline, transforming classroom engagement and supporting first-year success.

## STRATEGIC PAUSES: CONTEMPLATIVE LEARNING IN A FAST- PACED WORLD - WORKSHOP

MICHELLE PROSE

UC 122

How can we spark and sustain curiosity in students? This interactive workshop shares how a redesigned first-year Aerospace Engineering course uses hands-on, project-based learning to shift student engagement from passive to active. Through weekly interactive lectures and labs, students collaborate to solve real-world problems—building curiosity, creativity, and ownership from the start. Participants will leave with adaptable strategies to bring student-driven, experiential learning into any discipline, transforming classroom engagement and supporting first-year success.

## STRUGGLE, SOLVE, SUCCEED: BUILDING PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS AND RESILIENCE THROUGH CLASS ACTIVITIES - INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION

SEAN DEAN

UC 307

This session showcases a hands-on classroom activity—the Problem-Solving Relay Race—designed to build students' problem-solving skills and resilience. Working without technology, students tackle tough puzzles in teams, embracing frustration and ambiguity as part of learning. A guided debrief fosters reflection, metacognition, and emotional awareness. Attendees will learn how to adapt the activity across disciplines and explore ways to normalize struggle and failure in supportive, research-based ways. You'll leave with practical tools to help students develop persistence, confidence, and adaptable thinking.

## PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIOS AND MICRO-CREDENTIALS: FIRST- YEAR STEPS TO LONG-TERM GOALS - INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION

PHILIP HASLEY

UC 309

UCCS upper-classmen can display their learning through e-portfolios and have their skills certified through micro-credentials. This presentation describes efforts so far and lays out next steps to engage first-year students in the process.

**CREATING FLEXIBILITY AND FOSTERING LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE: SUPPORTING  
FIRST-YEAR MILITARY AND VETERAN STUDENTS - PANEL DISCUSSION**

JONEILA HENSELMAN  
UC 302

First-year active duty and veteran students often face unique challenges, from navigating unfamiliar academic systems to balancing military duties and service-related health issues. This session presents a holistic, adult-learning-based framework to support their academic success.

Veteran and Military Affairs staff will share best practices and institutional strategies for creating adaptive, supportive environments that foster persistence and future-readiness, presented in a panel format.

**ALL BASICS: AN INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL THINKING  
SKILLS AND GENERATIVE AI - WORKSHOP**

MATTHEW BALK  
UC 303

This workshop will introduce individuals to the basic elements of Generative AI. In doing so, we will outline a framework for how to use critical thinking skills to assist with prompt generation as well as managing and refining outputs. Folks who attend this session will learn basic strategies to teach their students, as well as how to use Generative AI responsibility in their own teaching and research.

**CONNECTION BEFORE CONTENT: BUILDING RELATIONAL TRUST  
WITH FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS - WORKSHOP**

LINDA RAWLINGS  
UC 124

First-year students face major academic, social, and emotional transitions—and a sense of belonging is key to their success. This interactive workshop explores how relational communication builds trust, resilience, and engagement in the classroom. Drawing on communication theory and teaching experience, we'll share practical, research-backed strategies—like immediacy behaviors, inclusive language, and humanizing feedback—that help students feel seen and supported. Participants will engage in reflection, partner activities, and leave with adaptable tools to foster connection in any teaching format. Before students engage with content, they need to engage with us—and this session helps make that happen.

**APPLICATION IS EVERYTHING: CREATING STUDENT BUY-  
IN FOR COLLEGE 101 - TRADITIONAL PRESENTATION**

ANNA SUPER  
UC 307

Curricular changes that created more student choice and application, which have resulted in greater student engagement and success rates in College 101, will be discussed.

**BUILDING COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION THROUGH INNOVATIVE  
ENGAGEMENT - TRADITIONAL PRESENTATION**

**TELMA FRUMHOLTZ & CHRIS ERTMAN**

**UC 307**

From hikes to escape rooms and everything in between, we use a variety of activities to engage our students in creating strong community and connection. Our aim with this presentation is to share how incorporating recreational activities, hiking, and escape rooms into our curriculum offers students strong benefits including wellness, teamwork, communication, strong ties to campus, leadership skills, and so much more. We'll provide key examples, learnings, and recommended best practices to incorporate these techniques.

