THE UAGC
CHRONICLE

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
GLOBAL CAMPUS

# Contents

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.**

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR
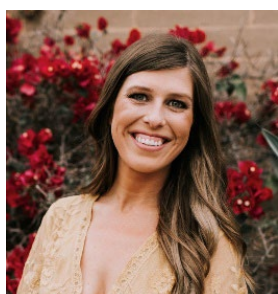
As the Chronicle editor, I envision this publication as a reflection of the innovative teaching practices and collaborative efforts integral to the UAGC culture. We have focused the past four issues on our critical student goals because we wanted everyone in our UAGC community to clearly see how we each contribute to our institutional endeavors in student success. No matter what the role, each of us plays a part in changing the lives of our students.

With each issue, we learn more about the approaches our colleagues leverage to ensure students have a unique learning experience that enables them to progress within their own aspirations and goals. Learning about these approaches inspires our commitment to this vision by encouraging our contributors to push boundaries and discuss new and unique methods, ideas, and resources to improve teaching and engage with students. With this in mind, we considered the past four issues in which The UAGC Chronicle has actively explored the institution's critical goals. Seeing the value we can each bring to these initiatives, the final issue of the 23/24 academic year reflects on the work and progress achieved towards these critical goal initiatives and to share lessons learned.

We enthusiastically jump in with another article from Stephani Kilby reviewing our progress on the critical goals and where we are going in the 24/25 academic year. Teresa Handy and Connie Lower remind us of the evolution of GEN 101 and how it has enhanced the student experience. Meanwhile, Amy Erickson provides a year in review for our Faculty Community of Practice sessions and shows that these sessions created a network for faculty and staff to share knowledge and learn from one another.

Additional articles in this issue include an introduction of UAGC Vice Provost of Academic Affairs, Teaching, and Learning for Online Initiatives, **Dr. Blake Naughton.** The Research Corner introduces the

24/25 Annual Faculty Course, which offers a pathway for providing substantive feedback to students and provides resources to further explain the 24/25 Annual Faculty Curriculum. In our Building Academic Community section, Dr. Robin Dhakal shares ways faculty can incorporate economics and current affairs into the classroom experience. Knowing that adult learners are motivated by applying their learning to current events and industry, this tactic can help faculty connect their teaching to critical goal #3 of giving students marketable skills. These articles focus on the common understanding that student success is our top priority. We are constantly shifting, learning, and enhancing our objectives to give our students the most enriching experience during their journey at UAGC.

With that said, please join us in recognizing over 8600 graduates who celebrated the completion of their educational journey at the spring 2024 commencement. The guidance, feedback, flexibility, and expertise that UAGC faculty and staff have in supporting students play a crucial role in the path to graduation!

We encourage the UAGC community to reflect on these articles to support engagement in institutional initiatives and enhance the evolution of teaching practices by integrating new insights, resources, and methodologies to strengthen student preparation for life after graduation. The UAGC community continues to demonstrate tremendous support for the Chronicle. Our next issue will be published in the 24-25 academic year, and our strategy will continue to focus on engaging this community in the critical work necessary to achieve the UAGC mission and to celebrate our achievements.

Sincerely,

Jackie Bullis

Lead Faculty Support and Classroom Consultant, The UAGC Chronicle Editor

UNIVERSITY, PROGRAM, AND CURRICULUM NEWS

WELCOME DR. BLAKE NAUGHTON | VICE PROVOST FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, TEACHING, AND LEARNING FOR ONLINE INITIATIVES

Dear UAGC Faculty and Staff,

I am thrilled to announce that Dr. Blake Naughton joined us as the new Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Teaching, and Learning for Online Initiatives. Dr. Naughton is leading our exceptional academic team at UAGC, collaborating closely with Dr. Caleb Simmons, Executive Director of Arizona Online, and our partners at the University of Arizona to enhance our commitment to a student-first culture. His focus is on advancing the quality of our degrees, improving student support, and boosting retention, persistence, and completion across all our online initiatives.

Dr. Naughton comes to us with a wealth of experience in academic leadership, most recently serving as Vice President of Engagement and Extension at Colorado State University. There, he led CSU Online, launching significant initiatives that expanded educational access and fostered innovative program development, significantly increasing enrollment and revenue. His leadership style is deeply collaborative, emphasizing the co-creation of educational programs that meet workforce and community needs while setting high standards for academic quality and student success.

In his new role, Dr. Naughton oversees all academic areas at UAGC, including our schools, degree programs, faculty support, and student outcomes. He works directly with the Deans of the College of Arts and Sciences, Forbes School of Business and Technology®, the School of General Studies, the VP of Academic Experience and the VP of Faculty Affairs, and the Accreditation Liaison Officer.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Naughton to our team. His start coincides with pivotal integration planning and the implementation of strategies aimed at critical student goal achievements. We are enthusiastic about the skills and perspectives he brings to this role and look forward to his contributions to our community.
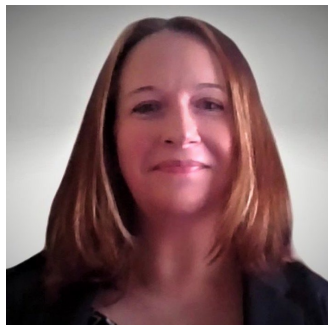
Sincerely,

Gary A. Packard Jr., Ph.D.

Interim Senior Vice Provost of Online Initiatives

UAGC CRITICAL STUDENT GOALS: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Stephani Kilby, Director, Student Success

Over the past year, you joined me on a journey through our four Critical Student Goals. Together, we explored the intent and spirit behind each of the goals and why they are not just meaningful to students but critical aspirations of our institution. We sought to better understand our progress and success measures and identify gaps and areas of opportunity we need to meet to achieve these goals. You welcomed me into conversations with your teams, departments, and working groups as you considered your role in driving improved student outcomes, including the responsibility and accountability we all hold. You shared ideas, recommendations, and concerns and invited me to learn more through the lens of your experience. I am grateful for the opportunity to partner with you as we focus on this critical work and share the incredible progress we are making regarding our commitment to our students.

Retention During the First Year of Enrollment

Over the past few years, UAGC has collectively organized and amplified efforts to improve retention rates, most specifically for our bachelor's degree-seeking students. We are seeing consistent progress, as evidenced by our year-over-year comparisons. Through May 2024, the UAGC retention rate (as defined internally) is 40.6% for the 2022-23 cohort. This is approximately 2.6% higher than our ending retention rate of 38.0% for the 2021-22 cohort. Nine of the past 11 months saw improved retention rates in comparison to the same month of the prior year. While it would take pages to detail all the institution's incredible work, I do not want to pass up the opportunity to place a spotlight on some of the efforts.

- Admissions and advising teams re-envisioned roles, models, and strategies to ensure students are prepared, supported, and seamlessly transition into their student journey.
- Work continues to align retention initiatives with student needs. This includes improving upon established initiatives, such as Live Learning and CHAMPS Peer Mentoring, and launching new initiatives, such as Peer Tutoring and YellowDig pilots, and many more.
- The UAGC Culture of Care continues to grow. Key highlights from the past year include the establishment of a Culture of Care Council, defined Culture of Care Pillars (CARES: Communicate, Advocate, Respect, Empower, Student-Centered), the launch of a Culture of Cares training in Workday, and, in March 2024, our inaugural Culture of Care Summit.

The dedicated efforts UAGC has focused on enhancing retention rates are yielding promising results. These collective endeavors highlight our commitment to fostering student success and creating a nurturing academic environment.

Completion of Programs and Educational Goals

Every time a degree is conferred, the potential for career growth and social mobility improves for our student. In 2023, UAGC committed to an internal goal of 17,000 degrees/certificates awarded between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2025. The intent of the goal was to establish a call to action grounded in our need to commit focus and resources beyond retention and to highlight the urgency with which we need to act. Through May 31, 2024, UAGC has awarded 7,090 degrees. When considering degrees completed, as well as potential degrees that could be completed within our targeted timeframe based on current student progress, we are on track to meet our goal of 17,000 degrees. More importantly, there is a renewed focus on this part of the student's degree journey. Here are a few highlights of recent efforts:

- Student Records expanded reporting to include deeper reviews of students who are just shy of completion to identify potential barriers and missing final requirements proactively. In addition, they are partnering with other teams to address trends and identify potential solutions to mitigate barriers for future learners.
- In February 2024, the UAGC Articulation and Prior Learning Assessment team collaborated with the Student Success Committee and others around the university to strategize ways to engage more students in Credit for Prior Learning opportunities, to understand the needs of our students attending through a transfer partnership, and to promote Prior Learning Assessment.
- In Spring 2024, CHAMPS launched a mentor recruitment campaign to identify and recruit high-achieving students to the program as a peer mentor. This effort recognizes students for academic achievement, supports their development as an emerging leader, and provides an opportunity to obtain PLA credit (for eligible students) while giving back to the UAGC community they are a part of.

The UAGC strategic focus on degree completion supports students beyond their initial year of enrollment through the achievement of their educational goals and propels the institution toward reaching its ambitious target. It also has enabled the institution to complete integral groundwork that will support sustained improvement as we seek to fulfill our commitment to WSCUC of improved completion rates.

High-Value Credentials with Marketable Skills

Offering high-value credentials with marketable skills means UAGC is committed to aligning offerings with current and future job market demands, effectively demonstrating that alignment to our students through course design, delivery, and instructor interaction and supporting student well-being by promoting confidence in what the future holds for them. This goal was recognized in the 2022 and 2023 UAGC Faculty Satisfaction Surveys as the goal faculty feel most able to contribute to, and substantial work is being done to achieve that goal.

- In Fall 2023, UAGC committed to onboarding Occupation Insight by Anthology, a product that brings together career, job, and skills data with an institution's programs and courses. When students have a clear connection between education and career, it increases their likelihood of feeling their education is worth the cost, earning a higher income, and achieving their goals. Occupation Insight supports UAGC's efforts to make these connections explicit. This work has

been incorporated into the more considerable technology effort to move to the cloud instance of Anthology Student and is still on the roadmap for 2024. More to come as this project kicks off!

- Throughout 2023 and 2024, faculty have engaged in opportunities, such as UAGC Faculty Community of Practice meetings and The Development Dish, to share examples of how they incorporate skill alignment and career insights or reflections into course content and discussions.
- In Spring 2024, UAGC Career Services obtained approval to develop a process for implementing a Next Destination Survey to gather insights into career trajectories of recent UAGC graduates. More commonly known at traditional universities as a 'First Destination Survey,' UAGC recognizes our diverse student body and the range of academic and professional pathways that may be pursued following degree completion. The Next Destination Survey is aptly named to acknowledge the unique point on their journey in which students obtain a UAGC degree. The first instance of the survey will launch in alignment with commencement weekend.

These efforts highlight UAGC's unwavering commitment to equipping students with valuable, market-aligned skills and fostering confidence in future career prospects, reflecting a shared dedication among faculty and staff to ensure students are prepared and confident in achieving their career goals.

Students' Economic Return

The pursuit of enhancing students' economic return reflects the institution's commitment to financial health, economic stability, and career mobility for our learners. UAGC has engaged in multiple initiatives that drive toward progress in this area.

- In February 2024, UAGC launched the Tuition Simplification initiative to reduce catalog tuition rates and strategically modify institutional grants and benefits.
- In May 2024, UAGC announced the launch of ResourceFULL, an initiative designed to reduce the costs of course materials while enhancing the quality of learning outcomes through a creative approach to the use of Library and Open & Affordable Educational Resources (OER).
- In collaboration with Delivery and Student Success, the UAGC data team designed an Economic Return dashboard to help leaders of functional areas better identify trends and opportunities with post-graduate economic outcomes. This dashboard provides data related to degree cost, median salary, and median earnings growth and can be disaggregated by program, degree level, and a range of demographics.

