

An abstract painting with vibrant, expressive brushstrokes in shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, and black. The composition is dynamic and layered, with various shapes and colors overlapping. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the painting.

THE UAGC CHRONICLE

WINTER 24/25



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
GLOBAL CAMPUS



Cover image Sampson, H (2022). Hope | Soaring Into A Cloudy Sunset. [30x40"; mixed media on canvas]. Used with permission

The work featured on the cover is a visual representation of Emily Dickinson's poem, "Hope" is the thing with feathers". Dickinson's poem (1891) uses language to portray the lightweight yet ubiquitous and stalwart force that hope brings to our lives. The bird and feather-like abstract images are meant to represent this force while provoking feelings of encouragement, resilience, joy, and aspiration. All emotions that a student may experience on their academic journey.

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Dickinson, E. (n.d.). "Hope is the thing with feathers." Digital Public Library of America.
<https://dp.la/item/8643a746bc8a5c3eed1c0d04e1f85684>.

Share your artistic contributions to support the UAGC Chronicle's mission to involve the UAGC community in our publication. We seek to feature original art that highlights the creativity, vision, and talent of our learning community. Entrants are encouraged to reflect on their involvement with faculty, students, and various learning elements within their submissions. **Learn more here.**

THE UAGC CHRONICLE: A FACULTY–FOCUSED PUBLICATION

The UAGC Chronicle supports the entire academic community's contribution to the UAGC mission of providing a community of caring and guidance for adult online learners. Therefore, our publication promotes content that addresses the theoretical underpinnings and practical execution of this mission: academic research on instructional best practices, curricular innovation, and student support strategies; examples and resources that foster a community of practice; news of the progress of institutional student success initiatives; professional development opportunities; and – most importantly – the stories and successes of the people who shape our university. Please check the Call for Submissions section for more information on submitting an article for consideration.

Contents

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR.....	4
UNIVERSITY, PROGRAM, CURRICULUM, AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	5
SOLIDIFYING A SHARED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE FACULTY COUNCIL AND SHARED STUDENT SUCCESS GOALS.....	5
INTRODUCING THE STUDENT SUCCESS RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT TEAM.....	10
OUR SHARED FUTURE AS LEADERS IN LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT	12
RESEARCH CORNER	17
SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES	17
FULBRIGHT SPECIALIST GRANT RECIPIENT: KATIE THIRY	17
STANDARDS-BASED GRADING: A MORE ACCURATE REFLECTION OF STUDENT LEARNING.....	21
BALANCING EDUCATION AND INQUIRY	24
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT – TIPS AND RESOURCES	26
TODAY’S HUMAN LEADER IN AN AI WORLD: BALANCING TECHNOLOGY WITH THE HUMAN TOUCH IN ONLINE LEARNING	26
LEVERAGING OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER) TO FOSTER STUDENT SUCCESS.....	28
BUILDING ACADEMIC COMMUNITY	31
CULTIVATING CRITICAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM.....	31
TEACHING OUR STUDENTS ABOUT THE US HEALTHCARE SYSTEM’S PERFORMANCE	34
BRIDGING THE GAP: SUPPORTING MILITARY AND VETERAN STUDENTS THROUGH ANDRAGOGICAL STRATEGIES AND FACULTY PERSPECTIVES.....	37
10 TH ANNUAL UAGC TEACHING AND LEARNING CONFERENCE	39
FACULTY VOICES	41
NEW FACULTY INTRODUCTIONS	41
CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS.....	43
CONTRIBUTORS	44

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Happy New Year! The halfway point of the academic year is also the start of the new calendar year, and so it's the perfect time to reflect and recharge. As a university, we have come so far in such a short amount of time; it's good to remember our goals and what's next as we move forward through the first half of 2025.

At the beginning of the 2024-2025 academic year, we announced four pathways that would facilitate the full integration of UAGC with the University of Arizona (U of A). Since July, UAGC faculty and staff have executed planning, organizing, and reflection exercises that are critical to reaching our unification goals. At the same time, the evolution of the U of A leadership structure has halted key decision-making processes that are necessary to our unification progress. These two circumstances understandably might be causing a sense of limbo, but platforms like The UAGC Chronicle can help ground us in the vision of the University of Arizona Online Initiatives and motivate us to define these changes for our academic community through scholarship, innovation and care.

Indeed, the fall edition of The UAGC Chronicle featured articles from several faculty about actions they are taking – like updating their scholarly and professional profiles in the UAGC Faculty Portal – to maintain a sense of control during a time of flux. This winter edition expands on those ideas about maintaining control during flux by exploring ways to *make the change we want to see*. For example, Dr. Hazar Shehadeh writes about how the research and publication process not only contributes to knowledge in a field but also supports one's sense of control and achievement in one's career. Likewise, Associate Faculty member Carol Bishop distinguishes critical thinking from critical intelligence, the latter being what allows us to adapt effectively to our changing environment. And, while UAGC is awaiting important unification-related decision-making, we are exercising our critical intelligence through research that is helping us define our unified future with the U of A – for example, through the inaugural Online Student Success Initiatives Fund (OSSIF), which supports research toward instructional, student support, curricular, and learning technology innovations.

As you read this edition of The UAGC Chronicle, I invite you to consider how you can embrace its articles' call to action to make the change that will usher UAGC into its future.

Sincerely,



Jackie Bullis

Lead Faculty Support and Classroom Consultant, The UAGC Chronicle Editor

UNIVERSITY, PROGRAM, CURRICULUM, AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

SOLIDIFYING A SHARED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE | FACULTY COUNCIL AND SHARED STUDENT SUCCESS GOALS

Yvonne Lozano, Faculty Council Co-Chair, Assistant Dean, Department of Health Sciences and Cara Metz, Faculty Council Co-Chair, Program Chair, Department of Behavioral Science



As we close out 2024 and anticipate the new year, it is time to reflect on the significant ongoing evolution of the UAGC Faculty Council. This past year's transformation is an administrative exercise and a crucial step toward ensuring faculty voices are incorporated into university decision-making processes. The Faculty Council, through its rejuvenated shared governance framework, promises to redefine the intersection between council actions and academic policies, enhancing both the efficacy and inclusivity of faculty governance.

Shared governance is essential in a university setting because it ensures faculty participation in decision-making, reflecting a collaborative approach between faculty, administration, and sometimes students and staff. This inclusivity brings diverse perspectives, fostering informed decisions that align with the academic mission. It enhances academic freedom by allowing faculty to help shape policies influencing academic standards and efforts to work toward student success. Moreover, shared governance builds institutional trust and accountability, demonstrating transparency and fostering mutual respect. It also leverages faculty insights for adaptability and innovation, enabling universities to respond effectively to changing environments and maintaining relevance. Finally, shared governance leads to more engaged faculty (American Association of University Professors, 2021; Becker et al., 2023) and improves educational and institutional outcomes (Curnalia & Mermer, 2018; Ott & Mathews, 2015).

The decision to restructure the Faculty Council, including developing bylaws and faculty policies, comes in response to the growing need for improved operational clarity and shared governance. This evolution focuses on delineating the responsibilities and powers of the Faculty Council, ultimately supporting a more transparent and effective governance model. The revamped Faculty Council structure has been carefully designed to align with existing academic policies and positively influence their evolution. By involving diverse faculty perspectives in policy discussions, the Council aims to ensure that academic regulations reflect current educational standards and are adaptable to future challenges to meet the needs of our student body. Integrating these policies into the Council's operations is expected to reinforce their relevance and ensure faculty voice is considered in any policy revisions or

implementations. Through integrating these upcoming bylaws and policies, the institution seeks to streamline Council operations and better align its goals with UAGC critical goals and faculty voice.

The heart of this new framework lies in the Policy and Governance/Faculty handbook subcommittee, a vital part of the unification pathway initiative co-chaired by Dr. Matt Laubacher and Dr. Teresa Handy. One of their principal objectives is rigorously reviewing current UAGC, University of Arizona (U of A), and Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) faculty policies to ensure both that UAGC policies align with ABOR and U of A policies and that they represent the best interests of UAGC faculty and institutional goals. This involves identifying discrepancies in existing policies and recommending adjustments that reflect the evolving academic and administrative landscapes. The efforts of this subcommittee demonstrate that inclusive faculty voice is pivotal in fostering a supportive and forward-thinking academic community.

Another crucial aspect of the Council's evolution is the development of the Faculty Council Bylaws. The Faculty Council Bylaws and Elections subcommittee, led by Dr. Hazar Shehadeh and Dr. Ishonte Allar, is critical in shaping how the Council will operate within the broader context of institutional governance. Their task is to ensure that the bylaws facilitate transparent decision-making, clear delineation of voting procedures, and effective faculty engagement. The bylaws will serve as a binding document that underlines the processes for Council votes, votes by the full UAGC faculty body, and issues that require only notification, thereby establishing more precise governance delineations.

Since November 2019, the faculty council had operated based on minimal standards outlined in the faculty council charter. However, the forthcoming establishment of policy and bylaws subcommittees will provide a more structured and comprehensive framework for the functioning of the council that focuses on incorporating faculty voice into initiatives and reassessment of current academic standards and policies with the goal of helping our faculty and university support our student body. The policies and bylaws typically provide information on the composition of subcommittees, including requirements for membership, terms of service, and any limitations on the number of members from specific departments or groups. They also outline the responsibilities and duties of each subcommittee, as well as the reporting and communication channels with the larger faculty council. Furthermore, policies and bylaws may specify the process for establishing new subcommittees, including the approval procedures, criteria for formation, and guidelines for dissolving or merging existing subcommittees. They also define the relationship between subcommittees and the faculty council, including the delegation of authority and the mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between the two entities. Overall, policy and bylaws provide the necessary framework for organizing and governing faculty council subcommittees, ensuring that they operate effectively and in alignment with the broader goals and values of the institution.

A clearly defined decision-making process is crucial to successfully operating the newly structured Faculty Council. Distinctions between full faculty votes, council votes, and issues requiring only notification are essential to navigate complex academic governance efficiently. Full faculty votes are reserved for decisions that impact the entire faculty body, ensuring widespread involvement and consensus. Council votes streamline decision-making on more localized issues, allowing for efficient

governance within the Council itself. Matters requiring only notification enable the faculty to remain informed without necessitating direct input, maintaining a balance between informed awareness and efficient administration.

