



New England Faculty Development Consortium

Neurodiversity: Broadening Our Lens



Friday, October 16, 2026
Hogan Center

College of the Holy Cross
Worcester, Massachusetts

Fall Conference Co-Chairs:

Dana Grossman Leeman
Mary Wiseman
Eric Matte
Andrea Milligan
Amely V. Cross
William S. Duffy

May Hara
Jennifer Herman
Shawn O'Neill
Ryan Rideau
Laura Roberts
Jayantika Charkraborty



Keynote Speaker:

Rebecca Whittaker Matte

M.S., A.C.C. Professor of Education

Neurodiversity: Broadening Our Lens.

This year's conference theme, **Neurodiversity: Broadening Our Lens**, encourages us to reexamine how we understand, support, and engage the diverse ways people think, learn, communicate, and experience the world. As higher education continues to evolve, this theme challenges us to move beyond traditional assumptions and consider how our teaching, leadership, policies, programs, and learning environments can better serve all members of our academic communities.

We are excited to announce this year's keynote speaker, Rebecca Whittaker Matte, Professor of Education at Landmark College. Rebecca will explore the concept of neurodiversity and its implications for higher education, examining common neurotypes, the evolving understanding of neurodivergence, and the shift from medical to social models of disability.

In addition to the keynote, the conference will feature a range of interactive sessions and opportunities to share ideas and practices with colleagues across New England.

Conference At-A-Glance

8:15 AM – 8:50 AM	Registration and Continental Breakfast
8:50 AM – 9:00 AM	Welcome & Introductions with Co-Presidents, Mary Wiseman and Dana Grossman Leeman
9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Keynote Address: Rebecca Whittaker Matte
10:30 AM – 10:40 AM	TRANSITION
10:40 AM – 11:40 AM	Concurrent Session 1 (Session Descriptions and Room Assignments Below)
11:40 AM – 12:30 PM	LUNCH
12:30 PM – 12:40 PM	TRANSITION
12:40 PM – 1:40 PM	Concurrent Session 2 (Session Descriptions and Room Assignments Below)
1:40 PM – 1:50 PM	TRANSITION
1:50 PM - 2:50 PM	Concurrent Session 3 (Session Descriptions and Room Assignments Below)
2:50 PM – 3:00 PM	TRANSITION TO CROSSROAD (Located at the bottom of the Hogan Center)
3:00 PM – 3:50 PM	Poster Session + Ice Cream Social
3:50 PM - 4:00 PM	Closing Session and Raffles

Concurrent Session 1

10:40am - 11:40am

Themes	Session	Room	Session Title	Presenter(s)
AI	50-Minute Roundtable Discussion	Ballroom	Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum: Bridging the Gap Between AI Use and AI Literacy	Shveta Parekh, Boston College, Aparna Nathan, Harvard Medical School
Teaching, Learning & Course Design	Session A 25-Minute Teaching Tips	328	What Are We Really Assessing? Designing Multimodal Pathways for Learner Variability	Michelle Commeret, Bridgewater State University
Neurodiversity & Accessibility	Session B 25-Minute Teaching Tips		Engaging Diverse Student Voices for Feedback on Teaching	Amy Simolo, Sacred Heart University
Neurodiversity & Accessibility	50-Minute Roundtable Discussion	Ballroom	"My Students Can't Read": Centering Neurodiversity in the Unpacking of Harmful Higher Ed Narratives	Elizabeth Luoma, Sacred Heart University
Neurodiversity & Accessibility	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	402	The Tension Among Rigor, Ableism, and Inclusion in Academia	Dr. Jeanette Landin, Landmark College; Lee Crocker, Landmark College
Teaching, Learning & Course Design	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	403	From Barriers to Bridges: Inclusive Strategies for STEM Classrooms	Melissa Chabot, George Mason University / Northern Virginia Community College; Mandy Gaudreau, Clark University
Teaching, Learning & Course Design	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	406	From Hidden to Living Curriculum: Teaching with Students' Cultural Capital in Mind	Marika Prezioso, Massachusetts College of Art and Design
Belonging & Student Support	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	407	From Awareness to Action: Leveraging Mindfulness to Foster Student Self-Advocacy	Kristyn DeMarco, Johnson & Wales University
Neurodiversity & Accessibility	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	408	Paths Towards Neurodivergent-Affirming Higher Education: Teaching and Learning Strategies to Support Neurodivergent Students and Faculty	Tiffany Landry, Springfield College; Jessie M. Quintero Johnson, Bridgewater State University
Teaching, Learning & Course Design	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	409	Learning Through the Body: Embodied Pedagogy Across Disciplines	Jimena Bermejo, College of The Holy Cross

