Committee on College Teaching and Learning

CCTL Conference on Teaching and Learning January 13, 2026

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Schedule At-A-Glance

https://www.niagara.edu/cctl-conference

TIME	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
8:00 am	Registration and Breakfast	Glynn, **4th floor**
8:50 am	Welcoming Remarks	Glynn, **room 407**
9:00-10:00 am	**Morning KEYNOTE: Dr. Carol Hurney**	Glynn, **room 407**
10:00 am	*Coffee Break*	Glynn, **4th floor**
10:10-11:00 am	**Morning Breakout Session 1 (AM1)**	Glynn, **2nd & 3rd floors**
11:10-12:00 pm	**Morning Breakout Session 2 (AM2)**	
12:10-1:00 pm	**Lunch/Poster Session**	Glynn, **4th floor**
1:10-2:00 pm	**Afternoon Breakout Session 1 (PM1)**	Glynn, **2nd & 3rd floors**
2:10-3:00 pm	**Afternoon Breakout Session 2 (PM2)**	
3:10 - 4:00 pm	**Afternoon Breakout Session 3 (PM3)**	
4:10- 4:30 pm	**Closing Remarks and Awards**	Glynn, **room 407**

Committee on College Teaching and Learning (CCTL)

CCTL's charge is to build a learning community of faculty who are committed to exploring, developing, and implementing active learning/teaching strategies into their courses by:

- Organizing faculty-led workshops and discussion groups about teaching and learning.
- Providing opportunities for full-time and part-time faculty to share ideas and to support one another's efforts to use and to assess the effectiveness of active teaching/learning strategies in their courses.
- Identifying, describing, and promoting active and integrative learning.
- Organizing a campus-based conference on teaching and learning.
- Coordinating the awarding of CCTL grants.

CCTL Members

- Mitchell Alegre
- Ashley Byczkowski
- Joellen Stender
- Katie Bryant
- Keri Thomas-Whiteside
- Katherine Rossi
- Cheryl Rode (Co-Chair)
- Jeffrey Faunce
- Carolyn Shivers (Co-Chair)
- David Taylor
- Yonghong Tong

Welcome from the Conference Chairs

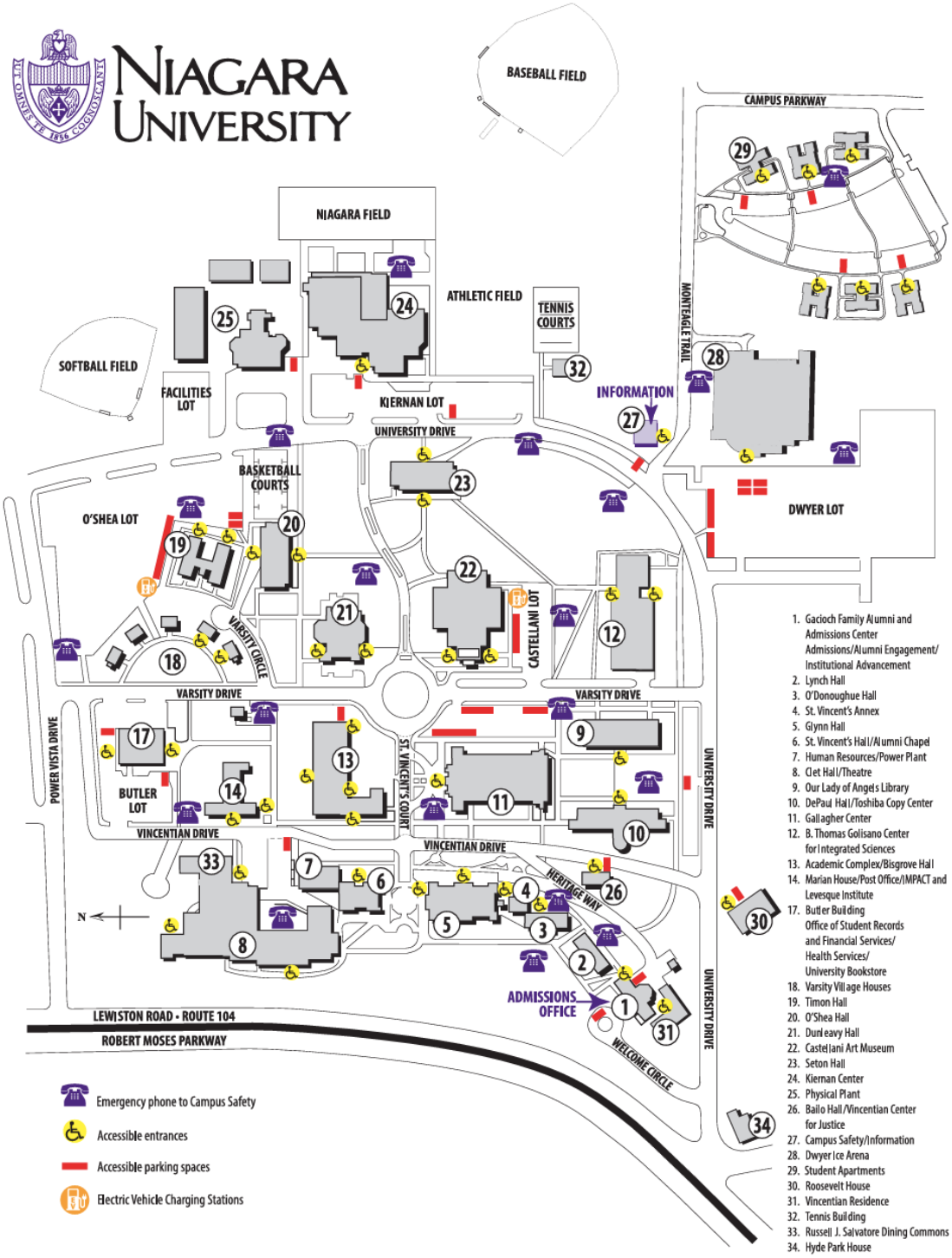
Attendees, guests, and colleagues—welcome!