One pivotal question to be answered is what necessitates a total faculty vote versus a council vote or mere notification. The Faculty Council Bylaws and Elections subcommittee is working on a new structure that aims to streamline these distinctions, ensuring matters of significant importance to the broader faculty community are addressed inclusively through total faculty votes. In contrast, more routine or specialized issues may be resolved within the Council, providing ample notification and opportunity for input from the broader faculty body. This layered approach to decision-making underscores a responsive and adaptable governance system, keeping faculty informed and involved at every step.

Engaging the full faculty for particular votes is necessary for legitimizing decisions that have university-wide implications. Issues such as major curriculum overhauls, changes to classroom policies, professional development topics, new faculty orientation, student success initiatives, and faculty or amendments to the faculty handbook are examples that require comprehensive faculty participation. An established process for these votes includes advance notification, followed by information sessions to ensure faculty understand the implications of their choices. An online voting platform may ensure maximum participation, enabling faculty to cast their votes easily and securely, thus upholding the principles of shared governance by empowering faculty voices.

Additionally, the evolution of the Faculty Council is bolstered by the active roles of all its supporting subcommittees, which work collectively to address the multifaceted needs of faculty and students alike. The new Faculty Council structure introduces significant changes that are designed to better meet the needs of the UAGC academic landscape. Essential alterations include the formation of specialized subcommittees focusing on areas such as curriculum development, classroom performance, faculty wellness, faculty policy development, newly hired faculty development, classroom management, associate faculty engagement, and academic standards. These changes aim to foster a more collaborative environment where faculty can effectively contribute their expertise, ultimately leading to sounder and more innovative decision-making that helps promote student success.

The **Faculty Wellness subcommittee**, led by Dr. Tanya Mooney and Dr. Jennifer Ballard, plays a vital role in advocating for faculty mental and physical well-being and ensuring that supportive resources and initiatives are prioritized.

The **Faculty and Student Success subcommittee**, led by Dr. Hazar Shehadeh and Dr. Holly Lopez, is supported by Faculty Affairs. The committee will consult on the New Faculty Experience (NFE), Faculty Development, and Classroom Support, which strives to enhance teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. Its comprehensive approach to professional development ensures that associate faculty members are equipped with the skills and tools necessary for an ever-evolving educational landscape.

The **Institutional Quality Review (IQR) and Faculty Expectations Subcommittee**, led by Dr. Debbie Carpenter and Dr. Jennifer Robinson, underscores the Council's commitment to transparent governance and accountability standards through updated teaching expectations and an Instructional Quality Review process created by and voted on by faculty. This commitment ensures a representative process and upholds rigorous academic expectations.

The **Associate Faculty Engagement and Communication subcommittee**, led by Dr. Chris Tex and Deanna Lauer, addresses the unique challenges associate faculty face, focusing on enhancing communication channels and engagement opportunities. By understanding and responding to the current needs of associate faculty, this subcommittee helps bridge gaps within faculty governance, promoting a more cohesive academic environment where every member feels valued and empowered to contribute their insights.

The **Curriculum and Assessment Steering Committee**, which is led by Dr. Dana Dillard and Tricia Lauer, works toward recommending guidelines for program and course design; collects, analyzes, and disseminates data; and assists with programmatic and regional accreditation. This committee exemplifies how faculty and staff work together to support innovation in curriculum and assessment to help promote student success.

The **Doctoral Advisory Committee**, led by Dr. Kelly Olson Stewart and Dr. Barb Zorn, designs strategies and proposes policies to foster a strong doctoral culture. It promotes innovation and best practices and enhances the curriculum, ensuring students feel supported throughout their journey, from enrollment to graduation.

Faculty involvement in leading educational policies is critical for fostering an environment that supports student success and ensures that educational frameworks remain robust, dynamic, and responsive to student and workforce needs. The value of faculty leadership in achieving academic excellence remains integral to discussions about student success and institutional support for several important reasons:

Expertise and Experience: Faculty members possess deep expertise in their respective fields and years of experience in education. Their insights into curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and academic standards are crucial for ensuring educational programs meet high-quality benchmarks.

Connection with Students: Faculty interact directly with students daily, giving them a unique perspective on student needs, challenges, and successes. This close relationship allows faculty to develop and implement policies genuinely responsive to student requirements.

Innovation and Adaptability: Faculty-led initiatives often lead to innovative approaches in pedagogy and curriculum development. Faculty are typically on the front lines of educational change, experimenting with and adopting new teaching strategies and technologies that enhance student learning experiences.

Commitment to Academic Integrity: Faculty involvement ensures academic policies uphold integrity and rigor, maintaining the institution's educational reputation. This commitment is fundamental to preparing students for successful careers and meaningful societal contributions.

Stakeholder Influence: As key stakeholders within educational institutions, faculty play a critical role in shaping institutional policies. Their influence can help steer policy decisions more aligned with educational best practices and student-centered outcomes.

Interdisciplinary and Collegial Collaboration: Faculty-led efforts often promote collaboration across disciplines and departments, facilitating a more comprehensive approach to education that benefits students and prepares them for complex, real-world problems.

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Faculty led policy development can increase motivation and commitment to institutional goals, ultimately benefiting students.
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Empowerment and Agency: Allowing faculty to lead policy development empowers them, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability. This can increase motivation and commitment to institutional goals, ultimately benefiting students.

Continuous Improvement: Faculty led feedback mechanisms ensure continuous improvement of the teaching and learning environment, as faculty are well-positioned to identify areas needing enhancement and implement improvement strategies.

As we anticipate the reshaped Faculty Council's implementation in 2025, all faculty members must grasp the importance of its evolving structure and function. Faculty's active participation in governance processes is crucial. Faculty can gain awareness of progress and harness their voices and ideas by coming to open Faculty Council meetings, volunteering for subcommittees, talking to Council and subcommittee members, and participating in surveys and votes. Understanding how decisions are made and the channels available for faculty input enables all members to participate actively. The Faculty Council's transformation represents a progressive steppingstone towards a more inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance model that supports faculty and the larger university community in pursuing academic excellence and student success.

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INTRODUCING THE STUDENT SUCCESS RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Stephani Kilby, Director, Student Success



For the past several years, the UAGC Student Success Committee (SSC) has played a central role in driving student achievement. As a cross-departmental working group, the SSC is tasked with meeting regularly to review data and progress, identify challenges, and develop solutions to drive achievement of the UAGC Critical Student Goals: Retention, Completion, and Value. They explore the interconnectedness of initiatives, discuss the allocation of resources, and take a hands-on approach to learning more about the student experience, including shadowing Academic Advisors, conducting targeted student outreach, and engaging in collaborative data analysis. While the SSC's broad perspective and unified approach remains invaluable, this ambitious scope has inspired the launch of a new, smaller working group to be the agile arm of the SSC: the Student Success Research and Development (SSRD) team.

As a subset of the SSC, the SSRD team takes this vision to the next level, accelerating progress by focusing on strategy, innovation, testing, and learning to tackle barriers and unlock new possibilities. This dedicated team furthers the work of the SSC by turning research and ideas into action, continuously adapting to drive progress toward our Critical Student Goals. The SSRD is a hub of creativity and collaboration, designed to transform challenges into opportunities and shape the future of student success.

The Charge

The SSRD team is a cross-departmental working group committed to fostering a culture of engagement and achievement for all students – ensuring students are prepared every step of the way. By embracing a continuous cycle of learning, the SSRD stays attuned to the evolving needs of our students. Through thoughtful planning, strategic implementation, and ongoing analysis, the SSRD aims to remove barriers and mitigate challenges, so every online learner has the opportunity to reach their full potential, creating a system of success defined by the achievement of our students and our critical student goals.

The Student Success Research & Development team is driven by a clear purpose, guided by these core responsibilities:

1. **Identify Obstacles:** Regularly assess the barriers and root causes impacting student success in the online learning environment.
2. **Develop Solutions:** Research, propose, and test strategies that address preparation and intervention.
3. **Support Growth:** Recommend scalable and impactful initiatives that promote students' academic, personal, and professional preparation.
4. **Evaluate Progress:** Continuously monitor and analyze the effectiveness of implemented strategies using data-driven insights and feedback.
5. **Collaborate and Advocate:** Build enthusiasm and support for improving student success through communication – serving as a bridge across students, faculty, and staff, ensuring all perspectives are considered.

SSRD Inaugural Members

The inaugural members of the Student Success Research & Development team were thoughtfully selected through recommendations from SSC members, peers, and colleagues, and with the support of university leadership. These individuals bring a unique blend of knowledge, experience, and a deep understanding of the online learning landscape. They are idea generators who are eager to learn, challenge assumptions, and embrace the possibility of failure as part of the innovation process. Additionally, they bring such attributes as being action-oriented, authentic, trusted, and effective communicators, ensuring a collaborative and forward-thinking approach to advancing student success. Under the leadership of Stephani Kilby, Director of Student Success, and the executive guidance of Dr. Blake Naughton, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Teaching and Learning for Online Initiatives, these individuals are united by a shared commitment to transforming the student experience and shaping the future of online education.

The founding members of this dynamic group are:

- Tracy Bormann, Director of Institutional Research
- Rebecca Davis, Career Services Manager
- Marie Henderson, Director of Strategy Performance Analytics
- Holly Lopez, Program Chair
- Cole McFarren, AD Academic Technology and Innovation
- Matthew Phillips, Student Affairs Program Manager
- Eric Piepenbrink, VP Student Services
- Allison Rief, Department Chair
- Gregory Rogers, Strategy Performance Analyst
- Rob Shah, Associate Professor
- Kaitlyn Sproat, Assessment Specialist
- Erin Wilton, Associate Registrar, Director of Student Records

Looking Forward

The formation of the Student Success Research & Development team marks the beginning of an exciting chapter in our collective mission to support student achievement. With a focus on collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement, this group, in partnership with the Student Success Committee and the UAGC community at large, is poised to make a lasting impact. Together, we are shaping a brighter future where every online learner has the tools and support needed to reach their full potential.

If you have thoughts, ideas, or would like to learn more about the work being done, we encourage you to connect with members of the SSRD or reach out through the Office of Student Success at SuccessTogether@uagc.edu. We look forward to hearing from you and continuing this important conversation. Stay tuned for updates in future editions of the UAGC Chronicle and at the monthly Student Success Spotlight as the SSRD begins its transformative work!