Concurrent Session 1
10:40am - 11:40am

Session Title	Presenter(s)	Room	Abstracts
Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum: Bridging the Gap Between AI Use and AI Literacy	Shveta Parekh, Boston College, Aparna Nathan, Harvard Medical School	Ballroom	Despite being avid users of AI tools, students have highly variable AI literacy: they may lack a basic understanding of how AI models work, limitations, and how to critically evaluate AI outputs. Educators risk misjudging students' AI literacy when designing policies and assignments, thus creating a "hidden curriculum". Drawing on AI literacy assessment data, participants in this roundtable will discuss the gap between assumed and measured AI literacy, how to strengthen students' AI literacy, and how metacognitive reflection can foster responsible use of AI for diverse learners.
What Are We Really Assessing? Designing Multimodal Pathways for Learner Variability	Michelle Commeret, Bridgewater State University	328	If learner variability is expected, how might that shape the ways we ask students to demonstrate learning? This teaching tip explores how multimodal assignment design can expand opportunities for students to communicate what they know while maintaining rigorous, aligned expectations. Grounded in Universal Design for Learning and examples from higher education practice, the session offers a practical approach for distinguishing what must remain consistent from where meaningful flexibility in format and expression can support diverse learners.
Engaging Diverse Student Voices for Feedback on Teaching	Amy Simolo, Sacred Heart University	328	Traditional student evaluations of teaching may not engage all student voices - particularly neurodiverse students. Will this change if student feedback became a meaningful dialogue rather than a routine end-of-term survey? What information can we gather about how students experience the learning environment, especially neurodiverse students? This session discusses the importance of engaging in purposeful, ongoing dialogue about the student experience and describes transferrable strategies for soliciting feedback that is both constructive and actionable from all students.
"My Students Can't Read": Centering Neurodiversity in the Unpacking of Harmful Higher Ed Narratives	Elizabeth Luoma, Sacred Heart University	Ballroom	University faculty increasingly lament that current college students "can't read." These observations traverse department hallways, student success committees, and Inside Higher Ed features. This deficit is attributed to many factors, from COVID learning loss to debunked K-12 curricula. But where is neurodiversity in this dialogue? As a mother of a child with dyslexia/dysgraphia, an advocate for evidence-based K-12 literacy curricula, and a CTL executive director, the facilitator will guide participants through the deep complexity of reading deficits with a new eye toward neurodiversity.

