



Ride the Rapids: Navigating General Education through Turbulent Times

ASSOCIATION FOR GENERAL & LIBERAL STUDIES

2026 CONSTITUTE

DOUBLETREE CITY CENTER

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

SEPTEMBER 24, 25 & 26



Charlotte, the site for this year's AGLS Constitute, is the home of the National Whitewater Center, featuring the world's largest man-made whitewater river for rafting, kayaking, and canoeing. The Center offers rapids that range from Class II – exciting but manageable with some areas of smooth water to Class IV – with strong currents, big waves, and little calm water between rapids.

When life gets bumpy it sometimes becomes excruciating hard to wade through tough times. It is life's way of teaching you timeless lessons of steadfastness, patience and forbearance.

Challenges and hardships are not meant to break you, but to build your willpower, patience, and strength. Just like rough waters test a raft's durability and rider's skills, in the same way, the hard times test your inner character. Every struggle is a profound lesson in disguise—shaping you into someone wiser, more flexible, and more capable of tackling all kinds of challenges.

In higher education, and in particular in general education programs, periods of uncertainty and disruption place particularly challenging demands on us. Rapid institutional change, shifting student needs, technological transformation, and contested public expectations require educators to make careful, often difficult decisions about purpose, design, and practice. Like navigating rough water, this work calls for coordination, judgment, and adaptability rather than endurance alone. In such moments, general education becomes a site for clarifying values, refining priorities, and developing approaches that help students and institutions remain oriented amid change.

Like white water rafting, leading general education requires agility, teamwork, and courage. This year's conference invites bold ideas and practical strategies that help leaders steer through uncertainty, overcome institutional rapids, and chart a course toward innovation and student success. We invite proposals that examine how general and liberal education can be intentionally shaped, strengthened, and sustained under these conditions.

WHO ARE WE?

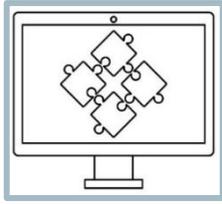
AGLS is a national organization designed to provide general education faculty and administrators with practical knowledge and experiences for creating, revising, and running a quality program. We have helped individuals, programs, and institutions with everything from communication and marketing to day-to-day administrative operations to innovations in the classroom. Our goal is to create an interactive, three-day experience devoted to practical matters that get all participants engaging, sharing, and leaving each session with concrete 'takeaways.'

OUR 2026 TRACKS

We ask that proposals focus on highly interactive presentations or discussion intensive, sharing high-impact takeaways, and considering how your work supports one of our thematic tracks. Remember, here in AGLS, we are free to talk about not only our successes, but our failures. This is a forum where you will find people who understand the challenges and opportunities that your colleagues on

campus may not always comprehend. This is your gen ed safe place for anyone who does the challenging work of general education.

General Education Revision and Reinforcement



In the world of program development, the essential components—curriculum content, learning outcomes, teaching methods, assessment strategies, and the needs of students—are like the gear, paddles, and trained crew you need before pushing off into fast-moving rapids. Each element must be chosen with intention and brought together in balance to steer a clear, purposeful course through the waters of general and liberal education.

As we all navigate the same rushing currents of change, it is vital that we chart and share our routes: the why, what, and how behind our general and liberal education work. By comparing maps and learning from one another’s rapids and eddies, we avoid paddling the same stretch alone—or worse, getting stuck in the same whirlpools. Works-in-progress are not only welcome; they are essential river guides for the rest of us. (Co-Pilot, 2026)

Some potential questions to explore on this track include, but are not limited to:

- How can the changing currents inform successful course adjustments or major redesigns? How has your messaging regarding the value and purpose of general education changed for various stakeholders? How does the messaging keep the raft steady and responsive?
- How are you bringing innovative, high-impact practices into your Gen Ed sequence—for example study abroad, undergraduate research, service learning, or civic engagement—to build bridges across disciplines and help students connect Gen Ed to majors and careers? What new tributaries are you helping students explore?
- How do two-year and four-year institutions paddle in sync to create smooth transitions for transferring students? How are they communicating about requirements, outcomes, and high-impact practices? What creative approaches are emerging to align the learning experience across campuses—like constructing shared channels that help students move forward without capsizing?
- How do considerations related to career development and preparation factor into your revision process? How are you helping students navigate the rapids of their first job with confidence and skill?