OUR SHARED FUTURE AS LEADERS IN LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

Tricia Lauer, Vice President, Learning Assessment & Curricular Affairs



The future of learning outcomes assessment at UAGC is poised to be shaped by several key trends, including the use of data analytics and AI, the integration of soft skills assessment, and the development of personalized learning pathways. These trends reflect a broader shift towards more formative, flexible, and student-centered approaches to assessment, which aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of student learning and development. However, as we consider how to embrace these changes, we must also address the ethical, practical, and pedagogical challenges they present. By doing so, we can ensure that our assessment practices remain forward-thinking, innovative, and effective in preparing students for the demands of the 21st century. I am excited for the possibilities we have as partners in these areas and how we can use our collective innovative approaches to continue to serve as leaders in outcomes assessment while also meeting our student success goals.

Why is learning outcomes assessment important to UAGC?

Learning outcomes assessment has been and continues to be critical to UAGC, particularly given our online program offerings, for several key reasons:

1. **Ensures Quality and Accountability:** In an online setting, where students study remotely, it is essential to ensure that they are achieving the intended learning outcomes. Assessments provide a structured way to measure whether students are gaining the knowledge, skills, and competencies that our programs aim to deliver, holding both students and us accountable for quality education. For example, Dr. Patricia Ryan, chair of the BA Business Leadership revised a program learning outcome (PLO) as a program review action item. As a follow up, *MGT321: Assessing Leadership Skills* was revised to closely align with the revised PLO, and students are

expected to demonstrate mastery of the PLO in the course by completion of a key assignment which is used as a direct measure for the program assessment plan. This assignment ensures we are able to assess how students develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies required in the BA Business Leadership program.

2. **Enhances Student Learning:** By assessing learning outcomes, we are able to identify areas where students may struggle and provide timely interventions. Our students benefit from regular assessments that offer feedback and promote continuous improvement in their learning. The *GEN101: Developing Skills & Strategies for Success* faculty team and assessment specialist meet quarterly to review course learning outcomes student achievement data. In these meetings, the team discusses the areas of improvement as well as areas in which students are consistently experiencing challenges. It was acknowledged that one of the course learning outcomes was performing lower than others. As a result, the outcomes data was disaggregated by assignment, criterion level, and even by course section to determine potential course changes to improve student achievement. The GEN101 team used the information to make updates to activities, create classroom announcements, and collaborate with faculty. Increases in student achievement have occurred as a result of these changes.
3. **Guides Curriculum Improvement:** Assessment results help faculty refine and improve the curriculum and provides critical data regarding the instructional design of courses and approach to program development and offerings. In online programs, where the delivery method and tools might differ from traditional in-person courses, assessments ensure that content and instruction methods are effective in helping students meet learning goals. PLO achievement data from the 2022-2023 academic year showed that BA Organizational Management students weren't meeting the acceptable targets for the final assignment in *MGT450: Strategic Planning for Organizations*. The course was revised, specifically addressing the design of the course and making changes to the assignments to better support student mastery of the aligned outcomes. Data from the 2023-2024 academic year shows that BA Organizational Managements students are now meeting the acceptable targets.
4. **Promotes Institutional and Professional Accreditation:** Accreditation bodies require evidence of learning outcomes assessment to ensure that programs meet specific standards, and they often require more information, analysis, and reporting due to our online programs. Consistent assessment supporting our credibility led to a commendation from the 2019 WSCUC Reaffirmation Visiting Team, which was comprised of two assessment experts.
5. **Fosters Student Engagement and Retention:** Clear learning outcomes and assessments motivate students to stay engaged with course material. Assessments provide benchmarks for progress and completion of them creates a sense of accomplishment, contributing to retention. Dr. Darla Branda, chair of BS Health Information Management, recently revised *HIM360: Healthcare Statistics*. In this course, every assignment builds up to the summative assignment. For example, in Week 1 Assignment 1, students are writing an executive summary for a fictitious hospital. The assignment instructions clearly state that this will be part of the summative assignment. Worksheets and templates are also used for many of the assignments. The

summative assignment, a PowerPoint presentation, is engaging for students because it is applicable to their future career tasks in the profession.

Importantly, learning outcomes assessments provide critical insights into how well academic programs meet their objectives, which is especially relevant for our collective effort to provide a flexible and varied online learning environment.

How will optimizing assessment help UAGC achieve its student success goals?

In the future, advancements in technology, the increasing importance of soft skills, and changing stakeholder expectations will shape how we can and should assess learning outcomes. As I consider the future of learning outcomes assessment and collaborative conversations we are having in a variety of capacities, I offer some perspectives to consider as we partner to ensure UAGC continues to be a leader in this critical work. By engaging in this important work, we are also staying true to our mission, the students we serve, and our goals for student success, notably retention, completion, and offering high value credentials. Let's explore important trends which will certainly impact the future of learning outcomes assessment in higher education, focusing on the role of data analytics, the integration of soft skills assessment, and the growing demand for individualized learning pathways, while also addressing the challenges and opportunities these trends present.

The Role of Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence

One of the most significant developments in the future of learning outcomes assessment is the use of data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) to provide more precise, timely, and scalable assessments. The traditional model of learning assessment, which relies heavily on periodic exams and standardized tests, is increasingly seen as inadequate for capturing the full range of student learning experiences. We have consistently engaged our students in authentic assessment and assess student learning using relevant and meaningful artifacts and grading rubrics. That said, AI and learning analytics do offer the potential to assess students' learning continuously and in real-time, providing valuable insights into their progress and areas for improvement.

According to Shavelson (2018), learning analytics can track student interactions with educational content, online platforms, and even social media to create a more comprehensive picture of their learning. By analyzing these interactions, we have the opportunity to identify patterns, predict future performance, and intervene early to support struggling students. Moreover, AI tools can provide personalized feedback and recommendations, helping students improve their learning strategies and achieve better outcomes. In this sense, the future of learning outcomes assessment is likely to shift towards more formative, data-driven models that provide ongoing support rather than summative assessments focused solely on final results.

However, the increasing use of AI and data analytics in learning outcomes assessment raises several ethical and practical concerns. For instance, issues of privacy, data security, and algorithmic bias must be addressed to ensure that assessments are fair and equitable for all students. Furthermore, I feel strongly that we must be careful not to rely too heavily on data-driven approaches at the expense of human

judgment and faculty expertise, which remains essential for understanding the context and nuances of student learning.

Integration of Soft Skills Assessment

Another key trend shaping the future of learning outcomes assessment is the growing recognition of the importance of “soft skills”, such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and emotional intelligence. As the job market increasingly demands these skills, higher education institutions are being called upon to ensure that graduates are not only knowledgeable in their fields but also capable of applying that knowledge in complex, real-world situations. I am proud of how we have collectively established a Culture of Care at UAGC, the various ways we as faculty and staff model these behaviors for our students, and, in turn, have woven the pillars throughout our teaching and learning practices.

Traditional assessments, such as exams and essays, are often insufficient for measuring soft skills, which are typically demonstrated through behavior, interactions, and problem-solving abilities. As a result, there is a growing emphasis on alternative assessment methods that capture these more elusive competencies. For instance, Caputo and Rastelli (2020) suggest that experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, group projects, and service learning, can provide valuable contexts for assessing soft skills. In these settings, students are required to work collaboratively, think critically, and adapt to changing circumstances, providing rich data on their abilities in these areas.

To assess soft skills more effectively, institutions are turning to digital portfolios and reflective assessments, where students document their learning processes, showcase their work, and reflect on their experiences. These tools allow students to demonstrate their soft skills in a variety of contexts and provide assessors with a more holistic view of their development. Furthermore, AI-based assessment tools, such as natural language processing, can analyze written reflections and group discussions to identify indicators of soft skills, providing additional layers of insight.

Despite these advancements, the challenge of assessing soft skills remains significant and is an area of opportunity for us. Many educators and institutions struggle with defining clear, measurable outcomes for skills like creativity and emotional intelligence. Moreover, the subjective nature of soft skills assessment raises concerns about the reliability and validity of these assessments. As higher education continues to evolve, finding robust, scalable methods for assessing soft skills will be crucial to ensuring that graduates are prepared for the demands of the 21st-century workforce.

Personalized Learning Pathways and Adaptive Assessment

Another major trend in the future of learning outcomes assessment is the increasing focus on personalized learning pathways and adaptive assessment. Our students enter UAGC with diverse backgrounds, learning styles, and goals, and there is growing recognition beyond our university that a one-size-fits-all approach to assessment is inadequate. More institutions are exploring ways to tailor learning and assessment to the individual needs and preferences of students.

Personalized learning pathways allow students to progress through their educational journeys at their own pace, selecting courses, projects, and assessments that align with their interests and career goals. According to Fink (2019), this approach requires a shift from standardized, time-based assessments to more flexible, competency-based models, where students demonstrate mastery of specific skills and knowledge before moving on to the next level. Adaptive assessment tools, which use AI to adjust the difficulty and content of assessments based on students' responses, are likely to play a key role in this transition. These tools can provide real-time feedback, adjust learning activities to match students' current abilities, and ensure that assessments are appropriately challenging for each individual.

The shift towards personalized learning and adaptive assessment presents both opportunities and challenges for higher education. On the one hand, it offers the potential to create more inclusive and equitable learning environments, where students are not penalized for differences in learning speed or style. On the other hand, it requires significant investment in technology and infrastructure, as well as ongoing support for faculty and students to navigate these new systems. Additionally, the move towards personalized assessment raises questions about how to ensure consistency and comparability across different students and programs, particularly in terms of accreditation and quality assurance.

What are our shared challenges and opportunities?

While the future of learning outcomes assessment holds great promise, there are also significant challenges that we must be prepared to address together. The integration of AI and data analytics, for instance, requires a careful balance of the possibilities of the tools with consideration of ethical issues related to privacy, bias, and fairness. Additionally, the shift towards personalized learning and soft skills assessment adds layers of complexity regarding reliability and consistency and will require new forms of faculty and staff development and institutional support to ensure that we are all equipped to implement these changes effectively.

Despite these challenges, the future of learning outcomes assessment presents numerous opportunities for enhancing the quality and relevance of higher education. By leveraging technology, we have the opportunity to provide more personalized, flexible, and meaningful assessments that better prepare students for the complexities of the modern world. Moreover, the focus on soft skills and adaptive learning pathways reflects a broader recognition of the need to cultivate lifelong learners who can adapt to changing circumstances and continue to grow throughout their careers.

