

## Breathing Fresh Life into Recurring Events

**Lance Connolly** | *Purdue Research Foundation*

**Alexis DeBerry, CMP** | *King Abdullah University of Science and Technology*

### SESSION DESCRIPTION

This session focuses on innovative ways to revamp tired event experiences while keeping sustainable event practices in mind. Many academic event planners face the same challenges when looking to breathe new life into existing events on campus. The challenge for today's event professional is to be creative enough to innovate the experience, yet fiscally conservative enough to keep the event within budget. This session will spark your imagination with exciting real life examples; that delivered Instagram worthy memorable experiences. See how King Abdullah University of Science and Technology and Purdue University create Instagram worthy events that stimulates all the senses.

### SPEAKER BIOS



**Lance Connolly** | *Purdue Research Foundation*

Lance Connolly started his career at his alma mater, Purdue University after graduating in 2009. He is currently serving as the Assistant Vice President for Special Events with the University Development Office. Lance provides complete oversight and management for the Office of Special Events, reporting to the Vice President for Development. In addition, he is also serving a limited term assignment as the Executive Producer for Purdue's Sesquicentennial concluding in 2019. Responsibilities include managing all anniversary events on behalf of the University President.



**Alexis DeBerry, CMP** | *King Abdullah University of Science and Technology*

Alexis is a driven event planner and producer with extensive expertise in corporate, social events and diplomatic relations. She is a customer service professional who achieves genuine care, creativity and comfort for her clientele. In coordinating complex logistical challenges and all service operations on behalf of the University President, including at his private villa, Alexis maintains a personal touch in a professional realm. Her passionate commitment for service excellence, and drive to foster environments of relaxed, yet refined ambiance, have been buttressed by her many years in the luxury hospitality industry with the Ritz Carlton. Building on this service excellence, Alexis's international diplomacy skills blossomed while working with such notable groups as the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, the World

Bank, US China Business Council, National U.S. Arab Chamber of Commerce, the Atlantic Council; and

## SESSION DESCRIPTION & SPEAKER BIOS



embassies including the Embassy of the Peoples Republic of China, and the Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain. This invaluable diplomatic experience coupled with her deep knowledge of protocol and access to the ever changing protocol databases has allowed Alexis to craft the perfect environment for notable VIP guests including His Royal Highness Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, The First Lady of Zambia Madam Esther Lungu, and His Excellency Ali Al-Naimi.

A native of Snyder, New York, Alexis earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theater from Howard University in Washington, DC. Alexis relocated from Washington, DC to Saudi Arabia to join the Event Office of the President at KAUST in 2014 in time to plan and implement a keystone event -- the 5-year anniversary celebration -- which was an outdoor fête commemorating the University, for over 7000 guest inclusive of students, faculty, government officials, and VIPs. Over her professional career, Alexis has over 13 years of event planning experience ranging from lavish galas, to corporate and state-level events. Alexis is a life-long learner, consistently honing her craft and expanding upon her hands-on experience via formalized training and continuing education. Specifically, Alexis earned her Sustainable Event Professional Certificate and her Certified Meeting Professional from the Events Industry Council.