Assessment in General and Liberal Education



Assessing student learning in general education helps one to guide the curriculum and students through the rapids. Students may see the curriculum as a river--full of varying currents and hidden obstacles--while sound assessment serves the institution and program directors the way the paddle serves the river guide. It helps educators read the water, adjust course as conditions change,

and avoid preventable missteps. Without assessment, the program drifts on momentum alone; with it, we can steer intentionally, ensuring students reach the end of the journey with the essential skills and knowledge general education is meant to provide.

Good assessment practices can lead to authentic and meaningful improvement in general and liberal education, highlight areas of strength, and illuminate areas for growth—they can be the difference between students merely making it down the river and growing through the journey.

Some potential questions to address for this track include, but are not limited to:

- How can we assess students' growth over time as they encounter, and address issues related to access, equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice?
- How can we use assessment to enhance connections—be them across disciplines to increase student understanding of the value of liberal arts/general education or between general education and career readiness?
- How have you used assessment to respond to and/or guide changes in your program? What approaches have you used to “close the loop” with your communities in embedding the development of learning outcomes and assessment processes into general and liberal education?
- What strategies have you used to increase campus-wide participation and engagement in assessment of general and liberal education? Have you found innovative ways to help faculty and staff members find value and importance in this process?

Teaching and Learning in General Education



Teaching general education courses is much like guiding a raft through unpredictable rapids with some students paddling along eagerly while others are only along for the ride. Just as a guide reads the river, adjusts to changing conditions, and ensures that everyone paddles together, general education instructors must adapt to diverse student backgrounds, spark curiosity, and embrace intellectual risk. We invite proposals for the Teaching and Learning track that highlight evidence-based strategies to enhance engagement, foster inclusive learning environments, and improve student outcomes, turning the “rapids” of gen ed courses into a meaningful learning journey.

Some potential areas to explore in your proposal include but are not limited to:

- How do you “read the river” in your gen ed course? What data or observations help you understand your students' backgrounds, motivations, and learning needs and how do you adjust your instruction in response?
- What strategies do you use to ensure all students are “paddling together?” In what ways do you foster participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility so that both highly engaged and more reluctant students contribute meaningfully to learning? What engagement methods do you use to reach all learners in gen ed courses?
- How do you spark curiosity and make intellectual risk feel safe? How do you help students step beyond just showing up and toward authentic inquiry, experimentation, or creative problem-solving?

- What evidence shows that your approach improves the journey for students? What assessment data, student feedback, or classroom outcomes demonstrate that your instructional strategies enhance learning, belonging, or persistence in gen ed courses?
- Much like co-guides reading the river together, in what ways have you, as a gen ed leader, partnered with instructors to redesign courses, share best practices, streamline assessment, or support faculty development so that students experience a smoother, more meaningful learning journey?



PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

AGLS encourages participation from faculty, students, staff, and administrators, as well as proposals that relate to successful collaborative efforts between two and four-year campuses. Sessions that actively engage the session audience and/or provide usable ‘Monday morning’ ideas and activities are especially encouraged. We pride our conference on providing hands-on experiences for the attendees.

FOUR WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

30-Minute Presentation: one or more people present a final or preliminary summary result of a new program, initiative, or collaborative project. The purpose of this presentation should be designed to generate discussion or feedback on the next stage or further development of the presentation’s focal point. This format is well-suited for sharing information about works-in-progress, quick activities, and seeking feedback or collaborations. Two presentations of comparable topics of this format will be paired for one 60-minute session.





60-Minute Interactive Session: one or more people present an interactive learning opportunity similar to our longer workshops but limited to 60 minutes. The goal of these sessions is to demonstrate a useful tool or best practice used at the presenting institution and spark conversation and ideas for attendees to take back to their campuses. Sessions should focus on innovation and integration of processes, successful practices, and pedagogies that have proven meaningful at the home institution. Proposals should include the learning goals and takeaway(s) and indicate how participants will be invited to engage in the material.