Where do we go from here and what do I recommend?

While the conversation around these areas has started in different venues, I invite you to connect and share your ideas around work you are currently doing related to these trends and recommendations to further investigate these trends and how they could support our students. Consider reaching out to the assessment specialist team and me at assessment@uagc.edu.

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RESEARCH CORNER

The research corner is a space in the *UAGC Chronicle* dedicated to exploring innovative ideas related to teaching and learning. In this space, we want instructors to share their research interests and pursuits. In addition to fostering a community of educators eager to exchange insights, the research corner serves as a platform for showcasing different methodologies and pedagogical approaches. Whether delving into emerging trends or reimagining traditional practices, this space encourages collaboration and the advancement of educational scholarship.

SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING | COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES

We are excited to announce that the call for proposals for the second round of Online Student Success Initiative Fund (OSSIF) projects is now open! All proposals submitted before **January 24, 2025**, will be considered for funding. Please review the [OSSIF FAQ for additional information](#).

Are you eager to connect and explore research partnership prospects? The UAGC Chronicle can help share your research endeavors with the UAGC learning community. Please contact theuagcchronicle@uagc.edu.

FULBRIGHT SPECIALIST GRANT RECIPIENT: KATIE THIRY

Interviewed by Amy Erickson, Faculty Coach and Development Specialist, Faculty Affairs



Dr. Katie Thiry, Assistant Dean and Professor of Organizational Studies, recently received a Fulbright Specialist grant for her project seeking to enhance career development and global readiness at the University of Split in Croatia. Her ambitious goal is to ensure that graduates possess the skills needed for the global job market, improve the university's international competitiveness, and establish a system for continuous program evaluation and improvement.

AE: Thank you so much for agreeing to be featured in this quarterly edition of The UAGC Chronicle. Let's start by learning a bit more about the Fulbright Specialist grant. Can you provide a bit of background for our readers who may not be familiar with the goal of these grants?

KT: A Fulbright Specialist grant is an award and opportunity for U.S. scholars and professionals to engage in short-term projects (ranging from two to six weeks) at host institutions in over 140 countries. Funded by the Fulbright Program, these grants cover travel and living expenses, helping to build partnerships between the U.S. and other nations. The projects also aim to improve educational and professional systems around the world by offering expertise to help institutions grow, enhance their programs, or address a challenge they are facing. These projects can cover a wide range of fields, including education, health, science, technology, business, and the arts. They often focus on strengthening the host institution's capabilities, helping it meet international standards, or contributing to its academic and professional growth. The purpose of the Fulbright Specialist Program is to promote mutual understanding between the U.S. and other nations through professional collaboration. The projects aim to improve educational and professional systems around the world by offering expertise to help institutions grow, enhance their programs, or address challenges they're facing. These projects can cover a wide range of fields, including education, health, science, technology, business, and the arts. They often focus on strengthening the host institution's capabilities, helping it meet international standards, or contributing to its academic and professional growth.

Once an individual is selected from the Fulbright Specialist Roster, they will work with pre-approved institutions abroad, which can include universities, research centers, cultural organizations, and other educational entities. It's all about promoting international educational exchange and collaboration by allowing specialists to share their expertise through activities such as workshops, lectures, or curriculum development. The host institution and the specialist collaborate to define the scope and goals of the project.

AE: Some of our readers may not have heard of the Fulbright Specialists Roster. Can you talk a little bit about that and tell us how your existing work and application helped you to obtain a position on the Roster?

KT: The Fulbright Specialists Roster is a curated list of pre-approved U.S. scholars who have been deemed qualified to participate in the program. To be added to the roster, individuals must apply and demonstrate expertise and experience in their field. Being on the roster signifies eligibility to be selected for projects but it doesn't guarantee you'll get picked.

The application process for the Fulbright Specialist Program involves a detailed application form where you outline your professional background, expertise, and why you're a good fit for the program. It includes submitting a CV, letters of recommendation, and examples of your work. After applying, there's a vetting process where the Fulbright Commission reviews your qualifications. Once selected, you're then notified of available opportunities that align with your skills and expertise.

When a scholar is on the roster, they can be chosen to receive a Fulbright Specialist Grant for a specific project at a host institution abroad. The selection process involves collaboration between the host institution and the Fulbright Program, where the host institution identifies a need for a specialist's expertise and requests a specialist from the roster. In short, being on the roster signifies eligibility and expertise, and receiving a Fulbright Specialist grant represents an awarded opportunity to contribute to a specific project internationally.

In terms of being selected, my work in curriculum and assessment spans over a decade, focusing on improving business education programs, ensuring they meet international standards, and fostering student success. I have experience developing curriculum that aligns with accreditation standards like the International Accreditation Council for Business Education (IACBE) and WASC Senior College & University Commission (WSCUC), and professional standards like SHRM, which directly contributed to my being considered for the Fulbright Roster. My expertise in designing courses and assessment frameworks to evaluate program effectiveness and my work in designing degree programs made me a fit for the Fulbright Specialist Program.

I believe my unique qualifications stem from my extensive experience in both higher education and career development. My ability to bridge the gap between academic programs and industry needs, especially in the realm of business education, sets me apart. Additionally, my work with universities to align programs with accreditation standards demonstrates my ability to operate at a global level.

I also leverage my expertise through active engagement in professional development and in the field of education. I've also implemented assessment tools that track student outcomes, making sure that curriculum changes directly contribute to enhancing student career readiness. By sharing these practices in my current role as Assistant Dean for the Forbes School of Business and Technology, I continue to demonstrate my commitment to advancing educational quality and professional standards.

Stepping out of my comfort zone is at the heart of this project. Working in an international setting, collaborating with a new institution, and navigating different educational and cultural contexts will challenge me to adapt and grow both personally and professionally. It's an opportunity to apply my expertise in a new environment and learn from the local community, all while contributing to their educational system.

AE: I understand you will be collaborating with the University of Split in Croatia. What is the focus of your project and what inspired you to choose Croatia?

KT: Yes, I'll be collaborating with the University of Split in Croatia and focusing on building academic partnerships and enhancing their curricula in business and organizational studies. I chose Croatia because their need allows me to expand on my work in curriculum mapping and assessment. The University of Split has a need to strengthen its career development programs to better prepare students for the global job market. This includes aligning their programs with international accreditation standards like AACSB and developing more effective methods for assessing the impact of career services. My research will aim to fill this gap by creating a framework to assess the effectiveness of their

career programs, offering workshops for staff on industry engagement, and providing best practices for improving career services. Ultimately, I aim to help them enhance their international competitiveness and the employability of their graduates.

I'll be applying my expertise in aligning programs with international accreditation standards and enhancing career development frameworks. The project focuses on improving the University of Split's career readiness programs, which will involve designing new curriculum elements and assessments that support students' career paths and global competitiveness. It will deepen my understanding of how curriculum development can meet both academic and professional needs in a global context.

AE: Can you tell us why this topic is important to you?

This project is important to me because it aligns with my passion for enhancing educational experiences and preparing students for the global job market. Working with the University of Split to improve their career development programs allows me to contribute to shaping a more globally competitive education system. I am deeply committed to ensuring that students not only gain academic knowledge but also develop the skills necessary to thrive in diverse industries and environments. By helping align their programs with international accreditation standards, I believe I can make a meaningful impact on the university's future success and the career readiness of its graduates.

AE: What sort of collaboration do you anticipate? And what outcomes do you hope to achieve to inform your future research?

I anticipate collaborating closely with faculty, staff, and administrators at the University of Split, particularly those involved in career services and curriculum development. We worked together already to design the project. The outcomes I hope to achieve are their goals which are to include the creation of a comprehensive framework for evaluating career programs and the development of sustainable practices that can be used for continuous improvement. These outcomes will inform my future research on global best practices in career services and curriculum development, particularly in preparing students for the international job market.

AE: Are you familiar with the Croatian culture and language? Will you be living with a host family?

I will live in an apartment on campus while I am there. I am not at all fluent in the Croatian language, but I am familiar with some aspects of the culture. To prepare, I plan to familiarize myself with local customs and traditions. UAGC has Croatian speakers who have been giving me tips already!

AE: Can you tell us why you felt your participation in this project would be valuable to UAGC?

My participation in this project is valuable to UAGC because it enhances our global perspective and strengthens our commitment to international collaboration. By engaging in this project, I bring back new insights and best practices that can inform our curriculum and career services. The knowledge gained will help us continue to align our programs with international standards and improve our students' career readiness on a global scale. It also supports the UAGC mission to offer high-quality, globally relevant education that prepares students for success in diverse, international environments.

AE: What advice do you have for current or future scholars who are interested in this kind of international collaboration?

For anyone interested in applying for a Fulbright, I recommend starting early and clearly defining how your work will contribute to the host institution and community. I'd be more than willing to talk with anyone about the application process and share insights from my experience.

AE: Thank you so much for sharing your time and insights with us, Dr. Thiry. We at UAGC want to wish you safe travels and the best of luck with your research. I sincerely hope we can schedule another interview with you once you return.

I would love to do a follow-up interview after my return to share the insights and experiences (and pictures)! Thank you again for your interest, and I look forward to our next conversation. In the meantime, please [click here](#) if you are interested in learning more about the Fulbright Specialist Program.

STANDARDS-BASED GRADING: A MORE ACCURATE REFLECTION OF STUDENT LEARNING

Timothy Cedor, English Faculty, Dallas College



Academic grades should reflect what a student has learned in a class or their proficiency in the course content. This is not the case with the conventional grading system of American education. Traditionally, students are evaluated using assignments, tests, and quizzes, but grading preferences are unique to the individual professor. Sometimes individual assignment grades hold equal weight, and sometimes grades are weighted in the final course grade. Some educators factor attendance into the final grade, allow for multiple submissions on assignments, give extra credit, offer a combination of these, or refuse to do any of them. It has been observed that the wide-ranging individual preferences of professors in grading have led to students being more concerned with their grades than whether they are learning the material (O'Connor et al., 2018). Our long-accepted grading system also tends to punish students for what they do not know by penalizing them for mistakes instead of offering them a guided path for improvement.