The Tension Among Rigor, Ableism, and Inclusion in Academia	Dr. Jeanette Landin, Landmark College; Lee Crocker, Landmark College	402	Neurodiverse students need inclusive teaching, which extends to cognitive needs and physical abilities, as well as appropriate academic rigor. The questions of physical classroom presence, participation in learning opportunities, and other instructional activities must be considered to meet the intended learning outcomes and connect students with meaningful, accessible course content. In practice, instructors need to present options in situations where accessibility may be an issue, such as alternative assignments, multimodal course materials, and well-communicated expectations.
From Barriers to Bridges: Inclusive Strategies for STEM Classrooms	Melissa Chabot, George Mason University / Northern Virginia Community College; Mandy Gaudreau, Clark University	403	STEM courses often present barriers that can limit student success and persistence, particularly for neurodivergent students, students with disabilities, and other learners who benefit from inclusive course design. This interactive workshop explores evidence-based strategies for creating inclusive STEM classrooms while maintaining academic rigor. Participants will analyze authentic STEM teaching scenarios presented as comic strips and leave with practical strategies to support learner variability and student success.
From Hidden to Living Curriculum: Teaching with Students' Cultural Capital in Mind	Marika Preziuso, Massachusetts College of Art and Design	406	This interactive session invites educators to engage in reflective practices designed to surface the "hidden curriculum" (Denial, Sathy, Jack)—the implicit personal and cultural assumptions that frequently shape course design and assessment. By reflecting on these internal frameworks, participants will develop actionable strategies for creating learning experiences centered on the "living curriculum"—the actual students in our classrooms.
From Awareness to Action: Leveraging Mindfulness to Foster Student Self-Advocacy	Kristyn DeMarco, Johnson & Wales University	407	Today's students are constantly connected to others, but are they connected to themselves? Starting class with an introspective mindfulness activity fosters connection to the authentic self. Mindfulness practices cultivate present-centered, nonjudgmental awareness of internal experiences and foster the development of self-awareness and self-regulation. In turn, students become better able to recognize, articulate, and act on their needs. Participants will engage in guided, adaptable mindfulness exercises, including reflective journaling, breath work, and sensory grounding.
Paths Towards Neurodivergent-Affirming Higher Education: Teaching and Learning Strategies to Support Neurodivergent Students and Faculty	Tiffany Landry, Springfield College; Jessie M. Quintero Johnson, Bridgewater State University	408	Neurodivergent students and faculty deserve for higher education to be accessible and affirming. In this workshop, participants will learn about neurodivergent-inclusive language, have an in-depth knowledge of the barriers and protective factors that impact neurodivergent students and faculty, as well as how faculty can work towards creating a neurodivergent-inclusive culture at their institutions.

Learning Through the Body: Embodied Pedagogy Across Disciplines	Jimena Bermejo, College of The Holy Cross	409	Dance classrooms cultivate forms of learning that extend beyond movement: students take risks together, reflect on their experiences, learn from and alongside their peers, and develop a sense of belonging. This interactive workshop invites participants to experience how embodied pedagogy makes learning processes visible and explores how principles from dance education can be adapted across disciplines. Through movement, reflection, dialogue, and application, participants will leave with practical strategies for fostering belonging, reflection, and meaningful engagement in their own classrooms.
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Concurrent Session 2

12:40pm - 1:40pm

Themes	Session	Room	Session Title	Presenter(s)
AI	Session A 25-Minute Teaching Tips	320	Integrating Generative AI to Improve Metacognitive Monitoring in a Seminar Course	Taneisha Vilma, Wheaton College (MA)
Neurodiversity & Accessibility	Session B 25-Minute Teaching Tips		Supporting Executive Functioning Without Lowering Standards	Melissa Chabot, George Mason University
Neurodiversity & Accessibility	50-Minute Roundtable Discussion	Ballroom	Broadening Our Lens: What Autistic College Students' Lived Experiences Reveal About Student Success	Amanda Beeman, Liberty University
Neurodiversity & Accessibility	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	401	Cultivating a Culture of Inclusion	Sarah Benes, Southern Connecticut State University; Jennifer Hudson, Southern Connecticut State University
Neurodiversity & Accessibility	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	402	The Pause as Liberatory Formula: Interrupting the Illusion of Understanding	Andrea Hojnacki, Holyoke Community College
Neurodiversity & Accessibility	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	403	Accessible Horizons: Expanding Access for Students with Neurodiversity in Education Abroad Programs	Krista Miller, Worcester Polytechnic Institute; Amy Curran
Faculty Development	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	406	Listening, Gathering, Leading: Building Servingness Mindsets at an HSI	Abby Machson-Carter, Salem State; Cami Condie, Salem State University
Teaching, Learning & Course Design	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	407	Towards a Pedagogy of Risk-Taking	Bethany Lisi, University of Massachusetts Amherst; Sara Cavallo
Belonging & Student Support	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	408	Helping Faculty and Staff Navigate Your Institution's Student Support Services	William Duffy, Bristol Community College
Belonging & Student Support	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	409	Redesigning Academic Recovery: Student Centered & Data-informed	Christie Soltys, Quinnipiac University; John Goepfrich, Quinnipiac University

