



# Distilling the Essence of General Education

## Louisville 2025

**ASSOCIATION FOR GENERAL & LIBERAL STUDIES**

**2025 CONSTITUTE**

**THE GALT HOUSE**

**LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY**

**OCTOBER 2, 3 & 4**



**The mind is a richly woven tapestry in which the colors are distilled from the experiences of the senses, and the design drawn from the convolutions of the intellect.**

~Carson McCullers (American Author)

One third of all bourbon comes from Louisville, and its distilleries are the city's eighth largest employer! To honor those distinctions, we at the Association for General & Liberal Studies invite you to think about the role of "distillation" in general education. Both processes—bourbon distillation and education program development—require careful planning, expert handling, and thoughtful refinement over time. They both start with raw ingredients, undergo transformation through distinct phases, and ultimately result in a refined, complex final product that satisfies its intended purpose.

Distillation is a process by which the components of a compound are separated and purified via a process of heating and cooling . . . it also refers to the drawing out of the most meaningful and significant components of an experience. General Education has many values and purposes, and we invite all to join the exploration of those essential elements, the very elements of the gen ed experience that make General Education what it is.



Education can be compared to distilling whiskey in the sense that both processes involve taking a raw material (knowledge or a fermented mash), carefully separating and refining the valuable components through a controlled process (learning or distillation), to produce a concentrated and refined end product (a well-informed individual or a high-quality whiskey).



Key similarities:

- **Extracting the essence:** Just as distilling removes unwanted elements from the mash to concentrate alcohol, education aims to extract key knowledge and skills from a vast amount of information, filtering out irrelevant details.
- **Gradual refinement:** The distillation process involves multiple stages to progressively purify the spirit, similar to how education progresses through different levels and subjects, building upon foundational knowledge.
- **Importance of control:** Both distilling and education require precise control over variables like temperature and teaching methods to achieve the desired outcome.

- **Experience matters: ‘The mash’ as the foundation:** The initial raw material (mash in distilling, basic information in education) provides the base for further refinement.
- **‘The still’ as the learning process:** The distillation apparatus is analogous to the educational structure, where knowledge is "cooked" and refined through various teaching methods.
- **‘The finished product’:** Just as a well-aged whiskey represents a refined spirit, a well-educated individual embodies a well-rounded understanding of a subject.

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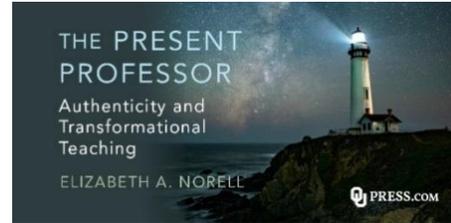


**Liz Norell**

**Associate Director of Instructional Support  
Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning  
University of Mississippi**

Author of the 2024 book,  
*The Present Professor:*

*Authenticity and Transformation Teaching*  
(University of Oklahoma Press)



### **FRIDAY KEYNOTE**

*Presence Under Pressure: How leaders can foster meaningful teaching in general education*

To say that higher education is in crisis is both trite and true. The threats to college and university budgets have rarely felt more existential, and in many states—including our host state of Kentucky—state legislators are actively redlining programs that support diversity, equity, and inclusion on our campuses. For academic leaders, the challenges abound. In this keynote, Dr. Liz Norell will help you reclaim your presence and purpose in these turbulent times. By focusing on presence and authenticity, she will model ways of thinking about our work that center our values and our joy. By focusing on presence under pressure, leaders can foster meaningful teaching opportunities for our colleagues that can, in turn, shape meaningful learning for all students.

### **SATURDAY WORKSHOP**

*Presence Under Pressure: Tools for cultivating authenticity, presence, and joy*

What does it mean to be present in higher education in 2025? In this workshop, attendees will be invited into reflection and inquiry about their values, sources of joy (and stress), and ways of being at work. Through those reflections, attendees will identify tools and practices to support authenticity, presence, and joy on campus in ways that support others in a community of meaningful teaching and learning. Expect hands-on activities, reflections, and discussions that support attendees where they are.

Learn more about Dr. Norell [HERE](#).

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Newly launched creative commons resources for teaching and learning with reflection.

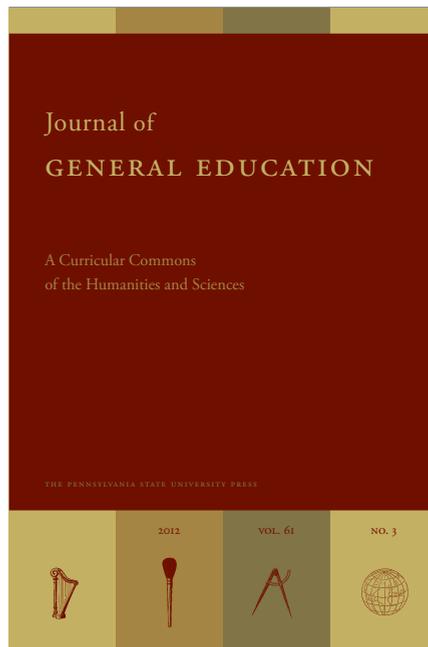
**OAIR** | [oair.org](http://oair.org)

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The Taxonomy of Reflective Inquiry

# Scholarly Publishing Collective



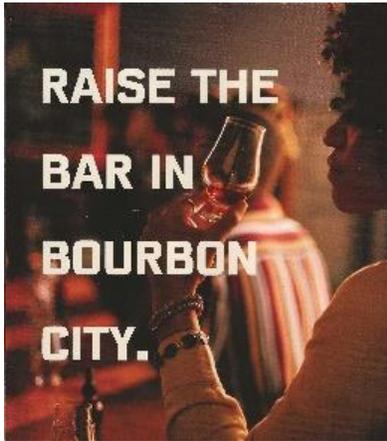
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## WHAT IS THERE TO DO NEAR THE GALT HOUSE?

You name it! The Galt House -- known as Louisville's centerpiece -- enjoys a close proximity to all the city's favorites.

You will be walking distance away from the:

KFC Yum! Center

The Belle of Louisville

Museum Row

Louisville Slugger Museum and Factory

Waterfront Park

Kentucky Center for the Arts

Muhammad Ali Center

Frazier History Museum

Falls of the Ohio

Louisville Glassworks

Actors Theatre of Louisville

Kentucky Science Center

And Fourth Street Live!

You can also make a splash by visiting local distilleries that are just a shot away from the Galt House Hotel!

Whiskey Row

Urban Bourbon Trail

Old Forrester Distillery

Jim Beam Urban Stillhouse

Kentucky Peerless Distillery,

Evan Williams Bourbon Experience





**WANT TO GRAB A BITE TO EAT  
OR A QUICK BEVERAGE? THE  
GALT HOUSE HAS A VARIETY OF  
RESTAURANTS FOR YOU TO  
CHOOSE FROM!**

**Swizzle:** enjoy picturesque while dining on the 25<sup>th</sup> floor

**Walker's Exchange:** an American Brasserie open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner

**Jockey Silks Bourbon Bar:** fantastic spirits paired with southern comfort food for lunch or dinner

**The Veranda:** gather before dinner in the east tower lobby for spirits and hors d'oeuvres

**Thelmas at the Conservatory:** grab and go options throughout the day, featuring Starbuck's coffee

**Down One Bourbon Bar & Restaurant:** one of the stops on the Bourbon Trail, right on the historic Whisky Row

The beautiful **Conservatory Bar** is billed as Louisville's "longest" bar and it is in the skywalk atrium connecting the two towers. With an array of TV's and plenty of seating, this is where you want to hang out for any ball game or socializing with your colleagues



## DINING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM LOCAL AGLS MEMBERS

Neighborhood : NuLu [hip, artsy area with plenty of art galleries, antique shops, and eateries]

- Feast BBQ (Vegetarian & Vegan Friendly)
- In Season Harvest Kitchen
- MeeshMeesh Mediterranean (Vegetarian & Vegan Friendly)
- Mayan Café (Vegetarian & Vegan Friendly)
- Grind Burger Kitchen

Neighborhood: Downtown

- Proof on Main
- Mussels & Burger Bar
- Safier Mediterranean (Vegetarian & Vegan Friendly)
- Doc Crow's Southern Smokehouse and Raw Bar
- Troll Pub Under the Bridge

Neighborhood: Old Lou [the historic district just south of the central business district]

- Old Louisville Tavern

Neighborhood: Shelby Park/Germantown [settled by German immigrants in 1800s, know for its architecture and vibrant community]

- FOKO & La Pana Bakery y Café (Mexican Brunch/Lunch & Bakery)
- Toasty's Tavern
- The Post, Germantown
- Full Stop Station (Vegetarian & Vegan Friendly)

Neighborhood: The Highlands [centered on Bardstown Road, known for its Victorian and Queen Anne-style homes, eclectic shops, and restaurants]

- Ramsi's Cafe On The World
- The Black Italian
- Heart & Soy/Roots (Vegetarian & Vegan Friendly)
- Dragon King's Daughter (Vegetarian & Vegan Friendly)
- O'Shea's Irish Pub

Neighborhood: Paristown [east of downtown, revitalized arts and entertainment district]

- Locals Pizza (Vegetarian & Vegan Friendly)

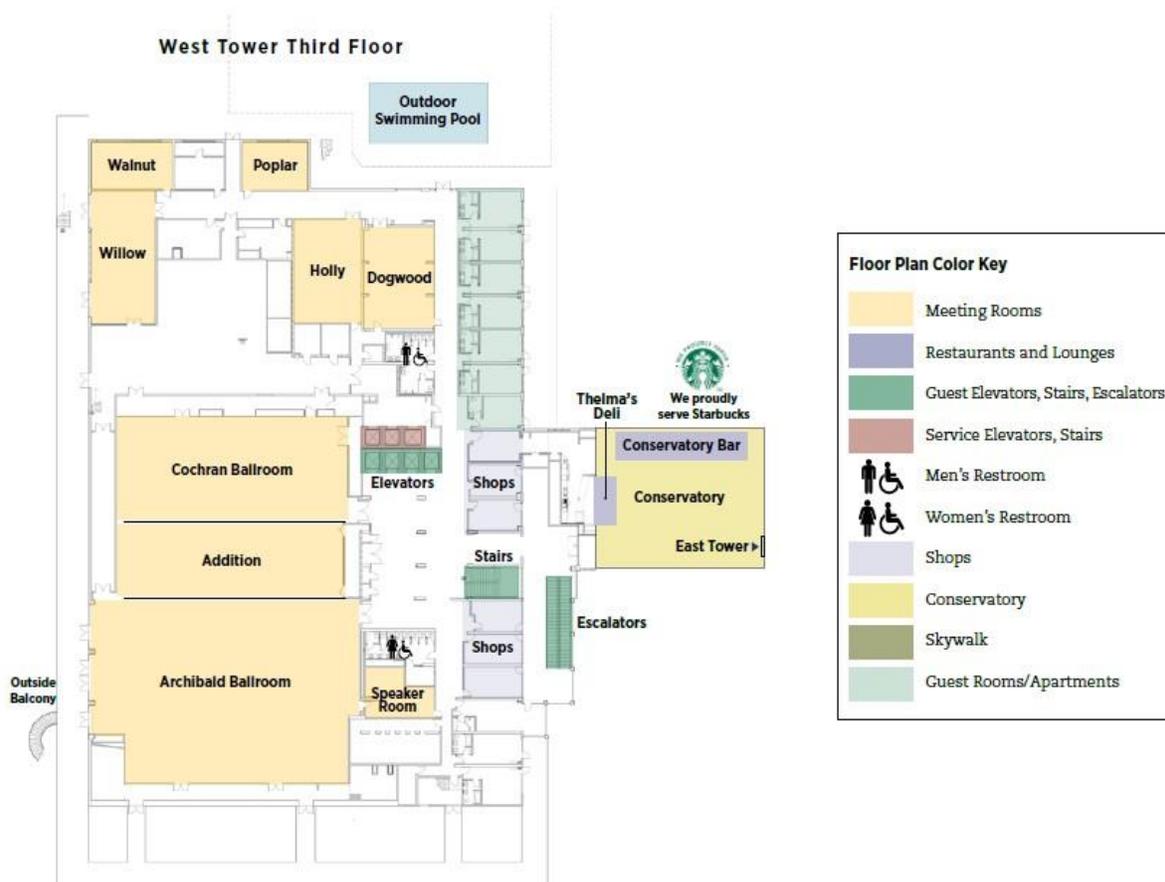
Neighborhood: Crescent Hill [a few miles east of downtown, known for its residential areas and lively commercial area center along Frankfort Avenue]

- DiFabio's (Vegetarian & Vegan Friendly)
- Whirling Tiger Coffee (Coffee Shop & Light Bites)
- The Silver Dollar
- Irish Rover

## HOW TO READ THE SCHEDULE

- Time listed gives you the beginning and ending time of the session
- Letter in bracket indicates the track: [A] = assessment [R] = reform [B] = belonging [PD] = AGLS offering [S] = sponsor session
- *Italics* indicates the presentation title
- **Red** words indicate the room of the session

**ALL MEETING SPACE IS LOCATED ON THE THIRD LEVEL OF THE HOTEL'S WEST TOWER. BELOW IS A LAYOUT OF THE FLOOR.**



# **THURSDAY, 10/2 SCHEDULE**

## **2:00 PM to 4:00 PM**

*NEW in 2025! The How-to Gen Ed Reform Workshop: Useful Tools for All Four Phases of the Process* [A] **Archibald** Tisha Paredes (Paredes Assessment Accreditation Consulting) and Stephen Biscotte (Virginia Tech)

In this ALL-NEW workshop, experienced facilitators will help participants navigate the four phases of the gen ed reform process: 1) laying the foundation, 2) program design, 3) program implementation, and 4) sustained engagement. This is not a theoretical overview...it is a nuts-and-bolts, in-the-weeds, how-to-guide that brings 'assessment thinking' to gen ed leadership. We will share and work through prompts, worksheets, templates, and activities to practice the hard work of gen ed reform in a supportive, collaborative environment so participants will leave feeling more prepared for the real deal at their institutions. We will even throw in a couple of engaging gen ed reform games and exercises to put the FUN in gen ed reform FUN-damentals. This workshop is ideal for those new to gen ed leadership as well as seasoned gen ed veterans looking to expand or refresh their reform toolbox.

## **4:30 PM to 6:30 PM**

*Refining the Proposal Process: Streamlining General Education Course Development* [R] **Archibald** Tricia Mieden Wilson and Laura Wheeler Poms (George Mason University)

Much like the bourbon distillation process, the general education course proposal process benefits from being thoughtful and methodical, rather than rushed. Taking the time to refine your proposal process not only streamlines the process but also supports faculty in developing strong proposals that align with both category and larger institutional goals. This 2-hour collaborative pre-conference workshop focuses on ensuring clarity, consistency, and meaningful faculty engagement at every stage—from initial proposal submission to final approval. Anyone who engages in faculty developing or reviewing general education courses will benefit from this workshop. The emphasis of this workshop is to give you strategies for implementing a course proposal process that is both efficient and supportive of faculty, committee members, and the overall general education program. We will share key insights from our experience, including how to: 1) develop clear guidelines and expectations for faculty submitting course proposals, 2) implement structured feedback mechanisms that improve proposal quality while reducing committee workload, 3) support faculty through targeted resources and transparent communication, and 4) ensure committee members can efficiently evaluate proposals while upholding curricular standards.

Access to sample materials, including proposal templates, feedback guidelines, and communication strategies, will be provided. Through guided discussions and activities, attendees will explore ways to adapt and implement these materials and practices at their own institutions, ensuring that their course proposal process strengthens—not hinders—their general education program.

## **7:00 PM to 8:30 PM**

All-Conference Welcome Reception **Willow** Join us for light snacks, a beverage, and meeting your gen ed colleagues.

# **FRIDAY, 10/3 SCHEDULE**

## **8:00 AM to 9:00 AM**

Morning Coffee! **Archibald**

coffee and other beverages are available all day at Thelma's Deli located in 3<sup>rd</sup> floor skywalk

## **8:00 AM to 5:00 PM**

Registration and Information Desk **Archibald**

## **8:30 AM to 9:30 AM**

Welcome to Louisville! [A] **Archibald**

Presentation of 2025 AGLS Awards

Jerry G. Gaff Faculty Award, Outstanding Teacher presented by Jodene DeKorte  
(Purdue Global)

Exemplary General Education Program Award presented by David DiMattio  
(Springfield Technical Community College)

Presidential Address

*Reaffirming the What, Why, and Who of Gen Ed* Stephen Biscotte (Virginia  
Tech) and Joyce Lucke (AGLS)

## **9:45 AM to 10:45 AM**

*Building Inclusive Communities in General Education* [B] **Poplar** Kali Furman and  
Kara Clevinger (Oregon State University)

My co-facilitator and I discuss three sets of required courses in the newly revised general education program at Oregon State University: a first-year experience student success course called Transitions, with an upper-division course required for transfer students, a mid-tier course on Difference, Power, and Oppression meant to be taken in the first or second year, an Advanced Difference, Power, and Oppression upper-division course meant to be taken within the major, and an upper-division Seeking Solutions course on solving complex or “wicked” problems in interdisciplinary groups meant to be taken outside of the student’s major. We provide pedagogical support and development for faculty and TAs teaching in these categories, primarily through required trainings, and we also teach these courses. In the session, we will use our faculty support and teaching and learning lenses to explore building inclusive communities in general education. Our plan for the session will be to 1) share an overview and lessons learned from developing and now implementing these four new categories that make up OSU’s Signature Core Education requirements; 2) demonstrate how these courses help students find and build inclusive communities on campus with an interactive demo of a sample class activity; and 3) engage participants in a discussion of how they already support or could support belonging, access, and student success by helping students practice and evaluate approaches to community-building, respectful dialogue, and interdisciplinary problem-solving. Ultimately, we are distilling our Signature Core Education courses to focus on this key element of building inclusive communities that runs across the three categories and that students do deeper, more advanced work on throughout their general education experience from their first year to senior year. The goals we have for participants in the session are to leave more informed about what it means and can look like to have students critically examine and build inclusive communities in their general education and take away a set of strategies, activities, and assignments for teaching community-building approaches.