Students would be better served if the grading system promoted intrinsic motivations to learn and then accurately represented what they have learned at the end of the course. Standards-based grading (SBG) is one such grading system. In SBG, students are first taught the course's performance standards and what is expected to meet those standards. SBG still recognizes student mistakes, but instead of focusing on the mistakes, SBG encourages communication between student and professor: The professor reports grades in a way the student will better understand so the student can then use the feedback and their self-directed skills to improve learning. In SBG, the professor and student work together to improve the student's educational experience through practice over time instead of simply averaging the grades on all assignments to determine the level of mastery a student achieved. SBG shows a more complete

picture of student mastery of course objectives than traditional grading. Table 1 below shows how a final course grade in an ENGL 1301 (Composition I) course would be represented.

Table 1

Sample SBG Essay Grade in an ENGL 1301 Course

Standard Learning Objective (SLO)	Overall Grade: 2.75 (C+)
Student essay demonstrates knowledge of the writing process. (SLO 1) Student understands the writing process, but as seen in the grade for SLO 4 below, the student needs to focus on the editing stage more.	3 (B)
Student essay develops ideas with appropriate support and attribution. (SLO 2) The student's essay is written in words that are easy to understand and logically connect ideas to each other. While grammar errors are distracting, this is not the focus of this SLO.	4 (A)
Student essay is in a style appropriate to audience and purpose. (SLO 3) While the student's essay is easy to follow and the ideas well supported, the grammar issues are highly distracting and divert attention from the message of the essays to the grammar and mechanics of the essay.	2 (C)
Student essay demonstrates a knowledge and use of Standard American English. (SLO 4)	2 (C) (Average of scores below)
<i>Subcategory 1: Sentences avoid run-ons and comma splices</i> <i>Student ability to control sentences is limited. There are four or more run-ons/comma splices in documents of three pages or less.</i>	0 (F)
<i>Subcategory 2: Sentence structure</i>	1 (D)

Student struggles with the ability to write a well written sentence across all four modes of sentence writing (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex).

Subcategory 3: Comma usage 1 (D)
Student struggles with the ability to correctly use commas in all modes of writing this semester.

Subcategory 4: Spelling 4 (A)
Student demonstrates an ability to spell words at a 90%+ success rate.

Subcategory 5: Capitalization 4 (A)
Student demonstrates an ability to capitalize words at a 90%+ success rate.

In Table 1, the student earned a C+ for the essay (average of SLOs), but the specific feedback from the teacher on the student's performance of each SLO reports what the student was capable, or incapable, of doing in each learning objective. Specific feedback not only allows teachers to analyze the root causes of why learning was not mastered and relay this information to the student so the issues can be corrected before future assignments are turned in, but it also allows students to focus on what they know and what they still need to work on in future assignments.

SBG revolves around the idea that current grading methods rely on high risk, one-time events, which are then used to label students in a way that may or may not represent their true abilities in a course. SBG proponents also argue that students must have input in their education, and professors must give quality feedback when communicating with students about their grades. Essentially, the American education system must get better at assessing what students do and do not know and listening to and working with students to improve their educational experience, especially if it is going to continue to make the results of the assessment high risk for students, teachers, and schools.

Research supports the idea that students will be receptive to the use of SBG. Buckmiller et al. (2017) conducted a study to measure student attitudes and experiences around SBG. Twenty of the 21 students surveyed felt that SBG was an effective method of grading students, and 17 of the 21 students said that SBG enhanced their progress in the course (Buckmiller et al., 2017). According to the student surveys, SBG was most effective because it helped students take ownership of their learning, actually helped them learn material instead of memorizing it just long enough to do well on a test, gave them opportunities to correct mistakes they were making when they were unfamiliar with the material, and kept them from having to do unnecessary work. In this study, once a skill was mastered, students did not have to keep taking assessments on the mastered skill (Buckmiller et al., 2017).

Buckmiller et al. (2017) drew two major conclusions from the data collected in the study. First, teachers should reflect on and clarify their purpose for grading. Higher education professors receive little to no training in effective assessment and as a result, are usually not consistent, fair, or accurate in their grading. SBG forces professors to focus on the standards and objectives students are expected to master in a way traditional grading does not. Second, grades should mean something. Traditional grading systems allow students to mask learning with things like extra credit factored into their grade. These practices lead to grade inflation, and a student can make a good grade in a class without understanding the content. SBG forces students, and professors, to dialogue about what the student knows, or does not know, and how exactly this applies to the required objective.

The assessment process in higher education needs reform to not only accurately reflect what students have learned in a course but also provide students with feedback on where they are and are not meeting the course learning objectives. Professors must give students quality feedback and be able to communicate with students why the grade they receive accurately reflects the content they learned instead of masking this with extra credit. Grade inflation does a disservice to education by preventing students from taking ownership of what they are learning and making plans to improve in the areas they need improvement by learning the material instead of just doing more work. A grading standard must be found that correctly identifies and measures what a student has learned in any given course. SBG gets closer to this standard than traditional grading.

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BALANCING EDUCATION AND INQUIRY

Hazar Shehadeh, Faculty, School of General Studies



As educators, our top priority is to teach students, but we should also engage in academic research. Having academic research agendas and goals enhances our teaching practices and allows us to engage in current issues impacting the educational landscape. Disseminating knowledge increases personal growth, professional credit, and institutional recognition. We can also view this process as a way to enhance collaboration with colleagues within our department, across other departments, and even with those from different institutions while providing opportunities to present findings at national and international conferences.

Findings, whether they align with or challenge current research, hold significant value. Results that question existing knowledge are particularly important as they expand our understanding and open pathways for developing new strategies to improve student success and retention. In academic education, such findings have consistently played a key role in shaping research and practice. Such findings have consistently played a key role in shaping research and practice in academic education. For example, standardized testing has historically served as a foundational method for assessing student learning. However, recent research has underscored critical limitations of this approach, including inherent biases that disadvantage certain populations, an overemphasis on rote memorization, and a weak connection to long-term student success. These insights have driven a re-examination of assessment methods, encouraging the adoption of more comprehensive and equitable practices that prioritize critical thinking, creativity, and inclusivity in education.

In this context, the important point is the ability to conduct relevant, creative, and innovative research studies and disseminate findings in academic publications to document results and share insights with other scholars in the field. Even when the findings are not in accordance with the current body of research, they contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the field. Such findings enrich academic dialogue, help refine future studies, and advance overall understanding.

Some educators publish their studies because they are intrinsically motivated to engage in meaningful and enjoyable topics. In contrast, others tend to publish because of extrinsic motivation, focusing on specific results, rewards, and even pressure. Regardless of the reasons or the underlying motivation, here are a few points to consider when embarking on a research project:

- Read previous and current books and studies to identify gaps in the literature and generate ideas.
- Choose topics of interest within your field and explore new perspectives or strategies.
- Attend professional conferences to understand current issues you can engage in.
- Volunteer as a proposal and paper reviewer for different journals and conferences. When you respond to submissions, you become familiar with submission standards and guidelines.
- Collaborate with other published colleagues as some studies cannot be carried out alone, and seasoned researchers can enhance the depth of the study.
- Develop a research plan and allocate weekly hours to writing.
- Secure ethical approvals, including Institutional Review Board (IRB).
- Write and rewrite the manuscript; engage in writing as a therapeutic tool rather than a task.
- Emphasize the practical implications and relevance of your study in the discussions and conclusions sections.
- Select academic journals in your field and identify the ones that align with your study's focus.
- Format the manuscript according to the journal's guidelines, including length, citation, and submission format.
- Expect rejection but keep resubmitting.

- Embrace and apply reviewers' feedback.
- Exercise patience as the publication process is lengthy.
- Present your research at academic conferences to collect feedback and connect with other scholars.

On a different note, researchers look for publishing in top-tier, highly cited peer-reviewed journals; however, there are other venues in which to publish your work and reach a broad audience. Consider publishing books, textbooks, or chapter books, professional conference proceedings, professional magazine articles, and 2nd-tier peer-reviewed journals. Consider writing a paper based on your recent conference presentation or even a conference presentation you have attended.

Publishing is an excellent aspect of being an educator. It is an intellectual exercise that fosters analytical skills as researchers evaluate complex information and draw meaningful conclusions. It also promotes the exploration of innovative ideas and their dissemination to a broader academic community. For me, it has been a channel for not only intellectual exploration and curiosity but also a tool to improve my sense of control and achievement. That is why it has been a therapeutic process to deepen my personal appreciation for writing, which in turn enhances my ability to engage with students, improve instruction, and help them find value in writing as well. Just like some of us may not like going to the gym, but we do it anyway, do not wait until you feel like it to write!

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT – TIPS AND RESOURCES

TODAY'S HUMAN LEADER IN AN AI WORLD: BALANCING TECHNOLOGY WITH THE HUMAN TOUCH IN ONLINE LEARNING

Cardra E. Burns, Associate Faculty, Department of Health Sciences



Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping higher education, particularly in online learning environments. From tracking student engagement to supporting personalized learning, AI tools offer transformative opportunities. Yet, as educators, we must ask: how can we embrace these AI advancements while preserving the human qualities of authenticity, empathy, and courageous leadership that define impactful teaching?

Writing this article helped me arrive at an answer. I leveraged AI tools to research trends and identify key resources, which helped me organize ideas and uncover insights. However, crafting a message that resonates with an audience requires my human touch. Similarly, in teaching, AI enhances our ability to brainstorm ideas, pull and analyze data, and personalize learning experiences, but it is our humanity that creates meaningful, lasting impressions with students.

Embracing Authenticity Through Self-Awareness

Authenticity begins with knowing our strengths and recognizing where we can grow. As Chief Transformation Officer at the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, I relied on data insights while maintaining a leadership style grounded in collaboration and transparency. This approach meant encouraging input, adjusting strategies based on feedback, and building trust across the team — practices that exemplify genuine leadership.

Similarly, combining human decision-making with AI fosters better outcomes when educators act authentically and engage with intention (Wang, 2021). AI tools, like learning management system (LMS) analytics, offer valuable insights into student engagement and learning outcomes. However, it's the educator's ability to infuse these insights with their personality and presence that truly sets them apart.

For example, if LMS analytics reveal a drop in engagement during a specific module, an educator might respond by recording a short, conversational video announcement sharing personal insights or anecdotes related to the module's content. This approach not only reintroduces the educator's voice into the course but also shows students that their learning experience matters. Adding an interactive element, such as a discussion board where students can respond to the video with their own reflections, further personalizes the learning process.

Authenticity in teaching means being genuine--acknowledging challenges, connecting with students on a human level, and inspiring them to bring their best selves to the learning process.