These efforts collectively underscore UAGC's dedication to ensuring that our students not only achieve academic success but also secure meaningful economic returns from their educational investments.

Looking Forward

As I reflect on our Critical Student Goals, I am filled with gratitude for the collective journey we've embarked upon. Together, we've delved into the essence of these goals, recognizing their significance

not only to our students but also to the fundamental aspirations of our institution. Your openness in engaging with these goals, sharing insights, and collaborating on strategies has been invaluable.

As we move forward, let us carry this spirit of collaboration, innovation, and dedication. Let's continue to explore new opportunities, adapt to evolving needs, and relentlessly pursue excellence in every facet of our work. Together, we will not only achieve our goals but exceed them, empowering our students to thrive and shaping a better future for all.

Send your thoughts to SuccessTogether@uagc.edu. I would love to hear about the commitment you are making to contribute to the success of our students and the achievement of our four critical student goals.

FACULTY COUNCIL | MEET OUR NEW FACULTY REPRESENTATIVES

Yvonne Lozano, Faculty Council Co-Chair, Assistant Dean, Department of Health Sciences

With great pleasure, I introduce the newly elected representatives who will serve as your voice in the Faculty Council and Subcommittees for the upcoming 24-25 academic year. I extend my heartfelt thanks to all faculty members who participated in the election process, as your active involvement is crucial to our shared governance and collaborative decision-making.

Learn more about the new Faculty Council members here.

The individuals elected demonstrate dedication and passion for our academic community and bring a wealth of experience and fresh perspectives that will undoubtedly drive positive change within our institution. With these newly elected representatives joining us, we are poised to continue our commitment to shared governance. Together, we can achieve great things!

Thank You For Your Service

I express my deep gratitude to our outgoing Faculty Council and Subcommittee representatives for their exemplary leadership, dedicated service, and commitment to our academic community. Your contributions have been invaluable, and we are grateful for the time and effort you have devoted to representing your colleagues and advocating for positive changes within our institution.

College of Arts and Sciences

- Department of Behavioral Sciences – Dr. Karen Williams-Associate Faculty Representative
- Department of Education and Liberal Arts - Dr. Kelly Olson-Stewart-Faculty Council Representative, Dr. Chris Sorensen, CASC Representative
- Department of Health Sciences - Dr. Avi Stein-Associate Faculty Council Representative, Dr. Mehrete Girmay-Associate Faculty Representative Curriculum and Assessment Steering Committee

Forbes School of Business and Technology®

- Department of Organizational Studies – Dr. James Moore- Faculty Council Representative, Frank Bucaria-Curriculum and Assessment Steering Committee
- Department of Professional Studies – Dr. Ron Beach - Faculty Council Representative, Dr Susan Gould-Curriculum and Assessment Steering Committee
- Department of Technology Studies - Jaclyn Krause - Faculty Council Representative, Dr Elisa Magill-Curriculum and Assessment Steering Committee
- Department of Advanced Management Studies - Dr. Peggy Sundstrom, Kelly Ihme
- School of General Studies - Dr. Tonya Mooney Faculty Council, Dr. Jean Insinga-Curriculum and Assessment Steering Committee

The Faculty Council would like to express their gratitude to all UAGC staff for their unwavering support and assistance to the Faculty Council and its subcommittees. Your dedication and hard work have been pivotal in ensuring our committees' smooth and effective functioning—a special thanks to Alysia (Aly) Spinoccia and Bryce McLenithan for their exceptional administrative support. Your professionalism, efficiency, and attention to detail have been the backbone of our achievements. The Faculty Affairs team has provided unwavering support, dedication, and expertise, which have been instrumental in facilitating the success of our initiatives and ensuring our support of all UAGC faculty. I want to give a special thank you to Teresa Kuruc and Haley Sampson for their support.

Looking ahead to the upcoming academic year, we are eager to continue our alliance and shared governance with UAGC; we aim to revisit diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at UAGC, prioritize faculty wellness, and foster a culture of care for our faculty members. Through these continued efforts, we are confident in strengthening our academic community and advancing the Faculty Council mission of shared governance by amplifying the faculty voice.

Onward and upward!

ASSOCIATE FACULTY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

Associate Faculty Engagement Committee

The results are in! You responded, and we are listening! 13% of Associate Faculty completed the Associate Faculty Engagement survey, which asked associate faculty to respond to questions related to communication preferences, resource awareness, and community creation. What is clear from the data is that associate faculty members want to hear from their team regularly, have accessible resources, and have opportunities to connect with colleagues. Now that we have heard from our associate faculty, the Associate Faculty Engagement Committee offers recommended best practices to improve communication and opportunities for engagement to develop consistent practices across the university. The results also garnered helpful feedback beyond the program level, which will help produce recommendations for the university.

FINDINGS

Communication Preferences

According to the data, Associate Faculty appreciate the following existing communications for emails and community groups:

- Regular emails and check-ins, as well as hearing positive feedback from program chairs and academic leadership.
- Having a department or program-specific Canvas resource room

As we understand the communication outreaches associate faculty appreciate, we also wanted to know the appropriate amount of contact. Many of the faculty who participated are satisfied with the current amount of contact, although it is unclear what the current level is for many of these responses. There was a wide range of responses to desired communication cadences, from as needed to weekly. However, it is evident that associate faculty members want to hear from their team regularly to ensure transparency.

Resource Awareness

Teaching Support

When asked about available teaching support resources, 88% of associate faculty who responded to the survey indicated they knew about the available resources and whom to contact for support. The analysis revealed that associate faculty usually contact their program chair since it is a quick way to start the request, but it can often delay resolving an issue. Also, there were some frustrations with getting help on the weekends or at night when many associate faculty are active in the classroom. However, two notable themes concerning frustrations were that finding a resource can be challenging at times, and accessibility or availability of the resource is limited.

Student Resources

78% of associate faculty who responded to the survey stated they know what student resources are available. The library and writing center were the most frequently mentioned resources in the responses. Other responses mentioned feeling overwhelmed with the number of resources and that having a reference sheet of available resources would be helpful. It is unclear if associate faculty know the resources beyond the library and writing center, such as the student advocate helpline, access and wellness, and career services.

Creating Community

The themes that stood out from faculty feedback on creating community include the recommendation that program chairs provide monthly asynchronous communication pertaining to organizational and program updates, course design changes, facilitate opportunities to connect with colleagues, and associate faculty recognition. Faculty sentiments expressed that consistent course scheduling and fair compensation are essential to the academic community. Associate faculty also seek to create community via mentorship opportunities that provide:

- collaboration and participation in decision-making
- pathways for career advancement within the university
- a space to connect, ask questions, and find resources, such as a Canvas Learning Community or synchronous program meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Associate Faculty Engagement Committee will submit a proposal to the Faculty Council with a recommendation that the committee craft a findings-based institutional guide to associate faculty engagement to effectively amplify the faculty's voice. The proposal will include guidance for strategies that ensure regular communication and provide faculty with convenient access to institutional, professional development activities. For example, the proposal will highlight two key resource repositories: FacultyHelp, located in the Canvas Help? menu, provides resources at the faculty's fingertips, and the Student Support Center, linked inside every course in the left-hand navigation for every course, provides student support resources that faculty can use to guide students appropriately.

Student Support Center
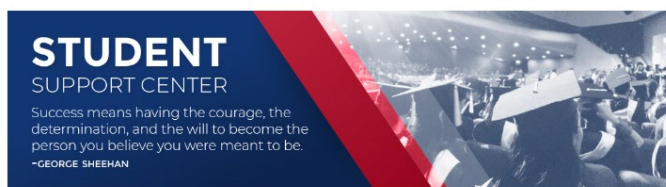
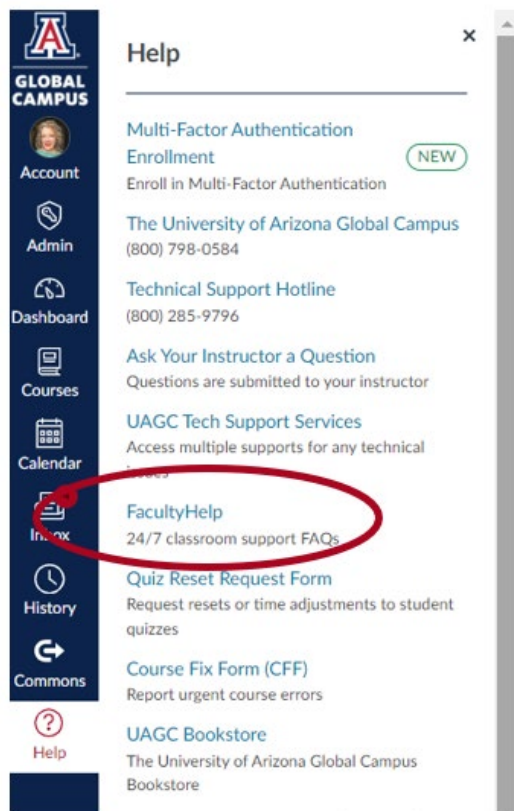As we move forward, we want to continually hear from you about how we can serve and engage our associate faculty. If you have questions, comments, or feedback, please contact Faculty Council Co-Chairs Dr. Cara Metz or Dr. Yvonne Lozano.

GEN 101 REVAMPED: EMPOWERING UAGC STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS

Teresa Leary Handy, Program Chair, School of General Studies; Connie Lower, Faculty, School of General Studies; James Bond, Faculty, School of General Studies

This article shares an update on the changes made to GEN 101, which is the entry point course for all UAGC students. The School of General Studies initially revised this course a little over a year ago after a unified College of Arts and Sciences and Forbes School of Business and Technology® decision to develop a joint General Education pathway that provides students with an empowering experience to allow them to imagine new possibilities for their personal and professional lives. GEN 101 is designed with the student experience at the core while allowing for active peer engagement and learning opportunities from former GEN 101 students. Kuh (2008) suggests the highest-quality first-year experiences strongly emphasize elements of critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. The GEN 101 instructional design prioritizes connecting students' academic experiences to real-world applications by creating a high-quality curriculum aligned with students' personal aspirations and future career paths. This approach aims to increase student retention by fostering a sense of purpose and relevance in their academic journey. The course's focus continues to support student success with a learning experience designed to engage and encourage students to persist.

GEN 101 Responds to Feedback

Leveraging data analysis of the end-of-course student data, faculty surveys, and course snapshot data provided by Assessment Specialist Renee Stuart, the GEN 101 team determined that the course uplift would focus on specific course learning outcomes to support the student learning experience. In response to this feedback, the GEN 101 team took the following actions:

Feedback	Response
Student data on week three assignments indicated that students continued needing assistance writing SMART goals.	A quiz was added that allows for iterative feedback from their instructor before the assignment is due to facilitate more substantial student outcomes with SMART goals.
Usage and assignment data indicated students were not completing the SMART goal interactive.	The SMART goals interactive was divided into separate academic and professional sections for ease of use.

