

Shanta Varma, Ph.D., Ed.S.

Special Advisor to the Chancellor for Distance Education & Collaborative Partnerships

Professor, Curriculum, Instruction & Technology — College of Education, Auburn University
at Montgomery

EDUCATION

- Education Specialist (Ed.S.), Instructional Technology — Auburn University at Montgomery, 2020
- Harvard University, Graduate School of Education — Management Development Program, 2012
- Ph.D., Anthropology (Social Change & Gender Reconstruction) — University of Delhi, 2002
- M.Sc., Anthropology — University of Delhi, 1992
- B.Sc. (Honors), Anthropology — University of Delhi, 1990
- Advanced Diploma/Diploma/Certificate in German — University of Delhi, 1991–1993

ENHANCED EDUCATION CERTIFICATIONS & LEADERSHIP INSTITUTES

- CITI Certification for Human Subjects Research (HSR) — Auburn University at Montgomery, 2019
- SANS Mandatory Security Training — Auburn University at Montgomery, 2019
- Montgomery Leadership Academy, 2019
- Certification: Designing & Developing Online Programs — AUM Faculty Development Institute, 2017
- Quality Matters Peer Reviewer (initial 2009; recertified 2017); Applying the QM Rubric (initial 2009; recertified 2017)
- Institute for Emerging Online Leaders — Penn State University, 2009

ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP & UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Auburn University at Montgomery (2017–Present)

2024-2025 Accomplishments:

- Special Advisor to the Chancellor for Distance Education & Collaborative Partnerships; oversight of ODE and OCP staffing, strategy, and operations.
- Chaired the AUM Accessibility Task Force; implemented institutional accessibility policy, software acquisition, and compliance procedures for electronic instructional materials.
- Led campus migration from Blackboard Learn to Canvas; advanced sustainable EdTech transitions (Kaltura→YuJa) and integrations (Panorama, Quizz, CopyLeaks).

- Developed comprehensive Online Student Orientation for domestic and international learners; established a fully functional video studio to support accessible, high-quality multimedia.
- Launched Digital Design Days and hosted AI-focused workshops (e.g., Dr. Haya Ajjan, Elon University) to strengthen faculty capacity and SoTL engagement.
- Co-developed fully online degree programs: BIS in Healthcare Management (College of Business) and Bachelor of Social Work (CLASS).
- Partnered with Student Affairs to design Drug & Alcohol Accountability and Advocacy Awareness modules (including Hazing 101 & Refresher).
- Organized Chancellor's Business Breakfast series (e.g., Gregory M. Lein, Alabama State Parks; The Future of Business with ChatGPT).
- Expanded dual enrollment and community college pathways; 33+ district/school/home-school agreements; concurrent enrollment partnerships with multiple Alabama community colleges.
- Internationalization: signed MOUs with Dr. Vishwanath Karad MIT World Peace University (India) and Universidad Nacional Tecnológica de Lima Sur Villa (Peru/El Salvador); conducted recruitment and partnership visits (Raisoni Education Group, Transworld Educare, N.M. Wadia Hospitals & Institutes).
- Accreditation leadership: SACSCOC 2022 Review—Chair, 10.6 Distance & Correspondence Education; contributor to 10.9, 8.2.a, and 14.3 standards.

Selected Impact Metrics (AY 2024–2025)

- Online Enrollment: 4,572 fully online enrollments (37%) out of 12,274 total; Summer 2024 peaked at ~74% fully online.
- International Enrollment: 2,651 across Summer 2024, Fall 2024, Spring 2025 (peak 1,222 in Fall).
- Pathways: Dual-enrolled (1,161) and junior college transfer students (1,142) across AY 2024–2025.

Prior Administrative Appointments (Condensed)

- UHCL (2008–2017): Director/Executive Director roles in Online Programs & E-Learning; scaled programs/courses; led QA and accessibility; OLC award (2016).
- AUM Confucius Institute (2017–2019): Dean; P–12 liaison; regional cultural/language initiatives.
- UT Brownsville (2004–2008): Director/Coordinator, Premedical Education pipelines and student success programs.
- SUNY Empire State College (2004–2005): Coordinator for Online Programs; QA and assessment systems.
- ARCE (1995–1996): Academic Services Officer; research program development.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Auburn University at Montgomery (2017–Present) — Professor, Curriculum, Instruction & Technology

- Teach across Master's, Ed.S., and Ed.D. levels in Instructional Technology; course design, development, and delivery.
- Support COE recruitment and retention; contribute to CAEP alignment and SACSCOC reporting for Instructional Technology.
- Intercollege collaboration between COE (Instructional Technology) and COB (Information Systems).
- Courses developed/taught: INST 6010 Innovations in E-Learning; INST 6966 Selected Readings; INST 7400 Teaching at Distance; INST 7200 21st Century Learning; FNDS 8600 Managerial Strategies in Multicultural Environment.
- Prior teaching includes UHCL, UT Brownsville, SUNY Empire State College, and University of Delhi (online, hybrid, and f2f modalities).