*Capturing Unconscious Thought: Using Projective Techniques to Guide Discussions* [non-track] **Walnut** Hannah Deuyour (Virginia Tech)

Projective techniques originated in the field of psychology as a way to reveal personality and unconscious thought (Hertz, 1986; Miller, 2015). More recently, these strategies have been used in qualitative research methods (focus groups and interviews) to help participants articulate their thoughts and answer questions more thoroughly and descriptively (Fazrul, 2020). Projective techniques fall into several categories identified by Linzey (1959) summarized as: Associative techniques (say the first thing that comes to mind when presented with an image or other stimulus); Construction techniques (draw or create something out of other materials); the Which House? Activity (asks participants to describe subjects (such as HIV/AIDS) as a house); Completion techniques (fill in blanks, complete a drawing, or fill in speech bubbles to explain what someone or something would think, feel, or do); Choice or ordering techniques (group or order items according to certain criteria) --the Comparison Plots and Group Collage activities are both examples of this category); and Expressive techniques (assume an assigned identity and act out a scenario or create another product (first-person diary entry, for example).

These strategies are useful for general education class discussions because there are dozens of projective activities, which makes them easy to incorporate into courses of any discipline. More importantly, projective techniques are “fun for respondents [and] tap feelings, perceptions, and attitudes that can be difficult to access by more direct questioning” (Catterall & Ibbotson, 2000, p. 247). Additionally, these strategies offer flexibility to instructors because some pieces of these activities can be completed individually by students prior to coming to class as preparation for a discussion or done start to finish in groups during a single class period. Participants will work in groups to practice with the three techniques (Which House?, Comparison Plots, and Group Collage) to see how they work and discuss when, how, and why to include them in their courses.

*Beyond Boundaries: A Cross-campus Approach to Embedding Global Awareness into General Education* [B] **Willow** Jenni Gallagher and Rachel Fitzgerald (Virginia Tech)

In an era of increasing global complexity, general education should be intentionally designed to prepare students to engage with global challenges across cultural contexts. This session explores how strategic, institutionally supported partnerships between General Education and Global Education units can create sustainable and scalable models for embedding global and intercultural learning outcomes across disciplines and throughout the undergraduate curriculum, both abroad and on campus. Drawing on Virginia Tech’s model as a case study, presenters will highlight institutional strategies that connect general education with global and intercultural learning to cultivate graduates who are prepared to act ethically and responsibly in a globally interconnected world. They will then open discussion among the participants to share their experiences and collectively troubleshoot challenges and barriers to embedding global learning within gen ed. Designed for general education administrators, curriculum designers, global education professionals, and teaching faculty, this session will offer practical strategies, institutional models, and inclusive pedagogical approaches that foster global engagement and intercultural understanding. Presenters will share actionable examples that illustrate how collaborative efforts can result in transformative learning opportunities for all students. Administrators and faculty will gain tools to foster sustainable collaboration between departments and scale innovative global learning opportunities across disciplines.

*Leveraging Rubrics, Canvas Outcomes, and Power BI in the Assessment of General Education Student Learning Outcomes: A Case Study* [A] **Dogwood** Caitlyn Jessee, Lyn Hogan, and Galiya Tabulda (Florida State University)

This session explores the intersection of technology and assessment through a comprehensive case study from Florida State University's English department, showcasing the evolution of their approach to general education learning outcomes assessment – from the initial, imperfect process to the successful adoption of Canvas Outcomes, assod rubric, and Power BI visualizations. In this session, we will describe how we used Canvas Outcomes to streamline instructors’ role in scoring and documenting students’ assessment scores, how we extracted and cleaned learning outcomes data, and ultimately leveraged Power BI for data visualization, supporting informed analysis and improvement of the general education curriculum.

Attendees will receive access to a live version of the report with fictitious data and participate in guided discussions to deepen understanding and expand practical takeaways.

**Round Robin** -- Engaging Community with Gen Ed Success [R/B] **Holly** facilitated by Bridget Trogden (American University)

*Challenges to Celebrating Student Achievement* Kethera Moore and Chelsea Duncan (James Madison University)

In Fall of 2024, James Madison University (JMU) celebrated the 20th annual General Education Student Conference, which has always included student presentations, followed by a banquet dinner and a keynote address by the winner of that year's General Education Distinguished Teacher Award. However, since COVID, participation at all levels (faculty nominations, students accepting their nomination, and conference attendance) has steadily declined. Although faculty and students who participate deem the conference a high impact, worthwhile event, the small numbers have made it unsustainable. Currently, this event has been paused to reassess and re-envision what such an event might look like. What type of event could celebrate student achievement, showcase the work being done in Gen Ed, and provide professional development opportunities to students in a way that is appealing to today's college student? This roundtable will explore innovative ways to highlight student achievement in general education and provide students with personal and professional skill development, while also capturing student interest and engagement.

*Distilling the Essence of the First-Year Academic Seminar: What Goes In, and What Should the Final Product Be?* Paula Patch (Elon University)

A signature component of Elon University's general education curriculum (the Elon Core Curriculum) is the four-credit-hour first-year seminar, The Global Experience, which is now 30 years old. While its founders were prescient in creating a course that could move/age with the times, many things about the world, the university, our students, and the ways that we teach and learn have changed. Yet, we have not undertaken a systematic review or revisioning of The Global Experience in three decades. The curriculum for The Global Experience FYS must do many things: start Elon students on the path to “global citizenship” by exposing them to ideas that extend from the local and national to the global or international, as well as embody or incorporate six High-Impact Practices (first-year seminar, writing-intensive, collaborative learning, diversity and global learning, learning communities, and shared intellectual experiences). To accomplish these goals, instructors must practice pedagogy that incorporates what we have learned in 30 years, especially the pandemic experience, about teaching and learning, including that content must be taught alongside intellectual practices and habits of mind; that content must reflect the diverse backgrounds of our students and colleagues in the discipline and aim to ameliorate colonizing and marginalizing effects of publishing and disciplinary tradition; the importance of inclusive classroom environments and pedagogy; the importance of developing technological literacy; and, not least, what we know about first-year students and successful practices in foundational or gateway courses. Leaders in the Elon Core Curriculum have attempted to add these practices or elements piecemeal as they have arisen. Unfortunately, this has led to confusion and lack of cohesion for faculty teaching the course and students taking it. The time is ripe to develop a clear and cohesive—and, thus, effective—curriculum for this course. But what do we keep in, and what do we take out? In other words, what does the distillation of the FYS look and feel like? This presenter will bring a work-in-progress draft of the “new” FYS curriculum for feedback from the roundtable participants and will share ideas or actions that participants can take back to their home institutions.

## 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM

**Round Robin** -- Measuring the ‘Proof’ of Effective Student Learning [A] **Holly** facilitated by Kenneth Purcell (University of Southern Indiana)

*How Can We Measure That?* Bartell Berg (Hanover College)

General education assessment plays a central role in demonstrating student learning and institutional effectiveness. Yet, many institutions—including Hanover College—anchor their curricula in broad, mission-driven values such as responsibility, curiosity, and lifelong learning. Such values pose difficulties in defining and translating them into measurable outcomes. This session invites faculty and administrators to reflect on how assessment practices might better capture mission-driven outcomes, even when those outcomes resist traditional metrics. In this interactive discussion, participants will explore strategies for articulating, evidencing, and potentially reimagining the assessment of mission-aligned learning. Importantly, the session will include a discussion of the limits and possibilities posed by the alignment of assessment with the mission of higher education institutions.

### *Ensuring the Perfect Blend: How to Incorporate Assessment as Part of the Team?*

Benjamin Gross and Ross Martin (Jacksonville State University)

Beginning with farmers, and ending with bottling, it takes a dedicated team to distill the perfect blend. An unsung hero in this process is the quality control team. These individuals ensure the final product maintains public trust through assessing the beverage, ensuring it reaches the mark, and closing the loop by informing others of necessary adjustments. In other words, those in quality control are the assessment team of the distillation process. Through reimagining general education, Jacksonville State University is producing a college experience that mirrors this cohesive process of distillation. For example, this new general education program, Jax MIX, uses thematic topics to increase student understanding of the purpose of general education. While this new program is part of the process to ensure that the final product of the college experience, an undergraduate degree, is worthwhile, there are challenges with assessing Jax MIX. For example, the courses within Jax MIX are not part of an assessment cycle to maintain their status as part of the general education program. We will use this opportunity to gain feedback from others on how to increase campus-wide participation in the assessment of general and liberal education. Additionally, we look for ideas on how to embed our learning outcomes into courses, as these courses have existed without such a structure. Furthermore, we seek insights from others on how to improve in areas that are emerging from this project. This includes how we assess students' understanding of the value of the liberal arts through Jax MIX's thematic topics, the connection between general education and career readiness, and assessing the messaging of this program to students, the institutional community, and external stakeholders. Through investing in assessment, we are confident we can form the dedicated team necessary to distill the perfect blend for all stakeholders.

### *Play & General Education: Creating a Sense of Belonging in Our Learning Communities* [B]

**Poplar** Elisabeth Johnston (Plymouth State University)

Play is often seen as an activity for children; however, it has many important benefits for adults as well. Play supports adults' social, emotional, and cognitive well-being. People that play tend to develop connections with others that allow them to "create a sense of belonging" (National Institute of Play, n. d.). Playful learning has the potential to create excitement and "changes students' relationship and association to learning" (Forbes & Thomas, 2025, p. 3). Belonging has many facets. Two components: student well-being and active engagement (EAB, n. d.), not only relate to how students find connections on college campus but are key aspects of play. This provides an opportunity for general education instructors to consider how playful learning could promote student well-being and encourage engagement in non-major courses. Using play in the higher education classroom can take a wide range of formats. It can be as simple as a fun ice breaker to start a class to do something more complex such as creating an escape room related to course content. There are many possibilities to consider that could provide students with the connection they are seeking. The focus of this session is to explore the role of play in the general education classroom and to consider the following question: How can playful learning provide opportunities for student belonging, access, and success in courses outside of the major? There are several goals for this interactive session. Participants will 1) learn about the benefits of play and how to approach adding play within the general education context, 2) engage in play experiences to consider how these opportunities could impact student belonging, access, and success, and 3) discuss ways to incorporate playful learning within the participants' general education courses.

*Reading for Living: General Education, Intellectual Community, and Shared Belonging* [B]  
**Willow** Tonya Krouse (Northern Kentucky University)

Faculty across institution types ranging from the Ivy League to community colleges have sounded the alarm: since the Covid-19 pandemic, students seem to lack the reading skills to meet the expectations of college-level reading assignments. For some, this seems to be a problem of work ethic--students do not feel compelled to persist through difficulty or to meet basic expectations for preparing for class. For others, problems with reading trace to problems with digital distractions. Still others trace issues with reading to problems with the capacity to engage with longform texts, to think critically, or to engage dialogically with written texts. Nevertheless, belonging in classroom settings, access to educational attainment, and student success depend on students' ability to read. And if instructors do not incorporate reading instruction into their general education classrooms, they set students up for failure not only in major coursework but in the workplace after graduation. This interactive session leads attendees through a 60-minute bootcamp on "Reading for Living" - an essential skillset that our general education student learning outcomes often take for granted as an implicit foundation to student success but that they do not often prioritize as direct and achievable goals for student learning. The session will begin with a quiz for participants in which they take inventory of their own reading practices as well as what they are experiencing in their general education instruction with students, followed by discussion (15 minutes). Then, taking a multidisciplinary approach, the session first introduces attendees to relevant research on reading in the general education classroom, particularly as reading pertains to success in writing, critical thinking, and active engagement in course content (10 minutes). From there, participants will break into groups to test four different classroom approaches to helping students to engage in reading, which they can adapt for their own courses (20 minutes). The session will conclude with reporting out from groups and sharing out of resources so that participants can continue to think more critically about how they can prioritize reading to help increase intellectual community, belonging, access, and student success on their campuses. This session is modeled after ongoing work at Northern Kentucky University to revitalize general education through the study of transformative texts, which has been supported in \$275,000.00 of grant funding from the Teagle Foundation's Cornerstone: Learning for Living Grant Initiative. Distilling down the faculty development workshops we have held over the course of the past three years into a robust, 60-minute, participation-oriented session, this session seeks to give attendees a hands-on experience that they can bring back to their own institutions and that can inform their own reinvention of general education in their classrooms.

*Purifying the Process: Distilling Stakeholder Feedback to Re-envision Gen Ed* [R]  
**Dogwood** Steve Coughlin, Crystal Southall, Suzanne Taylor, and Kelsey Bennett (Western Colorado University)

Western Colorado University is a four-year regional public institution located on the Western Slope of the Rocky Mountains. As an integral part of Western's new strategic plan rollout during the 2023-2024 academic year, a faculty-led task force was established to develop and propose a re-envisioned GE curriculum to be implemented in the fall of 2026. This process required the task force to solicit and synthesize feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including faculty from a diverse array of disciplines, staff, students, administrators, and external sources. In this panel, we will discuss the various, and often competing, needs of stakeholders, both internal and external; the importance of and challenges with associated timelines; and provide strategies and key takeaways to distill stakeholder feedback to achieve stronger consensus and an aligned vision for a renewed GE program. Panelists will include members of the task force, the GE Program Director, an Associate Provost, as well as members of multiple shared governance committees. During this panel, attendees will have multiple opportunities to engage in the conversation through brainstorming sessions to discuss how the essential elements of stakeholder feedback can be addressed to make the best of re-envisioning GE on their own campuses.

*AI-Powered Learning Platform for Gen Ed Courses and Student Learning Outcome Assessment*  
[S/A] **Walnut** Jeffrey Yan (Digication) and Candyce Reynolds (Boise State University)

AI is rapidly changing how students develop critical thinking and metacognitive skills. This session introduces how the Digication Learning Platform harnesses AI as a collaborative thinking partner to support general education outcomes through research-backed reflective dialogue. With AI assistants

customized by faculty with instructions that meet course goals and usage parameters, students engage in authentic conversations that adapt to their thinking patterns and guide them through reflective processes rooted in research from 6 core domains of reflection, categorized into 60+ distinct reflection types from over 90 academic fields. These interactions maintain academic rigor while feeling natural and conversational. The platform uses AI as both a collaborator and learning catalyst, personalizing reflection while connecting it clearly to learning outcomes. These AI-powered conversations capture authentic thinking processes and become powerful evidence of student growth. They reveal how students develop critical thinking and meaning-making skills, creating unprecedented transparency in learning.

For the first time, General Education programs have access to this level of authentic, transparent evidence. This evidence can guide students in their continued growth and inform General Education reform and assessment practices. Join this session and see 1) how AI-assisted conversations can be used to demonstrate learning outcomes and metacognitive growth, 2) how Digication can be used in courses to guide, capture, and assess student learning including integration with the LMS, 3) methods for capturing authentic, reflective conversations as evidence of student learning for Ged Ed program-level outcome assessment where multiple reviewers can access and score student submissions, and 4) access to freely available AI resources and The TORI Project through Creative Commons licensing at <https://tori.oair.org>.

## **12:15 PM to 1:00 PM**

All Conference Lunch **Archibald**

## **1:00 PM to 2:00 PM**

AGLS Keynote Plenary [A/PD] **Archibald**

*Presence Under Pressure: How Leaders can Foster Meaningful Teaching in General Education*  
Elizabeth Norell (University of Mississippi)

To say that higher education is in crisis is both trite and true. The threats to college and university budgets have rarely felt more existential, and in many states—including our host state of Kentucky—state legislators are actively redlining programs that support diversity, equity, and inclusion on our campuses. For academic leaders, challenges abound. In this keynote, Dr. Liz Norell will help you reclaim your presence and purpose in these turbulent times. By focusing on presence and authenticity, she will model ways of thinking about our work that center our values and our joy. By focusing on presence under pressure, leaders can foster meaningful teaching opportunities for our colleagues that can, in turn, shape meaningful learning for all students.