Students and faculty report that the Starter kits have been instrumental in building foundation skills for the course.	A starter kit focusing on SMART goal development was added to week three.
The Student Support Center reported students had issues with the existing SWOT assignment template.	The SWOT Analysis template was reformatted with help from the technical team to improve student use.
Faculty requested resources to support their students	Student "HELP" boxes were added to each Weekly Overview page, allowing students to have direct assistance, and the resource was readily available for faculty. (see figure one)
Students reported that they did not like writing about challenging times in their past because it made them feel sad and disappointed.	The week two journal assignment prompt was revised to focus on students' strengths.
Address assessment observations and anecdotal data around the completion of the work and ease of use.	The UAGC Writing Center assisted with revising all templates.
Upon review of the assessment course snapshot data, the team discovered faculty were grading assignments using the rubric, but they were not using the established criterion.	Rubrics were updated to create a more substantial alignment with assignment requirements.
Course snapshot data determined that the final assignment did not adequately allow for student reflection.	The final assignment, the Personal Development Plan, was revised to include opportunities for student reflection, allowing for adequate assessment of student progress toward the learning outcome.
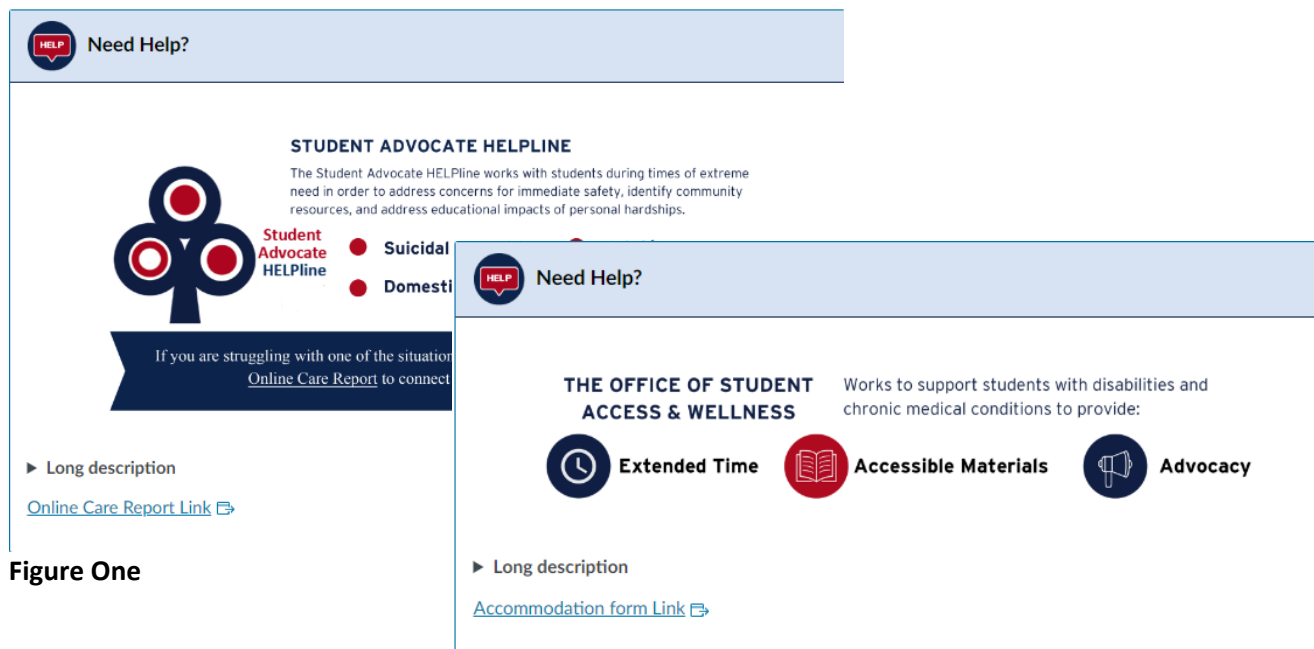
Figure One

Impact of Live Learning

Live Learning is an interactive session designed to engage students in a learning experience that will help them be more successful in the first UAGC online course. Student feedback drove the decision to add two more sessions to bring the total to six live learning sessions over six days, Monday – Saturday. During the Live Learning Zoom sessions, one instructor leads the lesson, which includes course subject content, assistance with student questions, and information on UAGC resources, and a second faculty member responds to students in the chat as needed. We initially had three faculty in the session and had plans for the third faculty to be prepared for 1:1 time in a breakout room with students, but we learned that students preferred asking questions in the group setting.

Students are required to attend live learning once during their five-week course. However, some students attend more than once and/or ask for the recording. Faculty make a recording available to students who cannot participate in live learning due to work and life conflicts. As students reflect on their final assignment, they share that the online experience helps them realize they are not alone and feel empowered to continue their course. Live learning was revised to add substantive content for the five weekly themes.

Summary of Weeks 1-5

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Starting the Journey	**Understanding Resources**	**Setting Goals**	**Cultivating Growth**	**Planning for Success**
• Students complete technology activities in a Starter Kit setting them up for success. • They complete a personal SWOT analysis and discuss the results • Students experience a time management interactive. .	• A second starter kit continues technology learning. • Personal growth is addressed through a discussion. • The Student Support Center resource is introduced. • Journal assignment focuses on developing a support network.	• In the Looking Ahead discussion, students will reflect upon their future career. • Students will explore the Writing Center and take a quiz. • A quiz on the SQ3R reading method will be taken. • Students will write their two SMART goals.	• Academic integrity will be addressed. • One discussion will focus upon growth mindset and grit through shared stories. • A second discussion will identify soft skills as aligned with career readiness. • Students will take and reflect upon the TypeFocus self-assessment as the assignment.	• Students will reflect upon their class experience in a Reflective Thinking discussion. • Reading Strategies information will lead to a quiz. • Students will complete their Personal Development Plan template.

Figure Two

In addition, a section on mindfulness and self-care to support student care was added to the Live Learning lesson in response to this need.

Unexpected Outcomes

The GEN 101 team never expected the Post Your Introduction discussion would garner so much meaning and purpose for the students and the instructors. Instructors report connecting with their students more and using the discussion responses as touchstones throughout the course. The sense of community develops quickly as students connect with other shared experiences in the class. Many students share that GEN 101 is the first time they have had time to reflect on personal and professional goals. Other students stated that they expected the course not to add value to their lives, but they surprisingly learned about tools they can use in the workplace. However, the access to student support services students share is helpful to them on their journey. For example, when a student recently experienced grief, the instructor directed them to the student help resources located on each overview page in the course.

Early and Often is Working!

As we shared in the original article, GEN 101 has a different cadence of work in the first two weeks to pro-actively engage students in developing the habit of incorporating college into their busy lives while also working on the ever-important time management skill of juggling work, school, and home. The course continues to run smoothly because of the many interdepartmental connections and scaffolded resources. First, there is a strong advising connection with embedded announcements that remind the

student to connect with their advisor. Next, the intentional connection to student resources such as CHAMPS (Collaborative, Holistic, Academic Mentoring for Peer Success) and Career Services has demonstrated an increase in student usage. Finally, the GEN 101 Faculty Community page continues to be the hub that provides faculty with required announcements, suggested announcements, discussion posts resources, and many other tools to support the GEN 101 student. The Culture of Care is woven throughout the course with the high-touch approach, the use of Signalz, and course rigor. Differentiated feedback is provided to students, encouraging them to make revisions when needed. Accommodation is also offered for students encountering impactful life events.

Next Steps for GEN 101

The GEN 101 team continues to look for ways to enhance the student experience. First, the team has just completed a University Fellows Program research study where they created UAGC-branded Open Educational Resources published and used each week of the course. Fifteen courses piloted the materials, and the instructor and students responded overwhelmingly positively. First, the materials were created in-house and branded UAGC, covering the weekly themes (see figure two) and content. Next, the materials were delivered in various modalities to meet the different learning styles. Finally, these materials are housed on the UAGC Hub page, a public-facing webpage allowing students to revisit them after their course ends. Faculty found that having additional resources created in-house helped students who needed more support. This summer, the GEN 101 team plans to record a series of podcasts and vodcasts to support student learning further. The goal continues to create an engaging, rigorous, and student-centric course. The GEN 101 team looks forward to using course and student evaluation data collected on GEN 101 in Power BI as the course progresses to guide faculty training and future course revisions.

References

Kuh, G. D. (2008). Excerpt from high-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. *Association of American Colleges and Universities*, *14*(3), 28-29.

BREAKING FREE FROM DISCUSSION FORUM FATIGUE – UAGC'S NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH YELLOWDIG

Cole McFarren, Associate Director, Academic Technology and Innovation
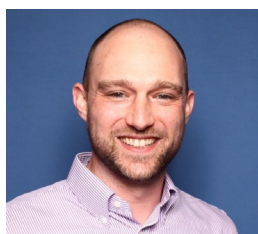
A lot has changed in the online higher education landscape since I began my career fourteen years ago. One aspect of the online classroom that has barely changed in all that time is discussion forums. And UAGC is not alone! Many other online institutions still ask students to post once on Thursday and reply to two peers over the weekend to replicate organic discourse in a physical classroom. Years of faculty survey engagement data reinforce the hypothesis that there are better ways to engage our students than our current discussion forum experience. Especially as we

explore ways to increase student success and persistence, improving or re-thinking the discussion forum experience is an opportunity to positively impact our students.

As Associate Director of Academic Technology and Innovation, part of my role within the university is understanding our learning ecosystem and its strengths and areas of opportunity. I'd been looking for years at alternative platforms to the discussion forum, and one that continually resurfaced is a platform called "Yellowdig." After arranging demonstrations with our academic leadership and IT teams, we agreed to enter a pilot program with Yellowdig to see how we can partner to enhance the UAGC student experience.

Yellowdig offers solutions to several shortcomings we currently face in the classroom:

- First, it offers students a variety of ways to engage with each other and content to earn their points for the week and display mastery as opposed to the old "post once, reply twice" formula. There are additional ways to react to content, like social media, and students are rewarded by crafting content that sparks more conversations.
- Yellowdig gamifies the discussion experience, as it offers points to earn and leaderboards to help learners track their progress in their course. The platform and prompts also allow students to drive the conversation by offering broader topics so they can talk about what interests them.
- Faculty similarly have more engagement methods available, like quickly uploading a recorded video.
- Students earn points throughout the learning week in Yellowdig, which could save faculty time by not having to assess discussions.