Concurrent Session 2
12:40pm - 1:40pm

Session Title	Presenter(s)	Room	Abstracts
Integrating Generative AI to Improve Metacognitive Monitoring in a Seminar Course	Taneisha Vilma, Wheaton College (MA)	320	Increased student use of AI presents a significant challenge, when AI delivers instant answers, students avoid the critical metacognitive process of monitoring their own understanding of course content. This session offers examples from an upper-level seminar psychology course to shift AI from a coursework shortcut into a tool for students to actively monitor their understanding. These practical assignment examples shift AI usage into an active dialogue to help students build strategies to examine their comprehension monitoring across readings and during interactive seminar discussions.
Supporting Executive Functioning Without Lowering Standards	Melissa Chabot, George Mason University		College courses require students to manage complex executive functioning demands that often remain implicit within assignments and course expectations. This interactive teaching tip helps faculty recognize those hidden demands and apply practical, evidence-informed strategies that support planning, organization, and task initiation while preserving high academic standards and promoting student success.
Broadening Our Lens: What Autistic College Students' Lived Experiences Reveal About Student Success	Amanda Beeman, Liberty University	Ballroom	How can broadening our understanding of autistic students' lived experiences strengthen student success in higher education? This roundtable invites participants to explore how everyday experiences beyond the classroom shape belonging, well-being, perceived sense of safety, and success for autistic college students. Drawing on findings from a qualitative study exploring the lived experiences of autistic college student in higher education, participants will discuss how these insights can inform teaching, advising, and institutional practices and foster more inclusive campus environments.
Cultivating a Culture of Inclusion	Sarah Benes, Southern Connecticut State University; Jennifer Hudson, Southern Connecticut State University	401	Join us for an interactive session where we share our experiences advancing institutional action to support neurodiverse learners. We will discuss humanizing pedagogy as the foundation for our work to both meet the needs of neurodiverse learners while also moving inclusive practice forward in general. We will share how our faculty development office catalyzed action on campus through community engagement, faculty-staff partnerships, and a range of programming. We will provide time for group dialogue so that participants can learn from each other and leave the session with ideas they can use.

The Pause as Liberatory Formula: Interrupting the Illusion of Understanding	Andrea Hojnacki, Holyoke Community College	402	Neurodivergent students mask during verbal conversations, and anxiety or compliance-driven responses can be misread as dishonesty, noncompliance, or a failure to follow through, driving conduct escalation, uneven success rates, and eroded belonging. "The pause" is introduced as a structured formula, naming intent, mood, stakes, and response options, usable in conversation and as a built-in design strategy. Drawing on case management and disability justice frameworks, this workshop equips faculty and staff to verify understanding and support communication.
Accessible Horizons: Expanding Access for Students with Neurodiversity in Education Abroad Programs	Krista Miller, Worcester Polytechnic Institute; Amy Curran	403	Worcester Polytechnic Institute is a recognized leader in global project-based learning and is committed to providing that experience to all students. Drawing upon work associated with the IDEAS Grant, this session will address how WPI is responding to the needs of students with disabilities participating in global learning experiences, including strategies that support neurodivergent learners through inclusive teaching practices. Participants will have the opportunity to explore ways to foster inclusivity in global learning while considering our own personal and organizational contexts.
Listening, Gathering, Leading: Building Servingness Mindsets at an HSI	Abby Machson-Carter, Salem State; Cami Condie, Salem State University	406	Inspired by Dr. Gina Ann Garcia's work, this interactive workshop shares a cycle of listening, gathering, and leading that supported shifting mindsets as we continue to transform from an historically white institution toward an Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Participants will consider how this concept of Servingness can translate to their contexts, engage in an audit of the spaces where they are listening, gathering, and leading, and identify a next step for developing equity through Servingness mindsets at their institution.
Towards a Pedagogy of Risk-Taking	Bethany Lisi, University of Massachusetts Amherst; Sara Cavallo	407	Have you ever wondered, "Why don't my students take more risks in their work? How come they sit silently during a discussion and not voice an opinion?" In this interactive workshop, we'll discuss how to integrate risk-taking in our course design and in-class activities that empower students to try new things, grapple with uncertainty, and push their learning without fear of failure. Come for the ideas and leave with new approaches that will make this semester different than the last.
Helping Faculty and Staff Navigate Your Institution's Student Support Services	William Duffy, Bristol Community College	408	Colleges are serving an increasing number of neurodivergent students with increasingly complex needs while simultaneously becoming more complex themselves. This is a challenge for faculty members helping their neurodivergent students find the services they need, as well as the students themselves. In this session, we will discuss these challenges and collaborate with participants to help them determine strategies for helping the professors and students they serve navigate their institutions' bureaucracy and get neurodivergent students the support they need and deserve.