**ESTABLISHING AN ETHICAL APPROACH TO AI IN  
ACADEMICS - WORKSHOP**

**ANGIE DODSON**

**UC 303**

In this workshop, participants will simulate establishing an acceptable-use AI policy for the campus based on Reacting to the Past Pedagogy. Participants face-off representing three factions: Student Government Association, Educational Policy and University Standards Committee, and an Academic Affairs and Student Affairs Joint-Task Committee to convince a group of indeterminants to adopt their ethically based policy. The simulation takes place in three game rounds: Faction Proposal Development, Proposal Finalization, and the University Committee on Acceptable Use of AI in Academics Meeting. Participants will be able to customize the simulation into their own instructional plan on establishing an ethical approach for student use of AI in academics.

**FROM CONNECTION TO CALLING: A MEANINGFUL FIRST-YEAR  
JOURNEY - WORKSHOP**

**HEATHER GARDNER & AMANDA GARCIA**

**UC 122**

How can we design first-year experiences that build connection, purpose, and well-being? This session introduces a four-pillar framework—Belonging, Purpose, Transcendence, and Storytelling—used to create a seminar rooted in meaning and inclusive pedagogy. Drawing on resources like Emily Esfahani Smith's TED Talk and the Life Design Catalyst Program, the session shares hands-on strategies including curiosity conversations, purpose mapping, and reflective storytelling. Participants will leave with adaptable tools, facilitation tips, and a clear vision for integrating meaning-driven practices that support engagement, retention, and a connected campus culture.



## EN INGLES Y ESPANOL: POSSIBILITIES IN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION AND FOSTERING BILINGUALISM AT UCCS - PANEL DISCUSSION

JONEILA HENSELMAN

UC 302

In this session, conducted with simultaneous interpretation into English and Spanish, presenters will share their journeys of empowerment during their participation in interpretation training as high school and college students. Afterwards, presenters will encourage participants to collectively explore ideas that education groups could implement to promote bilingualism, interpretation and translation, and the support of bilingual students and their families while meeting the needs of an increasingly multilingual society and job market. We urge the participation of a broad range of teams across campuses, from STEM to Health to the Liberal Arts to best explore innovative ideas and understand the opportunities. All participants who are not bilingual in English and Spanish will have an opportunity to experience in person interpretation.

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 7<sup>TH</sup>**  
**SESSION C - 2:30pm-3:30pm**

**FYE 2025**

### ENHANCING ORIENTATION OUTCOMES THROUGH PEER-TO- PEER SUPPORT STRATEGIES - TRADITIONAL PRESENTATION

NICK LOCKWOOD

UC 122

Peer-to-peer support has emerged as a powerful tool in shaping successful orientation experiences. This session explores how reimagining the role of orientation leaders—particularly in facilitating class registration—can enhance key outcomes such as personalization, satisfaction, access, and emotional motivation for new students and their families. Through innovative program design and longitudinal data, we'll examine the successes, challenges, and opportunities of implementing a peer-led model that supports both student transition and institutional enrollment goals.

### POPULATION RESILIENCE - TRADITIONAL PRESENTATION

NICOLE WEIS

UC 307

As we navigate a constantly changing, often stressful and at-times traumatic, world, we have an opportunity to increase and foster resilience in ourselves and those around us. This presentation provides an overview of stress and trauma, exploring their impact on the brain and body, common signs and symptoms, and practical strategies for building resilience. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of how stress and trauma affect daily functioning and relationships, and learn tools to support personal well-being and foster trauma-informed environments, particularly in education.



