

THE PH.D. EXPERIENCE: EXPECTATIONS & REALITIES

Agenda

Dr. Lawrence Morehouse, President & CEO, Presiding

FRIDAY, AUGUST 15, 2025

1:00-5:00 p.m. ~ *Grand Ballroom East Foyer*
♦ **Registration**

2:00-3:30 p.m. ~ *Grand Ballroom East*

♦ **Opening Session**

Welcome and Purpose: - Dr. Lawrence Morehouse

The MDF Profile: 2025-2026 Class Portraits - Dr. Taylor Rodman, McKnight Alumna and Program Manager

3:40-4:30 p.m. ~ *Grand Ballroom East*

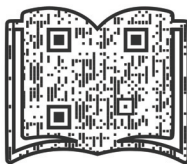
♦ **Session I: Write Smarter, Publish Faster: Practical AI Applications for Researchers**

You don't need to know how to code to harness the power of artificial intelligence in your research. In this hands-on session, Dr. Antoinette Smith will demonstrate how AI can write code for you, run regression analyses, conduct literature reviews, and even help you brainstorm and structure your ideas. Participants will see live demonstrations of how these tools can accelerate and enhance every stage of the research process—from concept development to final manuscript preparation. By the end of this session, you will walk away with practical experience using at least two to three AI tools that you can immediately apply to your own work, giving you a powerful set of resources to elevate both the quality and efficiency of your research.

- Dr. Antoinette Smith, Professor and Morrison, Brown, Argiz & Farra, LLP Professorship in Accounting, Florida International University; and Faculty Advisor of Florida International University NABA

Please complete Evaluation Form

(Scan QR code with your phone camera)



4:45-5:45 p.m. ~ *Grand Ballroom East*

♦ **Session II: Strategies for Navigating the Ph.D. Process: Expectations and Realities**

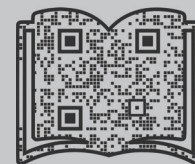
This session surveys key academic and psycho-social requirements to successfully navigate a Ph.D. program. By examining the unique nature of doctoral studies, personal learning styles, coping mechanisms, skill sets, and the span of the doctoral commitment, students will leave the session empowered to create their own "Strategies for Navigating the Ph.D. Process." The discussion will include information related to analytical note-taking; maintaining mental health, a strong work-ethic, and commitment; and the process of creating knowledge.

- Dr. Tony Barringer, Associate Provost & Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Florida Gulf Coast University

- Dr. Claude Villiers, Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, Florida Gulf Coast University

Please complete Evaluation Form

(Scan QR code with your phone camera)



6:00-8:30 p.m. ~ *Grand Ballroom West*

McKnight Reception

Guest Speaker: Dr. Iraida V. Carrion, LCSW, Associate Professor Emerita, School of Social Work and Affiliated Faculty, Department of Anthropology, University of South Florida
MDF Online Writing Workshops: Lyra Logan, Esq., Executive Vice President & General Counsel, FEF



Closing Remarks: Dr. Lawrence Morehouse

Book Signing: Dr. Vernetta Mosley, Writing Coach, Editor, Consultant, Chrysalis Consulting, LLC

SATURDAY, AUGUST 16, 2025

7:00-8:30 a.m.

♦ Room Checkout

8:00-8:45 a.m. ~ *Grand Ballroom East Foyer*

♦ Breakfast

9:00-10:00 a.m. ~ *Grand Ballroom East*

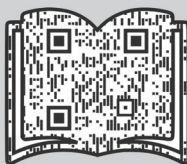
♦ Session III: Negotiating the Ph.D. Environment

This presentation describes key components of the academic department at the Ph.D. level and engages new McKnight Doctoral Fellows in a discussion of strategies to develop to successfully negotiate the Ph.D. environment. The session will focus on identifying and addressing challenges faced by new doctoral students. These challenges include cultivating relations with faculty and choosing a major professor, connecting to the faculty's research enterprise, connecting coursework to research interests and dissertation development, forming committees and responding to them at various stages, and understanding the academic culture and its role in facilitating degree completion and career sponsorship.

- Dr. Marvin Dawkins, Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Miami

Please complete Evaluation Form

(Scan QR code with your phone camera)



10:10-12:00 p.m. ~ *Grand Ballroom East*

♦ Session IV: The Ph.D. Roadmap: Graduate School Resources and Best Practices for Success

On this panel, selected university professors and administrators share advice on leveraging Graduate School resources and best practices for successfully completing the Ph.D. program.