Redesigning Academic Recovery: Student Centered & Data-informed	Christie Soltys, Quinnipiac University; John Goepfrich, Quinnipiac University	409	This session explores how The Learning Commons at Quinnipiac University redesigned Academic Recovery for students on Academic Warning and Probation through a strengths-based, outcomes-focused, data-informed model. Learn how targeted campaigns, predictive indicators, and AI reduce barriers to support, particularly for neurodiverse students, while improving engagement, persistence, and academic success.
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Concurrent Session 3

1:50pm - 2:50pm

Themes	Session	Room	Session Title	Presenter(s)
AI	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	320	Designing Courses with AI: Centering Faculty Expertise	Carol Hurney, Colby College
Neurodiversity & Accessibility	50-Minute Roundtable Discussion	Ballroom	I See Myself in You: A Neurodivergent Faculty Member's Quest in Empowering Neurodiverse Students	Soumyadeep Mukherjee, Rhode Island College
Teaching, Learning & Course Design	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	401	Clear Expectations, Clear Minds: Transparency as a Tool for Supporting Executive Function	Karen Anderson, Stonehill College; Danielle Marie Lacorazza, Empire State University
Neurodiversity & Accessibility	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	402	Countering Anti-Fat Bias in The Classroom	Benjamin Kenzer, Simmons University
Belonging & Student Support	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	403	EPIC FAILS: The Tenacity Playbook for Educators	Kaye Kelly, Berklee College of Music
Neurodiversity & Accessibility	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	406	How to Design Collaborative Learning for Neurodiverse Groups: What Neurodivergent Students Have Taught Us	Anne Marshall, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Teaching, Learning & Course Design	Session A 25-Minute Teaching Tips	407	Designing for Learning, Not Compliance: Assessment Redesign of QU 105- Learning Strategies Seminar	Gina Altano, Quinnipiac University
Belonging & Student Support	Session B 25-Minute Teaching Tips		PIVOTing in Academic Advising	Hannah Andry, North Shore Community College
Belonging & Student Support	50-Minute Interactive Workshop	408	Student Testimonials on Trauma-Informed Teaching	Taylor Philcrantz, Salem State University; Melissa Kaplowitch, Salem State University

Concurrent Session 3

1:50pm - 2:50pm

Session Title	Presenter(s)		Abstracts
Designing Courses with AI: Centering Faculty Expertise	Carol Hurney, Colby College	320	AI is challenging faculty and educational developers to rethink long-held beliefs and practices about teaching and learning. Responses range from skepticism to curiosity to a loss of bearings altogether. This session demonstrates an AI-enriched course design process grounded in backward design, where faculty are the disciplinary experts and AI is the partner—generating bold possibilities while faculty retain agency and judgment. Participants leave with practical tools for course design that centers faculty expertise through AI partnership.
I See Myself in You: A Neurodivergent Faculty Member's Quest in Empowering Neurodiverse Students	Soumyadeep Mukherjee, Rhode Island College	Ballroom	The presenter will discuss his efforts at informing students and advocating for policy-changes. This includes speaking about his own Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) diagnosis, which was diagnosed in adulthood. In the classroom and beyond, the instructor also shares his peer-reviewed journal article (title of article omitted for blinded review) in which his struggles since the diagnosis are described. Secondly, strengths-based strategies in terms of delivering course contents and evaluating students, inspired by universal design for learning, will be discussed.
Clear Expectations, Clear Minds: Transparency as a Tool for Supporting Executive Function	Karen Anderson, Stonehill College; Danielle Marie Lacorazza, Empire State University	401	Many students struggle not from lack of ability but from not understanding the assignment. To support executive function (EF) and increase clarity, this workshop promotes transparency in learning and teaching (TiLT). We'll explore the TiLT framework, its benefits for students' success and equity, and how each element (purpose, task, criteria) directly supports EF skills while decreasing AI alliance. Attendees will the framework to an assignment with guided support.
Countering Anti-Fat Bias in The Classroom	Benjamin Kenzer, Simmons University	402	Anti-fat bias is common in many disciplines and is (often inadvertently) propagated through teaching. From nutrition classes that rely on outdated BMI data to literature classes that assign novels where fat characters are portrayed as lazy and villainous, anti-fat bias is prevalent in teaching materials. A lack of engagement with anti-fat bias marginalizes students of a variety of weights. In this workshop, participants will engage with and discuss research about countering anti-fat bias in their course materials – and will come away with ideas about countering anti-fat bias institutionally.
EPIC FAILS: The Tenacity Playbook for Educators	Kaye Kelly, Berklee College of Music	403	Failure, rejection, and uncertainty are inevitable parts of every student's academic and professional journey, yet many students are not taught how to navigate these moments. EPIC FAILS: The Tenacity Playbook for Educators introduces a practical framework for transforming setbacks into opportunities for reflection, resilience, and growth. Through storytelling, discussion, and interactive activities, participants will explore strategies for supporting student self-awareness, adaptability, and confidence as they prepare for complex, nonlinear futures.