Thank you for joining us as we bring back the CCTL Conference to Niagara University. As co-chairs, we extend our sincerest gratitude to all of you for joining us today as we enhance our teaching through the many outstanding presentations, workshops, and posters we will see throughout the day. Teaching and learning are important to all of us, so we hope you find some great things to take back to your classrooms and offices to help your students be successful.
Please see below for a listing of all events.

Regards,
Dr. Cheryl Rode and Dr. Carolyn Shivers
CCTL Co-Chairs

CCTL
Committee on College Teaching and Learning

Campus Map



Keynote Speaker

Dr. Carol A. Hurney
Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning
Colby College

Introduction by Dr. Carolyn Shivers

From Theory to Transformation: A CTL Director's Journey to a Learner-Centered, Inclusive Classroom.

This keynote chronicles a CTL Director's journey to reinvent an introductory biology course for non-science majors, applying the very principles they advocate for campus-wide. The core of this transformation involved the instructor leaving the lectern and redesigning the course to be driven by student interest in constructing the answers to big, beautiful, biological questions. Ultimately, this transformation story reveals concrete, actionable steps instructors can use to make their classrooms radically inclusive and learner-centered, fostering learning experiences where students embrace curiosity and take intellectual risks.

Schedule

	Morning 1 (AM1) 10:10-11:00 am	Morning 2 (AM2) 11:10am - 12:00 pm
Room 305	**305-AM1:** To AI or Not to AI: Rethinking Writing in the Age of Artificial Intelligence, *Christine Tinnesz*	**305-AM2:** Reinvigorating Motivation: Evidence-Based Strategies for Undergraduate Learners in Face-to-Face Settings, *Paul Vermette*
Room 307	**307-AM1:** Challenging Misconceptions: Building Engaged Learning Communities Online, *Debbie McCleary*	**307-AM2:** Lessons in the Creation and Ethics of AI-Generated Music, *Colleen Countryman*
Room 309	**309-AM1:** What the Best College Teachers Do: Remembering Ken Bain, *David Taylor*	**309-AM2:** From Curiosity to Curriculum: A Tiered Approach to Faculty AI Integration, *Jenna Linskens*
Room 312	**312-AM1:** Integrating AI and UDL Frameworks for Multimodal Course Design: Authentic Approaches to Inclusive and Engaging Learning, *Angela Thering*	**312-AM2:** Beyond the Ban: Intentional AI-Infused Course Design for Future-Ready Students, *Julianna Woite*
Room 315	**315-AM1:** Creative Teaching and Teaching for Creativity: Strategies for Instruction and Assessment, *Joanna Weld*	

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

	Afternoon 1 (PM1) 1:10 - 2:00 pm	Afternoon 2 (PM2) 2:10 - 3:00 pm	Afternoon 3 (PM3) 3:10 - 4:00 pm
Room 305	**305-PM1:** The First Minutes: Designing Care-Based, Culturally Relevant Class Openings, *Norline Wild*	**305-PM2:** Supporting Student Learning with Generative AI, *Rachael Webb*	**305-PM3**: Playing With Ideas – Student Engagement Through Simulation Games, *Jonathan D. Lawrence*
Room 307		**307-PM2:** Creating a Welcoming Classroom Community, *Jeffrey Faunce*	**307-PM3:** Socio-Emotional Learning and Mindful Movement Leading to Reading Success, *Donna Phillips*
Room 309	**309-PM1:** The Three Operating Systems (3os) of Online Learning: Building Scalable Academic Ecosystems, *Humberto Hernandez*	**309-PM2:** Teaching in the Age of AI: A Faculty Development Strategy for Building Confidence and Literacy, *Cana Fuest*	**309-PM3:** Enhancing Learning Together: Faculty-student Collaboration through AI-powered Tutorings, *Jie Zhang*
Room 312	**312-PM1:** The Lighter Side of Learning: Using Humor and Pop Culture to Spark Student Engagement, *Julianna Woite*	**312-PM2:** Breaking Barriers in Professional Learning: Introducing Kinvera, *Eric Yarwood*	**312-PM3:** Socratic AI: I Learned so Much from Their Questions (and the AI answers), *Mark Gallo*
Room 315	**315-PM1:** The Value of an Aging Simulation Suit as a Teaching Tool, *Susan Mason*	**315-PM2:** A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words…Bridge Building in the Classroom Through Arts-Based Texts, *Natalie Davey*	**315-PM3:** Supporting our Scholarship (SoS): Building a Faculty-Led Collaborative Initiative, *Norline Wild*