Leading with Empathy in a Data-Driven Environment

During my tenure as Senior Deputy Director of Public Health, data analytics highlighted gaps in COVID-19 testing, but the real breakthroughs came from listening to community members. Similarly, in online education, understanding a student's context allows us to support them holistically. AI can alert educators to trends such as missed assignments or declining attendance, but empathy uncovers the story behind the numbers. A student struggling to participate might be balancing caregiving or working multiple jobs. Reaching out to understand their circumstances and offering flexible solutions can make all the difference. Personalized emails, adjusted deadlines, or encouraging words go beyond data to foster a compassionate learning environment (Ifenthaler et al., 2024).

Demonstrating Courageous Leadership in Embracing Change

When leading North Carolina's COVID-19 Testing and Vaccine deployment operations, I faced infrastructure gaps that required bold solutions, such as implementing robotics to scale capacity. This experience taught me that addressing challenges requires bold thinking and a willingness to adapt. Similarly, in online education, integrating AI tools like adaptive learning platforms or chatbots demands the same boldness and commitment to innovation (Aler Tubella et al., 2024).

Navigating AI integration in education requires courage. Let's be honest, new tools can be intimidating, and figuring out what works often involves some trial and error. But when we're transparent with

students about the process, we build trust and help ease their fears about tackling new technologies. It's a reminder that learning and adapting is something we're all doing together.

Balancing AI with the Human Touch

AI has incredible potential to transform online education, but the most impactful teaching comes from blending technology with human connection. Authenticity, empathy, and courage remain at the heart of what we do (Aler Tubella et al., 2024). AI supported the research and organization of this article, but the vision and voice are mine. In the same way, educators must let technology enhance not overshadow their humanity. As we integrate AI into online education, let's reflect on this question: How can we use AI to enhance our teaching without losing the personal connections that make learning transformative? Together, we can create online classrooms where technology empowers us to be our best and most human selves.

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LEVERAGING OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER) TO FOSTER STUDENT SUCCESS

Teresa Handy, Program Chair, School of General Studies and Rebecca Paynter, Associate Director, Editorial



When faculty search for educational and ancillary materials to support their students in the classroom, they often encounter challenges. First, materials might be located behind a firewall or in a journal students don't have access to. Next, the content may not be aligned with course learning outcomes. Finally, faculty find themselves assuming some risk with certain online

resources because they do not control the consistency of the URLs which means if those URLs become inaccessible, this can impact the student's learning experience. One way faculty can address these challenges—while also supporting student success and empowering themselves—is through the use of Open Educational Resources (OER).

What Is OER?

OER refers to openly licensed, freely available educational materials that users can adopt as is or modify, depending on the requirements of the assigned license. OER can include any type of educational resources such as syllabi, full online courses, textbooks, curated digital collections, lesson plans, assessment items, images and infographics, videos, ancillary items (ex. worksheets), and podcasts. OER resources are housed in various repositories and platforms where faculty can access them. For example, [OER Commons](#), [Pressbooks](#), and [Merlot](#) have digital collections of open educational resources that faculty can explore.

OER: Supporting Critical Student Success Goals

Using OER enables faculty to support the institutional goal of student success. Specifically, OER aligns with the UAGC Critical Student Success Goals related to value, retention, and completion. Because OER is free or low cost, it decreases students' financial stress and makes higher education more accessible. Students who are able to afford college are more likely to remain in college and complete their degree (Silliman et al, 2018). However, OER is about more than affordability; it is about equity and access. OER can advance a university's efforts around diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, OER materials can be adapted to a student population's demographics and life experiences. Because anyone can create OER, OER invites a variety of voices and perspectives to create learning materials that match the variety of voices and perspectives of our students. OER puts instructors in the driver's seat as they create, remix, and publish materials to meet their students' specific needs with these materials accessible on the open access forum and not behind a firewall or within a journal that a student may not have access to.

Most importantly, by supporting UAGC Critical Student Success Goals, OER plays a vital role in improving student outcomes and promoting academic achievement. The faculty-created or -curated materials can incorporate real-world applications and faculty can incorporate content that relates directly to the course learning outcomes. Current industry standards can be incorporated in OER, ensuring students will be better prepared for the global workforce. Students who feel their course materials are relevant and applicable to their everyday life, and present and future career paths are more likely to be motivated to complete coursework and find more value in their education. Instructors also can select and sequence OER materials that allow for a more personalized or more flexible learning path, which allows students to have a better work-life balance, contributing to their degree completion.

OER: Empowering Faculty

OER empowers faculty to create a learning environment that supports academic freedom to instruct and support their students' learning journey. When faculty have ownership of their learning materials they can customize and update the materials as needed with ease. Here are some examples of how UAGC faculty have used OER.

Faculty Projects

- *GEN 104 Course Textbook.* Assistant Professor Becky Campbell adopted the use of OER to expose her students in her reading strategies course to diverse learning materials. She then extended the use of OER by partnering with the Constellation publishing team to compile the readings and add scaffolded support and strategies in a custom textbook. This OER textbook, *Noteworthy: Reading Strategies in Practice*, will be published in February.
- *GEN 101 OER University Fellows Program Project.* The GEN 101 OER Pilot Project research team (Dr. Teresa Handy, Jennifer Dunn, Dr. Connie Lower, Mathew Galloway, and Harla Frank) created ancillary open educational resources that were used to support course learning outcomes in the GEN 101 entry point course. Faculty who reported using the OER found that students were more engaged, and students reported that the materials supported their understanding of course content. These materials are housed on the [UAGC Hub](#).

Library Services

- *Library.* UAGC librarians remain a critical source of information on OER. Librarian Anna Uribe is developing a LibGuide, or Library Guide, to be published in 2025, on OER as well as open access (OA) and affordable educational resources (AER). In the meantime, review the [OER, OA, and AER handout](#) for an overview.
- *ResourceFULL.* As part of the resource affordability initiative, [the Library team](#) and [the Learning Resources team](#) work with faculty to find OER, OA (Open Access), or AER (Affordable Educational Resources) alternatives for their classrooms.

A strategy faculty can use when leveraging OER in their course is to think of places in their course where ancillary materials could be useful in clarifying or deepening an understanding of a topic for their students. Faculty can then identify OER from different repositories ([OER Commons](#), [Pressbooks](#), or [Merlot](#)) that can be either used as is or remixed to directly align with the course learning outcomes, using proper licensing and attribution. The remixed or revised “new” material also can be UAGC branded which lends to a cohesive student experience and builds credibility and trust in UAGC. With control of the content and the URL of that content, faculty know that students will continue to have access to the content that supports their learning. Remixing or revising OER and then sharing externally is also an opportunity for faculty to contribute to the larger academic community outside UAGC while supporting institutional student success goals and broadening faculty scholarly contributions.

How Can You Learn More About Utilizing OER?

Learning more about OER is one way faculty can support the Critical Student Success Goals of value, retention, and completion, and further empower themselves. Some faculty may be interested in using existing materials, while others may be interested in creating OER. Whether a faculty member chooses to use, remix/edit, or create OER, it is a unique opportunity for faculty to choose to enhance their teaching and learning and engage in professional development.

- Share your thoughts and level of interest by taking [this informal OER interest survey](#). We will use your feedback to develop future faculty learning opportunities to learn about OER.

- Review the following resources: [University of Arizona's OER page](#), which highlights resources available to faculty, and [OER Commons](#), which is a public digital library of open educational resources.
- Attend the [OERizona Conference](#). We invite you to attend the free and virtual OERizona Conference in February 2025! The OERizona Network is a professional learning community (PLC) that supports coordination and collaboration on OER projects. UAGC is a member of this PLC, and Dr. Teresa Handy is the UAGC institutional representative.

Future Learning Opportunities

In 2025 there will be two faculty-led OER events. The first event will be the UAGC OER Day, which will be an opportunity for faculty to voluntarily learn more about what OER is, why OER is important, and where to find OER. Most importantly, we plan to highlight the faculty voice in open educational resources by having a founding member of OERizona share his story. Our second event will be the UAGC OER Create Day where faculty will learn about creating/remixing and the publishing steps of OER. We hope each faculty member who participates will leave with a project they can work on. One of our plans is to have a virtual OER community where we can support one another on this journey—so stay tuned!

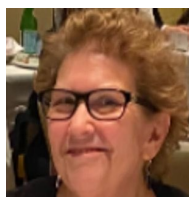
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BUILDING ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

CULTIVATING CRITICAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Carol Bishop, Associate Faculty, Department of Health Sciences



Due to the continual change in healthcare and other industries, managing the constant influx of information needed to present the most recent problems and strategies in the classroom can be challenging. Instead of focusing on issues and viable solutions, the trend in education and business is to concentrate on developing critical thinking skills or intelligence.

Defining Critical Thinking/Critical Intelligence

As discussed by Attipoe (2024), critical thinking is the process through which individuals consider pertinent facts and existing information and draw conclusions through reflection and logical analysis.

The competencies required include learning comprehension followed by deductive and inductive reasoning. Cultivating and mastering these skillsets results in critical intelligence, defined by NeuroLaunch (2024) as “the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information with razor-sharp precision, all while maintaining the flexibility to adapt to new situations” (para.2).

Significance of Critical Thinking Skills and Integration into Educational Practices

Davies and Camo, as cited by Attipoe (2024), believe that the prior emphasis on accumulating technical knowledge and proficiencies has been replaced by the need to swiftly identify and adapt to new processes and competencies while embracing the consequential change.

Academic institutions are evaluating learning processes and materials to ensure that critical thinking is emphasized. As in our courses at UAGC, students not only take multiple choice quizzes and exams but participate in discussions and complete assignments that not only reiterate learning materials but also use reasoning and problem-solving to apply lessons learned reflectively. As educators, we are also involved in evaluating and improving our strategies and outcomes, striving to encourage critical intelligence for our students. Goals are achieved through interactive discussion forums and in the evaluation process.

Learning Theories

Challenge-Based Learning

Farizi et al. (2023) state that enabling critical thinking skills requires a shift from teacher-centered to student-centered education or from factual and conceptual learning to critical analysis skills. By involving students in real-life situations, students bolster their critical thinking skills through learning experiences. It is easy to access knowledge through technology, but problems are solved based on the investigation of available information, evaluation, and problem-solving.