- Dr. Adrienne P. Stephenson, Moderator, Associate Dean and Director, Graduate Fellowships and Awards, Florida State University

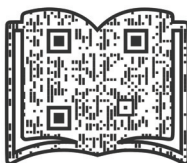
- Dr. Sonja Montas-Hunter, Program Director, Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) Program, National Science Foundation

- Dr. Antoinette Smith, Professor and Morrison, Brown, Argiz & Farra, LLP Professorship in Accounting, Florida International University; and Faculty Advisor of Florida International University NABA

- Dr. Jeremy Magruder Waisome, Thomas O. Hunter Rising Star Assistant Professor in the Department of Engineering Education, University of Florida

Please complete Evaluation Form

(Scan QR code with your phone camera)



12:10-1:30 p.m. ~ *Grand Ballroom West*

♦ Luncheon and Keynote Address: Student Success and the Ph.D. Experience

- Dr. Sylvia W. Thomas, Vice President for Research & Innovation, President & CEO of the USF Research Foundation, Inc., and Professor, University of South Florida



1:45-3:00 p.m. ~ *Grand Ballroom East*

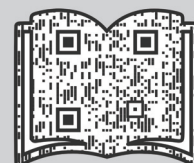
♦ Introduction to Graduate Writing

Writing in graduate school presents a number of opportunities and challenges. This session addresses a variety of types of writing students will experience in graduate school, including book reviews, critiques, literature reviews, annotated bibliographies, research papers and proposals, among others. In addition, the session addresses the need for students to familiarize themselves with scholarly journals in their fields, along with writing styles and documentation specific to their disciplines. The session also identifies typical writing problems that occur in students' writing and provides references to remedy the weaknesses.

- Dr. Vernetta Mosley, Writing Coach, Editor, Consultant, Chrysalis Consulting, LLC

Please complete Evaluation Form

(Scan QR code with your phone camera)



SATURDAY, AUGUST 16, 2025

3:10-4:20 p.m. ~ *Grand Ballroom East*

♦ **MDF Panel: The University Experience**

The McKnight Doctoral Fellows' Panel has long been a New Fellows' Orientation highlight. Matriculating Fellows share their experiences and insights on selected topics to help prepare new Fellows for their upcoming Ph.D. experiences.

- *Dr. Taylor Rodman*, Moderator, MDF Alumna and Code-Masters Program Manager, Florida Education Fund
- *Ms. LeeAnn Hewitt* (2021, Biomedical Sciences, UF), "*Navigating the Ph.D. Journey: Effective Mentorship for Aspiring Scholars*"

This presentation explores the pivotal role of mentorship in shaping the Ph.D. experience. Attendees will gain insights into establishing productive mentor-mentee relationships, setting realistic goals, and leveraging mentorship for professional growth. The session is designed to equip new Ph.D. students with the tools they need to maximize their research journey through effective mentoring.

- *Mr. Kworweinski Lafontant* (2023, Physiology, UCF): "*The 7 Dimensions of Wellness as a Ph.D. Student*"

Transitioning from a bachelors or masters program into a Ph.D. program can take a toll on our well-being in various ways. This presentation will provide perspectives on how to transition well, including practical strategies for maintaining every aspect of your well-being as you enter into your Ph.D. program.

- *Ms. Maria Moreno* (2020, Nursing, USF): "*Getting Started in Research: Opportunities and Resources to Explore*"

This section provides an overview of seeking opportunities for research-related experiences within and outside of your department. It will also explore the different funding opportunities available for students, as well as key research tools that can help you successfully navigate your Ph.D. journey.

3:10-4:20 p.m. ~ *Grand Ballroom East*

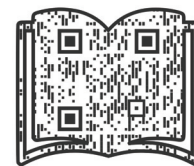
♦ **MDF Panel: The University Experience (Cont.)**

- *Mr. Brandon Sosa* (2021, Ecology, FIU): "*The Pre-Proposal Proposal: Learning to Think Like a Researcher*"

Starting your research journey can feel overwhelming, but it all begins with asking the right questions. In this talk, we'll explore how to ignite your curiosity, brainstorm meaningful research ideas, and identify critical knowledge gaps. You'll gain practical strategies, tools for navigating your research area, and paths to crafting strong proposals. We'll also discuss common early-stage challenges and how to overcome them, setting you up for a rewarding and impactful research experience.

Please complete Evaluation Form

(Scan QR code with your phone camera)



4:30-5:00 p.m. ~ *Grand Ballroom East*

♦ **Business Matters/Policies & Procedures**

McKnight Fellows, keep your
information up to date
in the MDF Directory.

Visit www.fefonline.org/dir