Abstracts

Morning 1 Breakout Sessions
10:10 - 11:00 am

305-AM1

To AI or Not to AI: Rethinking Writing in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Christine Tinnesz, *University at Buffalo*

Teaching writing at the college level remains an important skill for student success. However, in the era of artificial intelligence, teaching these skills has become increasingly difficult, requiring instructors to adapt to new technologies and evolving student expectations. In recent years, the emergence of AI tools has sparked important discussions about ethics and creativity in academic writing. This presentation will examine a Written Communication course designed to help students enhance their writing and communication abilities. Grounded in evidence-based pedagogy, the course encourages active learning, collaboration, and critical reflection. One major project, titled "Career Analysis," incorporates a balance of AI-assisted writing for certain components of the project and restrictions on its use in others. The course emphasizes process over product, guiding students through brainstorming sessions, peer reviews, and reflective writing to help them make informed choices about AI use. This fosters student engagement by creating authentic learning experiences where students take ownership of their writing and explore real-world applications of AI. Through this approach, students learn to ethically integrate AI for idea generation, grammar refinement, sentence structure improvement, and multimedia presentations. They also discover the importance of maintaining their own voice in their writing rather than relying solely on AI. The presentation will explore the structure of the Career Analysis project, share insights from student reflections, and consider broader implications for teaching writing in an AI-enhanced classroom.

307-AM1

Challenging Misconceptions: Building Engaged Learning Communities Online

Debbie McCleary, Natalie Davey, Carol Doyle-Jones *Niagara University*

Although market demand is strong, online learning is often viewed skeptically, with persistent misconceptions that virtual classrooms cannot foster communicative, relational, and caring learning communities comparable to face-to-face settings. In this collaborative presentation, we challenge that notion. Drawing on our combined research in Indigenous and inclusive pedagogies, we show how simple but intentional “pedagogy of care” strategies can create dynamic, respectful, and welcoming online communities of learners. We ground our approach in Nel Noddings’s ethic of care, which positions relational caring as foundational to educational practice (Noddings, 2002; Noddings, 2003). In Noddings’s framework, caring education depends not only on educators’ intentions but also on their capacity to engage in relational responsiveness, engrossment, and reciprocity with learners (Noddings, 2003; Noddings, 2016). We apply these principles in online contexts (such as through structured opportunities for student voice, scaffolded peer dialogue, responsive check-ins, and flexibility in assessment) to ensure students feel seen and actively contribute to the learning community. Integrated within this care-based architecture are Indigenous pedagogical principles such as relational accountability, reciprocity, storytelling, and learner-centred engagement. We draw on the work of Jan Hare, who highlights the centrality of relational ways of knowing and the role of community in learner identity and engagement (Hare, 2020). These Indigenous-informed practices reinforce a caring online classroom by honoring student stories, acknowledging relational responsibilities, and creating space for intercultural exchange. \r\nDuring the session, we will (a) present a conceptual framework combining care theory and Indigenous pedagogies, (b) share concrete strategies our team has implemented in online courses, and (c) invite participants to adapt these practices to their own teaching contexts. Our findings show that online classrooms can be deeply communicative, inclusive, and caring when community is intentionally cultivated, offering a model for reimagining relational online pedagogy in the digital era.

309-AM1

What the Best College Teachers Do: Remembering Ken Bain

David Taylor & Christina Taylor *Niagara University, SUNY Niagara*

In October 2025, we lost a true icon in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Ken Bain's classic book, What the Best College Teachers Do, celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2024 and has influenced countless numbers of educators. His book was published in 12 different languages, and Ken himself delivered more than 200 presentations around the world. This presentation will revisit his book and legacy as well as Ken\'s many contributions to teaching and learning. It will also examine how his ideas may apply today to a world of higher education that is at a crossroads and undergoing dramatic changes.