Six Thinking Hats







Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats Model for Critical Thinking and Problem Solving			
	WHITE HAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectivity • Fact-finding 	Wear the white hat to focus objectively on the available facts and figures.
	RED HAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion • Intuition • Emotions 	Wear the red hat to look at the problem using intuition, gut reaction, and emotion.
	BLACK HAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caution • Pessimism • Sombreness 	Wear the black hat to be vigilant and consider the negative sides of the event, issue, or problem.
	YELLOW HAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope • Optimism 	Wear the yellow hat to think positively. Consider all the benefits of the circumstances.
	GREEN HAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity • Inventiveness 	Wear the green hat to get creative and invent new approaches.
	BLUE HAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direction • Synthesis • Organization 	Wear the blue hat to perform meta thinking. Scrutinize and direct discussion. Synthesize all viewpoints.

Figure 1.

The online learning environment can be rich with active learning in discussion forums, mixed media instruction, and instructor interaction. As Sarigoz (2023) discussed, this active learning environment facilitates knowledge and an understanding of the thought processes, such as those outlined in the Six Thinking Hats.

Socratic Dialogue

Pitorini et al. (2024) discuss the method of the Greek philosopher Socrates by which a series of questions are used to clarify, dissuade assumptions, question diverse perspectives, and examine possible consequences. These questions do not lead the student to a predetermined answer but encourage free thinking, focusing less on knowledge and more on developing reasoning skills. As we know, this method has been discussed and endorsed at UAGC.

Tee Pattern

Sumardi et al. (2024) suggest implementing a teaching concept formulated around the TEE pattern, which stands for the following: T = Task, E = Explanation, and E = Evaluation. Answering analytical questions before exposure to the learning materials, the students complete assignments or tasks. An explanation is then provided to give the student a critical and logical understanding of the concept. The student is subsequently evaluated on their proficiency with the subject matter. This problem-based learning process is thought to enhance critical thinking.

Conclusion

The benefits of online learning include individualized learning experiences. In an atmosphere of diminished peer pressure, students are afforded time to think further, research, and question due to the flexibility afforded in this educational model. Instructors can utilize the discussion format to encourage intellectual growth through critical intelligence (Sarigoz, 2023). As instructors, we encourage critical thinking in the discussion forums; would it be beneficial to require reciprocal student interaction to promote responses to our probing questions?

We must continually improve our instructional processes to not only move our students through our courses but also ensure that they are leaving our classrooms with a greater understanding of how to be successful in their chosen career path. The development of critical intelligence, gained by thoughtful and intentional building of analytical and decision-making skills, will serve them as they move forward.

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TEACHING OUR STUDENTS ABOUT THE US HEALTHCARE SYSTEM'S PERFORMANCE

Ken Feifer, Associate Faculty, Department of Health Sciences



I have been a professional healthcare administrator for the past forty years and a faculty member at a variety of colleges and universities for the past sixteen years teaching graduate and undergraduate healthcare administration students. My work experiences have been in settings devoted to public health as well as those devoted to the provision of medical care to individuals and families.

Our students need to learn about healthcare system performance because it has an impact on their own well-being in addition to the well-being of others. With knowledge about our healthcare system, students will be able to participate in discussions about healthcare policy and be advocates for change in both personal and professional settings.

Understanding our healthcare system builds critical thinking skills that are applicable to a variety of challenges that students will face after their studies have been completed. It is my hope that this article enlightens and stimulates healthcare students to think critically about the healthcare services we offer and the healthcare services we consume in our own day-to-day lives. It also can help them to be effective change agents for the organizations they work for.

Let me start by discussing the differences between medical care and public health.

Medical Care

Medical care focuses on the individual and the diagnosis and treatment of disease. In our nation there are many bright spots in medical care. For example, heart disease can be treated with surgical

techniques that are minimally invasive, organ transplants can extend lives for decades, and sophisticated medical imaging can diagnose conditions before symptoms emerge.

Public Health

Public health is visible in our everyday lives. For example, the bus we see in the street with an ad that encourages people not to smoke is an example of public health in action. A label on an alcoholic beverage that warns about the effects of alcohol on the human body is also an example of public health.

Public health focuses on disease prevention and health promotion for the entire community. These efforts include smoking cessation programs, drug and alcohol education programs, vaccination promotion, and nutritional assistance.

Public health professionals are often referred to as the foot soldiers who identify emerging diseases and their root causes. There is a rich history of successful efforts such as the identification of spoiled milk that was the leading cause of infant death or the detection of water borne illnesses such as the Zika virus or vaccinations that eradicated disease.

Can you think of the distinctions between medical care and public health that you have encountered?

I ask students to think about this as the distinction matters because medical care focuses on treating people once they are ill, and public health's goal is to prevent illness by addressing the health of a population through preventative measures such as education and changes in healthcare policy. The ultimate goal is to stop disease before it ever occurs.

Finally, please be aware that public health has now become synonymous with Population Health. Population health and its metrics are defined as the health of a group of people, including the distribution of health outcomes within that group. It is now a widely accepted way of looking at the health of communities across our nation.

Population Health Metrics and Our Nation's Performance

Unfortunately, our nation does not perform well on population health metrics. Population health metrics are the direct results of public health initiatives that promote health. For example, making sure that people seek out preventative services such as screening mammography and colonoscopy.

Metrics that assess the overall health and well-being of our citizens are described in detail in Mirror, Mirror 2024, the Commonwealth Fund's eighth report comparing the health systems of ten high income nations—Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (Blumenthal D, 2024). The report has 70 measures of health system performance grouped into five domains—access to care, care processes, administrative efficiency, equity of care, and population health outcomes.

What their results reveal is that the US ranks close to last in all domains, most notably health outcomes. (Blumenthal, 2024) For example, our nation has the lowest life expectancy, we rank last on measures of death that could have been avoided by preventative services, we have one of the highest infant

mortality rates, we have the highest mortality associated with COVID 19, and the highest rate of self-harm, which includes death by suicide.

In addition, our nation ranks last in measures of access to care and equity of care. In healthcare systems across the world, we have learned that access is a key ingredient to health. If you cannot access care, you cannot take advantage of disease prevention which is vital to preventing disease and death. As students prepare for their careers in healthcare, they will continually be confronted with the challenge of promoting health for those they serve. Armed with knowledge about where the healthcare system can improve will allow them to be effective change agents for the organizations they work for.

Strategies to Improve—Social Determinants of Health

The focus on population health requires providers of all types to improve patient outcomes and invest in the communities they serve.

Healthcare literature tells us that the care delivered within the walls of a hospital or outpatient practice impacts as little as 10 percent of an individual's long-term health. The conditions in which individuals are born, grow, work, live and age make up the remaining 90 percent. And to truly serve their communities, doctors and hospitals must recognize what we now refer to as the Social Determinants of Health.

The categories of Social Determinants of Health include economic stability, the neighborhood where people reside, education, food, the availability of social and community support, and access to healthcare. Healthcare that focuses on these determinants by investing in social services and linkages to healthcare providers has demonstrably better health outcomes.

A notable feature of nations that have a healthier population is their enormous investment in social services that contribute to health—housing support, transportation services, vocational training, nutritional support, and mental health/substance abuse care. This is a lesson that took me many years to learn as healthcare was not initially focused on the dynamic relationship between healthcare and social service supports. Our students should focus on this important relationship. Students, in 2025 and beyond, should understand, appreciate, and promote this intimate relationship between healthcare and social services.

Conclusion/Next Steps

Understanding the basics of public healthcare discussed here is critical for all of us, not just students. On an individual level, it affords us the opportunity to make informed decisions about our own health and continue to advocate for policies that address the common good. Armed with the knowledge of public health and health system performance, we can promote the prevention of disease, identify health disparities in the communities we serve, and promote collaboration by and between professionals across the disciplines of health and social service. This is the journey that I will continue to be on, and I hope you will join me in asking critical questions as we observe and promote strategies that promote equal access for all.

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BRIDGING THE GAP: SUPPORTING MILITARY AND VETERAN STUDENTS THROUGH ANDRAGOGICAL STRATEGIES AND FACULTY PERSPECTIVES

James Bond, Faculty, School of General Studies and Breon Haskett, Faculty, Department of Organizational Studies

Supporting military and veteran (MilVet) students in the classroom requires a nuanced approach that blends andragogical principles with an understanding of military and veteran students' unique characteristics. This work often involves challenges stemming from instructors' familiarity with the MilVet community and the students' ability to adapt to the new psychosocial context of a classroom environment.

This article explores these challenges from two distinct perspectives. Professor James Bond, an eight-year Army veteran who has opened three veteran support centers at institutions in Southern California, will address strategies for instructors without military experience to effectively support MilVet students. Dr. Breon Haskett, a 25-year Marine veteran, will focus on how Knowles' andragogical principles can be applied to foster motivation and academic success for this student population. Together, their insights provide a comprehensive lens for creating inclusive and effective learning environments for MilVet students.

By drawing on these perspectives, this article aims to empower instructors, whether they come from military or civilian backgrounds, to build classrooms where MilVet students feel supported, valued, and equipped to succeed.

Faculty And Staff with no Military Experience - James Bond, Faculty, School of General Studies



UAGC offers [Green Zone training](#) to help faculty and staff familiarize themselves with the language and unique perspectives of service member students. Through my experience supporting students and opening three Student Veteran Resource Centers in the greater San Diego area, I have noticed that the faculty and staff most positively mentioned by military students are often also well-regarded by other student demographics. The key factor among these colleagues is their ability to find and build on shared experiences with their students, fostering strong relationships from those connections.

While military service is an integral part of some students' identities, it is essential to recognize that it may not always be their primary identifier. During introductions, we may learn that these students are

parents, artists, eldest siblings, or have other significant roles. Finding common ground through these shared identities can be a powerful way to connect with and support them.

Faculty and staff without military experience have a unique opportunity to assist transitioning military students in recognizing habits and behaviors that may impact their progress in their chosen fields. By building trust and offering constructive feedback, they can help these students adapt to civilian, academic, and professional settings more effectively. This support is particularly valuable in environments that may overemphasize the differences between veterans and their peers. However, it is also essential to note that at UAGC, many active service members are not focused on transition but on advancing within the military or preparing for retirement. Listening to our students' goals and supporting their path to achieving them remains at the heart of our work.