20-minute Discussion Round Robin: a 20-minute seeded discussion format to present emerging projects and challenging scenarios. This session is great for works in process or is an opportunity to get feedback from other attendees to gather ideas on how to move forward with your project. The proposals accepted will be matched with other similar round table proposals to make a 60-minute session. Here is how the '20-minute discussion' should go: the presenter talks for ten minutes then facilitates discussion and sharing for the remaining ten. At the 20-minute mark, a room facilitator will announce it is time for attendees to switch tables to participate in another discussion topic. Each session will have no more than three topic tables. Participants will be able to 'attend' no more than two discussions within a 60-minute session.



60-minute Poster Session: visually present a successful element of a general education program. Poster authors should plan to be at their poster during the session to answer questions and speak with conference attendees. Submissions should be for a single poster (multiple submissions representing several aspects of a program from a single campus are welcome). Posters will be a part of the Presidential Reception on Friday evening. Note: a limited number of poster proposals will be accepted onto the program.

PROPOSAL DEADLINE IS APRIL 24, 2026

What information should you have on hand prior to going online to submit your proposal?

- 1) Type/format of presentation you want
- 2) Title of proposal
- 3) Name, institution, email address, and day phone number of primary proposal contact
- 4) Abstract of proposal (limited to three hundred words)

Additional information will be requested once a proposal is accepted onto the program, e.g., co-presenter information, etc.

Note on AV: Computers/laptops will not be available in session rooms, but LCD projectors and internet access will be available for presenters to bring their own hotspot and laptops. No technology will be available in round robin sessions.

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24TH 4pm to 6pm

Option #1 *Ready...Set...Reform! A Hands-On Kickoff to Gen Ed Revision and Reimagination*

Congratulations! You have been granted the prestigious honor (voluntold?) to lead or be involved with your institution's gen ed program reform. So where to begin? In this hands-on workshop, participants will work through activities, reflection prompts, and inventories to help lay a strong foundation for a data-informed, transparent, highly engaged process. Who should you engage and when? Where does your current program stand and where could it go? How do you turn your gen ed program hopes and dreams into reality? Packed with lessons learned, pro tips, and 'Wow, if only I knew then what I know now' revelations from experienced gen ed leaders, this workshop is targeted toward individuals and teams in the early stages of a reform effort.

Co-Facilitators: Tisha Paredes (Paredes Accreditation and Assessment Consulting) and Stephen Biscotte (Virginia Tech, AGLS Past-President)

Duration: 2 hours

Fees: \$85 per person or \$70 per person for attendees from institutional member campuses.

Option #2 *Beyond Oversight: Engaging and Supporting Instructors in General Education*

Leading a strong general education program takes more than curricular oversight. It requires meaningful, sustained connections with the instructors who bring general education to our students. From experienced faculty to first year instructors and adjuncts, general education educators need targeted support to design effective courses, engage diverse students, and generate meaningful assessment data.

In this interactive two hour workshop, we will explore practical, scalable ways to connect with and support instructors, no matter the size or structure of your general education program. Drawing from our own experience, we'll share three high impact initiatives that have strengthened teaching, learning, and assessment in our program and can be adapted for use on your campus, including:

- Course proposal workshops that support thoughtful course design and embed general education outcomes into the very fabric of a course
- An instructor certification program focused on evidence based strategies for teaching non majors and fostering student success in general education classrooms

- Pre assessment workshops offered prior to data collection, emphasizing assignment alignment, transparency, and student success

Participants will receive sample materials and practical guidance, along with tips and strategies for building cross campus partnerships with key units such as teaching and learning centers, career services, and assessment offices. Attendees will leave with a clear, actionable outline for implementing one of these initiatives to better support instructors and strengthen general education at their own institutions.

Co-Facilitators: Tricia Mieden Wilson and Laura Wheeler Poms (George Mason University)

Duration: 2 hours

Fees: *FREE* for Constitute attendees

Have a question about session types, topics, or technology?

Contact our office by phone at (812) 390-6912 or by email at execdir@agls.org.