312-AM1

Integrating AI and UDL Frameworks for Multimodal Course Design: Authentic Approaches to Inclusive and Engaging Learning

Angela Thering, *University at Buffalo*

This session explores how instructors can authentically integrate artificial intelligence tools into their teaching practice to create multimodal and accessible learning experiences that meet the diverse needs of students. Grounded in the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and Reflective Teaching Practice, this approach demonstrates how evidence-based frameworks can guide the ethical and purposeful use of AI in course design. Participants will see how tools such as Panopto, Copilot, and Napkin AI can be used to enhance clarity, accessibility, and engagement across instructional materials. The session introduces a workflow for designing and delivering inclusive content: using Panopto to produce and caption videos, Copilot to generate and refine concise summaries, and Napkin AI to visualize key ideas through concept mapping. These methods help faculty design with intention while supporting accessibility compliance with Title II and WCAG 2.1 standards. By blending theory and practice, the session provides concrete examples of how AI can support rather than replace the instructor's expertise. Attendees will leave with practical strategies to design and build multimodal presentations that engage students, improve accessibility, and reflect thoughtful pedagogical design. The session invites participants to consider how authentic AI integration can transform teaching and learning while maintaining the human connection at the heart of education.

Joanna Weld, *Niagara University*

Creativity has been identified as an essential skill for participation in the technology-driven global economy of the future (NACCCE, 1999; P21 Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2017). The 21st century pace of change “demands young people who can learn on their own, solve problems, and respond to situations unlike their parents or teachers dream of” (Starko, 2017, p. 6). Higher education, however, is often criticized for the didactic nature of instruction. Creativity scholars Kaufman and Glaveanu (2019) argue that, “Like love or happiness, creativity is everywhere and nowhere in academia” (p. 27). In this workshop-style presentation, attendees will be introduced to creative teaching behaviors and creative instructional strategies supported by existing research. Participants will be challenged to consider the creative skills of their discipline and discover opportunities to incorporate creativity into the instruction and assessment of their courses. Tangible strategies and sample assignments will be shared and time will be allocated for discussion and collaboration.

Morning 2 Breakout Sessions

Committee on College Teaching and Learning

11:10 am-12:00 pm

305-AM2

Reinvigorating Motivation: Evidence-Based Strategies for Undergraduate Learners in Face-to-Face Settings

Paul Vermette, Melissa Langridge, & Preston Bartels *Niagara University*

Everyone who teaches in a Higher Ed setting has much to say about his or her own perceptions of student motivation. However, not everyone who does so has (1) developed and implemented specific strategies to entice and improve student effort to construct deep understanding (2) utilized research-supported and effective face-to-face collaborative or solitary in-classroom thinking experiences and/or (3) planned carefully to help undergraduates understand their own learning actions and the consequences of their decisions. This workshop will provide the opportunity to experiment with those very ideas. Topics include the role of expectations, the value of the use of Choice, the promotion of autonomy, the power of respectful questioning and feedback, the impact of the timing of interventions, and the building of sense of belonging and productive relationships in the classroom community. Participants in this collaborative and interactive session will (1) examine several theories (Wigfield & Eccles, l990, Ryan and Deci, 2000, Yaeger, 2024, (2) analyze and modify numerous classroom vignettes and (3) assess the personal utility of numerous plausible applications to their practice. The will leave the session with a brief plan for implementation into their own work.

307-AM2

Lessons in the Creation and Ethics of AI-Generated Music

Colleen Countryman, *Ithaca College*

In Spring 2025 and Fall 2025, a new instructional unit on songwriting and AI-generated music was introduced in a Physics of Music course. The unit aimed to help students in writing their first song, to investigate how they can utilize AI algorithms to generate chord progressions, and to critically evaluate the ethical implications of AI in music creation and consumption. Over two and a half 75-minute classes, students engaged in a range of activities: a live demonstration of an AI music generator; an iClicker-based game to distinguish AI-generated songs from human-made ones; and small-group critiques of songs generated whole-cloth by AI systems. Students also debated the ethics of using aspects of generative AI in songwriting and discussed the US Copyright Office's stance on AI-assisted works. Students then participated in a capstone songwriting activity, which required original lyrics and recordings of both a chorus and a verse. In class, we discussed basic song structure, and introduced the software tool featured in this unit—ChordSeqAI—a tool that suggests chord progressions based on popular patterns. While some students have backgrounds in STEM or music performance, the majority had limited knowledge in both songwriting and AI tools at the start of this activity. To lower the barrier to music creation, students were allowed to use ChordSeqAI to generate meaningful chord progressions. Survey data and classroom observations were used to assess the impact of the unit on students' understanding of AI technologies and ethical concerns, as well as their openness to using AI in future creative work.