How to Design Collaborative Learning for Neurodiverse Groups: What Neurodivergent Students Have Taught Us	Anne Marshall, Massachusetts Institute of Technology	406	Studies suggest benefits of collaborative learning to develop critical thinking, interpersonal skills, and student engagement. However, not all students benefit from these activities and neurodiversity may add additional challenges not considered by instructors. Based on data from interviews of over 50 neurodivergent students, we identified key issues that influence the effectiveness of collaborative learning. In this workshop we will present the students' experience and review a checklist developed from these experiences to address in designing and implementing collaborative learning.
Designing for Learning, Not Compliance: Assessment Redesign of QU 105- Learning Strategies Seminar	Gina Altano, Quinnipiac University	407	Quinnipiac University's QU 150- Learning Strategies Seminar is a 1-credit course that aims to enhance learning habits, providing a robust foundation for academic success. This session will explore how the classroom is intentionally designed to create routines and increase metacognition, how assessments aim to help students gain experience using learning strategies in their real academic lives, and how class expectations and grading focus more on learning than compliance.
PIVOTing in Academic Advising	Hannah Andry, North Shore Community College		This session introduces the PIVOT Learning Model—Promote Equity, Integrate Diverse Perspectives, Value Every Voice, Open Dialogue, and Team Collaboration—an equity-centered advising framework grounded in culturally responsive social-emotional learning. Aligned with the conference themes of strengths-based advising, student success, campus belonging, and self-awareness and self-advocacy, participants will explore practical, trauma-informed strategies to foster equitable, holistic advising and improve student success.
Student Testimonials on Trauma-Informed Teaching	Taylor Philcrantz, Salem State University; Melissa Kaplowitch, Salem State University	408	In the spring of 2026 the presenters ran a study within the MS in Counseling Program (a relatively diverse sample) related to trauma informed teaching practices that students has observed their faculty using, and the impact on their learning outcomes and sense of felt safety within the classroom. Data was pulled from students and from research to support 15 practices that faculty can use within their classroom. These practices are designed to support students in feeling safe in the classroom to ask questions, be themselves, and participate, thus increasing their course outcomes.

Poster Descriptions

Located in Crossroads on the bottom floor of the Hogan Center.

Poster Title: Offering Choices in Assignment Submission Formats: A Win for Everyone

Presenter: Amanda Mack, Salem State University

This poster reports on a mixed methods study investigating student perceptions of choice in assignment submission formats in an asynchronous, elective course, part of the general education curriculum, taken by students at all levels and from all disciplines. This relates to the conference theme of “broadening our lens” by offering choices that align with the CAST Universal Design for Learning Guidelines. Participants will understand the value of offering choice for students, and a list of alternative assignment ideas that they might use in their own classes, regardless of discipline.