## **MAKING IT STICK: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SUPPORT FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS - WORKSHOP**

**LISA COOPER**

**UC 303**

To truly support student engagement, we must address executive functioning (EF)—skills like planning, time management, and self-regulation—that are critical for first-year success but rarely taught. This interactive workshop reframes disengagement through an EF lens, showing how deficits often mask as missed deadlines or lack of follow-through. Drawing on cognitive and developmental research, we'll share simple, effective tools like time-mapping, planning frameworks, and self-regulation checklists. Attendees will leave with practical strategies to embed EF support into advising, teaching, and mentoring—boosting both academic and personal growth.

## **THE CONNECTION ADVANTAGE: THE SECRET TO FIRST- YEAR AND BEYOND SUCCESS - WORKSHOP**

**PAUL YANKEY**

**UC 126**

First-year students often arrive eager but uncertain about their identity, purpose, and path to success. This session offers practical strategies to help them uncover their “why,” build meaningful connections, and foster a sense of belonging that supports long-term resilience. Attendees will gain tools to create reflective, purpose-driven learning environments, strengthen student relationships, and guide students toward deeper motivation and engagement.

## **KEY NOTE SPEAKER**

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6<sup>TH</sup> : 12:00pm-1:00pm**

**FYE 2025**

### **MATTHEW SANDERS**



Matt Sanders is a Professor of Communication Studies at Utah State University. He holds a Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Matt conducts research in the areas of nonprofit organizations, organizational communication, and student learning. He is the author of *Becoming a Learner: Realizing the Opportunity of Education*, which is used in first-year experience courses at many colleges and universities. He is also the co-author (with John McClellan) of *Studying Communication: An Invitation to Purposeful Learning*. Awards recognizing Matt's work with students include the Distinguished Teacher Award from the Western States Communication Association and being named Teacher of the Year for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Utah State University.

## PLENARY SPEAKERS

THURSDAY, AUGUST 7<sup>TH</sup> : 9:00am-10:00am

FYE 2025

### CODY PARISH



Cody Parish (he/him) serves as the Program Director of the Chancellor's Leadership Class and UCCSlead at University of Colorado Colorado Springs. Brenna Faircy (she/her) serves as the Program Coordinator of the Chancellor's Leadership Class and UCCSlead at University of Colorado Colorado Springs. They lead a team that coordinates and facilitates accessible leadership programming for all UCCS students, as well as ongoing, holistic leadership development for scholarship students. Their mission is to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be everyday leaders on campus and in the greater Colorado Springs community.

### BRENNA FAIRCY



Explore the impact of service learning through the UCCSlead Days of Service program. This session highlights how the program fosters student success, belonging, and community connection while meeting the new service-learning requirement. Learn about its roots in leadership theory, integration with GPS courses, and key outcomes from 2024-2025. Attendees will gain practical insights into programming, logistics, promotion, and assessment—along with data on increased student engagement, retention, and community partnerships.