Our first courses with Yellowdig launched in February 2024, and we are currently offering Yellowdig in COM 200, ECE 101, BUS 308, and MGT 435. Our teams are currently in the process of scoping a second phase of the pilot with another course or set of courses to further determine impact.
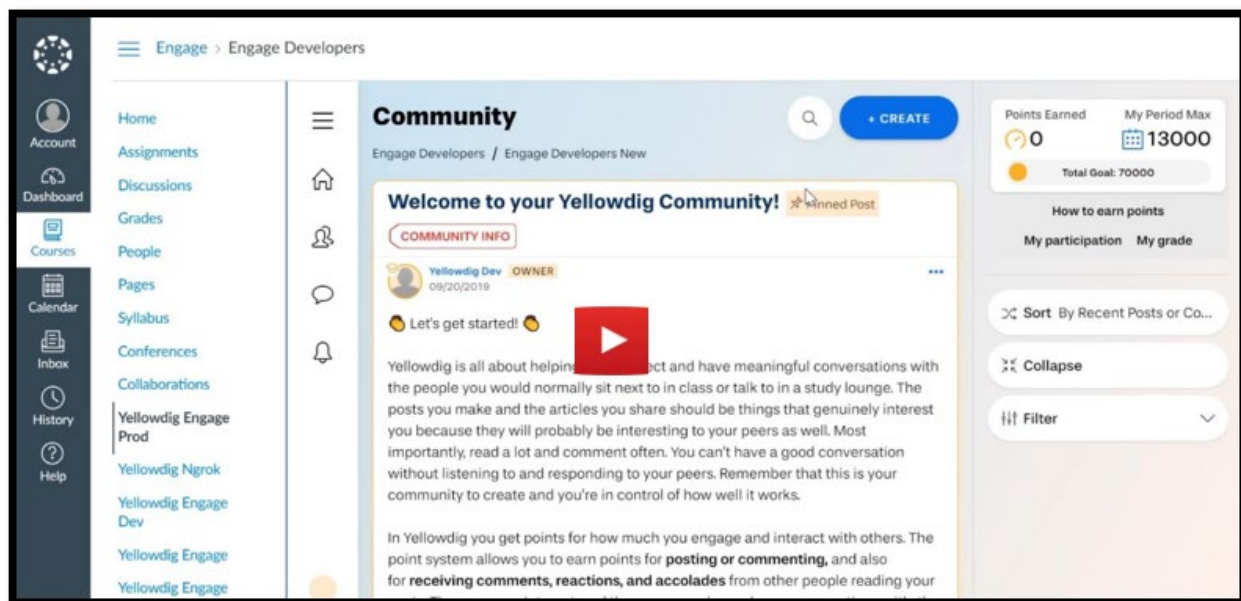
Testing new technologies in the classroom always comes with obstacles. One shortcoming of the current pilot is that Yellowdig is not fully integrated to trigger attendance, and students must rely on other classroom activities to meet attendance requirements. Part of the second phase of this project includes scoping the attendance trigger and determining how that integration could work on a larger scale in more courses before we potentially expand. We have also seen students a bit hesitant to adopt the new platform early in the course as they are so used to our current forums and expectations. Still, once they get in, students typically note a positive experience in survey feedback.

The Data and Analytics team and Office of Institutional Effectiveness are involved in analyzing student success and potential return on investment. My team closely tracks the end-of-course survey responses and course metrics available as soon as courses complete to ensure pass rates, GPA, and progression rates are maintained or hopefully positively impacted. We have also created a specific survey for faculty who have taught with Yellowdig and students who have participated in Yellowdig. So far, the student feedback is mainly positive. As of the writing of this article, 20% of the almost 1,500 UAGC students who have participated in a Yellowdig community have completed an end-of-course survey, which indicates

that the overall satisfaction rating is 4.42/5. Student sentiments and feedback about this new classroom technology and method of engagement say:

- *I really enjoyed using the YellowDig platform. I found it to offer better interactions with my peers versus using the class discussion posts. The social media look and feel also added a sense of comfortability when interacting with my peers. Overall, 10/10 experience! This should be available in all classes!!*
- *I really like this because it gives me the opportunity to discuss more than just one topic at a time.*
- *I enjoyed the Yellowdig community! I felt like it fostered more "real" engagement with peers than trying to hit minimum post requirements in traditional discussion forums.*
- *I found the interface easy to use. I feel it to be more robust and easier for personality to show in the discussions, than in the standard discussion format. It was an enjoyable experience.*
- *I really enjoyed this format! It was easy to use, and I felt like it was easier to engage with classmates. The points gave a fun incentive to post and respond. I don't want to go back to the old format. This was a fantastic experience.*

We look forward to sharing more results from this initiative as it progresses and determining what insights we can gather to improve our student experience. Review this short overview video: Learn Yellowdig in Under 3 Minutes

Screenshot of a Yellowdig community in a Canvas classroom courtesy of
https://support.yellowdig.co/hc/en-us/articles/14092259071252-Creating-an-Account-and-Joining-a-Yellowdig-Community

REFLECTIONS ON INCREASING STUDENT RETENTION BY DEMONSTRATING CARE IN THE ONLINE CLASSROOM

Bill Davis, Program Chair, Department of Organizational Studies; Sarah Korpi, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director, University of Wisconsin

It is the end of the academic year, a time of celebration for graduates and reflection for university employees. In the moments that follow the chaotic conclusion to courses and commencement for new graduates, we pause and think about how our instruction in the past course went. As we celebrate the successes of the past year and our most recent graduates, let us also take the time to consider some of the deltas – the moments when we noticed that something wasn't going as well as we had hoped or planned. These deltas can provide helpful insight into how we can adjust our courses or approach for the next cohort of learners as we engage in the critical work of iterative and ongoing improvement.

In our Spring 2023 *Chronicle* article, "Increasing Student Retention by Demonstrating Care in the Online Classroom," we shared that there is a myriad of reasons students may disengage from the online class. These reasons are often deeply personal and individual. It would be impossible for us as instructors to anticipate and mitigate these reasons during course design. However, you CAN positively impact student retention in your classroom, and you can do so by utilizing skills you have been building your entire life: caring for others and taking an interest in the lives of those around you. This increases perceptions of awareness, importance, and dependence.

Also, our 2023 article discussed the mattering theory and how impactful feelings noticed by, important to, and cared for by others could be (Rosenberg, 1985; Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). In the classroom, we explained when we increase student perceptions of awareness, importance, and dependence, we will likely form the types of connections with learners that result in them reaching out to us when things get difficult. We recommended several strategies for increasing student perceptions of awareness (greeting learners as they enter, publishing general weekly updates, emailing learners to encourage them to share something about their week with the class); importance (asking students how they are doing, requesting that students share a challenge and a success in a message board, thanking students for their contributions); and dependence (telling students we are looking forward to seeing them at the next live learning session or seeing their next discussion post, emailing to tell students that they are missed when absent, calling out how we as instructors benefit from our students insights).

An additional strategy that we have been working on this year is building high levels of psychological safety in the classroom. Psychological safety is an individual's perception of the workplace or other environment as safe for taking interpersonal risks, such as speaking up, expressing ideas, or asking questions without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career (Kahn, 1990). The

concept of psychological safety came out of the organizational science field more than a half-century ago (Schein & Bennis, 1965) and has flourished more recently as a topic of study in organizations. Scholars have identified organizational benefits such as increased performance (Baer & Frese, 2003; Schaubroeck et al., 2011) and engagement (Rich et al., 2010; Christian et al., 2011). Since classrooms are groups of people working toward a common goal and understanding (meeting the learning outcomes) under the direction of a leader (the instructor), it follows that the benefits of increased psychological safety in organizations and workplaces can also extend to our classrooms. Below, we outline ways we enhanced student retention and fostered a caring environment in our classrooms this past academic year.

In our roles at each of our institutions (Bill as faculty and Program Chair at UAGC and Sarah as Director of DEI and Learning Engineering at the University of Wisconsin), we encouraged associate faculty members and instructional staff to adopt practices that increase student perceptions of mattering and classroom psychological safety. These practices are in line with the UAGC Culture of Care pillars.

Practice 1: We aim to facilitate meaningful connections with the content to ensure knowledge transfer occurs. To achieve this, we incorporate learning tools, strategically using videos in discussion forums and interactive storyboards to enhance knowledge transfer.

The results from implementing this practice are as follows:

> Result [1]: We have observed increased student engagement and positive feedback about the various learning tools placed in the course (videos, infographics, storyboards). Students have commented that the content is relative, which helps students bridge the gap between theory and practice.

> Result [2]: We understand students' journey and goals by reading the students' responses in the Post Your Introduction forum and other forums. As outcomes, we have built further rapport and trust and understand each student's needs and learning styles more closely. Students tell us they appreciate our interest, which makes them more comfortable and increases their self-efficacy.

> Result [3]: Providing students with substantive feedback connected to the learning outcomes has improved student's understanding of the course content

Practice 2: Data analysis also plays a crucial role in our ongoing efforts to enhance student success throughout the course. We constantly leverage data and look for areas to improve the student experience. For example, by looking at student postings, time in course, and Signalz data, we can understand student performance and the influence and impact on the course learning outcomes.

The results from implementing this practice are as follows:

> Result [1]: More effective data analysis identified increased opportunities for timely coaching and suggestions for improvement. Student expressions of appreciation evidence this.

Result [2]: By reviewing the time spent in the course, we have identified and connected with students who may need to dedicate more time to the weekly tasks and provided suggestions for improvement. This opened dialogue with students about time management and incorporated the student's advisor if they needed additional resources.

Practice 3: The benefit of increased perceptions of psychological safety in the classroom is an increased willingness to make mistakes and take risks. We know as educators that making mistakes is a necessary part of learning. Taking risks might look like students reaching out for help or guidance. When faced with challenging situations, we embrace the role of leader coaches, proactively reaching out to students, providing mentoring, and offering coaching support. By leading with empathy and acting with compassion, we have observed better responses from students and increased their active participation. Additionally, we have established stronger connections by understanding students' experiences, goals, and learning styles.

The results from implementing this practice are as follows:

Result [1]: By being positive, modeling consistency, and engaging students in the forums through Signalz, email, invites to video meetings, and phone calls, we show we care and want them to have the best learning experience possible. We observed students exude increased confidence, which led to increased initiative in the course and improved student self-efficacy.

Result [2]: Many students will request one-on-one meetings with us and ask for career advice or letters of recommendation.

Result [3]: Improved grade point averages, increased indicators of student motivation, and higher participation with their peers in the course.

By demonstrating that we are committed educators who genuinely care about their growth, we establish a foundation of trust and support, increasing students' feelings of psychological safety in our courses. Overall, we are proud of our progress in implementing the strategies outlined in this article. By consistently applying these principles and actively engaging with our students, we create an environment that fosters student success and well-being.
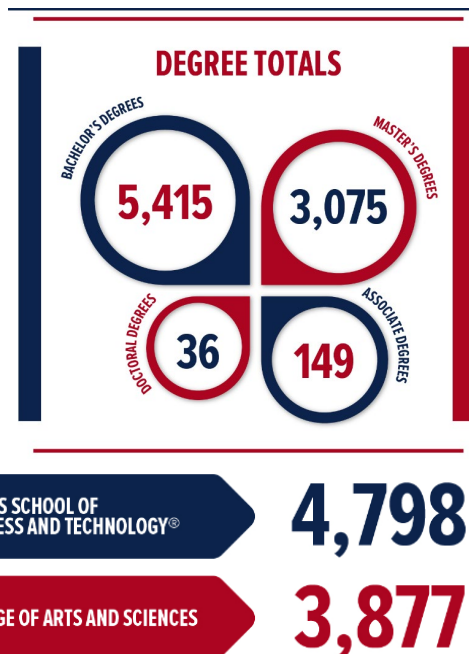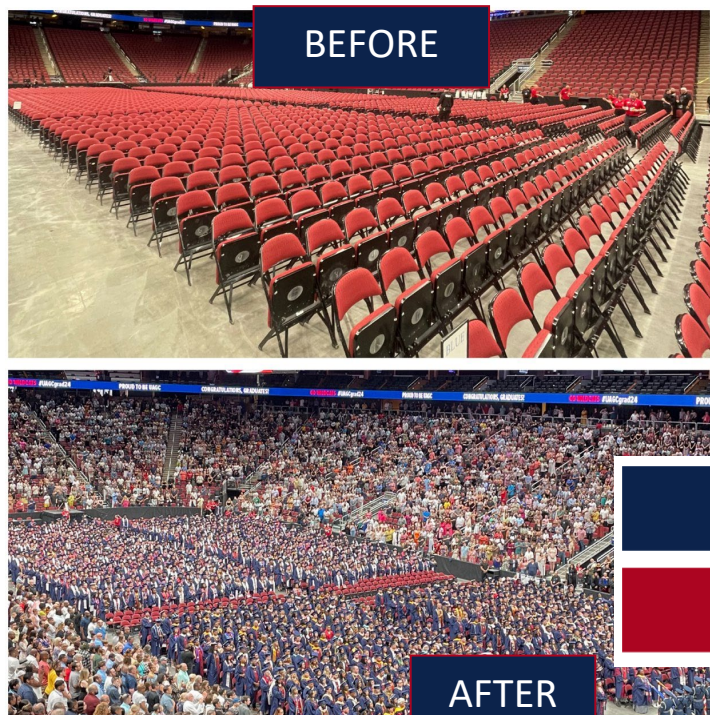
Together, we can continue to impact student retention and success positively.