309-AM3

From Curiosity to Curriculum: A Tiered Approach to Faculty AI Integration

Jenna Linskens, *Ithaca College*

As artificial intelligence continues to reshape higher education, institutions face a growing need to support faculty in exploring, understanding, and applying AI in the classroom. At Ithaca College, we developed a four-tiered initiative to meet faculty where they are—whether they're curious about AI or ready to redesign a course around it. This session will present details of this initiative, which blends theory, practice, and performance with a foundation in ethical, inclusive AI use. Our conversation will highlight the design of this scalable model, ranging from awareness-building and community learning to mini-grants, intensives, and full course redesigns—and share practical insights for institutions seeking to build faculty capacity for AI-integrated teaching. Attendees will leave with strategies to replicate or adapt this approach, along with an honest look at faculty concerns, institutional challenges, and the collaborative support structures that make innovation sustainable.

312-AM2

Beyond the Ban: Intentional AI-Infused Course Design for Future-Ready Students

Julianna Woite, Marcia Bohn, Becky Goldberg-Petty *D'Youville University*

At D'Youville University's Institute for Teaching Innovation, we believe the question is not whether students will use artificial intelligence (AI), but how we can design meaningful learning experiences that embrace it. As instructional designers, our team partners with faculty across diverse disciplines to integrate AI as a teaching tool rather than a prohibited shortcut. This session showcases how intentional, AI-infused course design can strengthen learning outcomes, promote ethical awareness, and better prepare students for professional practice. Through case studies in disciplines such as nursing, pharmacy, mental health counseling, statistics, research, and writing, we will highlight universal design approaches that make AI integration practical and impactful across the curriculum. Participants will benefit from our early victories, common pitfalls, and lessons learned as we developed assignments that invite students to collaborate with AI rather than hide behind it. Session participants will not simply listen but will be challenged to experience these ideas firsthand. Attendees will engage with AI tools on their own devices through short simulation activities—both written and voice-based—modeling the same types of learning experiences our students encounter. Together, we will reflect on design strategies that balance creativity, academic integrity, and future-ready skill development. Ultimately, this presentation argues that preparing students for the world they are entering requires not restricting AI but teaching them to use it responsibly, critically, and creatively, transforming AI from a perceived threat into a catalyst for innovation in higher education.

Katie Bryant, *Niagara University*

As higher education continues to evolve, institutions are increasingly shifting from traditional lecture-based instruction toward active, student-centered learning environments. Although this pedagogical transformation enhances engagement, motivation, and long-term retention, it can present challenges for faculty who are adapting to new teaching paradigms. Time constraints, preparation demands, and the uncertainty of facilitating dynamic classroom interactions often make the transition appear complex or intimidating. This session will demonstrate how small, intentional modifications can successfully bridge the gap between lecture-based and active learning approaches. Strategies such as think-pair-share, the muddiest point, peer teaching, student choice, brain dumps, and case studies—along with interactive platforms like Edpuzzle offer accessible entry points for faculty at all experience levels. Participants will explore evidence-based practices that foster deeper learning, intrinsic motivation, and improved knowledge retention, leaving with practical techniques that can be implemented immediately in their own courses.

Afternoon 1 Breakout Sessions
1:10 - 2:00 pm

305-PM1

The First Minutes: Designing Care-Based, Culturally Relevant Class Openings

Norline WIld, *Niagara University*

The first few minutes of class set the tone for learning, shape relationships, and strongly influence student engagement and motivation. Research confirms that intentional openings spark curiosity, foster belonging, and help students focus attention while connecting new learning to prior knowledge (Ambrose et al., 2010; Fong et al., 2024; Langmann, 2025; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018).

Grounded in Care Ethics (Gilligan, 2024; Noddings, 2013) and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), this workshop explores how relational and culturally responsive care can be enacted in the opening moments of class. Gilligan (2016, 2024) defines care as a voice of resistance to hierarchy and domination - an ethics of relationship, integrity, and reciprocity that sustains human connection. Noddings (2013) extends this ethic to education, identifying three interrelated components that operationalize care in teaching and learning: modeling, dialogue, and practice. When applied through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Care Ethics becomes an act of cultural affirmation and equity, which recognizes students' lived experiences, values their identities, and fosters interdependence and respect.

This interactive workshop engages faculty in three care-based opening models: quiet reflection, playful activity, and interactive read-aloud. Participants will experience and co-construct strategies for opening class in ways that nurture belonging, authenticity, and curiosity while enacting an ethic of care and cultural responsiveness.

307-PM1

Designing Valid and Reliable Multiple-Choice Assessments: The Do's, Don'ts, and Power of Test Blueprints

Katie Bryant, *Niagara University*

Designing high-quality assessments requires more than testing knowledge; it demands strategic alignment between learning objectives, question construction, and evaluation methods to ensure validity and reliability. This presentation examines the do's and don'ts of multiple-choice assessment design and the use of test blueprints as tools to promote fairness, consistency, and transparency. Drawing from the frameworks of Brookhart and Nitko (2019) and Parkes and Zimmaro (2016), this session explores how deliberate test mapping, question sequencing, and item development can improve the accuracy of student evaluation and enhance learning outcomes.