## KEY NOTE SPEAKER

THURSDAY, AUGUST 7<sup>TH</sup> : 12:00pm-1:00pm

FYE 2025

### NICOLE WEIS

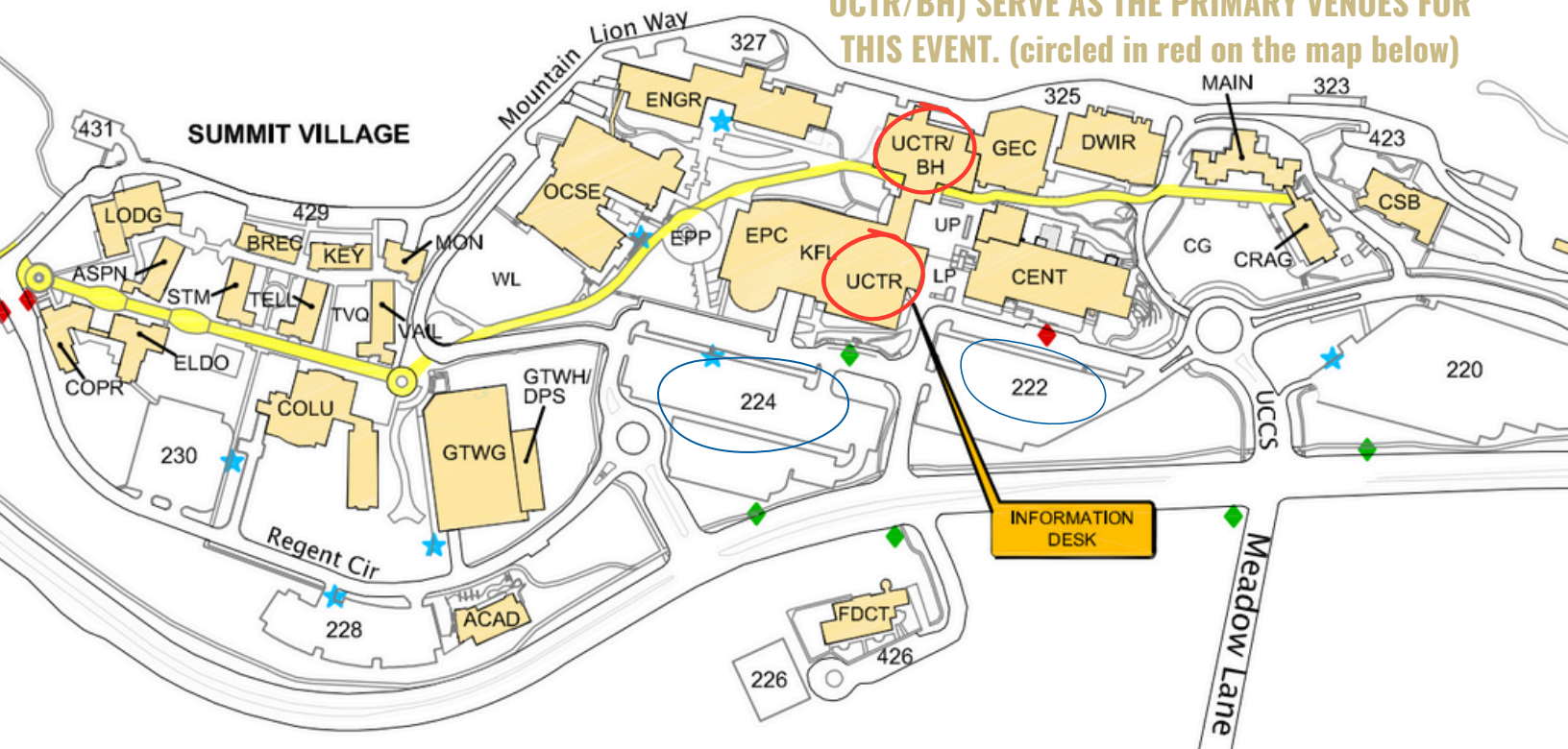


Nicole Weis is the Director of Community and Healing Programs at the Lyda Hill Institute for Human Resilience. She is a 2016 graduate of the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs Master's in Clinical Psychology program, with an emphasis in trauma, and is a Licensed Professional Counselor and Licensed Addiction Counselor. In her role at the Institute, Nicole oversees the Veteran Health and Trauma Clinic, Milestones Resilience Care Center, and Institute community trainings. These trainings include Peer Support Programs for several organizations in Colorado, the Trauma Training for Professionals online program, GRIT Program, and customized workshops. Nicole is skilled in Cognitive Behavior Therapy, community crises and disasters, and resilience and self-efficacy skills.