PUBLICATIONS — REFEREED & INVITED (SELECTED)

- Varma, S., & McKell, D. (2023). Impact of feedback on isolation in distance education students. *Journal of Interactive Learning Research*, 34(4), 605–635.
- Varma, S., & Ren, X. (2023). An initiative to develop OER-based general education courses in higher education. *Open Praxis*.
- Varma, S. (2022). Systematic considerations in online education administration... *Unbound: Reinventing Higher Education*.
- Kaur, P., & Varma, S. G. (2019). International students and determinants of their confidence in the police. *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*.
- Kelling, A., Varma, S. G., & Kelling, N. (2019). A multi-faceted and practical analysis of online courses at UHCL. *IJTLHE*, 31(1), 128–138.

Conference Proceedings & Chapters (Selected)

- Varma, S., & Ren, X. (2021). Developing OER-based general education courses... *Innovate Learning Summit Proceedings*.
- Kaur, P., & Varma, S. G. (2020). Cyber connectivity, cybercrime, and regulations. In *Women Minorities and Criminal Justice*.
- Bozkurt, I., Goswami, S., & Varma, M. M. (2015). Mapping trends and themes within online education. In *STEM Education; Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*.

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

- E-Learn Conference, Singapore (2024): Digital Literacy among Marginalized Populations.
- USDLA National Distance Learning Week (2021–2024): OER efforts and online learning leadership (organizer/presenter).
- Leadership in Higher Education Conference (2022): Systematic considerations in online education administration.

- AASCU Academic Affairs Summer Meeting (2022): Implementing OERs in gateway courses to improve retention.

GRANTS & EXTERNAL FUNDING (SELECTED)

- PI, ALSDE/ASAP Grant — AUM COM-COM Summer Academy, \$30,000 (2024) — FUNDED.
- PI, Daniel Foundation — Summer Dual Enrollment Academy, \$20,000 (2025) — FUNDED.
- PI, RUS-DLT Distance Learning & Telemedicine (Dual Enrollment via Distance Education), \$501,591 (2025) — Under review.
- PI, Institutional Research Grant — OER-based general education courses, \$5,000 (2022–2024) — FUNDED.
- PI, THECB Grant — Best Practices in Undergraduate Teaching & Learning, \$122,226 (2012) — FUNDED.

AWARDS & HONORS (SELECTED)

- OLC Effective Practices Award (2016) — University of Houston–Clear Lake.
- Best-in-Track, OLC International Conference — Women Leadership in Online Learning (2014).
- Harvard Graduate School of Education — Management Development Program Scholarship (2012).
- ‘Excelencia in Education’ National Award — Second Place (2007).
- UGC (India) Senior & Junior Research Fellowships (1992–1996).
- CAEP National Recognition (ISTE) — AUM Instructional Technology program (only nationally recognized in Alabama).

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE & EDITORIAL WORK

- Manuscript reviewer: Open Praxis; Journal of College Student Retention.
- Editorial Board: Journal of Online Learning Research (AACE); Intellectual Quest e-Journal.
- Conference reviewer/leadership: OLC (Program Co-Chair 2017; Steering Committee); TxDLA; USDLA (NDLW Alabama organizer).

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- United States Distance Learning Association (2012–Present); Online Learning Consortium (2009–Present).
- National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (since 2018).
- Quality Matters (since 2008).
- American Society of Criminology (2019–2021).

MAJOR RESEARCH & CREATIVE INTERESTS

- Dual Enrollment and the Future of Higher Education Pathways.
- Digital & Open Literacy in Marginalized Societies; OER and Student Retention.
- Isolation and Feedback in Distance Education Students; Online Education Administration.
- Frameworks for quality online programs in low-resource contexts; Women's leadership capacity-building.