Participants will learn evidence-based practices for crafting valid multiple-choice questions that measure various cognitive levels, reduce ambiguity, and minimize bias. Emphasis will be placed on constructing plausible distractors, avoiding trick questions, balancing cognitive demand, and sequencing items from lower- to higher-order thinking. The use of blueprints and item analyses will be discussed as essential tools for aligning test items with course objectives, maintaining content balance, and reinforcing transparency for students.

The session will also address common pitfalls that threaten validity, such as misaligned objectives, inconsistent weighting, and poorly structured items, and present strategies to mitigate these issues. By integrating assessment literacy with reflective test design, educators can transform traditional examinations into authentic measures of student learning.

309-PM1

The Three Operating Systems (3os) of Online Learning: Building Scalable Academic Ecosystems

Humberto Hernandez, *3os*

This session unveils how universities across three continents are redefining their online education ecosystems through an integrated, AI-powered framework known as the 3os of Online Learning

Operations. The model aligns institutional governance, pedagogy, technology, and growth operations into a unified system designed to build capacity, not dependency.
Drawing from case studies in North America, South America, and Africa, the presentation explores how AI tools, ranging from course builders and tutoring systems to analytics dashboards, can orchestrate quality, scalability, and retention simultaneously. Participants will see how universities have successfully transitioned from outsourced OPM models to fully internalized, AI-augmented operations.
This presentation invites educators and institutional leaders to reimagine online learning not as a series of disconnected tools, but as an intelligent, adaptive ecosystem. Attendees will leave with a replicable model for transforming online education sustainably, increasing ROI through data-driven retention, and enhancing equity and access through intentional design.

312-PM1

The Lighter Side of Learning: Using Humor and Pop Culture to Spark Student Engagement

Julianna Woite, *D'Youville University*

As Walt Disney said, "Humor is no enemy to learning." In fact, it might just be learning's secret sidekick! This session invites educators to trade a little seriousness for some sparkle and explore how humor and pop culture can energize both online and in-person classrooms.

From meme-inspired discussions to TikTok-based reviews, we'll explore creative ways to turn everyday cultural moments into meaningful learning experiences. Through real examples of student assignments, feedback, and laughter-filled lessons, participants will explore how humor can break down barriers, boost participation, and build authentic connections between students and instructors - something that matters more than ever in online learning.

This isn't about being a comedian - it's about being human. Attendees will walk away with practical, classroom-tested strategies for weaving humor and pop culture into lectures, assignments, and conversations in ways that are relevant, inclusive, and academically sound.

Whether you teach Shakespeare or statistics, you'll leave with fresh ideas - and maybe a meme or two - to keep your students engaged. After all, we all know children learn best though play – and maybe we do too.

315-PM1

The Value of an Aging Simulation Suit as a Teaching Tool

Susan Mason & Heidi Pauta, *Niagara University*

Aging simulation suits offer a new way for students in gerontology and related courses to experience what it feels like to grow older. Outfitted with weighted and restrictive components, as well as sensory distorting equipment, the user can experience issues related to advanced age: impaired vision, fatigue, hearing loss, and impaired mobility. These suits can be used to gain insight into the daily struggles of some older adults, while simultaneously increasing feelings of

empathy and compassion. In this presentation, we discuss research on the effectiveness of an aging simulation suit as a teaching tool. Factors to be considered include the extent to which aging simulation suits accurately represent the aging experience; the importance of providing a comfortable, non-institutional setting for the experience; conditions under which an aging suit may produce negative rather than positive feelings about aging; and the value of a debriefing session.

Afternoon 2 Breakout Sessions
2:10-3:00 pm

305-PM2

Supporting Student Learning with Generative AI

Rachael Webb, *University at Buffalo*

Generative AI has emerged as both a powerful tutor and a potential cognitive crutch in higher education. This interactive session explores how faculty and instructional designers can integrate AI tools to enhance, rather than erode, student learning. Participants will examine strategies to

mitigate “cognitive deskilling” and view live demonstrations of emergent models. The session will also include a comparative overview of leading AI platforms and their ideal use cases. Participants will leave equipped with an understanding of when and how to use generative AI as a teaching and learning partner, and how to design assignments that encourage productive human + AI collaboration rather than passive dependence.

307-PM2

Creating a Welcoming Classroom Community

Jeffery Faunce, *Niagara University*

When students respond to the journal prompt: “The best teacher I ever had was…and the reason is.” Inevitably, the students comment on how they were treated by their “best” teachers and how those teachers created an inclusive, positive classroom community.

Through the use of activities, starters, warm-ups and community-builders, this session will focus on how to create a welcoming classroom community where students feel heard, seen and comfortable. The session will be applicable to on-ground as well as online classrooms. This will be an opportunity for instructors from all disciplines to explore and share how to establish

connections and relationships with our students that lead to greater engagement and academic success.