# CAMPUS MAPS

## OVERVIEW OF CAMPUS

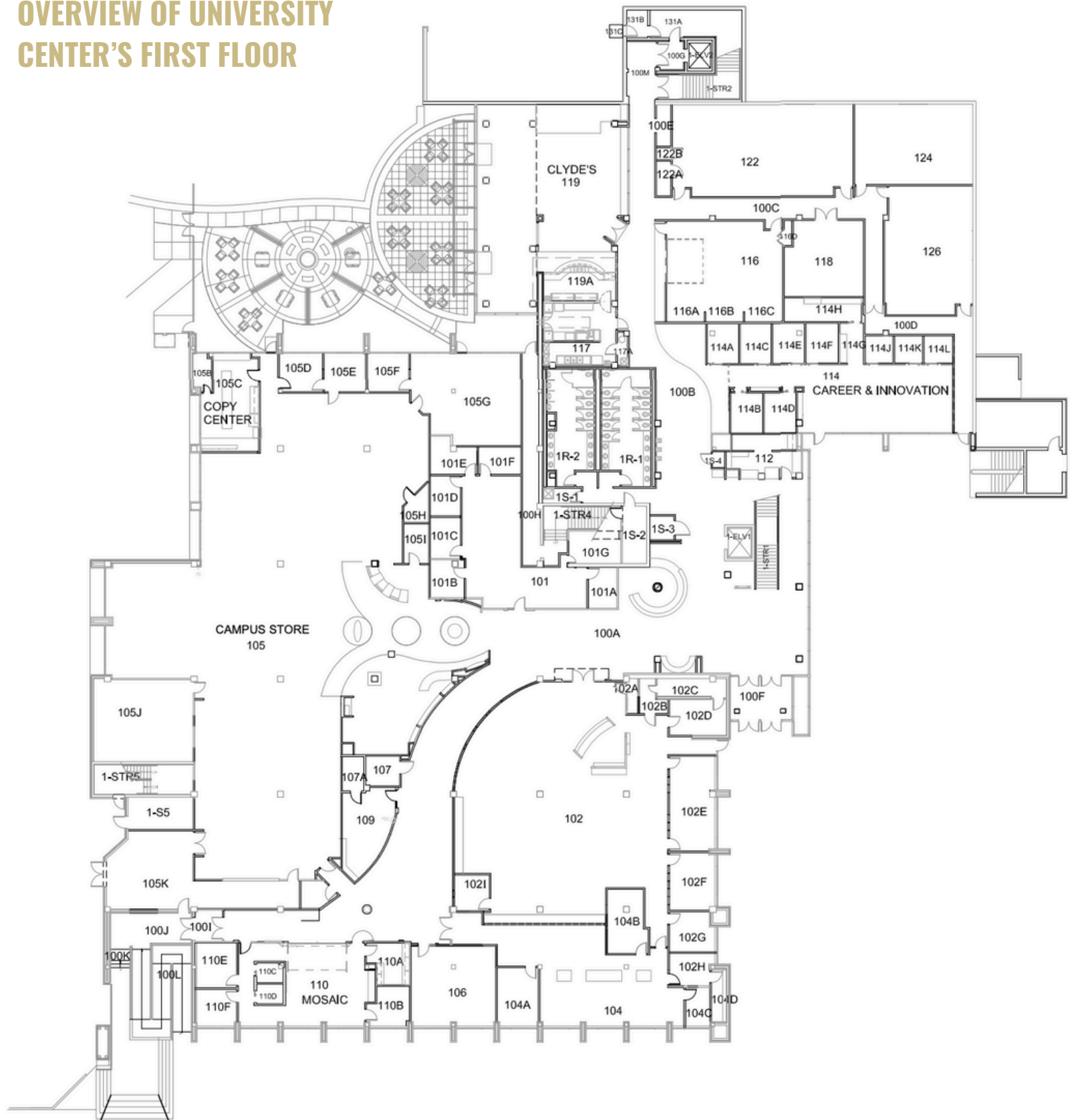
UNIVERSITY CENTER & BERGER HALL (UCTR & UCTR/BH) SERVE AS THE PRIMARY VENUES FOR THIS EVENT. (circled in red on the map below)