## **2:15 PM to 3:30 PM**

*From Raw Data to Refined Insight: Strengthening General Education Assessment Amid Institutional and Statewide Change* [A] **Poplar** Karen Palmer (Yavapai College)

Just as bourbon makers must carefully choose their ingredients and adjust to aging conditions over time, general education assessment must remain responsive to institutional shifts and external changes. At our institution, we launched a newly revised assessment process this fall reflecting two seismic shifts that have occurred over the past few years: offering our first bachelor's degrees and the implementation of a revised statewide general education framework. This session will explore how we created a meaningful revision to our general education assessment process by building on what worked well, improving the process based on faculty feedback, and updating based on major changes.

## Expanding the Value of General Education: Minors, Certificates, Microcredentials [R]

Walnut

*Making Gen Ed Count: How To Leverage Minors and Certificates to Achieve Value and Coherence through Credentials* Stephen Biscotte (Virginia Tech), Jeremy Schraffenberger (University of Northern Iowa), and David Beach (Radford University)

At a time when the public is questioning the purpose and value of higher education, general education serves as a central point of contention. At the institutional level, students, advisors, administrators, and even faculty who teach the courses might see little opportunity for gen ed in meeting academic, professional, or institutional goals, particularly through a siloed and incoherent distributive model. In response, institutions like Radford University, Virginia Tech, and the University of Northern Iowa have introduced innovative general education curricula built on thematic microprograms (minors and certificates respectively) to elevate the perceived value and coherence for all involved. We will share a variety of data across the three institutions to tell the story of their effectiveness and impact and where they are falling short. This data will include but is not limited to disaggregated student enrollment data, survey data during the minor and at graduation, focus group perceptions, insights from advisors and department heads, and even some anecdotal (but high profile) evidence from school newspaper articles and national awards/grants. Our institutions still grapple with issues such as effort to develop transdisciplinary course offerings, varied credit hour loads, budget, and personnel restrictions, providing too few or too many options, and broad advertising. However, we assert that offering minors and certificates is worth the effort to make gen ed 'count' for a variety of stakeholders. Our session will offer the opportunity for participants to reflect, brainstorm, and participate in rich cross-institutional discussion before taking the gen ed credential development plunge. After a brief overview of the gen ed credential concept and examples, session leads will facilitate an interactive full group brainstorm about the potential benefits and outcomes of implementing gen ed credentials, a small-group discussion of real-world themes and foci for microprograms as well as the anticipated challenges to making them happen, and a full-group share-out of first steps that participants can take to begin the development of gen ed micro-credential programs at their home institutions.

*General Education Microcredentials: A Preliminary Look at a Pioneering Approach to General Education* Marija Reiff and Benjamin Gross (Jacksonville State University)

After years of planning, Jacksonville State University (Jacksonville, Alabama) unveiled a new general education program during the 2024-2025 academic year that has a first-ever-of-its-kind component: general education microcredentials. This reimagined general education program, entitled Jax MIX, offers five microcredentials: Media Literacy, Community Engagement, Environmental Stewardship, Ethical Leadership, and Global Connections. To gain a general education microcredential, students fulfill a cluster of three general education courses, attend three events in that microcredential's track, complete a work product, and write a final reflection. This presentation, led by Jax MIX Microcredential Coordinator Dr. Marija Reiff and Jax MIX Director Dr. Ben Gross, has three components. In the first section, Dr. Gross introduces the process through which Jacksonville State University created Jax MIX, the theory generating the microcredentials approach, and the stakeholder building used in implementing this pioneering approach. The second and third parts are led by Dr. Marija Reiff. In the second section, Dr. Reiff discusses how general education can serve as the foundation for microcredentials. This discussion focuses on the details of the program, including how general education courses map onto the microcredentials, what a "work product" is, how the events are designed to intersect with the courses, and the shape and form of the final reflection. In the third section, Dr. Reiff offers preliminary results from this pioneering program, including discussing the logistical and philosophical challenges the program has faced, steps the Jax MIX team is taking to increase student participation, and plans to revise and alter the program for greater philosophical cohesion and greater faculty engagement.

## Preserving the Best, Innovating for Change: A Both/And For General Education [R/B]

Willow

*Don't Throw the Baby Out with the Bath Water! On Preserving Highlights of a Program through Renewal* Elizabeth Brown, Dennis Beck, Sarah Tyler Brooks, and Kethera Moore (James Madison University)

The General Education Program at James Madison University is currently undergoing comprehensive renewal. This interactive presentation will discuss four distinctive aspects of the existing program that we hope to evolve in support of emerging priorities in the new program: a wellness requirement, a first-year experience, upper-division integrative courses, and collaborative curriculum development grants. We will share defining strengths of each feature and how each is being reconceived to serve new emphases, along with systemic challenges of change. We invite conversation about strategies for successful preservation through renewal, both in general and relating to these specific topics.

*'Things will Never be the Same': Innovating Group Work to Facilitate Belonging in a Hybrid Environment* Elizabeth Weatherford (Florida Gulf Coast University)

Florida Gulf Coast University's Language and Literature Department began offering Hybrid sections of Composition courses in Fall 2024 to meet the flexibility needs and wants of the students, while also offering the familiarity and guidance of a face-to-face course. One of the challenges of hybrid courses has been in creating a welcoming learning environment where students feel secure enough to be vulnerable enough to participate, take risks, and grow. In a traditional classroom, group work is often the answer, and certainly has its place in hybrid environments, but the question is how does that group work change, and what else can be done to foster collaboration and trust between students and with the instruction. The Florida College English Association Conference inspired an approach to enhancing group work beyond the in-class experience, engaging students in activities that require them to work together outside the classroom. These low-stakes activities help students to not only get to know their classmates, but also to explore elements of campus life and research resources to help them become more engaged in the classroom, the campus, and in best practices for research. This presentation and discussion would focus on best practices for group work that moves beyond the classroom and builds skills that could not only enhance the classroom environment, but also the collegiate experience. Attendees can provide input on the current activities used, as well as share their own methods of creating classroom cohesion and engagement. The presentation will also discuss methods of building trust with the instructor to create a positive student learning environment for all students.

Collaboration and Connection through General Education [B] Holly

*Deliberative Democracy: Strengthening Inclusivity through Collaborative Inquiry Skills in the Classroom and Beyond* Jennifer Caseldine-Bracht (Purdue Global)

Deliberative democracy has the potential to create an environment where individuals engage in thoughtful conversations by actively listening, critically evaluating arguments, and providing well-reasoned positions. This presentation explores how these principles can be successfully incorporated into both online classroom settings and campus programming, providing practical tools for more effective civic engagement and collaborative inquiry that directly support general education learning outcomes. This presentation will explore the following initiatives: The Philosophy Society, our burgeoning Service-Learning Program, and our participation in the Unity College Bowl. These opportunities can create space for inclusive, engaged conversations at no cost to universities.

Attendees will participate in a structured 15-minute deliberative exercise: The Academic Freedom Deliberative Democracy Breakout Session. This session mirrors approaches used in competitive academic formats and provides a concrete model for classroom application. Participants will receive a handout, as well as participate in a breakout session, which will include: 1) role-playing scenarios representing diverse university stakeholders (faculty, students, alumni donors), 2) probing questions for exploring tensions between academic freedom and institutional accountability, 3) facilitation tools for navigating discussions involving various stakeholders, and 4) implementation strategies adaptable for various classroom and co-curricular settings. This interactive approach demonstrates practical methods that folks in general education can implement to develop students' capacities for reasoned dialogue, and critical thinking skills, which are essential for both academic success and democratic citizenship.

The learning objectives for the session include 1) apply deliberative democracy principles in classroom conversations, including active listening, developing one's own arguments, and respectful engagement with opposing viewpoints, 2) identify low-cost opportunities for students to practice these skills outside the classroom, with specific examples and implementation strategies that require minimal institutional

investment, and 3) develop leadership strategies for facilitating difficult conversations about controversial topics.

*Cultivating Access and Belonging in General Education* Kate Scarpena and Jonathan Racster (Purdue Global)

In this session, the presenters, representing Purdue Global's Humanities and Social Sciences faculty and academic leadership, will address the significance of intentional course design to create a sense of belonging in the PG general education classroom. This presentation explores evidence-based methods for promoting access and inclusion in general education classes at a large public online institution. Belonging is an institutional initiative at Purdue Global and core to the virtual community we create. The community that emerges from online classes is demonstrated by the fact that students in specific degree programs often recognize the names of fellow classmates (Strayhorn, 2018) but does not end there. The institutional structures can enable student belonging and improve accessibility in the individual classrooms, via academic advising, and the cross-curricular community. This session will show how intentional classroom environments that promote peer interaction and collaborative learning are essential for fostering belonging in general education.

This presentation will discuss strategies utilized by faculty and leadership that cultivate meaningful belonging at individual, classroom, and institutional levels, with emphasis on curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional goals. These strategies are enhanced by faculty training initiatives. Wang et al. (2024) find that most DEI training targeted individual knowledge and attitudes and had less emphasis on skill development or organizational change. In response to this trend, the DEIB Committee in the School of Multidisciplinary and Professional Studies produces a monthly "Theory to Practice" initiative. These presentations uniquely emphasize the practical application of DEIB training rather than solely focusing on internal participant growth. Our training sessions help faculty who may be experts in their fields but do not see immediate, action-oriented ways to incorporate diversity, improve inclusion, or foster equity in their classroom. Our sessions provide information on available training combined with action-oriented plans that apply the learning in measurable ways to any classroom, regardless of subject. These efforts have demonstrated positive results in terms of student engagement and achievement, resulting in survey results where students note a sense of belonging as well as self-efficacy (IHEP, 2024).

Assessment Strategies for the Long Run [A] Dogwood

*Aging Like Fine Bourbon: A Decade of Sustainable Gen Ed Assessment* Greg Childers (California State University Fullerton)

Many institutions struggle to meaningfully engage faculty in General Education (GE) assessment, particularly given its cross-disciplinary nature and the varying levels of faculty investment. At California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), we developed and refined a sustainable Faculty Learning Community (FLC) model that transforms GE assessment from an administrative burden into a collaborative professional development opportunity. This presentation examines our decade-long journey, with particular focus on our 2023-2024 GE assessment initiative addressing diversity and equity learning outcomes.

In the most recent cycle, six faculty members, both adjunct and tenured/tenure-track, collaborated to assess student work from diverse disciplinary contexts. Utilizing data from five courses across five colleges, they offered key insights and recommendations, including follow-up assessments and pre/post measures to capture student learning more effectively. The process revealed necessary forms of faculty development, including deeper reflection on assignment design, collaborative rubric development, and a broadened understanding of interdisciplinary perspectives. The FLC also provided a platform for adjunct faculty to contribute equally to a significant university initiative, fostering a sense of inclusion and recognition.

Participants will engage in small group discussions to adapt our FLC model to their institutional contexts and will receive tips on recruitment strategies, meeting templates, and sustainability. Attendees will leave with concrete steps for launching or revitalizing their own Gen Ed assessment communities that can withstand leadership changes and institutional challenges.

*Refermenting Assessment: Using a 'Sour Mash' Approach to Develop a Pillar-based Assessment Model* Caitlin Redden (Chadron State College)

To develop a sustainable and effective general education assessment process, a group of Chadron State College faculty, administrators, and staff refined the most important elements of their Essential Studies Program. The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the transition from a course-level assessment plan with twelve student learning outcomes to a pillar-based model with four overarching outcomes. We adapted a pillar-based model using a 'sour mash' approach (a process where a portion of a previous batch is used to start a new one). To do this, we asked ourselves: 1) "how can we create a sustainable, purposeful, and meaningful assessment model using our existing foundation?" and 2) "what are the hallmarks of a Chadron State graduate?" This process helped us identify four main themes that define a Chadron State College graduate without starting from scratch. By creating four pillars for the Essential Studies Program, we have developed an actionable plan to recertify courses within the Essential Studies Program, create rubrics for each pillar, integrate these rubrics into Canvas using the SpeedGrader tool, and begin collecting data on student work. Trials, tribulations, and triumphs will be discussed, along with future goals for assessing student learning. This session will demonstrate how Chadron State College distilled the essence of its general education program to create a manageable assessment framework. Participants will leave with practical ideas for implementing a pillar-based assessment model in general education.

### **3:45 PM to 5:00 PM**

How Can We Help? Figuring Out Effective and Efficient Assessment [A] **Dogwood**  
*Balancing Workload and Best Practices in GE Assessment* Michele Baranczyk, Megan O'Byrne, Megan Norris, and Alexander Hernandez (Kutztown University of Pennsylvania)

Three years ago, Kutztown University General Education (GE) Assessment moved from holistic to analytic rubrics as one part of promoting a culture of assessment. We have had many successes with this approach, namely, the ability to make specific recommendations in response to rated artifacts. One persistent issue that we face is a sizable percentage of artifacts unscored because they are unratable. The most common reasons, in order of frequency, are lack of assignment alignment to rubric; submission of multiple-choice (MC) items; and if/how to rate AI items. This results in large numbers of student artifacts being unratable, and thus impacts the data analyzed. In the three cycles thus far, at least 20% of rated artifacts were rated as zero. In some semesters and dimensions, the percentage of unratable artifacts soars to nearly 50%. In many disciplines (and class sizes), MC questions are a standard form of in-course learning assessment. From the GE assessment angle, none of those questions have been ratable either as singular items or overall. We simply do not have the knowledge or tools to convincingly rate MC artifacts. Yet, our understanding is that best practice is to use outside ratings rather than course instructor self-ratings. While Gen Ed Assessment has made great progress in many ways, we feel a bit stuck here. Faculty compliance in submitting artifacts is improving, but what we have gained in artifacts is not fully transferred to meaningful data regarding students' skills. A limited budget and faculty stretched thin are hurdles that limit our attempts in comprehensive GE assessment. We would like to gather feedback and suggestions, particularly from other universities limited by budget or staffing constraints, on how to help faculty better align Gen Ed artifacts to Student Learning Outcomes and associated rubrics. After about 15 minutes of giving context, we will ask those attending for strategies they have found to have some level of success. From that conversation, we will develop a shared document of best practices along with a contact name (with participant's permission) to facilitate communication about assessment post-conference and beyond.

*Beyond Group Work: Evaluating Team-based Learning in the General Education Curriculum*  
Nancy Barbour, Kristin Nagy Catz, Louisa Hooven, and Taylor Chapple (Oregon State University)

The "Seeking Solutions" category within Oregon State University's new general education curriculum challenges students to engage with complex global issues through collaborative, team-based learning. Courses in this core category emphasize collaboration across diverse perspectives or disciplines to develop

comprehensive responses to “wicked” problems. While team projects more accurately reflect how work is conducted in real-world settings than individual assignments (Lombardi, 2008), assessing students' development of collaboration skills remains a significant challenge. Reliable, equitable tools for evaluating teamwork are still emerging (Francis et al., 2024), particularly in asynchronous and/or interdisciplinary contexts.

In this session, we will share insights from two Seeking Solutions courses: Entomology 331, where students explore the consequences of pollinator decline, and Fisheries and Wildlife 325, which focuses on sociopolitical obstacles to action on multiple global environment crises. Presenters will discuss challenges and strategies for the assessment of teamwork in both synchronous and asynchronous contexts, with an emphasis on measuring collaboration, individual contributions, and group outcomes.

Key topics include 1) assessing effective collaboration skills, 2) evaluating teamwork in synchronous and asynchronous learning environments, 3) balancing assessment of the group product versus the individual process (Mellor, 2012), and 4) leveraging reflections, peer evaluations, instructor feedback, and project-based assessments to capture authentic learning.

Participants in this session are invited to share their insights, review a sample rubric used to assess team-based learning, and consider adaptations relevant to their own roles and institutional contexts. This collaborative exercise will highlight potential approaches to more effective and inclusive assessment of teamwork in general education.

### Gen Ed As the Community Center of Your Institution [B] **Poplar**

*Building Community through Gen Ed Capstone* Seth Hepner (Walsh University)

As Walsh continues to adjust to post-Covid realities and new norms, our president relentlessly pushes a traditional initiative: community building. Walsh's latest Gen Ed capstone course, GE 400, was designed to increase networking opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. In addition to resumes, cover letters, and weekly discussions focused on personal branding skills, students are required to attend two Alumni Speaker Sessions per 8-week term. These sessions are facilitated by alumni, with faculty guidance, who have professional experiences to share. More specifically, alumni who have transitioned from undergraduate studies to “real life,” and have passed the screening from Walsh's Career/Alumni Office. Thus far, only three sections of GE 400, capped at 20 students, have commenced, but in the 25/26 academic year, ten sections are scheduled. This year's Alumni Speaker sessions have been hosted via Zoom, but the goal for next year is to host sessions on campus with larger audiences. Ideally, more students, faculty, staff, and local community members will be invited to attend a much more glamorous on-campus event. Since some of this year's alumni sessions have been more productive and organized than others, likely due to too much freedom and lack of script, we are considering scripted interviews between a faculty member and alumni. If alumni interest continues to increase, we will consider alumni panels rather than individuals. The purpose of this 30-minute presentation is to generate feedback on the next stages of GE 400 development. For audience members who have designed similar courses or who have similar community building initiatives, suggestions as well as issues to prepare for will be welcomed.