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SPRING 2024 COMMENCEMENT

BEFORE

AFTER

DEGREE TOTALS

BACHELOR'S DEGREES 5,415

MASTER'S DEGREES 3,075

DOCTORAL DEGREES 36

ASSOCIATE DEGREES 149

FORBES SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY® 4,798

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES 3,877

The Spring 2024 Commencement was a milestone celebration - 1706 graduates walked across the stage with approximately 11,000 friends, family, and loved ones cheering on their grad - making this the highest-attended commencement ceremony! The ceremony recognized 8,675 graduates, many of whom attended virtually. The ceremony featured a keynote address from Regent C. Mata, Chair of the Arizona Board of Regents, who shared her personal story and educational journey.

The Class of 2024 is a diverse group of students aged 19-76. Our graduates live in all 50 states: American Samoa, Canada, Germany, Guam, Japan, Puerto Rico, The Republic of Korea, Thailand, The United Kingdom, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Throughout the weekend, students attended the UAGC Career Fair and Honor Society ceremonies, took pictures with UAGC leadership, met the UAGC faculty, decorated their graduation cap, and more!

Thirty doctoral graduates, supported by 150 family members and friends, attended the Doctoral Hooding ceremony. The following doctoral graduates were recognized for their exemplary projects. These projects are accessible via the UAGC Library.

Distinguished Doctoral Project Awards

Distinguished Dissertation 2024	Distinguished Applied Doctoral Project 2023	Doctoral Project Most Likely to Have a Social Impact
Dr. Catherine F. Vall, Ph.D. Dissertation: An Analysis of Employee Feedback Orientation: A Comparative Cross-Sectional Study Across Generational Cohort, Gender, Ethnicity/Race and Preferred Language (2023)	Dr. Janá Pitts, Psy.D Project Title: Fear-Less Front Man: A Digital Self-Help Evidence-Based Music Performance Anxiety Training Manual for Vocalists Between the Ages of 18 and 25 (2023)	Dr. Amanda Blodgett, Ph.D Dissertation: A Case Study of Rural Primary Care Providers' Experience with Telehealth (2024)

Thank you to all the faculty who attended, including our associate faculty, who supported the doctoral hooding and the commencement ceremony. Commencement is supported by an incredible volunteer cadre of staff – high five to you all for delivering an unforgettable experience.

Watch the ceremony here.
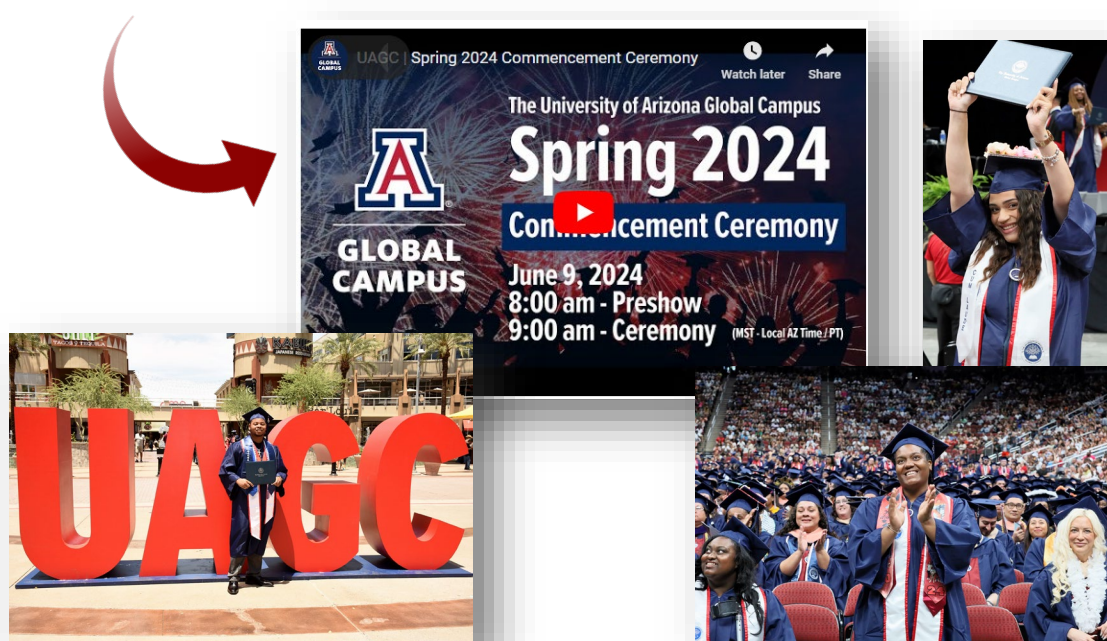
UAGC 2024 TEACHING AND LEARNING CONFERENCE: WHERE ARE MY KEYS? UNLOCKING BELONGING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Under the engaging theme "**Where are My Keys? Unlocking Belonging in Higher Education**," the 10th annual UAGC Teaching and Learning Conference (TLC) aims to explore the intricate role of belonging within educational environments and its pivotal influence on fostering vibrant, inclusive learning communities. UAGC invites proposals by **July 31, 2024**, from individuals across all levels and disciplines within the academic community who are eager to contribute to this vibrant discourse on belonging and its critical role in shaping the future of education.

When we bravely pursue learning, we often find ourselves in new communities that challenge us to achieve new levels of competence and mastery. By seeking broader and deeper understandings of belonging, TLC will help us in higher education identify, develop, and sustain the relationships that positively impact the developmental experience to relentlessly explore new approaches, research, and expand one's perspective - all key to the learning process.

"As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of our Teaching and Learning Conference, we're reminded of the transformative power of belonging in education," said Gary Packard, interim senior vice provost of Online Initiatives at the University of Arizona. "This year's theme challenges us to unlock the potential in every student, faculty, and staff member by creating environments where everyone feels valued and connected. I look forward to the innovative ideas and discussions this conference will undoubtedly generate."

If you are unfamiliar with the UAGC Teaching and Learning Conference, this free virtual conference connects, educates, and inspires faculty, staff, researchers, and students by offering a platform for them to share their work. Whether you're an experienced presenter or new to the conference scene, TLC provides a supportive environment equipped with mentorship, resources, and guidance to help you effectively communicate your ideas and research. In the past, TLC has hosted over 800 attendees from a wide range of disciplines, offering opportunities for professional growth, networking, and collaborative exploration.

The 2024 TLC invites educators, researchers, and learners to contribute their insights into how belonging, a fundamental aspect of the educational experience, can be cultivated and nurtured across diverse academic settings. The conference seeks proposals that explore the various dimensions of belonging, addressing its significance for students, faculty, and staff and outlining innovative strategies to enhance inclusivity and engagement within higher education.

Become A Teaching and Learning Conference Volunteer

TLC Ambassador | Proposal Reviewer | Conference Session Tech Host | Conference Session Host

VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION

TLC Think Tank Sessions - June 28, and July 15. Register here and attend to discuss, ideate about, and get feedback on your conference proposal. Think Tanks are a unique opportunity to engage with the TLC community with the aim of evolving your proposal ideas. Attend a think tank session to take those ideas to the next level!

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.

2024/2025 ANNUAL FACULTY COURSE – SUBSTANTIVE FEEDBACK

Kate Johnson, Associate Director of Faculty Development, Faculty Affairs

Culture of Care	→	Philosophy of Teaching	→	Substantive Feedback
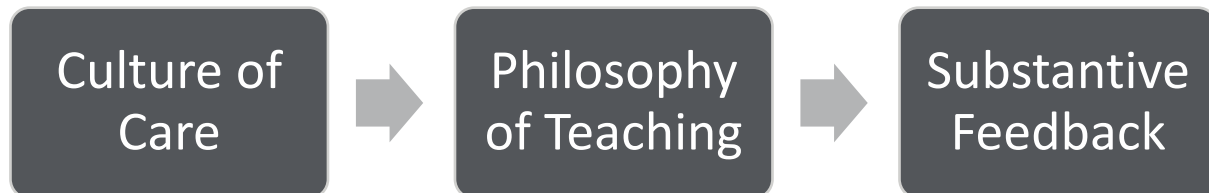
Evolving in any kind of practice takes time, reflection, intention, and planning. Teaching is no different, and Faculty Affairs is here to facilitate the evolution of teaching practice at UAGC by providing intentional opportunities, like an annual faculty development course, to reflect and plan.

The 2024-2025 Annual Faculty Course addresses ways to deliver substantive feedback to students and responds to ongoing discourse among UAGC faculty, staff, and students about how a Culture of Care is tangible in the classroom. In 2022-2023, we addressed the Culture of Care through the lens of specific policies and processes that can support student success. Our 2023-2024 learning and reflection expanded that lens beyond operations to instructional decision-making, specifically how defining our beliefs about how teaching and learning happens – key elements of a teaching philosophy – can give us a clear sense of purpose and curiosity that inform our caring instructional decisions. This academic year's course, which launches in July, offers a pathway for putting that philosophy into practice in substantive feedback on student work.

During the last half of the 2023-2024 academic year, Faculty Affairs facilitated a cross-college, cross-departmental reflective series that prompted us to consider our feedback practices in the context of the US Department of Education's definitions of substantive interaction. UAGC faculty and staff have been discussing, questioning, reimagining, and crafting what *substantive* looks like in our classrooms. As the discussion of substantive began, it was clear that many educators looked to substantive as a derivative

of substantial – indicating the amount of feedback offered to be reflective of its efficacy. Much of what the Department asks, and what this course conveys, is that substantive has far less to do with the amount a faculty member writes to a student and far more to do with how the faculty member is assessing student competence with the learning objectives and using that information to guide student progress toward the Course Learning Objectives (CLOs).

To that end, the course prompts a focus on the quality of feedback as an evidence-based practice (Cáceres et al., 2019; Dawson et al., 2018). To accomplish that, it focuses on four primary goals:

1. Describe the role that CLOs play in designing and developing the curriculum within a course.
2. Illustrate how task location within a course helps determine how feedback is offered.
3. Explain how to assess what a student is showing they can do and use that knowledge to determine the next step in their progress toward the CLOs.
4. Offer ways to provide feedback that 1) synthesizes the information in the first three goals and 2) favors scaffolded guidance to further students' progress toward the CLOs.

In summary, UAGC faculty and staff collectively have embarked on a journey of intentional evolution in instructional practice. We embrace creative, critical thinking, and instructional agency by leveraging education theories and practices like the Zone of Proximal Development, scaffolding, and schemas. This progression also supports our continued efforts to meet regulatory expectations for instruction. In this way, UAGC is laying a path for faculty to create substantive feedback, thereby supporting the intentional evolution of the institution's pedagogical approach.

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COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: YEAR IN REVIEW

Amy Erickson, Lead Faculty Coach and Development Specialist, Faculty Affairs

For the past year, faculty and staff have assembled virtually to participate in the UAGC Community of Practice webinars. These webinars were dedicated to discussing various themes in the 2023/2024 Annual Faculty Curriculum (AFC). The AFC leverages a teaching philosophy to enhance student success and encourages faculty to thoughtfully examine their beliefs about teaching and learning. The Community of Practice provided a space where faculty and staff could share research about various elements of a teaching philosophy and discuss and co-create statements for their teaching philosophy.