309-PM 2

Teaching in the Age of AI: A Faculty Development Strategy for Building Confidence and Literacy

Cana Fuest & Jenna Sadue, *Rochester Institute of Technology*

As artificial intelligence continues to shape the higher education landscape, faculty need more than awareness of AI tools. They need AI literacy that is grounded in sound pedagogy, ethics, and institutional priorities. AI Essentials for Educators is a six-week professional development course designed at the Rochester Institute of Technology to help faculty build confidence and competence in teaching and learning with AI. The course is modeled after the EDUCAUSE Faculty AI Literacy in Teaching and Learning Framework and focuses on four key competencies: technical understanding, evaluative skills, practical application, and ethical considerations.\r\nIn

this session, we will share how the course was designed, including the reasoning behind its structure and the value of aligning with the EDUCAUSE framework. We will discuss lessons learned from implementation, strategies for engaging faculty across disciplines, and examples of how reflective practice supported both confidence and curiosity around AI. Attendees will leave with some ideas for creating their own AI literacy initiatives at their campuses within faculty development contexts.

312-PM2

Breaking Barriers in Professional Learning: Introducing Kinvera

Eric Yarwood, *Education Collaborative of WNY*

Professional learning is essential for educators and institutions, yet it often comes with barriers—limited access, high costs, inconsistent quality, and lack of flexibility. This workshop introduces Kinvera, a new online professional learning platform designed to address these challenges by bringing experts, educators, and organizations together to create a more accessible, connected, and sustainable model for professional growth.

Kinvera was developed by The Education Collaborative of WNY (EdCo), a non-profit organization in Buffalo, NY, after experiencing challenges with enrollment, attendance, and engagement for in-person and synchronous professional development opportunities. Through conversations and

research, educators expressed a preference for asynchronous and on-demand learning experiences—leading to the creation of the platform. Kinvera provides a multifaceted opportunity to learn, share, connect, and earn. Through membership models, individuals and institutions can access both free and paid content, complete courses for certificates and credentials, and build personalized learning pathways. Institutions (K–12 through higher education) can also create their own content, track completion for compliance, and foster cross-sector collaborations that align professional learning across schools, colleges, and universities.

A unique strength of Kinvera lies in its content creation ecosystem. Educators, nonprofits, and businesses can contribute high-quality courses and resources. With a vetting process in place to ensure rigor and relevance, creators can share expertise, expand their reach, and generate income—while schools and educators benefit from a diverse and evolving library of professional development opportunities.\r\nIn this session, participants will explore how Kinvera is designed to dismantle the traditional challenges of professional learning. Together, we will discuss opportunities for collaboration, strategies for maximizing impact, and the role of expert-driven content in shaping the future of professional development.

315-PM 2/3

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words…Bridge Building in the Classroom Through Arts-Based Texts

Natalie Davey, Carol Doyle-Jones, & Debbie McCleary, *Niagara University*

Considering this year's theme of innovation, evolution, and adaptation, this session will offer a place to explore social justice issues through art-full responses to diverse texts. Exploring elements of storytelling, identity building, and the integration of arts-based pedagogies, visual arts provide a way into reflecting upon current social justice issues while integrating responsive dialogue creates space for deep discussions. Through arts-based responses to diverse picture books and short film, this session showcases the exploration of the question: What happens in educational spaces when exploring visual arts, literature, and issues of social justice together?

We consider Davey's (2023) work on care-based pedagogies and finding joy to explore how texts and art can create space for responsive dialogue around issues of social justice for teaching and

learning. As Noddings (2011) writes, “One who cares must meet the cared-for just as he or she is, as a whole human being with individual needs and interests” and in the educational context such human-centred work happens with art acting as a bridge to care.

This session is hands-on and interactive. We will be sharing images from both picture book and short films to illustrate how utilizing such arts-based texts are a way into important discussions and activities on important topics, often challenging ones. We want to highlight that the art and practice of teaching and learning involves the entanglements of and relationships between humans and materials and learning about the world, who we are, and our places in this local and global classroom (Ulmer et al., 2020). By sharing Maclear’s (2012) Virginia Wolf and stills from Davey’s (2025) The Assistant we explore learning relationships and educational moments of joy through artistic and reflective responses that will open up space for links to be made to a variety of classroom settings.

Afternoon 3 Breakout Sessions
3:10 - 4:00 pm

305-PM3

Playing With Ideas – Student Engagement Through Simulation Games

Jonathan D. Lawrence, *Canisius University*

I teach Religious Studies courses for my school’s core curriculum and have struggled sometimes to keep students engaged. About ten years ago I started incorporating games of different sorts into my classes and found that they increased student engagement, at least in individual class sessions.