*Belonging as a Pedagogical Practice: Centering Care and Community* Bruce Umbaugh (Webster University) and Julianna Sandholm-Bark (Webster University Geneva)

Once upon a time—perhaps—college was rare and students homogeneous so that students “just knew” they belonged. They felt safe, secure, connected, and respected. In this mythic golden age, college gave them all a platform for self-actualization. Today? Many of our students are unsure whether they are wanted, belong, can do it, are respected and safe. Consequently, many students miss opportunities, underperform, and leave without degrees. If we are committed to learning—not professing—we need to care for students' needs for belonging. This presentation shares two examples of practices that general education programs can adopt to support student belonging—one from a European campus and one from a campus in the midwestern U.S. These practices are designed to create inclusive, community-centered learning environments for first-year-seminar students. In one, the traditional classroom structure was reimagined through collaborative, experiential learning. Students engaged in a gamified curriculum that included designing and leading community events, such as a session during Creativity and Innovation Days, and culminated in a

community-based project that served as the final assignment. These experiences allow students to see themselves as active, valued participants in both academic and civic communities. The other adapts a practice that has been used previously at two-year colleges in Texas and Illinois. Faculty teaching seminars for new, first-year students agree to undertake a few simple activities in the first three weeks of the semester. These activities aim to increase feelings of belonging, being capable, and connected. Practicing care in these ways improves student learning, retention, and completion—and does so equitably for all our students. We should all distill what students need today rather than pouring out the same rotgut we associate with the imagined students of some golden yesteryear.

The Morning After: Assessing Gen Ed Reform [R] Willow  
*Distilled, Diluted, or Just Done? A Cautionary Tale of Gen Ed Reform Fatigue* David  
Beach and Laurie Cubbison (Radford University)

In just 17 years, our institution has undertaken three major general education reforms—each launched with hope, framed as innovation, and promising improved clarity, coherence, and student success. Instead, the result has been reform fatigue, persistent implementation gaps, and confusion among faculty, advisors, and students alike. This session presents a cautionary tale of good intentions colliding with institutional complexity. We'll walk participants through the life cycles of: 1. The Core Curriculum (a distributive model with required courses in writing, oral communication, critical inquiry, and ethical inquiry); 2. The REAL Curriculum (a program-based model that aligned gen ed with combinations of majors and minors); and 3. The General Education Program (a hybrid distributive/integrative model emphasizing competencies and inquiries, with a First Year Experience focused on civic engagement, digital literacy, and student success). Rather than simply narrating failure, this session distills the why behind the changes, the where things went wrong, and the how institutions might do better. Participants will engage in critical reflection on common pitfalls: overpromising, underestimating faculty governance dynamics, misaligning assessment with mission, rushing implementation without widespread faculty development or student-facing clarity, and recognizing when the external economic-political context means that needed resources will not be available. We will end by collaboratively generating a forward-looking framework: how to know if your institution is ready for reform, and what sustainable design principles might guard against unintended consequences. In the spirit of the conference theme, this session asks: What are the essential ingredients worth distilling from repeated reform cycles—and what should be left on the cutting room floor? Participants will leave with takeaway tools including a reform readiness diagnostic and a set of cautionary checkpoints for reform committees, provosts, and curriculum leaders.

*Well, that went...? Post-General Education Reform and Implementation Musings*  
McKenzie Huber (Oregon State University)

Are you about to embark on a general education reform or implementation process? Are you on the other side? What did you learn? What pitfalls did you avoid, stumble over, or flat-out fall into (Gaston & Gaff, 2009)? At Oregon State University, we launched our brand-new general education program in the summer of 2025, and learned a few things along the way, maybe a lot of things (things we might not want to even admit). This interactive session will share what Oregon State University learned in reflection on the various aspects of reform and implementation, engage participants in sharing their success (or horror stories), and provide folks with takeaways (without needing to read a book).

AI + GE=Potential for New Ways of Teaching and Learning [B/R] Walnut  
*Rethinking General Education Course Design to Mitigate AI Challenges* Kate Scarpena,  
Stuart Collins, and Jennifer Harrison (Purdue Global)

Navigating an increasingly AI-driven academic landscape, revising courses susceptible to AI academic integrity challenges can be complex. Our incoming students are from a generation that is already using generative AI on a daily basis. Forman et al. (2023) found out that over 57% of the High School Students surveyed use ChatGPT on a daily basis. "A 2024 survey by the Digital Education Council found that 86% of students globally are using AI in their studies, with 24% using it daily and 54% at least weekly. (DEC, 2024) Further, students are using it primarily for "academic support" and find it a time saving tool (Ibid.) Rahman et al. (2023) found that convenience and efficiency were the driving factors in AI use over

“informativeness.” This presentation will outline the revision process for three General Education Social Sciences courses at a large public online institution. The revision is a semi-formal controlled experiment, testing two distinct design methods developed to both mitigate challenges and provide students choice within the structure of their required Social Sciences core courses. Given that incoming students are already frequent users of generative AI for academic support and efficiency (Forman et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2023), these revisions are crucial. The changes aim to improve assessment accuracy and grading efficiency, while fostering critical thinking and real-world application through personalized engagement. Key take-aways for the session will include: \*Course revisions can simultaneously aim to mitigate academic integrity risks and enhance the learning experience. \*Understanding student AI usage patterns is crucial for developing effective course revisions. \*Experimentation and data-driven analysis of different design methods are essential for identifying effective strategies. Participants will have the opportunity to brainstorm and discuss unique challenges presented at their own institution.

*Using AI Tools to Develop Course Resources: Distilling Content for Enhanced Learning*  
Stephanie Thompson and Stuart Collins (Purdue Global)

This presentation will explore how faculty can leverage AI tools such as Gamma, NotebookLM, and InVideo to develop high-quality course resources. As educators face increasing demands on their time, these technologies offer opportunities to distill complex content into accessible formats that meet diverse learning needs.

AI tools can help faculty distill essential knowledge and transform it into multiple modalities. For example, instructors can upload course readings into NotebookLM to generate supplementary podcasts (Kilpatrick, 2025), create dynamic liquid syllabi with Gamma that can quickly be adapted to students’ needs, and develop targeted instructional videos addressing common writing challenges using InVideo. While peer-reviewed research on these specific AI tools is still emerging due to their recency, established scholarship documents the benefits of multimodal learning tools such as podcasts (Palanque, 2016). The liquid syllabus has proven to reduce student anxiety and enhance engagement (Pannell et al., 2025).

Session attendees will gain: \*Practical strategies for using AI tools, \*Methods for maintaining academic rigor when utilizing AI tools, \*Approaches to ensure accessibility through multimodal resource creation, and \*Strategies for evaluating the effectiveness of AI-generated resources for student learning. The presentation will balance pedagogy with concrete demonstrations, ensuring participants leave with immediately applicable techniques. The session will also address responsible implementation practices that consider privacy, copyright, and potential bias in AI systems. By exploring how AI can help distill complex course content into more digestible formats, the session aims to expand the pedagogical toolkit available to faculty while preserving the essential human elements of effective teaching.

Hearing Student Voices in General Education [A/B] Holly

*Data with a Heartbeat: Amplifying Student Voice in True Blue Core Assessment* Christina Cobb (Middle Tennessee State University)

Behind every survey response is a student voice waiting to be heard. This session highlights what students across campus are saying about their experiences in the True Blue Core. Drawing exclusively from recent student survey results, we will share the themes, insights, and reflections that reveal how students perceive their learning in these areas. Participants will explore what students value most about the Core, the challenges they report, and the ways they see these courses shaping their academic journey. Walk away with a clearer picture of how students describe their True Blue Core experience—and what their voices tell us about the impact of the curriculum.

*First-Year Students Defining Success: Beyond the Major, GPA, and Retention* J.R. ‘Jones’ Estes and Rowanna Carpenter (Portland State University)

Inspired by Garcia’s (2020) question, Is Liberation a Viable Outcome for Students Who Attend College? and by the lack of student voices in definitions of student success (e.g., O’Shea & Delahunty, 2018), a general education faculty member and an assessment professional collaborated with a class of first-year students to explore the ways our new-majority students define success. We engaged students in a three-

stage research project that introduced them to the literature on student success and asked them to consider how they define their own success before developing survey questions that they administered on campus and later analyzed the results. This project addressed student success and belonging, as well as program learning goals such as inquiry and critical thinking, in several ways. For example, student work reveals that, by examining and articulating their understanding of success, the project helped students reevaluate how they define success and how they connect that definition to their education. Encouraging students to see themselves as co-researchers on a project that would inform practice and improve the experience for future students in the general education program, deepened the connection for many students. Indeed, the general education program has gained important insight into elements of success not often captured through traditional measures such as student agency, relational connections, and self-care. We will present our process, findings, and analysis as an invitation to participants to explore meaningful ways of incorporating students into definitions of student success on their own campuses including a brief bibliography of supplemental course readings and a guide outlining steps to consider in designing a similar project.

## SATURDAY, 10/4 SCHEDULE

### 7:30 AM to 8:30 AM

Morning Coffee! **Archibald**

coffee and other beverages are available all day at Thelma's Deli located in 3<sup>rd</sup> floor skywalk

### 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM

Registration and Information Desk **Archibald**

### 8:00 AM to 9:15 AM

*We are the Leaders We've Been Waiting For* [PD] **Poplar** Margaret 'Meg' Mulrooney (James Madison University) and Rowanna Carpenter (Portland State University)

Whether committee members, elected chairs, directors, full-time administrators, or assessment professionals, those of us who lead General Education programs are in a tough spot right now. Our 'industry,' higher education, is arguably experiencing a leadership crisis—rapid turnover at the top; erosion of faculty governance; intrusive legislatures and boards; administrative 'bloat;' and debates over campus speech are just a few of the many indicators. On campus, we are enmeshed in large, complex systems and structures that can confound or devalue our work, our values, our persons. And even if we do not feel besieged, we are often so busy juggling teaching and scholarly pursuits alongside our programmatic responsibilities that we lack the time, focus, and energy needed to foster the positive changes we most want to achieve. The good news is that even small steps can make a big difference.

Offered by General Education leaders for General Education leaders, this workshop offers participants an opportunity to review leadership models applicable to our shared work, complete several short reflection exercises, and draft a short list of action steps for the 2024-25 academic year. The goal is to help you recenter and recharge as members of a supportive, collegial AGLS network.

Student Voice, Faculty Engagement: The Essence of Effective Assessment [A] **Holly**  
*The Art of Persuasion: Engaging Faculty in General Education Assessment Beyond the*

*Syllabus* Christopher Barnes, Maggie Slattery, and Betty Harper (Pennsylvania State University)

In a large, multi-campus public university system such as The Pennsylvania State University, direct assessment of General Education is critical to ensuring that all students – regardless of major or location – achieve essential learning outcomes. This presentation examines how structured, annual assessment processes can be scaled to evaluate student learning effectively across diverse campuses. Central to this effort is faculty engagement, particularly amongst those who may not view assessment as part of their instructional role. By developing supportive infrastructures, providing accessible tools, and training, and communicating findings clearly to all applicable campus partners, institutions can foster a culture where assessment informs and enhances teaching and learning. The session will also share strategies, lessons learned, and practical recommendations for fostering sustainable assessment practices that lead to continuous improvement. The learning outcomes of this presentation include the following. 1. Explain the process of conducting annual General Education assessment across a multi-campus public university system. 2. Discuss effective approaches for engaging faculty, especially those who may not initially view assessment as part of their responsibilities, in the General Education assessment process. 3. Describe strategies for communicating General Education assessment results to diverse university partners, including faculty, administrators, and students. 4. Identify tools, training methods, and support resources that help instructors enhance their assessment practices and use results to improve student learning outcomes.

*Making Assessment in a Gen Ed Course Actionable, Accessible, and Student-Centered: A Case Study* Melissa Beers (Ohio State University)

The Ohio State University Launch Seminar is a universal, one-credit, first year General Education course. All first-year students on all OSU campuses complete the Launch Seminar in their first three semesters. The novel curriculum centers on understanding the purpose and structure of General Education at Ohio State; building academic skills and habits for long term success; and academic identity development and planning.

The Launch Seminar has just completed our first three-year cycle of GE learning objective assessment. This process established actionable and accessible data streams for direct and indirect assessment data. Often, assessment data collected at scale take months post-semester to analyze, interpret, and circle back to instructors, administrators, and GE stakeholders. Students themselves are typically so far removed from the assessment process that they are often unaware of their own outcomes. Our program developed strategies to capture and consolidate data at scale in real time, so results are transparent, concrete, and accessible to instructors and students. This approach ensures assessment results are clearly aligned with the work students and instructors do during a semester and are transparent to those who stand to benefit the most: students themselves.

In this session, I will review key strategies for keeping the focus of GE assessment on those for whom it is intended to benefit - students. This is particularly important in General Education courses because of their broader visibility, accountability, and interrelationships with other courses, disciplines, and programs. Participants will step through an assessment audit activity to consider strategies to improve the transparency and actionability of their own assessment practices. During the session, participants will 1) identify strategies for collecting and using GE assessment data in real time Participants will be able to describe at least two methods for capturing and consolidating assessment data during the semester to make it timely and actionable, 2) evaluate the student-centeredness of existing assessment practices Using a structured audit tool, participants will reflect on how transparent, accessible, and actionable their current assessment strategies are for students, 3) consider how to enhance the impact of GE assessment for student learning Participants will generate at least one concrete idea for modifying an existing assessment or feedback practice to better support student engagement and learning outcomes.

Student Agency in Gen Ed Success [B] **Dogwood**

*Creating the Perfect Jax MIX Blend with Campus Events: Helping Students Find Deeper Connections and Success through General Education* Karlie Johnson and Emily Faucett (Jacksonville State University)

Like a tasting connoisseurs' thirst for the perfect bourbon blend, college students hunger for a sense of belonging in their campus communities. This desire for belonging and purpose in a campus ecosystem requires students to explore and build relationships. Research demonstrates that students who make connections on campus and find spaces of access and belonging have higher retention and college success. Like bourbon blending starts with the best aged barrels, students who connect through campus events while in general education (GE) can find their space and sense of belonging early in their college journey, which can encourage investigation into majors and minors, creation of connections to a vast array of campus communities, and early observation of college skills and knowledge being applied in real world settings.

A regional, public institution in the Southeast wanted to fully capture these opportunities to foster belonging during a multi-phase, university-wide re-envisioning of general education that resulted in Jax MIX, a signature general education program. A featured element of this program is the introduction of general education microcredentials that incorporate campus event requirements. One of the primary goals of Jax MIX campus events is to help GE students meaningfully engage in their course concepts while creating intrinsic motivation to connect with campus groups and faculty inside/outside their direct course of study. This presentation will address the development of Jax MIX campus events, partnerships with event organizers, how programmatic student learning outcomes are used to connect campus events to the GE microcredential pathways, and how this integration cultivates a GE student's sense of belonging and personal growth. Attendees, in a guided question activity, will discuss how campus events and GE interact on their campuses while receiving useful tips for identifying and starting conversations with campus event partners.

*Crafting a Personal Blend: Guiding Students into Purposeful Gen Ed Choices* Karen Palmer (Yavapai College)

Just as every bourbon blend is crafted to bring out distinct notes, students deserve a general education experience that highlights their interests, aligns with their goals, and enhances their strengths. This session shares how our institution is reimagining the Gen Ed journey through personalized tools designed to help students make more meaningful course choices. We will explore how we are using micro-credentials, not only to highlight the workforce-relevant skills embedded in Gen Ed courses, but also to build thematic Gen Ed pathways that give students options based on career goals or personal interests. These pathways are being supported by a newly developed, interactive Gen Ed "quiz" tool that helps students select courses that align with their major, learning style, and/or future goals. Our approach aims to increase student agency and belonging in general education, and to reframe Gen Ed, not as a checklist, but as a curated, purposeful experience that supports both exploration and employability.

Librarians! The Secret Ingredient in Distilling Gen Ed Success [B/R] Walnut  
*Bridging the Gap: Embedding Librarians for General Education Student Success* Meghan Kowalski, Catherine Meals, and Jacob Hopkins (University of the District of Columbia)

Students often have their earliest encounters with college-level research and information literacy in general education courses. But the skills and concepts associated with academic research are not always taught explicitly, and faculty may not have the time or resources to fully cover the research process in their courses. At the same time, while academic librarians have the expertise to support students' information literacy growth, that expertise is often underutilized.

That is where embedded librarians come in. Collaborating with instructors, embedded librarians provide wraparound support for students as they build their information literacy and practice strong research habits, and their presence can make the research process more approachable and manageable. Embedded librarianship can be at its most effective in gen ed, as academic librarians' focus on information literacy integrates seamlessly with gen ed's broad engagement with core intellectual ideas, exploration, interdisciplinarity, critical thinking, and preparation for lifelong learning.

This session will explore how embedded librarians enhance both student learning and faculty teaching by systematically integrating research support and information literacy threshold concepts into courses. Whether through participation in the LMS, co-designed assignments, or targeted instruction, embedded librarians offer timely, contextualized guidance that helps students develop confidence and competence in

their research abilities. We will also address an important but often overlooked reality: while faculty are experts in their fields, they are rarely taught how to teach—especially when it comes to research. Embedding librarians creates space for instructional collaboration and professional development. Faculty benefit by gaining a partner in research instruction, allowing them to focus more deeply on content while ensuring students still receive essential support in developing information literacy skills. This partnership not only leads to stronger student work but also enriches the teaching experience.

