

## Whose degree is it anyway? Empowering Student Independence: Navigating Helicopter Parenting in Higher Education

### Presenter Bios



**Ricki Gracia-** is an experienced higher education professional with a strong background in academic advising, program coordination, and student support services. Currently serving as a Bridge Advisor at Florida International University, Ricki provides pre-transfer advising and assists students in navigating the transfer process, selecting majors, and accessing academic resources. With a Master's degree in Higher Education Administration from Stony Brook University and a Bachelor's degree in English from Hofstra University, Ricki has held roles at Farmingdale State College, Molloy College, Barry University, and Dowling College, where she developed student workshops, coordinated admissions processes, and led recruitment events. Ricki is dedicated to enhancing student success, particularly for underrepresented populations, and has a strong commitment to innovation and leadership in higher education.

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**Anasa Lattibeaudaire** (Uh-nay-shuh Lat-tee-beau-dare)- joined Florida International University (FIU) in January 2024 as a Bridge Advisor/Transfer Coordinator III, bringing over 5 years of experience in guiding students through their academic journeys. She holds a Bachelor's in Interpersonal/Organizational Communications from the University of Central Florida ('15) and a Master's in Higher Education Administration from Barry University ('23). Anasa has previously worked as a Career Counselor at Barry University, a Pre-College Advisor at Miami Dade College, and an Academic Advisor at Florida Memorial University, demonstrating her commitment to empowering students and collaborating with faculty. Her role as a Career Advisor Contributor on CareerVillage.org further emphasizes her dedication to student guidance. A proud alumna of City Year, Anasa served as an AmeriCorps member at Miami Central Senior High School, which deepened her passion for supporting students from diverse backgrounds. She is always eager to use her skills to enhance student access to higher education and promote a student-centered environment.

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Sheryl-Ann views herself as an advocate in higher education. She has worked in financial, academic, veteran student support, and other roles at several non-profit institutions prior to working at Florida International University (FIU) where she began her role in academic advising. Sheryl-Ann now serves as Manager of Academic Support Services, which supports the Connect4Success (C4S) admissions pathway, the 2+2 partnerships with institutions in the Florida College System (FCS), in addition to leading a team of bridge advisors that aid students at Miami Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach State Colleges and more. In her roles, Sheryl-Ann has advised and coached a caseload of students, facilitated recruiting efforts, hosted and co-hosted an array of partnership and student orientation workshops, as well as presented at various professional conferences, e.g. NACADA, FLACADA and NASPA. Sheryl-Ann is also an Adjunct Instructor for FIU Success Courses since 2018. In her spare time, Sheryl-Ann volunteers with a variety of local and national community efforts. Sheryl-Ann earned her Bachelor of Arts in Business Studies from Saint Thomas University ('07) and her Master of Business Administration from Nova Southeastern University ('10). Additionally, Sheryl-Ann has certifications in Human Resource Management and Leadership from Nova Southeastern University ('12). Recent upskilling includes micro badges in Practitioner in Higher Education Coaching ('24), Administrative Assessment Planning ('24), Emotional Intelligence ('23), Advising Leadership Fundamentals, ('23), and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace ('21).

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**Mario R. Lara Jr.-** is an experienced higher education professional with over eight years of expertise in student advising, program management, and leadership development. He holds a Master of Science in Higher Education Administration from Florida International University and a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education/Recreation from Bethune-Cookman University. Currently serving as a Bridge Advisor at FIU, Mario leads the Connect4Success program, supporting student transitions, developing coaching strategies, and implementing initiatives to improve academic success and retention. Throughout his career, Mario has worked with a diverse range of student populations, including first-generation students, underrepresented groups, transfer students, and individuals from multicultural backgrounds. Passionate about empowering students, Mario is dedicated to fostering inclusive, goal-oriented environments that help students achieve their academic and personal aspirations.