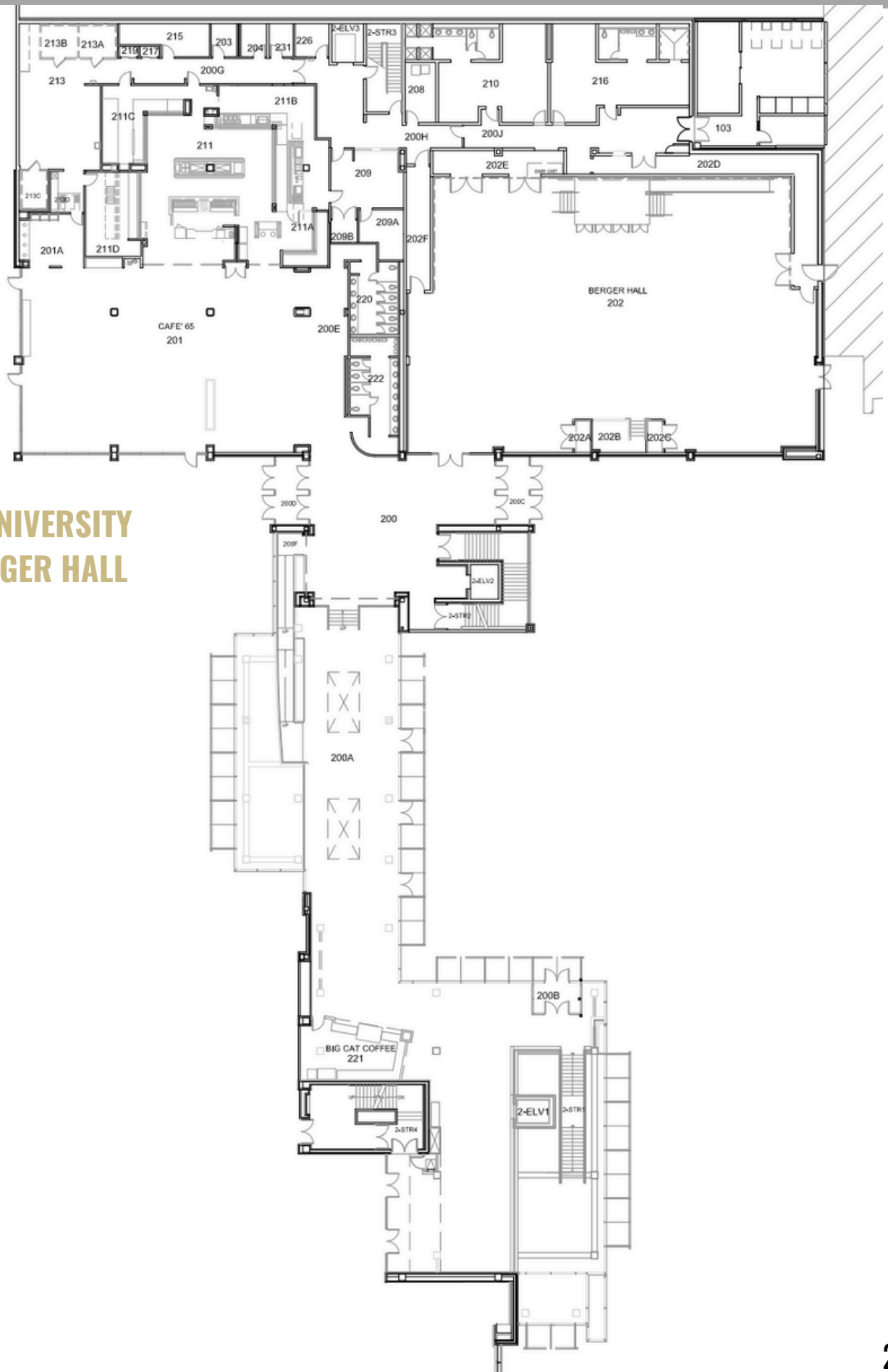
ATTENDEES MAY PARK FREE OF CHARGE IN LOTS 222 & 224, (circled in blue on the map above) WITH DESIGNATED HANDICAP-ACCESSIBLE PARKING AVAILABLE.