Attendees will not only be able to have a robust conversation with three embedded librarians but also return to their institutions with a worksheet for how to establish their own embedded librarian program within their specific campus context.

*Research Librarians to the Rescue: Improving Gen Ed through Faculty-Librarian Partnerships* John Regan, Michelle Niebur, and Kristina Bush (Boston University)

Research librarians from Boston University Libraries and faculty from Boston University's College of General Studies (CGS) will come together to present on the results of a pilot project, Information Literacy Unbound. This project was composed of three workshops designed by BU research librarians, who were informed by the Association for College & Research Libraries (ACRL)'s Framework for Information Literacy. The three workshops were titled as follows: "You've reached your limit of free articles: Developing a critical understanding of the value of information," "Down the rabbit hole : Mind mapping for thoughtful exploration," and "Looking for Context: Leveraging visual inquiry skills for effective research."

In the Fall of 2024, the research librarians were looking for partners to test these workshops on a smaller scale before rolling them out for broader circulation at the university, and they found a very willing partner in CGS faculty who were deeply interested in improving first-year student learning in information literacy. During the Spring 2025 semester, the research librarians conducted three workshops for a cohort of CGS students. In our presentation, research librarians and faculty will reflect upon their experience, and audience members will be encouraged to evaluate our approach and help us unpack the results of data gathered from focus groups with faculty and surveys of the students who participated in the workshops. Ultimately, we hope our audience will gain insights into how to forge cross-campus collaboration that they might be able to employ on their own campuses, and we hope to benefit from the collective expertise of our audience to gain insight into how to improve this initiative as we move forward into Year Two.

Fault Lines and Pressure Points in Gen Ed Revision [R] Willow  
*Revision under Duress: Responding to Anti-DEI legislation* Candyce Reynolds and Matthew Recla (Boise State University)

In Spring 2025, the Idaho legislature passed a bill restricting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion content in required courses at the university with a start date of July 1, 2025. Our sophomore level course was focused on Ethics and Diversity and has been transformed into a course on Ethics in Society. This session will outline the response that the university and general education program at Boise State University developed over time and with input from faculty. Collaboration was of utmost importance in creating guidelines and support for faculty. The presentation will share the steps taken to build a network of teams that worked on guidance and support while ensuring academic freedom. Participants will have the opportunity to consider steps they might take as such legislation is becoming more prevalent in the United States.

*FSU's Collaborative Effort in Implementing General Education Changes* Kestrel Strickland (Florida State University)

This presentation outlines Florida State University's approach to implementing changes to their general education curriculum due to new course content standards introduced by the Florida Board of Governors in May 2024. Faced with a tight deadline to review and revise over 400 general education courses across several colleges and departments, FSU worked closely with campus colleagues and state partners to ensure compliance with this process. This presentation will highlight the university's collaborative efforts in managing these changes, focusing on the integration of data from six key sources.

## 9:30 AM to 10:00 AM

*Going Public: Publishing your Work with the Journal of General Education* [S] Poplar  
Laura Cruz and Maggie Slattery (Pennsylvania State University Press)

Have you ever considered publishing on the work you are presenting here at the conference? In this interactive session, you will learn more about the Journal of General Education (part of Penn State University Press), what kind of articles it publishes, and how you can contribute to a growing body of scholarship on general education. Participants will have the opportunity to share ideas and ask questions directly to the journal editors. The Journal of General Education is an official partner of AGLS.

*General Studies Capstone Revision: They're Solving the Problems and Writing the Papers!*  
[R] Holly Elizabeth Imafuji and James Boldman (Ivy Tech Community College)

This presentation will discuss two major revisions to our General Studies capstone course that have contributed to higher student engagement, higher completion rates, and an increased focus on career skills. The first revision to the capstone was to move the course from a portfolio focus to a group research project focus. Additionally, the length of the class was switched from a regular semester offering to a one week, pre-semester offering. Previous versions of the capstone required students to meet objectives by reflecting on their own coursework throughout their degree. The new iteration requires students to work together to propose solutions to a persistent campus problem. Campus leaders knowledgeable about the problem are interviewed by students, and students apply their own experiences and background research in their hunt for a viable solution. This research project results in much deeper engagement in course objectives. The new course design also incorporates the career skills of interviewing, of professional communication, and of presenting a report to a professional audience. These career applications were not easily incorporated into the previous portfolio-based course design. The second revision was to the capstone term paper, moving it to a highly structured and sequenced writing assignment with daily section deadlines. This essay design draws on best practices in composition teaching across the disciplines and moves the class to a writing-intensive model (Thaiss & Porter, 2010; Holmes et. al., 2023). The new design resulted in higher rates of completion of the term paper. It also models how early research findings can affect the trajectory of a research project, thereby contributing to the increased student engagement in the capstone course overall. Attendees will leave the session with ideas and practical tips they can apply to their own courses or programs as we share the successes and challenges of this course revision.

*Assessment as Sour Mash: How to use Canvas Outcomes to Reduce Labor and Increase Effectiveness* [A] Dogwood Ashley Ireland (Murray State University)

This session will provide an overview of the Canvas (LMS) Outcomes feature and will explore how one regional public institution used this feature to simplify, standardize, and increase the effectiveness of general education outcomes assessment. The session will also discuss limitations of Canvas for this purpose and discuss some of the creative ways that we intend to proceed to continue to use this tool for consistency across the assessment cycle.

*Distilling a New General Education: Honoring the Process; Savoring the Product* [R]  
Walnut Alan Kalish (Ohio State University)

The Ohio State University began the process of creating a new General Education in December 2016. The first students took the first courses in Autumn 2022, in a phased roll-out. All undergraduates will be on the new program as of Summer 2025. As with the distillation in the conference's titular metaphor, each step along the way involved a complex, important process that was necessary for the success of the whole. In the brief time that the new program has been in place, efforts have begun to assess the product and to evaluate the impact of external factors, such as the governance and fiscal implications, on student outcomes and the institutional environment. The first step was the decision to begin a review that was expected to lead to substantial change, the first in over 30 years. Second came a wide-ranging conversation, informed by both research on other institutions' choices and many local "listening sessions" with every constituency we could engage. Next, we convened a broadly-based committee which spent months developing a design

proposal, gathering reactions, and revising the plan. This step ended with the review that saw all fourteen undergraduate-serving colleges and the university governance bodies agree to adopt the plan. However, another year was needed for the fourth stage of building a clear, acceptable, and workable implementation process. That implementation plan was then enacted, leading to course revision and reapprovals, new course development, socialization of the plan, recruitment of additional campus partners, and roll out to students, among other elements. Finally, a new, centralized assessment process is being created and implemented to determine where this new curriculum meets its goals and where it requires adjustment or improvement, as well as to see what impacts external forces are having on the program. Description and details of each step will be shared in this session, with hindsight perspective on the relative impact of choices made at critical points. Participants will be encouraged to discuss the relative importance of each and how these might (or have) play out in their own institutional context.

*From Grains to Gains: How Reflection on General Education Supports Student Storytelling*

[B] **Willow** Melissa Beers, Niki Jaburek, and Christin Hutchinson (Ohio State University)

At Ohio State University, our new General Education program launched in 2022 is framed by two “Bookend” courses, a first year Launch Seminar and a capstone Reflection Seminar. These two courses support students in exploring General Education, in building self-awareness and autonomy, and in reflecting on their experiences to tell their unique stories. These courses engage all Ohio State students with an ePortfolio to document, curate, and reflect on their learning experiences in General Education, their academic programs, and other extracurricular experiences. Together, these courses help students distill their wide-ranging experiences and tell their unique stories by reflecting on how their experiences have shaped who they are.

Attendees at this session will be asked to consider what stories they *hope* students would tell, and what structures, supports, and resources could equip and empower students to tell their authentic academic stories in a powerful and compelling way. We will share strategies that we use to support student reflection in their first year and as they are preparing to graduate, as well as assessment data that highlights the impact of these experiences. We will share lessons learned and take-away strategies that support student reflection in any context, and help participants consider, choose, and develop assets that support student reflection in their own courses. Our session objectives include 1) highlighting how reflection across the student experience supports deep learning and storytelling, 2) engage participants to consider what strategies to support reflection already exist at their institutions, and 3) brainstorm ways to support students to be prepared to “tell their stories” when they graduate.

## 10:15 AM to 11:15 AM

**Round Robin -- Equity and Authenticity in Gen Ed** [R] **Holly** facilitated by Rowanna Carpenter (Portland State University) and Kevin Hermberg (Dominion University New York)

*Expanding Equitable Assessment* Elissa Graff (University of Pikeville)

The success of students within the interdisciplinary undergraduate curriculum, where the emphasis for demonstrated growth is clarity in the understanding of the purpose that a student’s work may serve, is predicated on clear rubric design. Faculty must balance expectations of a student’s creative idea or plan, or an understanding of why a student has chosen to create what they have, with their potential capacity to complete or resolve that creation in a format for review. This leads to the question of crafting equitable assessment tools that objectively measure across a balance of factors. Since being hired as the first dean of a brand-new art + design college, a primary leadership responsibility has been co-developing and administering procedures and systems that support academic success and evaluate student learning for both faculty growth and program development. The most recent academic year focused on equitable rubric design, by faculty request, and has resulted in working closely with Full-time Faculty to develop assessment practices that promote constructive and measurable educational outcomes. This discussion will reflect on recent improvement plans created with a team of art, art history, and general education faculty who have been engaged in development and refinement of equitable rubric designs. As an advocate and

facilitator for the annual review work, this continual process to ensure that assessment practices measure educational outcomes is ongoing and evolving and the presenter welcomes feedback and suggestions for further refinement.

*Distilling Authentic Learning in the Age of AI* Beth Krammer, Rick Cole, and Jenai Engelhard (Boston University)

In his NY Times article “AI’s Biggest Threat: Shrunken Ambitions,” Jason Farago makes a bold prediction that AI might motivate our current society into a new phase of creativity. “I might even allow myself to wonder if A.I. might be the best thing to happen to culture in years,” he claims, “that is, if these perpetual mediocrity machines, these supercharged engines of cliché, end up pressing us to revalue the things humans alone can do.” Rather than taking away our human creativity, Farago believes AI might inspire us to strengthen our human creations and experiences. Our roundtable will extend this question: What can educators and administrators do in the age of AI to distill authentic Gen Ed learning—and increase the value of a strong liberal arts program? What tools do we have in our barrel to preserve authentic learning, such as collaborative multimodal assignments—like podcasts or films— or oral assignments that require careful listening and interaction? Can authentic class participation be part of this distillation process? What other ways can we filter our student experiences, such as Experiential learning and collaborative work? What all of these have in common is they require students to percolate ideas like distillation; they are dynamic experiences to engage minds that are attuned to the digital world. Can we find other ways to increase attention and engagement in the classroom, allowing students to filter and brew ideas to discourage dependency on any use of AI that replaces critical thinking? This roundtable will explore: how do we distill back to the basics or raw ingredients of what makes in-person college learning meaningful? We will query ways that all stakeholders in higher education can rediscover the human processes that cannot be replicated in the evolving digital landscape. By exploring how it connects to the human experience, we will ask if AI might be the best thing to happen to liberal arts and Gen Ed. to help us distill what really matters.

*Agility Within Structure: Integrating Flexibility within General Education for Student Success*  
[B] **Willow** Katy Hanggi, Elizabeth Anderson Fagan, Julianne Guillard, and Virginia Wray Totaro (Virginia Commonwealth University)

While not a new concept, “student success” continues to be a governing principle for higher education even during mass purges of diversity, equity, and belonging efforts across the US. What student success looks like has changed over the last five years. For example, general education faculty are observing a preparation gap in some incoming students, where high school education has not prepared them to succeed in college. Faculty are also wrestling with the ways in which Generative AI tools impact what students are learning. Yet, we work within rigid structures that are slow to change. How can general education programs, courses, and faculty adapt to improve student learning and persistence in systems that are slow to change? This workshop aims to surface ways in which we can be agile to the challenges our institutions, programs, and faculty are contending with, while recognizing the structures and constraints we work within. VCU is a public, urban, R1, minority-serving institution that has been swimming in these questions. We have begun to address them in various ways: culturally responsive curriculum revisions, faculty development, and program and senior leadership changes, and strategic initiatives. Some questions this session will raise include: •What does flexibility look like across different levels of engagement with general education? •Where might we identify spaces that empower us to adapt? •How can we be responsive to the changes in our students’ goals, motivations, and preparation? •How do we adapt teaching to the increasing capabilities of generative AI? •How can we advocate for resources in general education amidst the tightening of university budgets?

This session will invite participants to address these questions while also raising their own. Small groups will be organized around themes that emerge from the participants, and we will ask each group to delve into their theme with facilitation from one of the four presenters. Each group will produce a poster, and we will finish the session with a gallery walk and sharing out from the groups. The activities and prompts will be structured to share concerns and strategies across institutions.

*AI in the Core Curriculum: Bridging Practical Knowledge and Ethical Responsibility* [R]  
**Walnut** George McHendry and Faith Kurtyka (Creighton University)

Since the arrival of ChatGPT, generative AI has disrupted higher education, prompting us to rethink pedagogy, establish new policies, and assess what students know about this technology. At Creighton University, current and former students are asked about their ability to use generative AI in internship and job interviews. Our faculty and administration have looked to our core curriculum as a place to teach our students about generative AI's practical and ethical dimensions. In response, we have developed a comprehensive plan to incorporate AI at multiple levels of our general education program. This interactive session will explore our approach to incorporating AI into the Magis Core curriculum, focusing on key milestones: crafting learning objectives, gaining faculty buy-in, securing resources for faculty development, and navigating faculty governance. We will also outline our roadmap for implementation, including assessment rubrics, course updates, and ongoing faculty development. Participants will: 1. Explain the value of incorporating generative AI instruction into their core curriculum. 2. Articulate how their institution's mission can guide their approach to integrating generative AI into their core curriculum. 3. Identify places in their core curriculum where content about generative AI would ideally fit. 4. Design a roadmap of the process they would take to integrate generative AI into their core curriculum. 5. Predict challenges they might face if they pursue integrating generative AI into their core curriculum. 6. Create sample learning outcomes that are assessable and fit the needs of their students and institution. We will supply each participant with "Of Books and Bytes: A Planning Guide for AI in Gen Ed," a template for integrating generative AI into general education based on our work at our institution. Throughout the session, participants will complete portions of the template as a tangible start to adapt their general education program to life with generative AI.

*Continuous Collaboration and Innovation: Centre College's New General Education Curriculum from Faculty Forums to Planning for Future Revision through Assessment* [R]  
**Poplar** Kelly O'Quin and Ian Wilson (Centre College)

The faculty of Centre College revised its General Education curriculum to better reflect our College's values and the changing needs of our students. Our process for doing so was a multi-year, campus-wide, faculty-driven effort that required planning, implementation, and assessment. Critical to our effort was constant communication and collaboration among faculty, students, staff, and curricular committees. In the first two years of this project, our faculty empowered two redesign committees to investigate and present faculty with curricular goals and models for a revised General Education curriculum. These committees were balanced by academic division and faculty rank. After meeting with stakeholders throughout the college, these redesign committees facilitated monthly forums and workshops to help faculty collectively propose, prioritize, refine, and formalize the elements of a revised curriculum. At the end of each academic year, the redesign committees presented the faculty with a package of curricular goals or models for their formal approval. Following the adoption of these curricular elements, we established a third ad-hoc committee to prepare for implementation, including consideration of staffing, drafting appropriate catalog language, and advising on new course approvals. We implemented our revised curriculum in the fourth year and established a new administrative position to help manage and assess this new curriculum. We are currently in the final year of assessing the entire revised curriculum. The new administrative position bridges the gap between faculty engagement in vision, design, and pedagogy with administrative demands for assessment and evaluation. This 60-minute Interactive Session will outline the process of curricular revision at Centre College from development to final assessment. It will include practices and example activities used to visualize, prioritize, formalize, and approve our revised curriculum. Attendees will be invited to imagine which values, goals, and curricular models may best reflect their own institutions, and how similar collaborative practices can be implemented to facilitate successful curricular redesign.

*Student Persistence and the Importance of Belonging: Stories from Students* [B] **Dogwood**  
Bradley Smith, Eilio Fackler, Novia Pagone, Chris Greiner, and Kerri Morris (Governors State University)

A central factor in students' persistence is their sense of belonging (Tinto 2016; Samoila & Vrabie 2023; Walton, et al 2023). For students who are struggling academically it can feel as if they do not belong;

however academic struggle is a normal part of the collegiate experience (Mason & Atkin 2020). Thus, it is not the struggle itself that causes students to feel as if they do not belong but the lack of awareness that struggle is a routine part of the collegiate experience. Based on these founding ideas, this 60-minute interactive session will report on two ongoing interventions to address students' struggles in the context of their first-year experience. First, accounting for Harper's (2012) recommendation to focus on student success over student failure, we recorded interviews with four students who struggled early in their academic career but overcame those struggles to persist. These interviews adapted an online social belonging activity developed by PERTS (Walton, et al 2023) to create a homegrown version of the anonymous student stories presented in the online version. We expect that sharing these stories with first-year students will have a positive effect on student belonging and persistence. Second, the session will describe a faculty development program concentrated on the value of productive struggle and viewing mistakes as learning opportunities. The goal of this faculty development program is to instill in the teaching of first-year seminar a relational pedagogic practice that incorporates these values and a growth mindset into the syllabus, assignments, and evaluations for the course. This interactive session will share our processes for organizing and implementing these two projects. It will lead attendees in activities designed to help them enact these interventions on their own campuses.