Why is this important? Research has shown that instructors with a well-articulated teaching philosophy are more effective in the classroom (Laundon et al., 2020; Beatty et al., 2009). Crafting a teaching philosophy prompts instructors to reflect on various learning theories, consider best practices, incorporate current research related to teaching and learning, and evaluate their current teaching practices. Once the teaching philosophy is created, the work is not finished! Revisiting one's teaching philosophy and considering new information and experiences allows instructors to continually evolve their teaching practices.

By now, Community of Practice attendees likely have a one- to two-page document outlining their teaching philosophy, fortified by current research on learning theory, cognitive neuroscience, best practices, and their personal experiences as an instructor and student. Going forward, faculty will be asked to share their teaching philosophy in Canvas, either as part of their instructor profile or as an announcement.

To help you put the finishing touches on your teaching philosophy, consider this recap of this year's sessions, organized to allow you to explore specific topics in greater depth. If you were unable to attend the monthly Community of Practice webinars or would like to view or revisit any of the content, you can find recordings chronologically on SharePoint. If you have not yet completed the 2023/2024 Annual Faculty Curriculum, you can access it on Workday.

Understanding What Goes into a Teaching Philosophy

In the **July** 2023 webinar, we discussed aspects that comprise a teaching philosophy and noted that a teaching philosophy should be a living document that requires updates and even revision. We talked about how books, articles, conferences, and podcasts could inspire elements of one's teaching philosophy. A valuable place to start, it allowed faculty to consider the merit of their beliefs and experiences surrounding learning. Were these beliefs grounded in learning theory, research, and best practices? Or were these beliefs related to the instructor's personal experience in the classroom?

Understandably, many faculty members have not studied learning theory, as it is outside their professional scope. Knowing that learning theory may be new to some but also an important part of one's teaching philosophy, we explored a few learning theories. In our **August** webinar, we discussed attributes of constructivism, cognitivism, social learning theory, and cognitive load theory and how one does not need to adhere to only one learning theory. A teaching philosophy should demonstrate an understanding of learning theory (or multiple learning theories) because it will provide instructors with more tools for their toolbox, which benefits a diverse group of students. Instructors whose teaching philosophies discussed inclusivity recognized that familiarity with multiple learning theories helped them create inclusive classrooms.

Using a Teaching Philosophy to Guide Intellectual Engagement

Over the past year, UAGC faculty and staff brought lessons from the AFC to life. In September, Dr. Chris Foster, who oversees philosophy courses in our general education curriculum, and philosophy

instructors Dr. James Stieb and Dr. Jordan Seidel led breakout rooms in a robust discussion of how and why one could make the Socratic method part of one's teaching philosophy. We learned how Socratic method helped students (and faculty!) identify assumptions and question beliefs related to course material. Student Affairs Program Manager Matt Phillips shared a slightly different angle in May when he tackled intellectual engagement, metacognition, and critical thinking in the classroom. Both sessions reminded us how a teaching philosophy can guide an instructor to engage in more thoughtful student interactions and help students to critically evaluate materials.

Examining How Course Structure Influences a Teaching Philosophy

Course maps and learning outcomes are important tools for an instructor, and both help to guide course facilitation. How an instructor uses the course structure is a valuable element of one's teaching philosophy. In **October**, we examined how knowing the skills students need to demonstrate by the conclusion of the course helps instructors focus interaction and influences the type of feedback given, the resources shared, and decisions about the material to highlight in class discussions and announcements. In **December**, we revisited the importance of understanding a course's structure and how that awareness enhances one's teaching philosophy. For example, suppose an instructor embraces elements of cognitive load theory. In that case, that instructor will probably carefully align and scaffold feedback according to the course map to not overwhelm a student's working memory.

Infusing Your Teaching Philosophy with the Culture of Care

Throughout the past year, many instructors noted how important it was to incorporate their desire to help students into their teaching philosophies. In **January**, we discussed how weaving the Culture of Care into one's teaching philosophy can benefit both instructors and students. Institutional data revealed that the Culture of Care improved student retention, persistence, and student outcomes. Similarly, in **February**, associate professor Dr. Stephanie Heald-Fisher reminded us that nearly 90% of UAGC students are adults who are likely juggling multiple responsibilities. Dr. Heald-Fisher noted the importance of incorporating flexibility into one's teaching philosophy and shared strategies to streamline communication with students and guidelines for students requesting incompletes. We also looked at the data related to the number of incompletes requested and the number of passing grades that resulted from those incompletes. Having a flexible, caring element to one's teaching philosophy made it easier for instructors to make decisions surrounding late work, incompletes, and course extensions.

Using a Teaching Philosophy to Address Challenging Behaviors

Sometimes, students engage in regrettable behaviors in the online classroom. Our March discussion started by looking at possible reasons why students cheat. Academic Quality Services Manager Alaina Pascarella discussed academic integrity and how our beliefs about this important topic influence our teaching philosophy. We learned about the six fundamental values of academic integrity adopted by the International Center for Academic Integrity (2021): honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage. Associate professor Dr. Rob Shah outlined how his teaching philosophy helped him effectively manage issues related to academic integrity.

In April, we revisited possible causes of challenging classroom behaviors in relation to the UAGC population. Stress, microaggressions, racism, economics, disparities in health care, and essential worker status can all contribute to student stress and classroom challenges. Assistant professor Dr. James Bond showcased how his teaching philosophy demonstrated an understanding of UAGC student stressors and how that helped him navigate challenging classroom behavior.

Looking Ahead

The 2024/2025 Community of Practice sessions will align with the 2024/2025 Annual Faculty Curriculum and focus on the work of learning theorists Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner and their work on the zone of proximal development and scaffolding, respectively. These upcoming Community of Practice sessions will be delivered asynchronously to better meet our faculty's needs. Please keep an eye on the Community of Practice Teams page and the Faculty Digest for information on future sessions, knowing that you can review each session according to your schedule. I offer heartfelt thanks to our guest stars, the Faculty Affairs team, administrators, faculty, and staff who provided rich discussion this past year.

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BUILDING ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

WHY CURRENT AFFAIRS AND ECONOMICS BELONG IN THE CLASSROOM

Robin Dhakal, Faculty, Department of Professional Studies

Faculty often encounter students who ask, "Why do I need to learn this? What does it have to do with anything?" These questions, often posed in frustration, highlight the importance of bridging the gap between classroom learning and the ever-evolving world. Students who struggle to see a connection will be less engaged in their coursework and, thus, less likely to succeed in their programs. In my experience as an economics faculty member for the past ten years, I have found that integrating current affairs and economic news helps students understand the relevance of their learning, creating a dynamic, vibrant environment where students not

only grasp the concepts but also develop critical thinking skills essential for becoming informed and engaged citizens.

Our university's critical student goals are to:

- retain students during their first year of enrollment,
- support completion of programs and educational goals driven by student-based timelines,
- offer high-value credentials with marketable skills and
- enhance students' economic return.

We, as faculty, can help make significant progress toward achieving these goals by incorporating economics and current affairs into our classrooms.

Retain Students

Students often struggle to remain motivated when they do not see the relevance of their studies to real-world scenarios. By integrating current affairs and economics into the curriculum, we can demonstrate the practical applications of their learning. This is particularly critical during the first year of enrollment when retention rates are most vulnerable. For example, discussing contemporary economic issues like the impact of inflation on daily living expenses can resonate deeply with students. They can immediately see how economic principles explain phenomena they encounter in their personal lives, such as rising grocery prices or fluctuating gas costs.

When students engage with current events, they are empowered to participate more actively in class discussions, creating a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. For example, students can use recent news articles to bring fresh perspectives and real-world examples to their discussion posts. This not only enriches their understanding of the subject matter but also helps them develop critical thinking skills. Students' increased engagement can lead to higher retention rates as students feel more connected to their education and more invested in their success.

Support Completion of Programs

Completion of degree programs is closely tied to students' ability to navigate and manage their personal and professional lives alongside their academic responsibilities. A good grasp of economics and current affairs can equip students to make more informed decisions in their everyday lives, contributing to their overall academic success and persistence in their programs. For instance, understanding economic trends and policies, as well as topics such as interest rates, loan repayment, and investment strategies, can help students manage their finances more effectively and make better financial decisions, reducing stress and allowing them to focus on their studies.

Moreover, staying informed about current affairs enables students to anticipate and adapt to changes in their personal and professional environments. This adaptability is crucial for adult learners who balance education with other commitments. By staying informed, students can identify emerging trends in their field of study and align their learning with their educational goals to meet future demands. For instance, a business student who keeps up with economic news may better understand market fluctuations and

be more adept at financial planning. Similarly, a healthcare student who follows medical advancements can implement the latest best practices in patient care. This proactive engagement with current events not only enriches their education but also positions them as knowledgeable, forward-thinking professionals. Ultimately, staying informed supports their educational goals and facilitates their progress toward program completion.

Offer Marketable Skills

Incorporating economics and current affairs into the curriculum equips students with practical knowledge and skills that are highly valued in the job market. Employers seek individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also capable of analyzing and responding to complex, real-world problems.

Students develop critical thinking and analytical skills by engaging with current economic issues and trends. For example, analyzing the economic impact of global events like the Russia-Ukraine conflict helps students understand how international relations and economic policies influence business operations and market dynamics. This understanding is applicable in various fields, from business and finance to public policy and international relations. Furthermore, as students dissect news stories, evaluate sources, and consider multiple viewpoints, they become adept at distinguishing fact from opinion and identifying bias. These skills are invaluable in both academic research and everyday decision-making.

Additionally, discussing current events fosters a broader global awareness, making students adaptable, culturally competent, and empathetic. Exposure to diverse perspectives not only enriches their technical knowledge but also cultivates a sense of global citizenship and respect for differing opinions. These soft skills—adaptability, cultural competence, and empathy—are crucial in today's globalized job market, preparing students for diverse work environments and to contribute thoughtfully to society. By integrating these discussions into the curriculum, we can equip students with a strong foundation in both technical knowledge and the ability to thrive in an interconnected world.

Enhance Economic Return

Incorporating current affairs into our courses significantly boosts students' economic return by providing them with timely insights and practical skills that are directly applicable in today's dynamic job market. Understanding economic trends and their impacts across various sectors allows students to tailor their learning to the evolving job market and helps them make informed career choices that align with market demands. This adaptability positions them as forward-thinking professionals, enhancing their earning potential and career advancement opportunities.

Moreover, by staying updated with real-time developments, students can anticipate future industry shifts and strategically plan their careers. This proactive engagement with current affairs not only enriches their educational experience but also equips them with a competitive edge, making them more attractive to employers and better prepared for long-term financial success, thereby maximizing the economic returns from their education.

What Can You Do?

If you're interested in getting started, a wealth of online resources are available to help you integrate current events into your curriculum. National organizations like the News Literacy Project provide lesson plans, activities, and professional development opportunities specifically designed for educators. Additionally, many news outlets offer educational materials and teacher guides tied to current events. Whether you teach business, history, science, language, or arts, incorporating current events can make your courses more engaging and relevant. For example, using recent scientific discoveries can spark curiosity in a biology class, while discussing political developments can foster critical thinking in a civics course.