Poster Title: Redesigning STEM Courses at a Hispanic-Serving Institution

Presenter: Eliza Bobek and Tess Killpack, Salem State University

Salem State University faculty and staff are engaged in a grant-funded initiative aimed at improving STEM learning environments and outcomes for Hispanic and other at-risk students. Our approach involves implementing two complementary projects: (1) A Faculty Learning Community for equity-focused redesign of gateway STEM courses, and (2) Pedagogical partnerships to develop new courses that center cultural wealth, validation, and belonging for incoming STEM students. We aim to build institutional capacity through faculty development, curriculum changes, and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Poster Title: Possibilities and Pedagogies of LLMs in the Writing Classroom: Results from a National Survey with Writing Instructors

Presenter: Lisa Litterio, Bridgewater State University

This poster presentation will examine results from a national survey administered to writing instructors. The survey explored not only writing instructors' perceptions of the use of large language models, but also how they incorporate LLMs in the writing classroom, particularly with respect to brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing. There will also be a discussion of the assignments shared by instructors.

Poster Title: Engaging first generation college students holistically: Moving from the classroom to the soil

Presenter: Bonnie Pepper, Albertus Magnus College

This poster will discuss a garden-based service-learning project conducted in a child development course with first generation college students. The project is informed by universal design and centers the whole student. Scholarly learning is scaffolded and combined with hands-on experiential learning (with students' hands quite literally in the soil) as well as reflective practice. Data supports the successful impact of the project on student learning outcomes. This work was supported by the NEFDC's 2020–2021 Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Award.

Poster Title: Prioritizing Process Over Performance: Unlocking Critical Thinking Through Mastery Grading
Presenter: Kerri Olore, Bridgewater State University

Traditional points-based grading prioritizes performance over process, encouraging surface-level compliance and hindering critical thinking. Grounded in UDL and alternative grading scholarship, this poster demonstrates how a zero-to-mastery architecture shifts student focus back to deep learning. By replacing fragmented rubrics with a single proficiency scale and establishing a low-stakes messy thinking zone, this model reduces anxiety and supports neurodiverse learners. Attendees will gain a roadmap to foster metacognition via iterative feedback.

Poster Title: "Human-Cyborg Relations": Disciplinary Literacies and Metacognitive Teaching in Online Learning After AI
Presenter: Jim McGrath, Salem State University

This session will discuss current AI-generated pain points in online learning through the lens of disciplinary literacy. Investments in disciplinary literacies can help students see the value in aligning their coursework with methods modeled by their instructors. Doing this work effectively often involves investments in metacognitive teaching. In lieu of abandoning online learning or reimagining it to increase already-invasive surveillance tendencies, I model online teaching methods that resonate with students and increase needed investments in digital literacies, AI and otherwise.

Poster Title: Practices by Faculty Developers for Holistic Faculty Success
Presenter: Reema Zeineldin, Academic & Faculty Affairs Strategist

What is faculty success? Although it is the outcome that lies at the heart of work by faculty developers, there has not been a uniform definition of it. A uniform and clear definition would help clarify steps and resources by institutions and faculty developers to support it. In this interactive workshop, a new conceptual model of holistic faculty success is used with a three-part definition that is grounded

in career theory with utilizing three lenses, one for the individual faculty member, another for the institution, and a third for the higher education sector.

Poster Title: Ten Short Happiness-Inducing Activities for Student and Faculty Wellbeing

Presenter: Sally Merritt, Georgia Southwestern State University

This session introduces ten evidence-based happiness activities adapted from research in positive psychology that instructors can integrate into practically any course. Participants will learn the research supporting these activities, see examples of student responses, and discover practical ways to promote well-being in the classroom while encouraging students to engage with scientific evidence about happiness. These activities can be assigned to students, introduced to faculty, or used yourself for a mood boost.

Poster Title: Practice Before Performance: AI-Supported Professional Rehearsal for Student Success

Presenter: Christine Rodriguez, Fairfield University

How can students practice using what they know before they must perform independently? This session presents a transferable student-success framework that moves learners from foundational knowledge to formative practice, authentic application, and reflection. Using AI-supported patient conversations in introductory microbiology as a case study, participants will explore how individualized professional rehearsal can strengthen metacognition, communication, confidence, and professional readiness while recognizing learner variability.