### **11:30 AM to 1:15 PM**

All Conference Lunch **Archibald**

### **12:15 PM to 1:15 PM**

AGLS Keynote Plenary [PD] **Archibald**

*Turning your Inspired Practice into Published Scholarship with the General Education Toolkit*  
Laura Cruz and Maggie Slattery (Pennsylvania State University Press)

Are you doing innovative things in your general education course(s) or program(s) that you think others might be interested in reading more about? We know that many faculty, staff, students, and administrators are trying creative strategies to engage students and advance success in general education courses and programs, but there are challenges to developing these efforts into full studies and sharing these practices with interested colleagues.

In this hands-on workshop, the co-editors of the *Journal of General Education* will guide you through the initial steps of designing a research study focused on assessing (and sharing) the outcomes of your general education course or program.

Using a robust research toolkit developed by and with faculty, staff, and students at Penn State, participants will develop research questions, identify shared outcomes, and explore multiple designs and methods for implementing their own studies. The session will also include discussion on overcoming common obstacles, navigating persistent challenges, and identifying appropriate outlets for your finished product.

You will leave the session with a (draft) research plan and concrete plans for your next steps in turning your inspired practice into published scholarship. Attendees are welcome to participate as individuals or small groups.

### **1:30 PM to 2:30 PM**

*Blending General Education and Majors: Enhancing a Vertical Writing Curriculum* [R]  
**Walnut** Courtney Adams Wooten and Thomas Polk (George Mason University)

Best practice suggests that important skills or outcomes need to be reinforced several times across students' college experience in preparation for their careers (AAC&U; Anson). One of these can be written

communication, a key career readiness competency and common general education component. Given this, a vertical writing curriculum in general education that includes writing instruction for students at multiple points during their college careers, while a less common approach in most general education curriculum, can provide the best opportunity for students to develop these skills. However, articulating the value and relevance of these learning experiences- or any general education skill or outcome that includes multiple student experiences - to key constituents can be challenging. This interactive session describes a unique vertical writing program in a general education program at an MSI, large mid-Atlantic institution. It explains what the vertical writing curriculum is, how it fits within the institution's general education program, and how its directors have collaborated to understand and communicate its value. Presenters will 1) discuss data collection (enrollment data, faculty surveys and conversations, course reviews, student interviews, and assessment) that helped us identify what students were learning and opportunities to strengthen connections across the multiple writing sites, and 2) discuss opportunities and challenges we have experienced in gathering and communicating this information to support student learning and career preparation in general education. The session offers attendees the opportunity to identify how they can draw on our experiences to vertically scaffold a general education skill or outcome such as writing. What competency is built into their general education programs already? What do they already know about it and student success? What other data points would be useful? What cross-campus partnerships would support this type of scaffolded approach? How can the value of these learning experiences be communicated to various stakeholders?

*Defending Democracy: Educating Future Citizens Through Gen Ed* [R] **Holly** Jenni Gallagher (Virginia Tech), Abe Goldberg (James Madison University), Heather Lettner-Rust (Longwood University), Kelsey Orsini (Old Dominion University), Laura Wheeler Poms (George Mason University), Jenn Sloggie (Old Dominion University), and Kristen Wright (George Mason University)

While civic learning has long held a central role in general education (Harkavy & Hartley, 2010; Hartley, Saltmarsh, & Clayton, 2010), teaching our students how to engage meaningfully and ethically in our democracy has become critically important amidst the current political landscape. Defined by Matto et al. as “an evidence-based pedagogy that includes civic learning and emphasizes building civic skills, knowledge, experience, and a sense of efficacy to develop citizens who regularly and productively participate in their communities throughout their lives” (2017, p. 5), civic education can be integrated at the course, program, and / or institutional level. In this session, general education administrators from five different institutions will briefly share how they integrate civic education on their respective campuses. Their experience with civic learning ranges from no formal integration and trying to encourage faculty to include civic learning in individual courses, to intentionally including it during the gen ed reform process, to making it a cornerstone of their students' undergraduate experience with gen ed.

The facilitators will briefly cover the challenges and benefits of teaching civic learning in gen education, then open the floor for a discussion where participants will be invited to share their own familiarity with it, allowing for an exchange of experiences from various types of institutions. Attendees will leave the session with new resources and a wide range of ideas for increasing civic education on their own campuses.

*Reviving a Classical Approach to Liberal Education: It Worked Then, but Now?* [R] **Poplar** Paul Ranieri (Ball State University)

Liberal Education needs to be re-energized. As citizens and as educators, we need new ways to think about social problems and new ways to think about how to prepare students to grapple with those problems. This presentation begins by arguing that to go forward, we have to go back—to Isocrates, a contemporary of Plato, whose ideas and practices would dominate ancient rhetoric and education from the late 5th century B.C. to the early Renaissance. Yet, we cannot simply go back in time; Isocrates' views and practices must be adapted to our times using ideas drawn from current studies in cognition, developmental psychology, and pedagogy suited for fostering the learning of young adults. I will begin this presentation by sketching an Isocratean foundation for liberal education and how his Rhetoric Tradition of Liberal Education re-interprets the humanities and defines what a successful course of study in higher education should look like.

Interestingly, such an approach has worked at AGLS institutions: with core programs, with major/minor programs, with team-based/experiential projects, with assessment, and with faculty-led program reviews. After reviewing these success stories, participants will discuss (1) whether we can—intentionally—multiply such programs to affect a more interconnected, comprehensive approach to liberal education; and (2) whether a comprehensive approach to curricular design is just too much to seek. Even though a Rhetoric Tradition for liberal Education and the humanities was successful for over 1500 years—and is successful now with specific programs—is it even feasible to put effort into rebuilding such an approach today? Maybe such a brainstorming session will help uncover the roadblocks to improve the plight of liberal education in 2025, or maybe it will show that such roadblocks are just insurmountable.

*Curriculum Design Using Outcome-based Assessment: A Beginner's Guide* [A] Dogwood  
Amy Smith and Wendy Wolfram (Purdue Global)

Outcome-based assessment and curriculum design has become standard practice for higher education. Most faculty and administrators are familiar with learning outcomes and integrating them into courses and coursework, but without assessment it is impossible to know if the outcomes are met. Additionally, faculty involved with curriculum design are selected because they are subject-matter experts, and they may not have the necessary training to fully implement outcome-based assessment and data collection into their courses. This presentation will outline how curriculum design at Purdue University Global begins with outcomes at the program level, course level, and student skills level. These outcomes are then assessed in a systematic fashion using standardized rubrics and data collection. The results are shared with students, faculty, and administrators on a regular basis and reviewed during the process of frequent course revisions. Faculty serving as subject-matter experts are trained in the use of Bloom's taxonomy when creating outcomes and rubrics for assessment. Collaborative teams then work together to create the course content and ensure that the outcomes are mapped across the course and throughout the program major of study. Types of data collected throughout this process will be shared and participants are encouraged to bring their questions about how to create courses that are outcome-based and trackable within their institutions.

**Round Robin** -- Beyond the Gen Ed Classroom in the 'Real World' [R] Willow  
facilitated by Mary Frances 'Mimi' Pipino (Ursuline College) and Paul Hogan (Florida State University)

*The Study of Work: A Case for Grounding Career Exploration and Preparation in Academic Seminars* Virginia Wray Totaro (Virginia Commonwealth University)

As the primary function of higher education shifts more firmly toward job market preparation, more students are enrolling in career-focused courses within their majors, engaging with co-curricular resources like career centers and internship offices, and earning microcredentials to enhance their résumés. While these initiatives are valuable in guiding students toward appropriate career paths, opportunities within the general education curriculum are often overlooked. We can certainly align NACE competencies with skill development in Gen Ed courses, but how does that alignment contribute to a broader understanding of the rapid changes in labor markets driven by AI and other technological disruptions? At my roundtable, I would like to explore the feasibility and scalability of integrating academic inquiry into the concept of “work” within the general education curriculum. To frame this conversation, I will present my seminar course, which uses a multidisciplinary lens to examine the history of work and labor, giving students the context needed to critically assess today's employment landscape and its future trajectory. Rooted in project-based learning, the course includes a variety of student research projects—for example, analyzing a century of labor through film, visiting local museum exhibits on regional industries to explore historical responses to technological change (e.g., automation and augmentation), and critically evaluating the evolving role of higher education. Given that a significant number of undergraduates—by some estimates, up to 80%—change their major at least once, major-specific career prep may not offer the expansive perspective that general education can provide. Some institutions offer one-credit student success or career exploration courses led by career services professionals and advisors. While these are helpful, I believe that a scholarly investigation into the nature of “work” in society offers a more compelling and intellectually engaging way to prepare undergraduates for the future. I look forward to discussing participants' institutional initiatives around career preparation, hearing their responses—including critiques of my

approach—and working together to identify additional opportunities to reinforce and articulate the value of the general education curriculum in supporting students’ futures.

*Inspiring Creativity while Navigating Bureaucracy* Nicole Turner (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)

As a senior assistant dean and member of the Gen Ed Board, I have shepherded gen ed proposals, revisions, and reviews through a large, four-year, public institution with ever-changing policies and processes. Before that, I was advising students and hearing about their experiences in these same courses. My background in counseling and educational policy have led me to balance my own knowledge with skills I have learned from the faculty I support in fine and applied arts. The session will start with an activity for attendees to utilize AI in pairs (instructions provided for using AI) to create an image that represents their assumptions of the faculty experience during a gen ed review. After 2 minutes, this will shift into an 8-minute presentation that will highlight strategies for balancing faculty content expertise, gen ed policy/expectations, and an enthusiasm for the possibilities of creative collaborations. This will be shared in a method of 1) Challenge, 2) Strategy, 3) Implementation, and 4) Take-Away with approximately four examples. One example would be: 1) Challenge: The Ambiguous Policy, a.k.a. substantial writing required; 2) Strategy: Put the policy aside. Focus on the big picture and learning outcomes of the course. Define what the instructor has attempted over time that meets the outcomes. Ask questions about what this is like in their field; 3) Implementation: Reassure an outcome is possible. Be positive and collaborative. Craft the justification for what is common in this field and what occurs in this course. Nerd out in learning more without taking on the pressure of the policy. Ask questions to identify paths for resolving discrepancies. 4) Take-Away: Situations become frustrating when they are big and obscure. Utilize the excitement of the course itself and what has already been successful to address ambiguous policies. This is what helps develop informed policies for campuses! After the 8-minute presentation, the discussion will ask each table to identify other takeaways not addressed in the presentation, which would also find creative solutions to bureaucratic challenges. The last minute the pairs will share their AI generated image, explain their input, and summarize.

## 2:45 PM to 4:00 PM

General Education's Role in Lifelong Success [R/B] Holly

*Making General Education Meaningful: A Process of Revision* Sarah Maveety and Jordan Kuck (Brevard College)

Over the past ten years, study after study has shown that Americans are increasingly struggling to understand what higher education contributes to society. Even more alarming, over the past decade the number of people who think that higher education is harming society has gone up. While this trend has much to do with politics and the rhetoric of national politicians, it is also the case that colleges and universities have not done enough in the twenty-first century to explain the value proposition of a formal education. Seeking to combat this trend, Brevard College has launched a new strategic plan. Step one was to revise and update the general education program, which had not been significantly revised in more than ten years. Dr. Maveety and Dr. Kuck co-chaired the general education revision team, and their goal was to make the new program student-facing, with clear language that emphasizes the professional skill-building at the core of the program. They also created optional “focus areas” within the new program to ensure that students feel a sense of agency and empowerment. Additionally, as a capstone-like experience, students are now able to apply for a general education reflection prize. This annual competition invites students to reflect on how their general education experiences have transformed their understanding of major social issues and problems. Finally, the new general education program has now folded in the Brevard Career Advantage, another aspect of the strategic plan. As part of general education coursework, students now take career exploration and preparation courses during their first two years. In their presentation, Dr. Maveety and Dr. Kuck will outline and analyze their experiences revising the general education program, offering for the audience best-practice tips and advice.

*Durable Skills and Student Success: The Why and How* Candyce Reynolds (Boise State University)

Durable skills, such as communication and critical thinking, are essential for student success both academically and professionally. This session will provide an overview of the concept of durable skills (also known as transferable skills or soft skills). Employers recognize that durable skills are necessary for success in the world of work and have long encouraged those in higher education to help students develop these skills through their general education and academic programs. Transparent inclusion of these skills in general education courses is vital to student success in college and beyond. Strategies for inclusion of durable skills in Boise State General Education classes will be shared, and participants will have the opportunity to consider how they can highlight the development and growth of these important skills in their programs and courses.

*Presence Under Pressure: Tools for Cultivating Authenticity, Presence, and Joy* [PD]  
**Dogwood** Elizabeth Norell (University of Mississippi)

What does it mean to be present in higher education in 2025? In this workshop, attendees will be invited into reflection and inquiry about their values, sources of joy (and stress), and ways of being at work. Through those reflections, attendees will identify tools and practices to support authenticity, presence, and joy on campus in ways that support others in a community of meaningful teaching and learning. Expect hands-on activities, reflections, and discussions that support attendees where they are.

Humanities: Meeting the Challenges of Our Time [R] **Poplar**  
*Proteus and the California Maritime Academy: Recentering the Humanities in STEM and Vocational Education* Amy Parsons and Sarah Senk (California Poly Maritime Academy)

This presentation will describe our efforts to create a coherent, purposeful, and Humanities-focused GE program in the context of two compounding challenges: The California State University Maritime Academy trains students for work in the U.S. Merchant Marine (non-military) as ship officers and engineers, as well as in business and logistics, marine policy and security, and oceanography. Our career-focused students often see their GE classes as secondary or irrelevant to their professional aspirations. Additionally, support for GE in general and the Humanities in particular has eroded as the CSU system navigates increasing budget shortfalls. Our answer is Proteus, designed with the support of The Teagle Foundation's "Cornerstone: Learning for Living" initiative. We take existing requirements, especially in first-year GE courses, meet learning outcomes drawing from a list of "transformative texts," and infuse those courses with Humanities-based pedagogy: close-reading, open-ended discussion, and the centering of big questions about meaning, community belonging, and what it means to be a person in our increasingly digitized world. We have also appropriated a campus-wide focus on leadership, reframing it away from purely practical or managerial skills and toward habits of mind such as awareness of self and others, adaptability, and comfort with uncertainty. In this way, we are making GE foundational to cultivating a "maritime mindset," essential for a career at sea, or in any hands-on technical field. We just completed the first year of a two-year development plan; we will discuss how we connected with the Teagle Foundation, how we revised specific first year courses, how collaboration and consultation with colleagues across disciplines helped us make our approach more resonant with students' majors, and how our emphasis on self-reflection has been especially enriching for students. Finally, we will provide a short demonstration of how close reading in class of passages from literary or philosophical texts can lead to surprising student engagement. Our overarching aim is to develop strong links between General Education, degrees, and careers, while providing students with meaningful opportunities to embrace ambiguity with confidence and curiosity.

*Rhetorics of the Rust Belt: Framing Cleveland Through Transformative Texts* Valentino Zullo and Hayley Verdi (Ursuline College)

In Fall 2024, Ursuline College revitalized their composition sequence to feature works that speak to the way in which our understanding of civic engagement has been shaped by our city of Cleveland. Selected texts which illuminate Cleveland's history and emphasize the many important social movements that

emerged from our region were selected with the purpose of helping students to recognize that Cleveland was, is, and can continue to be a site of knowledge production. We focused on three main areas of our history: 1) our region's connection to the Civil Rights Movement, 2) The American Indian Movement and our role as a resettlement city, and 3) the Environmental Movement. Martin Luther King Jr., after penning the letter from Birmingham Jail, traveled to Cleveland to speak at Cory United Methodist Church, a building that previously housed a synagogue. Carl Stokes, elected in 1968, became the first Black mayor of a major city. Cleveland was the second city to serve as a center of the American Indian Movement in 1970—after Russel Means and Dennis Banks extended the reach of AIMs. Finally, the Environmental Movement was supercharged by the photographs of the 1969 Cuyahoga River fire. These three moments tell the story of the United States in the twentieth century, as Cleveland's changing landscape forecasted national trends. The goal of this reframing is to help students think about the role of place in their writing and broadly in their education. The presenters will reflect on the first year of the sequence revamp and how other instructors can root their classes in the context of their region. The course focuses on these topics, center our city's histories, and help students to visualize Cleveland as a laboratory—a testing ground for civic engagement.