Building Stronger MilVet Student-Teacher Relationships Using Motivation - Breon Haskett, Faculty, Department of Organizational Studies



For instructors immersed in an andragogical context, gaining an academic and socially valuable relationship is a difficult feat. For the student, the quality of this relationship can be reflexive, offering opportunities and barriers alike and having a major influence on student academic outcomes. Notably, academic institutions have done a great job in preparing teachers with new MiMilVet-related lexicons and explaining the nature and costs associated with making this cohort feel appreciated and seen. Next steps will be to look beyond general known characteristics to discover the psychosocial dynamics that may camouflage needs so as to offer tailored approaches to the MilVet student with higher propensities for academic accomplishment, retention, and post-graduate outcomes.

Our MilVet lexicon, or our gained understanding of the military student from things like green zone training or our past experiences with MilVet students, may provide instructors an initial advantage for building rapport and social comfort in the classroom, but this type of connection will not serve as a long term substitute for establishing a quality student-teacher relationship where the student will have the best opportunity to thrive. If we consider the additional variables such as an online modality and a student cohort like that of active military and veteran students, we discover a high-stakes dynamic that requires a focused strategy geared toward success.

The MilVet student offers a variety of contributions to the classroom including a strong work ethic, task commitment, and a general desire to obtain academic success. Characteristically they are well positioned to succeed academically and comparatively persist and graduate at higher rates than the general population. Nonetheless, if the antecedents relative to feeling accepted and connected to a new social and academic milieu do not exist, failure to thrive and succeed may be the unfortunate outcome.

One useful frame from which to view the work ahead and build classroom structures and learning activities conducive to success is Alderfer's ERG theory. Generally, Alderfer (1969) posits that individuals will maintain a high state of needed motivation if their existence needs, like secure employment,

relatedness needs associated with relational trust and a feeling of belonging, and finally growth needs, which are the intrinsic desire for personal development related to self-confidence and achievement, are met. Notably Alderfer concludes that when all are satisfied, individuals reach their highest motivational states, personal satisfaction, and levels of achievement.

Existence needs may seem inconsistent with what we might think would be a higher order need for the MilVet student community. Nonetheless when we consider the abrupt shift from a known context to a new type of educational mission, feelings of being unprepared may exist. Consider that while this community has had quality academic experiences while serving, the modality and requirements particularly in an online environment are distinctly different than their past academic experiences. Additionally, existence also includes an individual feeling of autonomy which may also be less evident as the capacity to make informed, uncoerced decisions about their academic paths may not have been part of their past lived experience.

Relatedness needs to recognize the social nature of the individual and their desire to build and maintain relationships. Here again, the experiential poses a challenge as their experiences in the Military were mostly deeply personal, configured around the building and maintaining of relational trust and clear affiliation, and acceptance. Additionally, the teacher to a MilVet student may be expected to function as mentor, leader, and coach and assume the responsibilities associated with each role. Entering this new context may make developing those critical relationships difficult given the limited time they may have with both teacher and peer and perceptions around social receptivity. Getting to relational trust is even more difficult in that very few of their interactions will be with someone with shared or similar experiences.

Growth needs relate to personal development, and a desire to perform meaningful work and explore potential. This element makes the creation of academically challenging work and clearly defined and measured academic success essential. Military experience is one with limited gray areas particularly related to performance and commitment. The examination of students' academic work and progression must include opportunities for personal improvement and easily discernable achievement.

Alderfer's work highlights a terrific opportunity for teachers and academic institutions to consider how they are providing opportunities for progression through the three tiers of his theory and examine what might be gained if all three were able to be obtained by our MilVet students. While the MilVet population shares many of the needs of other students they are characteristically unique in their experiences and their overall success solutions must be tailored to those differences.

10TH ANNUAL UAGC TEACHING AND LEARNING CONFERENCE



The 10th annual UAGC Teaching and Learning Conference (TLC) delivered robust opportunities for attendees to engage in discourse and professional development related to the impact a sense of belonging makes on learning communities.

Featuring over 100 presentations focused on exploring multiple facets of a sense of belonging, TLC attracted more than 900 attendees from 200+ higher education or higher education-affiliated organizations who came together to form a learning community focused on exploring the definitions of belonging in higher education, identifying barriers, operational solutions and opportunities to create belonging, and research related to the concept of belonging. This year, TLC featured spotlight sessions that discussed belonging from diverse perspectives, such as the historical and contemporary mission of land grant institutions, the influence of AI on learning and the dynamic of work, and accessibility to the [scholarship of teaching and learning](#).

The Teaching and Learning Conference community recognizes outstanding presentations for their contribution to the conference. The [UAGC 2024 TLC Vanguard award](#), which recognizes the session that most effectively embraced the conference theme through either theoretical inquiry or practical application, was presented to Dr. Teresa Leary Handy, UAGC, Assistant Professor and Program Chair in the School of General Studies for her work related to the impact of supporting faculty of color via peer mentoring on student success and a student's sense of belonging and inclusion, specifically marginalized students. The [UAGC 2024 TLC Teach Us More award](#) recognizes the session that TLC attendees expressed they would like to learn more about via an article-length piece for broader transmission and was presented to Alexa Dunne, Associate Director, Articulation & Prior Learning Assessment, The University of Arizona Global Campus, Matt Bergman, Partner Faculty member at the University of Louisville and Senior Fellow at the Council on Postsecondary Education, Melissa DeBlois, Director of Prior Learning Assessment, Community College of Vermont, and Susan Forseille Director, Prior Learning and Assessment, Thompson Rivers University for their exploration of research related to the positive correlation between awarding students Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) and sense of belonging.

The Teaching and Learning Conference is supported by over 90 volunteers who dedicate their time and expertise to ensure a quality development experience delivered to attendees and presenters alike. To learn more about these volunteers, please visit the [awards ceremony recording](#). Interested in supporting TLC in the future? Please contact TLC@uagc.edu.

The annual UAGC Teaching and Learning conference demonstrates the commitment UAGC has to delivering professional development opportunities to the entire learning community. Opportunities for development, such as the conference, pave the way for innovation in many facets of the higher education experience.



Please explore the [TLC 2024 YouTube playlist](#) to revisit, share, and learn more about the rich exploration of factors that impact belonging in the higher education experience for students, faculty, and staff.

FACULTY VOICES

This section of the Chronicle is dedicated to recognizing our amazing faculty body's contributions to their fields! Please share your accomplishments via the [Faculty Recognition Form](#). In addition, please remember to enter your accomplishments in your profile on the [Faculty Portal](#).

Hazar Shehadeh | School of General Studies

Published a book, a scholarly article, and a conference proceedings article and presented at two conferences.

Shehadeh, H., & Termos, M. (2024). Higher education: Innovations and challenges. Innovative Ink Publishing.

Shehadeh, H. & Robinson, J. (2024). Synchronous learning as a compliment to online learning and its first-year impact on student pass rate, next course progression, and satisfaction. Summer Academe: The Journal of Higher Education, 16, 1-17.

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<https://doi.org/10.21125/iceri.2024.1245>.

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Shehadeh, H. & Robinson, J. (2024, July 4). Synchronous learning as an adjunct to online Learning and its first-year impact on student retention. EDULearn 24 Conference, Mallorca, Spain. Individual presentation. Virtual.



NEW FACULTY INTRODUCTIONS

Nakia Ross | Department of Advanced Management



Originally from Miami, FL, I moved to Atlanta, GA. to start my educational journey. I attended St. Leo University graduating with a Bachelor of Science in computer information systems. I obtained a Master of Business Administration from the University of Phoenix, and a Doctor of Management, specializing in organizational leadership. I have had a very successful career in education and corporate America, working for some amazing companies such as Boise Office Company, Coca-Cola, and Gwinnett Technical College. Early in my career, I developed a passion for business. I

am fascinated with the ability to influence leaders and management. More importantly, I love how the business aspect continues to be redefined daily. Overall, I enjoy how business captivates so many aspects of the world. Therefore, I have enjoyed a very successful life in business management, which has given me the ability to assist in teaching others.

King Imani – Department of Advanced Management

My professional background is in business and human resources leadership. I hold a bachelor's degree in global business administration, an MBA, a Juris Master, and a Doctor of Management. With a passion for fostering diversity and inclusion, I have played a pivotal role in driving positive change within organizations. My expertise extends to human resources and organizational leadership, where I have successfully implemented inclusive hiring practices, mentorship programs, and tailored leadership development initiatives. My commitment to gender diversity is particularly noteworthy. I have led initiatives to ensure a majority of women in key leadership roles, contributing to a more inclusive and dynamic workplace. My strategic approach not only enhances professional growth and opportunities for women, and underrepresented groups of individuals within the workplace but also brings diverse perspectives to the forefront of decision-making in the management community.



Melissa Smith – Department of Education and Liberal Arts



My career in early childhood education spans a variety of roles, including teacher, administrator, consultant, curriculum publisher, and professor. I hold a Doctor of Education in early childhood from Northcentral University, a Master of Science in early childhood education from Northern Illinois University, and a Bachelor of Science in elementary education with an endorsement in Spanish from Concordia University Chicago. My experiences teaching and working with children from infancy through 8th grade provide me with a deep understanding of child

development across a wide age range. I am on a mission to keep the joy of play alive in early childhood classrooms by saying farewell to flashcards and hello to hands-on fun! I am passionate about preparing future educators and leaders in early childhood education, equipping them to implement developmentally appropriate pedagogical practices. I live with my family in Chicago, Illinois.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

We want to hear from you!

The UAGC Chronicle supports the entire academic community's contribution to the UAGC mission of providing a community of caring and guidance for adult online learners. Therefore, our publication promotes content that addresses the theoretical underpinnings and practical execution of this mission: academic research on instructional best practices, curricular innovation, and student support strategies; examples and resources that foster a community of practice; news of the progress of institutional student success initiatives; professional development opportunities; and – most importantly – the stories and successes of the people who shape our university.

To make this publication an authentic representation of our diverse faculty body, we encourage submissions from associate faculty and UAGC staff. Please consider the questions below as you craft your submission.

- What is your purpose in writing?
- What are you trying to accomplish?
- How does this information tie into university initiatives?
- Why should UAGC Constituents care about the information you are providing?
- What are the next steps, or what is your call to action?
- Who is your audience?
- How do you want to present your information? Would graphics or other visuals supplement your submission?

For more details and submission guidelines, [please visit the UAGC Chronicle page](#).

Thank you for reading! We hope you enjoyed this issue.



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