To further enrich your curriculum, consider inviting guest speakers or organizing virtual field trips. Journalists, scientists, and other professionals can offer firsthand insights that textbooks may not provide. Another effective strategy is to encourage students to explore diverse news sources, helping them understand different perspectives and develop media literacy skills.

Remember, the goal is not just to keep students informed but to empower them to become thoughtful, informed citizens who can navigate the complexities of the modern world with confidence and discernment. Start small, perhaps by dedicating a portion of your class time to discuss a recent news story or economic indicator. The possibilities are endless, and the rewards for both students and faculty are significant.

ONE-CLICK CARING: A HIGH-RETURN INVESTMENT IN STUDENT OUTREACH

Mark Metzger, Associate Faculty, Department of Health Sciences

Proactive outreach to students is vital for enhancing student engagement and addressing challenges affecting their academic performance. Because students may not always feel comfortable reaching out on their own, educators must initiate supportive communication. "One-Click Caring" is about maximizing the technology available in the classroom to proactively engage with our students.

Genuine Connections

During my teaching experience, I have found that most struggling students do not reach out for assistance. Unfortunately, the first hint of a struggling student is missing, late, or incomplete assignments. To identify students with struggles sooner we need to engage with them more relationally sooner. In introducing "One-Click Caring," we recognize the value of simple, low-effort gestures that yield substantial returns in student engagement. An example includes individually emailing each student after the second week of the class, using "one-click" by hitting the send button, and asking the following simple question: "How are you doing?" This personal touch fosters rapport and encourages students to share their concerns.

I have been amazed at the response rate and information gleaned from this simple outreach from both struggling and non-struggling students alike. Response rates from students are over 50% and elicit genuine, appreciative responses. More importantly, the outreaches provide students an opportunity to articulate previously unacknowledged challenges they might be having in completing their coursework.

I, too, am a dedicated student and can speak from personal experience. Embracing the ethos of lifelong learning, I am currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in History. Despite considering myself a seasoned and self-motivated learner, I have also experienced thoughtful faculty outreach at different junctures during my courses. Their simple email inquiries about my well-being were not only appreciated but also underscored the genuine care exhibited by the instructors. This has reinforced my belief in the importance of fostering such connections with our students within the classroom.

Routine, Yet Transactional Engagement

As faculty, we engage with students through various channels, such as:

- announcements,
- discussion board posts,
- assignment evaluations, and
- email responses to student questions.

Although faculty engagement with students may occur several times each week during a course, these interactions may not inherently convey a sense of genuine care due to their transactional nature.

Importance of the Culture of Care

In fostering a Culture of Care, it is essential to recognize that our students face distinct challenges in their educational journey. From my experience, real-world challenges our students face outside of the classroom include family, health, and work-related issues that negatively impact their coursework. Neglecting these student challenges may lead to decreased enrollment and higher attrition rates, hence emphasizing the need for supportive faculty interventions (Macdonald, 2018). Shatila (2024) examined the relationship between social connection and academic perseverance and found that enhancing social connections with students can significantly contribute to program completion rates and long-term academic success among students. This research highlights the importance of the relational aspects of student-teacher engagement in the classroom.

Call to Action

While conventional forms of engagement are essential, they may lack the depth of social interaction necessary for student support. Investing in initiatives like "One-Click Caring" demonstrates genuine care and yields more meaningful student responses, contributing to a supportive learning environment. For some of our students, the positive, caring, and supportive comments that we, as faculty, offer might be some of the only positive and constructive feedback they receive on a regular and recurring basis.

I encourage all faculty to integrate "One-Click Caring" into their classroom management strategies, aiming to reach out to each student individually at least once during the early weeks of each course. This

simple yet impactful action can elicit valuable insights into students' challenges and pave the way for effective support, intervention, and successful course completion.

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IGNITING INNOVATION: STRATEGIES FOR FACULTY / AI COLLABORATION

Nathan Pritts, Program Chair, School of General Studies

The landscape of higher education is undergoing a remarkable transformation, driven by the infusion of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. From adaptive learning systems that have the potential to personalize the student experience to chatbots that provide round-the-clock support, AI is reshaping traditional educational practices in remarkable ways.

As a result, we, as faculty members, are witnessing a profound shift in our roles, whether we are ready or not! We are dealing with a rapidly changing technology, one that advances beyond any roadmap we might be trying to develop. But still the potential is there to revolutionize the way we teach, conduct research, and engage with students. I'm willing to risk that everything I say here will be out of date by the time you read it in an effort to address the evolving role of faculty members in the context of AI integration. In doing so, I'll attempt to itemize a few practical strategies for effective collaboration to help with learning the strengths and limits of this tool.

Explore AI for Innovation

The first step in figuring out how we can productively work with AI is to simply get comfortable with the possibilities. By exploring the potential of AI-driven technologies, we set ourselves up to better determine how to leverage them in our daily work. Faculty members can start by experimenting with AI-powered tools and platforms, playing around to figure out how they work. Dr. Lane Andrew, one of my colleagues in the School of General Studies n(SGS), shared that using AI is a lot like learning how to search in Google. If you enter a poor-quality phrase or set of keywords, Google will give you millions of results that you have to sort through, that are worthless. But if you become clever at what to enter into Google, the first search results will be exactly what you want, saving time and giving you the correct

information. His experience indicates that while there may be a steep on-ramp, the results can get better. Fast. He says, "The more I work with AI, the more it's like you learn how it thinks, how to speak to it, and its limitations. It becomes your assistant. But it's only as good as the commands you give it."

Model Appropriate Use

Once you become more familiar with the various platforms, you can start to explore ways you can partner with generative AI in your work. I believe we need to prioritize the human things we do in our work and the classroom using our voice, our experience, and our compassion, all of which can lead to high-touch engagement and meaningful interactions. But since we know our students are already using gen AI in their work, it's up to us to help demonstrate a more ethical and productive way to partner with this technology.

Dr. Susan Luck, associate faculty in SGS, shared some experiences that back this up. She asked students to use AI to provide feedback on their essays and then conduct a summary analysis of their reactions to the feedback. But Dr. Luck said she was most struck by "all the different forms of feedback they received." She said "Nuance in wording a prompt changed the output format and content"—another indicator that practice and iterative experience might lead to AI becoming an even more powerful tool. Asking students to interrogate AI output is an important way to help them develop critical thinking skills while building AI literacy. Also, it helps us as educators ensure that the required outcomes and competencies are met.

Share for Mutual Success

I also think it's important to talk about what you're doing. This article is one example of that! Examples of successful AI integration can serve as inspiration, guiding faculty members through potential challenges and resistance. Another SGS colleague, Dr. Dan Tinianow, gave a talk at our recent Culture of Care Summit called "Using AI To Create Guided Visualization." In it, he models using AI-powered tools to develop guided meditations, and his steps in the process provide a good model. His presentation walks through specific strategies leading to a solution, but it does so by explaining the rationale for choosing between the many different AI-enabled platforms for image and audio creation. This metacognitive, exploratory process is the best model any of us could apply to our own search for deeper AI literacy. Dr. Tinianow's monthly Teachnology 101 sessions are a great launchpad for thinking about further integrations. Click here to drop him a line to wrangle an invite!

Of course, it's not all about using AI-driven technologies in our work as faculty. There are deeper considerations we need to account for as well. Working with AI-driven technologies means considering ethical implications that may perpetuate bias or inequality. Ensuring that AI education and training programs prioritize the development of critical thinking skills and ethical decision-making rather than just technical proficiency is crucial. As you navigate AI-powered tools and platforms, it's essential to remain mindful. By actively engaging with AI tools and platforms while upholding ethical standards, we

can harness the full potential of AI to enrich the educational experience for themselves and their students.

Faculty can no longer view AI as just another tool. These intelligent systems have unique strengths that, harnessed properly, can revolutionize teaching and research. But, embracing AI requires a commitment to ethical, responsible usage while maintaining human oversight. And we have a crucial role to play in ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability as AI becomes embedded in higher ed. If we don't proactively ensure these AI systems serve all students equitably, we'll only perpetuate higher ed's longstanding inequities. Cultivating a mindset of collaboration and partnership between humans and AI systems is paramount. Establishing clear roles and responsibilities ensures that both faculty members and AI technologies work synergistically to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. The transformation is already happening. But the power to shape it intentionally lies with innovative, forward-thinking faculty.

SUMMER READING LIST

School of General Studies Faculty

The days of summer invite us to pack a bag with sunscreen, plenty of water, snacks, and, of course, a great book. To help fill your bag with great reads this summer, here is a list of favorite books recommended by some avid readers in the School of General Studies.
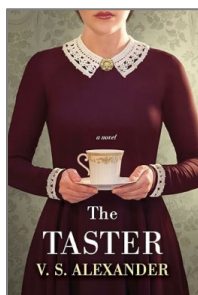

***The Taster*** - V.S Alexander

"Engrossing storytelling that drew me into the Führer's inner circle in his Bavarian mountain retreat. Drama, intrigue, and suspense are born from solid historical research. Such a unique perspective!" **-** Recommended by Joan Burkhardt

Napolean's Buttons - Jay Burreson and Penny LeCouteur

Napoleon's Button's is a relatively easy introduction to how different molecular compounds have impacted history. Outside of its speculation on ergotism and witchcraft accusations, it is really solid from both a scientific and social perspective." - Recommended by Matthew Laubacher
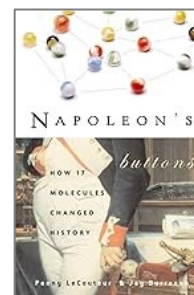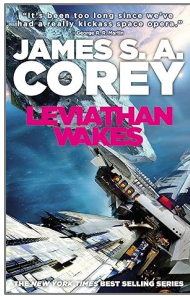
Leviathan Wakes - James S.A. Corey

"The first of the Expanse series, Leviathan Wakes introduces the reader to a Cold War in the far future between Earth and Mars, as well as their exploitation of the asteroid belt, home to the "Belters." One small spark is enough to lead to a system-wide conflict and thrust an unlikely alliance of individuals together to try and avoid further conflict. This series is so well written, it is often used to teach international relations within college classes."." - Recommended by Matthew Laubacher

Logicomix - Apostolos Doxiadis and Christos Papadimitiou

"Graphically illustrates Bertrand Russell's struggle to come to terms with how paradoxes and incompleteness overthrow the hope of a perfect logical system. Goes on to illustrate his honest application of these discoveries to challenge his own political commitments." - Recommended by Chris Foster
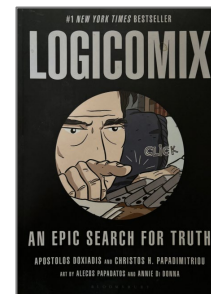
The Rigor of Angels - William Egginton

"This book has the best introduction ever written in the history of written introductions. In what can only be described as a dazzling use of the Rashomon effect, the author examines nothing less than the ultimate nature of reality from three points of view: the poet Jorge Luis Borges, the physicist Werner Heisenberg, and the philosopher Immanuel Kant." - Recommended by Julie Pedersen

The Magicians - Lev Grossman

"The Magicians is a trilogy that deconstructs many fantasy tropes, especially those found in the Chronicles of Narnia and Harry Potter (indeed, it is sometimes referred to as Chronicles of Narnia for adults). I actually prefer the show, which is excellent and really leans into deconstructionism, but the books are excellent. The second book, the Magician King is really dark, however." - Recommended by Matthew Laubacher
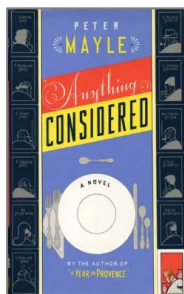
**Anything Considered** - Peter Mayle