### Responding to the DOA (?) of DEI [B] Walnut

*Reflecting on the Fall of DEI* Matthew Recla (Boise State University)

This year, Boise State University suspended its university learning outcome of diversity in response to a vaguely worded state law designed to prohibit any higher education efforts "predicated on...critical theory,...known under the title of 'diversity, equity, and inclusion.'" Students encountered the diversity outcome in a required second-year course entitled "Foundations of Ethics and Diversity," which has previously been challenged by legislative stakeholders. This moment provides an opportunity for reflection on at least two elements: the purpose of a university learning outcome focused on diversity (multiculturalism, pluralism, etc.), and the relevance of communicating with external stakeholders.

Awareness of the existence of a plurality of cultures, backgrounds, identities, and viewpoints is important. Diversity is a fact of life. However, the translation of this fact into an educational outcome raises at least two questions. First, is diversity an outcome that can be taught and assessed directly? Second, does the fact of diversity imply something students ought to do with it? If diversity is necessary as a learning outcome of a student's education, it suggests that the aims of this outcome cannot be gained, or are insufficiently gained, elsewhere. It also suggests we want students to gain more than knowledge of diversity. What unique skills, actions, behaviors, or dispositions are we fostering, and should we require them of all students? Alternatively, if diversity need not be a specific learning outcome, it might suggest that students can gain sufficient knowledge and skills related to a diversity outcome in other areas of the curriculum. It might also suggest that the attempt to make diversity a university learning outcome requires assumptions—about the goals of liberal education and trust in higher education—that are no longer valid.

Participants in this session will use the lessons learned at one public university to reflect on the history, state, and purpose of DEI-related efforts on their own campuses. Participants will also have the opportunity to discuss how to most effectively communicate with external stakeholders in our contexts about the importance of a general, liberal education when the value and purpose of a college education is increasingly questioned.

*Re-envisioning General Education Within Professional Studies Programs: Higher Education, Disruption, and DEI* Kate Scarpna, Michele Riley, and Tyra Hall-Pogar (Purdue Global)

Recent disruptions in higher education—from pandemics and economic shifts to evolving federal policies—have significantly reshaped the expectations of stakeholders. Beyond traditional groups like students, faculty, and alumni, we must now consider the broader community, employers, and policymakers, all within a climate of shifting ideas surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

This session will explore how these disruptions have impacted the general education requirements within the customized Professional Studies programs at a large public online institution. We will delve into how these programs have adapted to meet the evolving needs of various stakeholders while simultaneously fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment that emphasizes the importance of

belonging. Research highlights that shaping conversations is a vital part of advancing DEI (Kim, Gallardo, & Taylor, 2025).

For general education leadership/faculty, understanding these adaptations is crucial. We will examine 1) how can general education leaders identify and respond to the evolving expectations of a wider range of stakeholders, including employers and policymakers, in the current climate?, 2) what specific strategies can general education leaders employ to integrate DEI principles more effectively into their programs, ensuring relevance and fostering a sense of belonging for all students?, and 3) how can insights from program revision and reform, particularly in response to external disruptions, inform and strengthen general education initiatives across different institutional contexts?

The session will provide practical strategies for utilizing this information in program revision and reform. We will share specific examples of how to reshape program structure, curriculum, and student support services to advance institutional goals and ensure the continued relevance of DEI-focused education in a rapidly changing world. The key takeaway for general education leaders will be actionable strategies for proactively adapting general education programs to meet diverse stakeholder needs and championing DEI in an ever-evolving higher education landscape.

Reinvention by Design in General Education [R] Willow  
*Review and Restructuring of the Catalyst Program at Ripon College* Timothy Reed and John Sisko (Ripon College)

The Catalyst Program was created in 2016 as a five-semester core curriculum in which students take two courses during their first year (CTL 110 Writing and CTL 120 Quantitative Reasoning), two during their second year (CTL 210 Intercultural Competence and CTL 220 Integration), and a junior-level group problem-solving seminar (CTL 300). Through Catalyst, students develop skills in eight areas: oral communication, writing, critical thinking, collaboration, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, integration, and intercultural competence. Faculty from all academic programs teach Catalyst courses. Review of Catalyst began in summer 2024. The review process is multifaceted and involves two standing committees, an internal ad hoc committee, and an external committee (comprised of three AGLS members). In May 2025, proposals for concrete and conceptional changes will be advanced for faculty votes. In summer 2025, a task force will concretize proposed conceptual changes. Non-complex changes will be implemented in fall 2025, while other changes will be implemented in spring 2026. In this presentation, we offer a brief history of Catalyst and of the review process, but, more importantly, we share details and solicit feedback on implementation and remaining obstacles.

Key challenges facing the Catalyst Program include several things. These include 1) insufficient staffing (since 2016, there has been a 22% decline in the number of faculty at the College); 2) Projects in CTL 300 require skills that students have not developed in previous CTL courses, 3) lack of CTL-specific professional development for faculty and staff, 4) use of credit/no credit and satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading appear to hinder skill development, with students needing grades of only D or C- in specific courses to complete the Program, 5) the unique curricular structure of Catalyst complicates transfer of credits into and out of the College, and 6) CTL 110 and CTL 120 do not provide robust first-year experience programming for students, and this may be detrimental to retention.

The presentation will be interactive and will provide tools and insights for attendees who may be considering program review. Further, the presentation will highlight the ways in which the expertise of AGLS members may be leveraged in order to improve core curricula at a broad variety of institutions.

*Refined by Design: Distilling Purpose in General Education at VCU* Maria Carolina Yaber, Zachary Goodell, Ananda Newmark, Virginia Wray Totaro, and Angie Wetzels (Virginia Commonwealth University)

At Virginia Commonwealth University, the redesign of our General Education program—ConnectED—follows a process akin to distillation: beginning with raw inputs, exposed to pressure, and refined over time into a clear, impactful product. Originally, in the past, VCU's general education curriculum offered broad exposure across disciplines but lacked structure that would support coherence and transparency of purpose

and measurement of successful learning. Learning expectations varied widely, and assessment was concentrated in just three designated courses. Without shared goals or consistency, the experience often felt more like a scattered sampling than a meaningful progression across the baccalaureate program. Presently, in response to evolving SACSCOC standards, VCU implemented a complete overhaul in 2019. Faculty had to reapply to keep existing courses or propose new ones aligned with shared learning outcomes. The restructured program now centers on two key pillars: Areas of Inquiry and Breadth of Knowledge, both designed to integrate interdisciplinary thinking and measurable skills. Every course must now contribute to a cohesive learning experience that prepares students for academic, professional, and civic success. Future: As technology, workforce demands, and accreditation continue to evolve, ConnectED is built to be dynamic and responsive. Our commitment to continuous improvement positions us to keep refining the program so that it remains relevant, rigorous, and student-centered. Interactive Element: This session will offer participants a hands-on planning tool to help visualize and align the essential elements of their general education program. Attendees will work through how to move from “raw ingredients” (courses, goals, assessments) to a more distilled, unified structure that supports transparency, faculty engagement, and meaningful student learning. Participants will leave with a customizable template and practical strategies to spark or sustain reform efforts on their own campuses.

## 4:15 PM to 5:15 PM

*Designing Course Elements to Build Essential GenEd Skills* [R] **Walnut** Christopher Murphy (The College of New Jersey), Steve Jones (U.S. Air Force Academy), Elissa Graff (University of Pikeville), Bruce Umbaugh (Webster University), and David Beach (Radford University)

The complex problems of the 21st century require that citizens possess more than disciplinary knowledge. Our citizens also need a rich array of skills, including how to seek out and interpret credible information, evaluate the validity of an argument, collaborate with others to tackle complex problems in disciplined ways, and communicate effectively. GenEd programs are uniquely situated to help students develop these skills, but that development will not take place spontaneously; it requires intentional effort, and the traditional approach of centering GenEd courses primarily on disciplinary content is not likely to be sufficient. The goal of this session is to help attendees design course elements for their GenEd courses that more purposefully develop the essential skills our citizens need to engage as agents of change in their communities. In our session at the 2024 Constitute, participants identified several essential skills to be developed in GenEd courses (e.g., information literacy, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, informed decision-making, creative problem solving, among others). This year’s session will build on that work by engaging participants in the development of course elements (e.g., readings, assignments, assessments) through which students can gain essential skills. The six co-facilitators, representing diverse disciplines and institutions, will present some examples, and then participants will collaborate with each other and the facilitators to identify and backwards-design course materials, assignments, and assessments that effectively and efficiently develop essential skills to a level that allows students to understand and address complex issues. Participants will share the course elements they have developed and then will discuss the similarities and differences among the developed elements and how these elements differ from what has been traditionally used in GenEd courses. Participants will conclude the session by discussing a plan for continued collaboration and will be provided with resources to support the design of course elements that build essential skills. By the end of the session, participants will be able to identify essential GenEd skills for civic and professional readiness, backward-design course elements that build these skills, compare these elements with traditional GenEd course elements, and strategize continued collaboration with peers to sustain course-level innovation.

*Florida's Top-Down Revision Process: A Panel Discussion* [R] **Poplar** Joseph Ross (Florida Gulf Coast University), Lynn Hogan (Florida State University), and Linda Howell (University of North Florida)

The 2025-26 academic year is the first in which the General Education courses offered at all 40 of Florida's state universities and state colleges have needed the approval of the state's Board of Governors or Board of Education. The process to get to this point was confusing, controversial, and rife with conflict, as each institution navigated complicated directives from Tallahassee while balancing internal interests among faculty, advisors, and administrators. In this panel discussion, the leaders of the revision efforts at several Florida institutions will each share the view from their campus, both during the review process and as the new Gen Ed menus take effect in Fall 2025. Following the 2024 elections and efforts to emulate Florida's approach from various states, this conversation has taken on new urgency for the AGLS community. Session attendees will be encouraged to ask questions of the panel to help their institutions develop a game plan for dealing with external pressures, whether from legislators or activists seeking to "expose" faculty, pedagogy, and curriculum they disagree with.

*General Education Master Distillers across the Southeast* [R] **Willow** Staci Stone and Benjamin Gross (Jacksonville State University), Ashley Ireland (Murray State University), and Elizabeth McFalls (Columbus State University)

The approach of George Garvin Brown, the pharmaceutical salesman who was the first to bottle bourbon, is instructional for successful implementation of a new or revised general education program: his glass bottles represent transparency, Old Forrester's beginning as batches from three distilleries symbolizes collaboration, and the move to a double-barreled whisky to survive a fire shows innovation. This session, comprising panelists from four universities in the Southeast, will provide diverse perspectives on general education revision and reinforcement. Yet, these upper administrators, who support general education on their campuses, agree that open communication, partnerships, and transformation are key to a thriving general education program. The panel will address topics such as the significance of gen ed, high impact practices, effective collaborations, and career development, as well as badged microcredentials and gen ed reform. Descriptions of assessment models, funding, and staffing will accompany the theoretical underpinnings of these programs.

This panel discussion, which will begin with introductions and set questions posed to the administrators, will include brief descriptions of the gen ed programs at the four universities. These programs include Columbus State University's River Program, which links the University System of Georgia Core IMPACTS with experiential learning and community engagement; Jackson State's THEE Pathway featuring thematically-connected courses; Murray State's evolving University Studies distributive model; and Jacksonville State's Jax MIX Program, which is the first in the nation to embed badged microcredentials fully within gen ed. The session will conclude with plenty of time for responses to participant questions, making the session interactive.

The value of this panel presentation, an unusual format for this session, is the opportunity for attendees from various institutions (public, HBCU, regional, large, medium, etc.) to connect to and learn from transformative work occurring on diverse campuses featuring different gen ed models. The administrators have over eighty years' experience with general education—teaching and leading general education through disruption, crisis, pandemic, and calm. Like the Old Forrester brand, which is the only bourbon sold by the same company before, during, and after Prohibition, general education continues to transform and remain relevant, even desired.

*Distilling Excellence: Transforming General Education to Meet Modern Challenges in Higher Education* [B] **Dogwood** Stephanie Thompson, Kate Scarpena, and Tyra Hall-Pogar (Purdue Global)

General Education at a large, online university serving adult learners presents unique challenges. At our institution, students primarily take courses like "Arts and Humanities: Modern Creative Expressions" to fulfill requirements rather than from inherent interest. Juggling work and family responsibilities, they may resort to using AI for assignments, creating concerns about academic integrity and rigor. Faculty face their own challenges. Teaching standardized courses developed by curriculum teams can lead to burnout when repeated every 10 weeks for years. New hires often struggle with feedback and grading expectations, creating turnover issues. Research highlights additional stressors including isolation, year-round teaching

schedules, and expectations to support students' mental health needs (Kinkade, 2025; Rock, 2024; Vyletel et al., 2023). This session explores our program's response to these challenges through strategic evolution. While research has not established a causal link between generative AI and increased plagiarism (Rana, 2025), anecdotal evidence shows more reported breaches. Our university formed an AI Task Force shortly after ChatGPT's 2023 launch, regularly hosting sessions on ethical AI use and providing remediation through a joint pilot between Writing Across the Curriculum and Academic Appeals teams. Our transformation from General Education to the School of Multidisciplinary and Professional Studies (MaPS) has enabled us to create specialized courses for other schools, including a doctoral research and writing course. Our Professional Studies master's program also gives faculty the opportunity to teach graduate courses. We will discuss these courses as well as other faculty retention and burnout mitigation strategies that have shown promising results. This interactive session will provide resources on AI remediation and invite attendees to share their institutions' approaches to similar challenges, fostering a community of practice around evolving general education landscapes. Attendees will gain practical strategies for transforming general education programs to address modern challenges while supporting both student engagement and faculty wellbeing.

*Gen Ed and Democracy: Open Education Materials from Civic Engagement & Voting Rights Teacher Scholars* [R] **Holly** Bridget Trogden (American University), Mary Anne Clarke (Bryant University), Christopher Garris (Metropolitan State University of Denver), and Vee Kennedy (University of Central Florida)

In this session, Civic Engagement & Voting Rights Teacher Scholars from the past 3 years of Mellon Foundation-funded work will discuss their strategies for promoting democracy in general education courses and will share the open education materials they have created. Democracy is key to American general education, with ties to learning outcomes such as information literacy, critical thinking, dialogue, argument, and analysis. The panel will highlight the voices of Teacher Scholars passionate about civic engagement and the pedagogical connections in gen ed coursework. The panel will pull from diverse gen ed disciplines and feature Teacher Scholars at a range of different institution types. Teacher Scholars will share their experiences in engaging students civically and share strategies for faculty to cultivate civically engaged campus cultures while promoting student success in democracy-focused general education. We believe that the discussion will be especially critical and needed at this time in American history.

Handouts and other materials may be available post-Constitute if the presenters have shared their materials with us. We have set up a private webpage for attendees to get shared materials and other Louisville meeting resources. This page will be available through December 24, 2025.

**Visit the 2025 Attendee page [HERE](#) for handouts, resources, and more.**

## 2025 LOUISVILLE ATTENDEE LIST

LAST	FIRST	INSTITUTION	EMAIL
Archer	Alyssa	Radford University	aarcher2@radford.edu
Baranczyk	Michele	Kutztown University of Pennsylvania	baranczy@kutztown.edu
Barbour	Nancy	Oregon State University	nancy.barbour@oregonstate.edu
Barnes	Christopher	Pennsylvania State University	christopher.barnes@psu.edu
Beach	David	Radford University	dbeach6@radford.edu
Beck	Dennis	James Madison University	beckdc@jmu.edu
Beers	Melissa	Ohio State University	beers.3@osu.edu
Bennett	Kesley	Western Colorado University	kbennett@western.edu
Berg	Bartell	Hanover University	berg@hanover.edu
Biscotte	Stephen	Virginia Tech	biscotsm@vt.edu
Boldman	James	Ivy Tech Community College	jboldman3@ivytech.edu
Bowers	Shawn	Queens University of Charlotte	bowersss@queens.edu
Bringle	Mary Louise 'Mel'	Brevard College	mbringle@brevard.edu
Brooks	Sarah	James Madison University	brooksst@jmu.edu
Brown	Elizabeth	James Madison University	brownet@jmu.edu
Bush	Kristina	Boston University	kambush@bu.edu
Carnot	Mary Jo	Chadron State College	mcarnot@csc.edu
Carpenter	Rowanna	Portland State University	carpenr@pdx.edu
Caseldine-Bracht	Jennifer	Purdue Global	jaseldine-bracht@purdueglobal.edu
Childers	Greg	California State University, Fullerton	gchilders@fullerton.edu
Clarke	Mary Anne	Bryant University	mclarke1@bryant.edu
Clevinger	Kara	Oregon State University	kara.clevinger@oregonstate.edu
Cobb	Christina	Middle Tennessee State University	christina.cobb@mtsu.edu
Cole	Rick	Boston University	rickcole@bu.edu
Cooper	Lydia	Seattle University	lcooper1@seattleu.edu
Coughlin	Steve	Western Colorado University	scoughlin@western.edu
Cruz	Laura	Pennsylvania State University	lxc601@psu.edu
Cubbison	Laurie	Radford University	lcubbiso@radford.edu
DeKorte	Jodene	Purdue Global	jdekorte@purdueglobal.edu
Deuyour	Hannah	Virginia Tech	hshinault@vt.edu