Poster Title: Neurodiversity in the Classroom: Effectively Addressing the Needs of all Learners through Targeted Pedagogical Practices

Presenter: Jillian DiBonaventura, Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), Ceren Yilmaz Akkaya, Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI)

In this interactive workshop, participants will explore how to create safe learning environments where learners can take intellectual risks, learn from mistakes, and build a stronger self-concept. Facilitators will model inclusive teaching techniques such as student voice and choice, flexible learning and assessment options, and reflective practices. Participants will experience these approaches from the learner's perspective and consider how to apply them in their own educational settings. All will leave with strategies that support neurodiverse learners and value all ways of thinking.

Poster Title: The Simulation is the Laboratory: Experiential Learning, Productive Failure, and Student Engagement

Presenter: Scott McDonald, Nichols College

How do we move students from knowing course content to actually using it? Traditional classroom instruction often follows a familiar sequence: faculty introduce concepts, students study them, and an assessment determines whether they have learned them. Simulation-based experiential learning changes that sequence. Students encounter a problem, make decisions, experience consequences, receive feedback, reflect on what happened, and try again. The simulation becomes the laboratory in which students test course concepts rather than simply learn about them.

Poster Title: Beyond the Prompt: Teaching Students to Build, Think, and Create with AI

Presenter: Scott McDonald, Nichols College

The session draws upon an undergraduate AI course in which students were challenged to identify real operational problems and explore how artificial intelligence might improve decisions, workflows, or outcomes. One student began with a problem encountered through his professional experience and, through repeated questioning and iteration, transformed an initial classroom idea into the concept for an AI-enabled decision-support application. The significance of the example is not the application itself, but the learning process that produced it.

Poster Title: Supporting Faculty After Pregnancy Loss

Presenter: Elizabeth Siler, Worcester State University

Pregnancy loss can have an outsized effect on faculty due to the nature of academic work. For many faculty, trying to have a baby happens at the same time they are facing pressure of the tenure process. On top of the physical effects and grief, many (if not most) people keep their first-trimester miscarriages a secret at work, which carries its own difficulties. In this session, we will learn about the aspects of academic jobs that can make this experience both easier and more difficult, and discuss ways that colleges and universities can support faculty at this time.

Upcoming NEFDC Opportunities

Communities of Practice (CoPs)

Get Ready to Connect, Create, and Collaborate!

This spring, the New England Faculty Development Consortium (NEFDC) Communities of Practice (CoPs) brought colleagues together from across institutions to connect, collaborate, and grow. What made these communities so impactful? They created space for educators, faculty developers, and leaders to learn with one another, sharing ideas, experimenting, and building new approaches to teaching and learning in real time.

At their core, Communities of Practice are about shared learning and bringing together people with common interests to deepen their knowledge through ongoing interaction and collaboration. This spring, that spirit was fully realized.

Looking Ahead to Fall 2026

The momentum continues. Whether you joined us earlier this year or are looking to get involved for the first time, Fall CoPs will once again be offering:

- Free of charge, no registration required. Just join the fun!
- Dynamic, cross-institutional conversations
- Monthly opportunities for resource sharing and idea exchange
- A supportive network of colleagues committed to teaching and learning excellence

If you're looking for a space to think, connect, and create alongside others who care deeply about higher education, these Communities of Practice are for you.

- Alternative Grading
- Artificial Intelligence
- Centers for Teaching and Learning
- Mid-Career Transitions

Connect with NEFDC

NEFDC Members 2026 - 2027

1.	Bates College
2.	Boston University
3.	Bridgewater State University
4.	Bryant University
5.	Bunker Hill Community College
6.	UMass Amherst
7.	Colby College
8.	Community College of Rhode Island
9.	CT State Community College
10.	Dean College
11.	Fitchburg State University
12.	George Mason University
13.	Landmark College
14.	Massachusetts College of Art and Design
15.	North Shore Community College
16.	Northeastern University
17.	Northern Essex Community College
18.	QCC
19.	Rhode Island College
20.	Sacred Heart University
21.	Salem State University
22.	Salve Regina University
23.	Simmons University
24.	Southern Connecticut State University
25.	Springfield Technical Community College

26.	Tufts University
27.	University of Maine Augusta
28.	Williams College
29.	Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Got questions?

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