# BUILDING MAPS

## OVERVIEW OF UNIVERSITY CENTER'S FIRST FLOOR

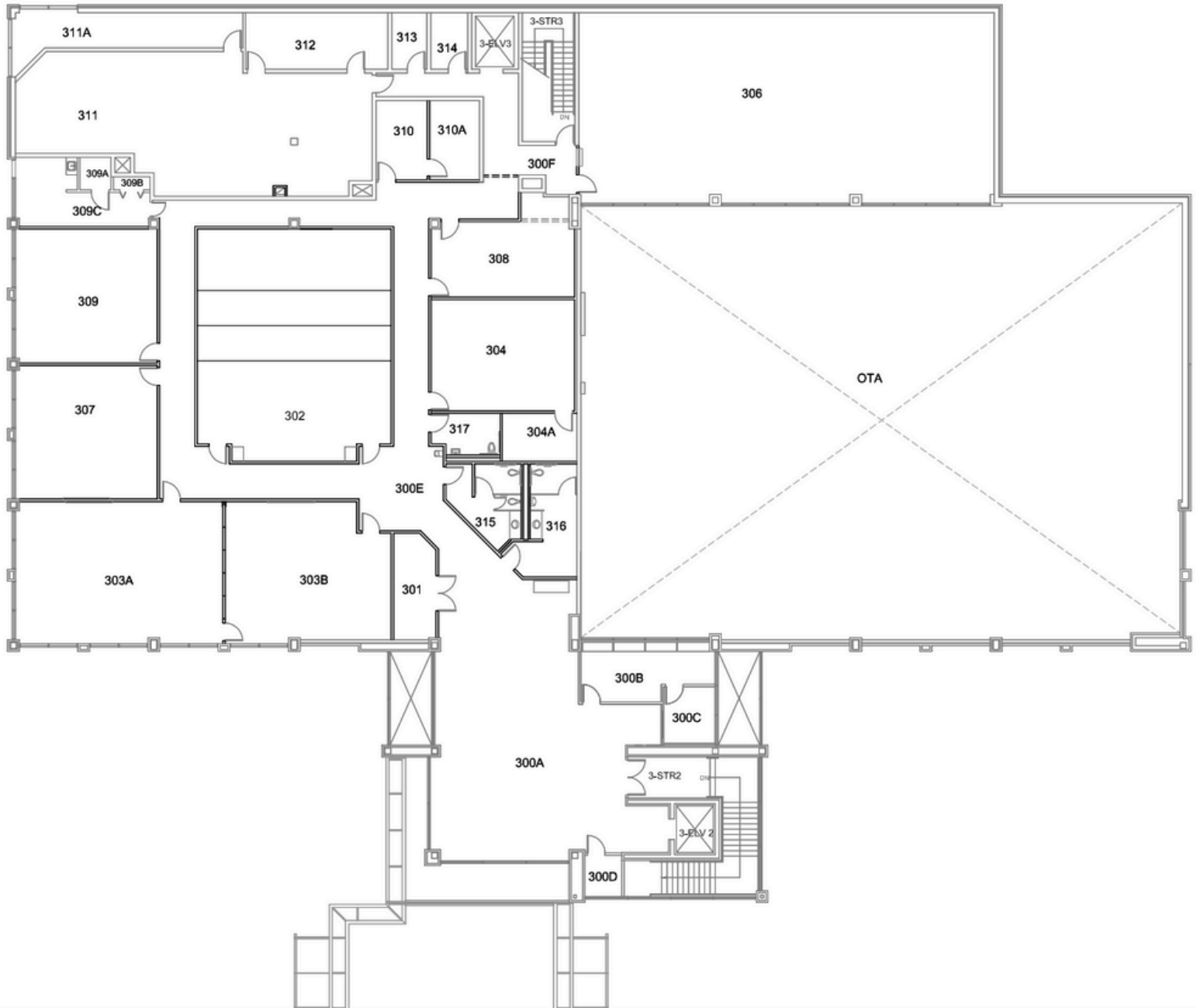






**OVERVIEW OF UNIVERSITY  
CENTER'S / BERGER HALL  
SECOND FLOOR**

## OVERVIEW OF UNIVERSITY CENTER'S THIRD FLOOR



### UCCS Campus Map

The campus is currently experiencing an emergency. It is possible that you may be instructed to evacuate during this time. If so, the campus has been split into evacuation zones as marked on the map, here.

 UCCS Campus Map