Dillon	Pattie	Spalding University	pdillon@spalding.edu
DiMattio	David	Springfield Technical Community College	djdimattio@stcc.edu
Dodge	Michael	University of North Dakota	michael.s.dodge@und.edu
Driscoll	Kelly	Digication	kdriscoll@digication.com
Duncan	Chelsea Kylene	James Madison University	dunca2ck@jmu.edu
Engelhard	Jenai	Boston University	jenai@bu.edu
Estes	J.R. 'Jones'	Portland State University	estesjr@pdx.edu
Fackler	Eliot	Governors State University	efackler@govst.edu
Fagan	Eizabeth	Virginia Commonwealth University	fagane@vcu.edu
Fitzgerald	Rachel	Virginia Tech	raegait@vt.edu
Furman	Kali	Oregon State University	kali.furman@oregonstate.edu
Gaff	Donald	University of Northern Iowa	donald.gaff@uni.edu
Gallagher	Jenni	Virginia Tech	jennigal@vt.edu
Garcia	Yeidaliz	University of Central Florida	yeidaliz.garcia@ucf.edu
Garris	Christopher	Metropolitan State University of Denver	cgarris@msudenver.edu
Goldberg	Abraham	James Madison University	goldbeax@jmu.edu
Goodell	Zachary	Virginia Commonwealth University	zggoodel@vcu.edu
Graff	Elissa	University of Pikeville	elissagraff@upike.edu
Green	Jane	Appalachian State University	greenje7@appstate.edu
Greer	Chapman	University of Alabama	greer017@ua.edu
Greiner	Chris	Governors State University	cgreiner@govst.edu
Gross	Ben	Jacksonville State University	bgross@jsu.edu
Guillard	Julianne	Virginia Commonwealth University	jguillard@vcu.edu
Hanggi	Kathleen	Virginia Commonwealth University	hanggik@vcu.edu
Hepner	Seth	Walsh University	shepner@walsh.edu
Hermberg	Kevin	Dominican University New York	kevin.hermberg@duny.edu
Hogan	Lynn	Florida State University	lhogan@fsu.edu

Hopkins	Jacob	The University of the District of Columbia	jacob.hopkins@udc.edu
Huber	McKenzie	Oregon State University	mckenzie.huber@oregonstate.edu
Hume	Douglas	Northern Kentucky University	humed1@nku.edu
Hutchison	Christin	Ohio State University	hutchinson.64@osu.edu
Hyle	Kristin	Appalachian State University	hylekm@appstate.edu
Imafuji	Elizabeth	Ivy Tech Community College	lizimafuji@gmail.com
Ingraham	Lauren	University of Tennessee at Chattanooga	lauren-ingraham@utc.edu
Ireland	Ashley	Murray State University	aireland@murraystate.edu
Jaburek	Niki	Ohio State University	jaburek.2@osu.edu
Jessee	Caitlyn	Florida State University	cjessee@fsu.edu
Johnson	Karlie	Jacksonville State University	kljohnson@jsu.edu
Johnston	Elisabeth	Plymouth State University	epjohnston@plymouth.edu
Kalish	Alan	Ohio State University	kalish.3@osu.edu
Kennedy	Vee	University of Central Florida	vee.kennedy@ucf.edu
Klima	Rick	Appalachian State University	klimare@appstate.edu
Komelski	Matthew	Virginia Tech	komelski@vt.edu
Kowalski	Meghan	University of the District of Columbia	meghan.kowalski@udc.edu
Kramer	Beth	Boston University	kramerb@bu.edu
Krouse	Tonya	Northern Kentucky University	krouset@nku.edu
Kuck	Jordan	Brevard College	kuckjt@brevard.edu
Kurtyka	Faith	Creighton University	faithkurtyka@creighton.edu
Lettner-Rust	Heather	Longwood University	lettnerusthg@longwood.edu
Lobova	Tatyana	Old Dominion University	tlobova@odu.edu
Loewen	Donald	Binghamton University	djloewen@binghamton.edu
Lucke	Joyce	AGLS	execdir@agls.org
Madel	Meghan	Virginia Tech	megmadel@vt.edu
Margetts	James	Chadron State College	jmargetts@csc.edu
Martin	Ross	Jacksonville State University	rhmartin@jsu.edu
Maveety	Sarah	Brevard College	maveetsa@brevard.edu
McCormick	Theresa	Portland State University	t.m.mccormick@pdx.edu

McFalls	Elizabeth	Columbus State University	mcfalls_elizabeth@columbusstate.edu
McHendry, Jr.	George 'Guy'	Creighton University	gmchendry@creighton.edu
Meals	Catherine	University of the District of Columbia	catherine.meals@udc.edu
Moore	Kethera	James Madison University	foglerka@jmu.edu
Morrison	Julie	Glendale Community College (AZ)	julie.morrison@gccaz.edu
Mulrooney	Margaret 'Meg'	James Madison University	mulroomm@jmu.edu
Murray	Robert	Mercy University	rmurray4@mercy.edu
Nagy Catz	Kristin	Oregon State University	kristin.nagycatz@oregonstate.edu
Nelson	Steve	Springfield Technical Community College	scnelson@stcc.edu
Newmark	Ananda	Virginia Commonwealth University	anewmark@vcu.edu
Niebur	Michelle	Boston University	mniebur@bu.edu
Norell	Liz	University of Mississippi	eanorell@olemiss.edu
O'Byrne	Megan	Kutztown University of Pennsylvania	obyrne@kutztown.edu
O'Quin	Kelly	Centre College	kelly.oquin@centre.edu
Orsini	Kelsey	Old Dominion University	korsini@odu.edu
Pagone	Novia	Governors State University	npagone@govst.edu
Palmer	Karen	Yavapai College	karen.palmer@yc.edu
Paredes	Tisha	Paredes Accreditation & Assessment Consulting	tisha@tishaparedes.com
Parsons	Amy	California Poly Maritime Academy	aparsons@csum.edu
Patch	Paula	Elon University	ppatch@elon.edu
Pearson	RaeAnne	University of Kentucky	raeanne.pearson@uky.edu
Peterson	Erik	University of Alabama	elpeterson@ua.edu
Pipino	Mary Frances 'Mimi'	Ursuline College	mpipino@ursuline.edu
Plumm	Karyn	University of North Dakota	karyn.plumm@und.edu
Polk	Thomas	George Mason University	tpolk2@gmu.edu
Purcell	Kenny	University of Southern Indiana	kmpurcell@usi.edu
Racster	Jonathan	Purdue Global	jraster@purdueglobal.edu
Ranieri	Paul	Ball State University	pranieri@bsu.edu
Recla	Matthew	Boise State University	matthewrecla@boisestate.edu

Redden	Caitlin	Chadron State College	credden@csc.edu
Reed	Timothy	Ripon College	reedt@ripon.edu
Regan	John	Boston University	jregan@bu.edu
Reiff	Marija	Jacksonville State University	mreiff@jsu.edu
Reynolds	Candyce	Boise State University	candycereynolds@boisestate.edu
Riley	Michele	Purdue Global	michele.riley@purdueglobal.edu
Ross	Joseph	Florida Gulf Coast University	jvross@fgcu.edu
Saadah	Eman	University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	esaadah2@illinois.edu
Sandholm Bark	Julianna	Webster University Geneva	juliannabark21@webster.edu
Scarpina	Kate	Purdue Global	kscarpina@purdueglobal.edu
Scarpina	Mark	Purdue Global	mark.scarpina@purdueglobal.edu
Schraffenberger	Jeremy	University of Northern Iowa	jeremy.schraffenberger@uni.edu
Senk	Sarah	California Poly Maritime Academy	ssenk@csum.edu
Slattery	Maggis	Pennsylvania State University	mjs436@psu.edu
Sloggie	Jenn	Old Dominion University	jsloggie@odu.edu
Smith	Amy	Purdue Global	asmith@purdueglobal.edu
Smith	Brad	Governors State University	bsmith7@govst.edu
Southall	Crystal	Western Colorado University	csouthall@western.edu
Stewart	David	D'Youville University	stewartd@dyc.edu
Stone	Staci	Jacksonville State University	slstone@jsu.edu
Strickland	Kestrel	Florida State University	kestrel.strickland@fsu.edu
Taylor	Suzanne	Western Colorado University	mstaylor@western.edu
Thompson	Stephanie	Purdue Global	sthompson3@purdueglobal.edu
Totaro	Virginia Wray	Virginia Commonwealth University	vvtotaro@vcu.edu
Trogden	Bridget	American University	trogden@american.edu
Turner	Nicole	University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	nicturn@illinois.edu
Umbaugh	Bruce	Webster University	bumbaugh@webster.edu
Verdi	Haley	Ursuline College	haley.verdi@ursuline.edu
Waters	Jay	University of Alabama	waters@apr.ua.edu
Weatherford	Elizabeth	Florida Gulf Coast University	ewweatherford@fgcu.edu

Wheeler Poms	Laura	George Mason University	twilso36@gmu.edu
Wilson	Ian	Centre College	ian.wilson@centre.edu
Wilson	Tricia	George Mason University	lpoms@gmu.edu
Wolfram	Wendi	Purdue Global	wendi.wolfram@purdueglobal.edu
Wooten	Courtney Adams	George Mason University	cwooten3@gmu.edu
Yaber	Maria Carolina	Virginia Commonwealth University	mcyaber@vcu.edu
Yan	Jeffrey	Digication	jay@digication.com
Zerucha	Ted	Appalachian State University	zeruchat@appstate.edu
Zullo	Valentino	Ursuline College	valentino.zullo@ursuline.edu

# THE GEN ED THOROUGHBREDS RUNNING FOR AGLS COUNCIL

Voting is now open. As an attendee of the 2025 Louisville Constitute, you are automatically a member of AGLS.

Voting will remain open through midnight EDT October 22nd.

Click [HERE](#) to go to the ballot to cast your vote.



## **For President Elect (2025-2027)**



David DiMattio (Science)  
Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs  
Springfield Technical Community College

## **For Treasurer (2025-2028)**

Jodene DeKorte (Mathematics & Education)  
Academic Dean and Vice President of the School of Multidisciplinary and Professional Studies  
Purdue Global

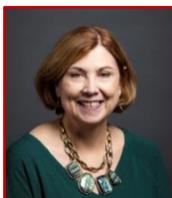


## **For Member-at-Large Cohort (2025-2028)**



Karim Dharamsi (Philosophy)  
Vice Provost, Academic  
Mount Royal University (Canada)

Kevin Hermberg (Philosophy)  
Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean  
Dominican University New York



Laura Wheeler Poms (Global & Community Health)  
Director of Mason Core  
George Mason University

# RESOURCES FOR GEN ED ADMINISTRATORS

## AGLS-based Resources



**Live Chats** Monthly open discussions on topics of interest to people involved with gen ed programs of all sorts. Topics often come from members who have a question or challenge. Everyone is welcome to attend, member or not, and lead a live chat session.

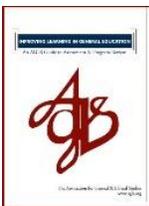


**Gen Ed Reformers Anonymous Support Group** While the idea is a spoof of 12-step programs, the live virtual meetings offer those working in gen ed the opportunity to gather in a safe and supportive 'cone-of-silence' environment with like-minded colleagues from all over to discuss and tackle all things gen ed. In the past, we have explored broad issues of transfer, assessment, messaging, etc....as well as digging into topics decided by the group as we go along. Hope you will join us for any/all of the meetings!

**Welcome to the Neighborhood: A Primer for Those New to General Education Programs** New or recently appointed as an administrator, staff, or faculty of your campus' general education program? Think of this workshop as your introduction to key issues, resources, and national network of colleagues to help you ease into the world of general education.

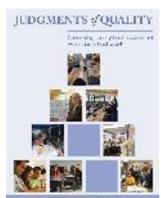


**Gen Ed on My Mind** Have a musing on something related to gen ed? Share your thoughts with your colleagues around the US and beyond. This is an informal venue – so anything fun or serious is encouraged.



**Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment & Program Review** *The Guide*, as it is often referred to, is grounded in the most

current thinking regarding quality general education and student learning. General Education luminaries such as John Nichols, NEH Distinguished Teaching Professor at St. Joseph's College; Rob Mauldin, AGLS President from 2002-2004; and Jerry Gaff, Senior Scholar at AAC&U, have led the writing and editing of the booklet. A host of experienced program administrators and faculty from two and four-year, private, and public institutions have contributed to the writing, reviewing, and editing. A *FREE* download on our website.



**Judgments of Quality: Connecting Faculty Best Assessment with Student Best Work** Project participants wrestled with the issue of how to do assessment of

liberal learning at the highest (about-to-graduate students) undergraduate levels that did not involve any lowering of expectations simply in order to produce data, perhaps even quantitative, for accountability purposes. The idea was to exert intelligence and ingenuity, in order to keep student learning primary to any other concerns from administrators or accreditors.

**AGLS Jerry G. Gaff Faculty Awards for General and Liberal Studies** These awards honor faculty on campuses who exemplify the advocacy for leadership and teaching in liberal education. Each year we recognize faculty who have demonstrated leadership on their campuses,

shown evidence of outstanding teaching in general and liberal education courses, or have a record of achievement in curriculum development, innovation, or implementation.

**The AGLS Award for National Leadership in General and Liberal Education** This award recognizes exemplary individuals who have made significant contributions to the practice or theory of general education and liberal studies as a national leader.

**AGLS Exemplary General Education Program Award** Known more commonly as the *Exemplary Program Award*, this award promotes institutional commitment to continuous quality improvement processes, recognizes faculty and institutions that practice these quality behaviors, and provides much needed examples of effective improvement processes. AGLS recognizes institutions committed to systematic, verifiable general education learning achieved through one of identified focus categories based on questions in the AGLS Guide.

**AGLS Gen Ed Administrators Playbook** With this playbook, our goal is to provide general education instructors, curriculum committee members, administrators, and any campus academic leader with a variety of tools and perspectives to address the tough questions as they arise. This is meant to be more than a simple FAQ, because how you respond will vary depending on who is asking, where, in what context, and in what tone. Obviously, no resource like this can be comprehensive, so some improvisation, trial-and-error, and live-and-learn will be inevitable.

**External Gen Ed Review Support** Looking to conduct an external academic program review for your general education program? You have come to the right place! Whether you are conducting the review as part of an institutional or accrediting body cycle or need an outside perspective as you gear up for a gen ed reform, AGLS can inform the process and connect with you people to get the most out of your review. Here you will find questions to consider while planning out your external review, a list of potential reviewers highly involved with gen ed at the national level, and guidance on conducting an institutional self-study to inform and complement the external review.

**Are You New To General Education?** Are you a new general education leader at your institution? This includes administrators, deans, dept heads, committee chairs, and anyone else tasked with facilitating the day-to-day nuts-and-bolts work of gen ed. If so, you have come to the right place! Welcome to AGLS! This is where you will find the resources and people to make your gen ed position great! The best, most supportive people and the professional development that will give you the best resources to tackle the challenges and celebrate the successes of doing the daily challenging work of improving general education on your campus.

**Good Gen Ed Reads Recommended By AGLS Members** This List Are Books, Chapters, Articles, Or Blogs Anyone New To Gen Ed May Find Useful. This Is Not A Comprehensive List And Will Be Updated As Recommendations Are Made Or We Find New Publications.

**Essential Reads for Those New to General Education** These ten books will give you a solid foundation to begin your journey as a gen ed champion.

**CONSIDER NOMINATING SOMEONE IN 2026**

## FOR AN AGLS AWARDS

As a part of our mission to support and celebrate the work and people who make a difference in the general education programs – AGLS is proud to be the only organization that routinely recognize the excellent and challenging work of people like you.



### **2026 focus: Emerging Gen Ed Leader on Campus**

Since 2002, the AGLS has given one Gaff award each year to recognize faculty who have demonstrated leadership on their campuses, shown evidence of outstanding teaching in general and liberal education courses, and have a record of

achievement in curriculum development, innovation, or implementation. Nominees should be a full-time, instructional faculty who have demonstrated significant campus-wide leadership specifically in the areas of general education and liberal studies curriculum reform, revision, implementation, assessment, or administration.

Learn more about the Gaff Award at <https://www.agls.org/agls-awards/gaff-awards/>



Our Exemplary General Education Program Award promotes institutional commitment to continuous quality improvement processes, recognizes faculty and institutions that practice these quality behaviors, and provides much needed examples of effective improvement processes. AGLS recognizes institutions committed to systematic, verifiable general education learning achieved through one of identified focus categories found in the *AGLS Guide to Program Improvement*. The Guide is available

for free on the AGLS website.

Learn more about the Exemplary General Education Program Award at <https://www.agls.org/agls-awards/exemplary-program-awards/>

Note: Details for the two awards which will seek nominations in 2026 will be available by late January 2026.

# AGLS 2026 CHARLOTTE, NC



**SEPTEMBER 24 TO 26**

**DoubleTree by Hilton Charlotte City Centre**



**OUR MISSION:** The Association for General & Liberal Studies is a community of practitioner-scholars that provides strategic, effective, and innovative support for peers engaged in the day-to-day work of general and liberal learning in 21st century higher education.

**OUR VISION:** The Association for General & Liberal Studies aspires to be the leading organization that enhances the day-to-day work of those engaged in general education.

(812) 390-6912

[execdir@agls.org](mailto:execdir@agls.org)

[www.agls.org](http://www.agls.org)