In 2020 I started using classroom simulations from Reacting to the Past (https://reactingconsortium.org/). Scenarios are available in many different disciplines and topics where there is a conflict of ideas and interpretations. Students are given role sheets outlining

their identity and affiliations and tasks. They have to use primary texts and collaborate with other students to achieve their goals. These games increased student engagement during the pandemic – one student even described an online-asynchronous game as "an immersive experience." These games also promote critical thinking, balance empathy with critical analysis of complex historical figures, and strengthen written and oral communication. In many of my courses I play several one-session games and two longer games which may take several weeks to play. This structure also allows students to learn from their failures as well as their successes and adjust their strategies in subsequent games. This is a useful lesson during the course but also an important life lesson.

Canisius University was started by the Jesuits and our Religious Studies courses are supposed to make connections to Jesuit concepts and history, but students do not seem very interested. I created a one-session game about Jesuit history "Ban the Jesuits" and the students get right into the debates and learn concepts that can then be discussed in subsequent sessions.

This presentation will include a short classroom game, a summary of a 2022 survey about the impact of the games on my students' learning, and comments from a panel of colleagues and former students about their experiences with the games.

307-PM3

Socio-Emotional Learning and Mindful Movement Leading to Reading Success

Donna Phillips, *Niagara University*

This discussion will explore the integration of socio-emotional learning (SEL) and mindful movement to support children's reading success. Research demonstrates that SEL skills such as emotional regulation, self-awareness, and social connectedness strongly predict reading engagement and comprehension. Mindful movement practices—including yoga, Tai Chi, Qigong, and breathing exercises—provide embodied strategies for cultivating these SEL competencies. By linking the body, breath, and emotions with literacy practices, educators can create calmer classrooms, reduce reading anxiety, and foster readiness to learn. Current research on classroom practices will be shared.

309-PM3

Enhancing Learning Together: Faculty-student Collaboration through AI-powered Tutorings

Jie Zhang, Ning Yu *SUNY Brockport*

The rapid adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education promises personalized learning, yet often functions primarily as a technical solution rather than as pedagogically integrated tools. Despite the promises, a common disconnect is particularly critical in fields like teacher education, where reflective practice, constructive feedback, human dialogue, and thoughtful revisions are central to learning (Holstein et al., 2019; Luckin et al., 2016; Yu et al., under review). To address these challenges, faculty of Computer Science and Special Education at SUNY Brockport worked together to launch an AI-powered tutoring project, linking student experiential learning with a faculty learning community to foster collaborative growth of both students and faculty participants.

During this presentation, we will showcase how the establishment of the Association for Computing Machinery Special Interest Group on Artificial Intelligence (ACM SIGAI) Student Chapter, the development and deployment of EduAlly, an AI-powered tutoring platform, and

experiential learning experience can bridge critical gaps in preparing students for career readiness. We will also discuss how a one-year Faculty Learning Community has evolved into a multi-year Reflective Practitioners Learning Community with support from the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), which provides space for continuous faculty development in technological and pedagogical innovation to better support student learning.

At the end of this presentation, participants will achieve the following goals:

- Learn about an AI-powered tutoring project
- Explore how an experiential learning project is conducted
- Discuss strategies for linking student-led projects and faculty learning communities through pedagogical and technological initiatives, aiming to enhance student engagement and career readiness.

312-PM3

Socratic AI: I Learned so Much from Their Questions (and the AI answers)

Mark Gallo, *Niagara University*

One of the concerns of many educators is the use of AI by students. I flipped this idea on its head and demanded students to use AI to dig into particular topics that are related to material we discussed in the classroom. The learner was required to ask a question, then based on the AI answer, ask another question based on that information, repeating this process several additional times until they felt satisfied with their research. Students included all the information (their questions as well as the AI answers) as well as a summary of their investigation as an assignment on an online course management system. This process presented an interesting window into their thought process as well as their level of understanding. What surprised me was how many times I learned something from the AI answers as well.

315-PM 3

Supporting our Scholarship (SoS): Building a Faculty-Led Collaborative Initiative

Norline Wild, Jennifer Hartman, Mary Louise Stahl, Paula Adams, *Niagara University*

While scholarly productivity is a primary expectation and major factor in promotion and tenure in higher education, faculty consistently cite the lack of dedicated institutional support as a significant barrier to success. This gap affects career progression and retention. Part I of this panel session will detail the development, structure, and initial implementation of Supporting Our Scholarship (SoS), a voluntary, faculty-driven initiative established in our College of Education to directly address this need.

SOS was created with the objectives of promoting productivity, retention, and creativity. We began by conducting an initial survey to map our faculty's areas of expertise, perceived scholarly strengths, and needs. This foundation led to establishing the initiative's core logistics: a weekly meeting schedule and a shared online resource repository. This repository is a vital, living tool, housing current member publications, vetted lists of conferences and journals, meeting notes, and project to-do lists. Weekly meetings are collaborative and action-oriented, featuring discussions on presentation ideas, venues for scholarly work, promotion requirements, and focused collaboration on specific research projects.

This session will provide a blueprint of the SOS model, offering actionable steps for attendees to adapt this framework to their own needs and setting.