Proposal Portal Opens February 12, 2026

Proposal Deadline: April 24, 2026

Registration Opens: May 1, 2026

For more information, visit us at

www.agls.org/agls-annual-conferences

REGISTRATION

All presenters must register for the constitute unless otherwise notified.

Online registration will open May 1, 2026.

The full registration fee is \$365 and one day only registration fee is \$250, if registered before September 11, 2026. Registration includes annual membership in AGLS.

Memberships paid for with registration will have a term of September 2026 through August 2027. Full registration includes Constitute resources, as well as morning coffee, lunch on Friday and Saturday.

Campuses with an institutional membership (paid for 2026-27 year prior to August 20, 2026) will receive a 15% discount code for constitute registrations. Contact the AGLS office for complete

details.

Our ticketed pre-conference workshop fee is \$85 per person or \$70 per person for attendees from institutional member campuses. NOTE: There will be other pre-conference workshops that are FREE to register.

REFUND POLICY

Refunds are available if requested in writing before September 1st (less \$50 processing fee). After September 1st, we will not be refunding registration fees in most circumstances. By this date we must provide our meeting venue with guaranteed numbers for room set ups, meal counts, and refreshment amounts. We pay for you if you cancel late or do not attend. This has been an unfair burden on the association in recent years.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Directly across the road from Spectrum Center, the DoubleTree City Center puts you in the middle of uptown Charlotte. Dozens of restaurants, museums, and attractions are within a 15-minute walk. Bank of America Stadium is just one mile away.

We have secured a block of rooms for the evenings of Thursday, September 24 through Saturday, September 26 at the rate of **\$155 per night plus tax**.

The guest room rate includes high speed internet access in all guest rooms.

Room rates are guaranteed through August 23, 2026, or until the room block is fully reserved.

Phone and online reservation lines will open May 1, 2026. Visit our website for information.

For those driving to Charlotte, parking is available at the hotel. Parking is available for \$32 per night for self-parking. Valet parking is \$40 per night.

Our hotel is eight miles from Charlotte/Douglas International Airport (CLT). Concord Regional Airport is seventeen miles away. The hotel is easily accessible by rideshares, taxis, Uber, and Lyft.

Want to grab a bite to eat or a quick beverage? Enjoy a meal in house at **Forchetta Italian** where you can explore the flavors of Naples. From soup and salad to shared appetizers and delectable entrées, each dish is hand crafted and pairs perfectly with our curated wines and classic cocktails made from in-house infused spirits.

EASY ACCESS ALL THAT CHARLOTTE HAS TO OFFER

“The Queen City,” “Crown Town,” “Buzz City,” “The QC,” “home”—whatever you call Charlotte, welcome.

What makes us a standout on this great, big map of phenomenal places? We are not just one of a kind; we are one of every kind.

From the diversity of our residents to our colorful history, which you will find represented in every corner, Charlotte is a melting pot. We are a heaping spoonful of natural beauty and metropolitan splendor. We are a blend of inventive chefs, talented artists, fierce athletes and mission-minded gamechangers. We are equal parts funky and eclectic, traditional and charming. We are a mix of night owls, early risers, and all-day adventurers. We are a dash of every different language and a sprinkle of the world's cultures.

Its modern city center (Uptown) is home to the Levine Museum of the New South, which explores post-Civil War history in the South, and hands-on science displays at Discovery Place. Uptown is also known for the NASCAR Hall of Fame, which celebrates the sport of auto racing through interactive exhibits and films.

Want a taste of the town? Order a plate of barbecue or a banh mi sandwich from one of the food trucks roaming the streets. Admire the rare artwork housed in our many museums. Snap a selfie with an 18th-century statue. Sip something crafty at a South End brewery. Take in a Broadway show in Uptown. Shop for stylish threads in South Park. Scale Crowders Mountain. Ride the Booty Loop in Myers Park. Groove to live music in NoDa. Toast cocktails in Plaza Midwood. Get behind the wheel of a race car in Concord. Celebrate at a cultural festival in Dilworth. Whatever you do in Charlotte, we invite you to make it your own.



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.



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