"I was drawn to this novel by its lead character, Bennett - an English expat living in southern France with "champagne taste and a beer budget." How to address such a problem? Buckle up! This perfect summer read is suspenseful, romantic, mysterious, offbeat, thrilling, and thoroughly satisfying." **-** Recommended by Joan Burkhardt

Sqerm - James C. Moore

Sqerm captivates with its intricate blend of personal trials and unfathomable adventures, masterfully penned by Dr. James C. Moore. As an Army veteran, my connection to the narrative was instant and profound, particularly through the lens of Sage Weiss, the protagonist whose experiences echo those of many servicemembers. The thematic undercurrent of relationships prematurely severed by circumstances beyond one's control is a poignant reflection of real-world sacrifices and the emotional toll they exact." - Recommended by James Bond
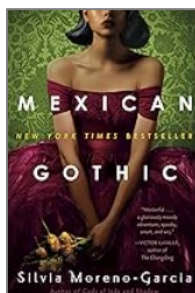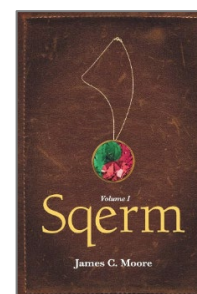
Mexican Gothic -Silvia Morena-Garcia

"Amazing read, especially for those who enjoy Rebecca and Jane Eyre. Read in the sunshine to offset the creepy vibe." **-** Recommended by Becky Campbell

The Botany of Desire - Michael Pollan

Pollan is one of our finest science writers, and in Botany of Desire, he examines how four distinct plants have influenced human history." - Recommended by Matthew Laubacher
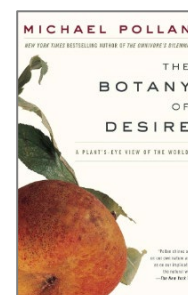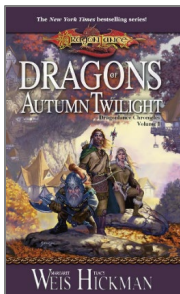
Dragons of Autumn Twilight - Margaret Weiss & Tracy Hickman

"Dragons of Autumn Twilight is based on an AD&D module that Weiss and Hickman were developing at the time, and sometimes feels like it, but it is the first of the Dragonlance novels that are the highlight of the 1980s TSR books based upon D&D realms. It features a rag-tag group of heroes (how novel!) up against an encroaching evil." - Recommended by Matthew Laubacher

Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow - Gabrielle Zevin

"Combining two of my passions, video gaming and reading a powerful narrative, Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow has found its way into my short list of all-time favorite books. As the book jacket states, "It is a love story, but not one you have read before." Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow follows the decades-long friendship between Sam and Sadie as their relationship shifts from childhood friends to work collaborators to distant strangers. It explores the power of combined genius and creativity as well as the depths of sadness and betrayal that can plague deeply rooted relationships. Gabrielle Zevin's masterful use of language draws you into this compelling story and doesn't let go." - Recommended by Jenn Vogel
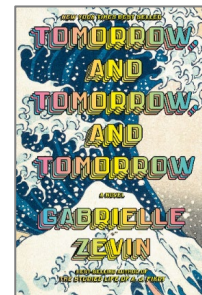
FACULTY VOICES

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.

Burton Ashworth | Department of Behavioral Sciences

I received a Master of Science in Aging Studies from the University of Indianapolis. I am a first-generation, non-traditional student who discovered a love for learning in my forties. Since then, I have become a lifelong learner, recently completing my fourth master's degree to add to a PhD in clinical psychology earned in 2014. I am thinking my next endeavor will either be a Masters in some area of neuroscience or theology.

Hwangji "Sherrie" Lu | Department of Health Sciences

Presented at the IISES International Academic Conference in Vienna, Austria, The International Conference on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Management in Cape Town, South Africia, and The International Conference on Psychology, Language, and Teaching in Cairo, Egypt. She was invited to serve as an advisory member for the Academic Research Network and the International Society for Engineers and Researchers (ISER). As well as invited to serve as a committee member for the IRECONF Scientific Committee, World Conference on Social Science, and Conference Scientific Committee. Her recent publications include:
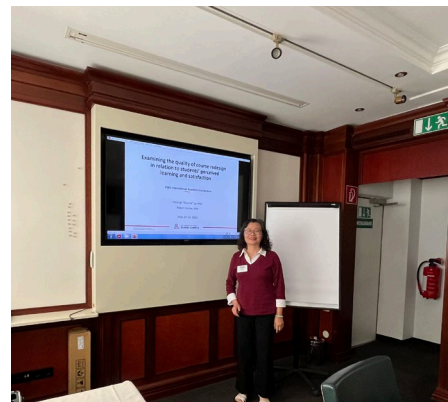
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https://doi.org/10.36348/gajhss.2024.v06i01.00X

NEW FACULTY INTRODUCTIONS

Dequies Lanier | Department of Advanced Management

I have served as a leader in higher education for over 12 years in the Georgia region. I have overseen student enrollment and admissions, multi-site operations, and staff. Additionally, I have taught graduate and undergraduate students as an adjunct faculty member in the organizational leadership field. At the beginning of my career, I served administratively in finance for the university's southeastern district. During that time, as an adult learner, I earned a master's degree in strategic communication from Troy University and a doctoral degree in organizational leadership from Nova Southeastern University. I have coached and trained staff, implemented district-wide strategic communication plans, launched marketing campaigns, and cultivated university corporate partnerships supporting the university's strategic plan. I am active in my community as an alumna of the Georgia North Fulton Chamber of Commerce's Leadership North Fulton program and as a Foundation Board Member. I am a member of the educational honor society Kappa Delta Pi and the National Honors Society, Phi Kappa Phi. Fun fact: I love cooking, traveling, and empowering and mentoring women. As a lover of learning, I enjoy studying various personality tools and interventions. I have published research on women's leadership, presented at research conferences, and

served as a reviewer for academic journals. My research interests include women's leadership development, which involves mentorship, developing design and strategic thinking, organization leadership, and socioeconomic welfare.

Trina Smith | Department of Behavioral Sciences

I have studied sociology since I was an undergraduate at the University of Nebraska, majoring in psychology and sociology. I obtained a PhD in Sociology from the University of Minnesota and earned a Master of Social Work. My interests in sociology include gender, reproductive issues, mental health, and qualitative research methods. I have been teaching sociology and social service courses for over ten years. I've taught at various institutions, from community colleges and state schools to private schools with diverse students. I've taught in-person, hybrid, and completely online. I took a break from teaching for some years during and after COVID-19 and am truly excited to be back teaching! I currently reside in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area in Minnesota, working full-time as an institutional research analyst for a seminary. I create and analyze numerous surveys, among other tasks! Beyond teaching and my current work, I've done market research and analysis, worked as a research manager in a business college, collected data for the Census, and worked in retail. In college, I worked with people with developmental disabilities. I've also interned with the LGBTQIA2S+ community in a college center and provided therapy in a free clinic.

Chanelle Pickens | Academic Engagement Center

I have spent 20 years working in media, marketing, event planning, higher education, and GLAMs (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums). I earned a Bachelor of Science in electronic media from the University of Tennessee, where I spent much time getting into trouble at the campus radio station. In 2014, I earned a Master of Library and Information Science from San Jose State University. I soon began a career in academic librarianship as an instructional librarian at West Virginia University. In addition to teaching general education and first-year experience courses, I am a freelance instructional designer. I have worked with various clients, including Indeed, Penn Foster, Hult International Business School, and the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE). Recently, I completed a 2-year contract with the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum. Because I believe in the importance of lifelong learning, I am currently pursuing a Master of Arts in English and Creative Writing. Through my work and studies, I am interested in developing pathways of support that enhance the classroom experience and stimulate curiosity for educators and learners. When not writing, teaching, or designing, I enjoy cooking, traveling, reading, learning Italian, and caring for the tropical houseplants in my desert home.

Teramena "Terri" Oliver | Department of Education and Liberal Arts

I have over 27 years of experience as the former Executive Director and President of a world-renowned childcare center and preschool. In this capacity, I observed that many children entering kindergarten lacked the necessary school readiness skills. As a result, in 1994, I founded The Academy to address this problem based on my belief that high-quality early childhood education unlocks the door to opportunity. I was recently recognized as one of Memphis's Most Interesting and Influential people, and my childcare center and preschool were awarded "Best Preschool" for six consecutive years. I hold a doctorate in early childhood education from Northcentral University, a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from the University of Mississippi, and a bachelor's degree in early childhood education from Clark Atlanta University. My unique approach to supporting and developing early childhood systems produces positive results for leaders and educators. I work as a childcare business coach at NEXT Memphis, an entity of Porter Leath, a Memphis area organization serving children and families through foster care and early childhood education. I develop strategies to increase enrollment, promote staff retention, improve health/nutrition, increase safety measures, improve academy outcomes, and ensure state and local program compliance. As an early childhood consultant and coach, my clients have seen a significant increase in enrollment, school readiness, and staff retention.

### Robert Dew | Academic Engagement Center

I am a college professor who lives in Ashland, OR. I teach film, media, and other subjects online. I have traveled extensively worldwide and in America, exploring city culture and hiking beautiful nature. I also do many volunteer projects in my local community. I have produced a film series, Eco Green Expo, and Chalk Art Festival. I have a master's in communication/film from the New York Institute of Technology, and my undergraduate degree is in sculpture from West Virginia University. My specific area of study has been media ecology and the effects of media on society. I have taught at numerous institutions, including Johns Hopkins and California School of the Arts. I have produced theater, films, events, and parades. I believe that education is a transformative democratic institution, and oral communication skills are essential for development in a democracy.

Temnesia Hobbs | Department of Behavioral Sciences

I received a B.A. in religious studies from Hampton University, an MBA from Marylhurst University, and an MPhil and PhD in Human and Social Services from Walden University. As an experienced Human Services Professional (HSP), I have contributed to diverse sectors, including an international nonprofit organization, a local government affiliate group, and advocacy initiatives. I have consistently provided expert guidance and support, developing and implementing strategies, policies, business management, grants compliance management, risk management, and programs tailored to the needs of diverse populations. My professional background consists of work with the homeless population, addressing veteran's experiences in the areas of mental health, housing, addiction, and food security. I

have a consulting business securing government contracts and specializing in supporting individuals and companies in improving their operations with suitable solutions. I enjoy volunteering, reading, and spending time with my family in my spare time. I am the mother of three adult children.
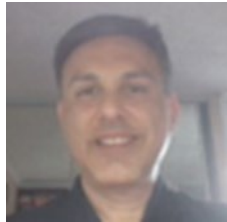
Alejandro Mendez | Department of Professional Studies

My academic background includes a bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in accounting from the University of Puerto Rico, a Master of Business Administration with a concentration in finance from the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico, and a PhD in business administration specializing in both accounting and finance from Trident University. My professional journey has been diverse, encompassing over 30 years of accounting experience across various sectors. I have the privilege of working for the government, Big Five accounting firms, a pharmaceutical company, and the education sector honing my accounting, tax, and management skills. A little about myself: I live with my little dog named Príncipe. I am passionate about reading, traveling, and learning new languages, and I delight in exploring new restaurants every week.

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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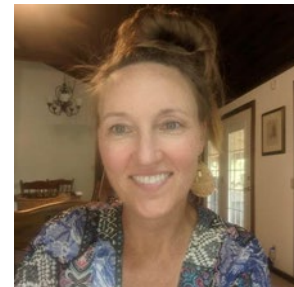
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