



# Georgia Gwinnett

## COLLEGE

### **Georgia Gwinnett College**

## **Teaching, Learning, and Research Symposium 2026**

January 15–16, 2026

Hosted by:

The Business, Economic, and Applied Research (BEAR) Center

in partnership with

The Experiential Learning and Critical Thinking (EXACT) Plan

## **Welcome to the Sixth Annual Georgia Gwinnett College Teaching, Learning, and Research Symposium!**

Six years strong and growing! What began as a vision from our School of Business Dean, Dr. Tyler Yu, and the BEAR Center leadership has become a vibrant tradition, thanks to you. Whether you traveled across the state of Georgia or participated from abroad, your commitment to reviewing, submitting, presenting, and attending has made this symposium a cornerstone of academic exchange. Additionally, if this is your first year with the Symposium, please prepare yourself for a delightful exchange of academic camaraderie and long-lasting relationships!

This year's theme, Bold Ideas, Big Impact, invites us to think beyond boundaries and embrace innovation that transforms teaching, learning, and research. As you may have come to expect, together we will explore groundbreaking pedagogical approaches and emerging scholarship that aims to challenge us to reimagine what's possible. This year we also have a special guest, the Academy of Business Education (ABE), who will be hosting a teaching workshop. We sincerely hope you can attend, and more information about ABE is located later in this program.

Our hybrid format continues to connect diverse voices from near and far, fostering collaboration and dialogue that enriches our academic community. We encourage you to engage fully, attend as many sessions as possible, share your ideas, ask questions, and build connections that last well beyond these sessions. We will also continue to seek your feedback at the conclusion of the Symposium, as we strive to continuously improve.

Enjoy the Symposium, and let's make this year's bold ideas create a big impact together. We look forward to seeing you again next year!

### Symposium Co-Chairs

**Dr. Mark A. Partridge**, Director, BEAR Center, Associate Professor of Economics

**Dr. Tracey King Schaller**, Associate Director, BEAR Center, Associate Professor of Marketing

**Dr. Reanna Berry**, Faculty Affiliate, BEAR Center, Associate Professor of Accounting

### Chair of the Student Research Track

**Dr. Wes Routon**, Associate Director of Business Analytics, BEAR Center, Professor of Economics

### Chair of the EXACT Track

**Dr. Karen Perell-Gerson**, QEP Director, EXACT Plan, Professor of Exercise Science



School of Business

BEAR Center

The mission of the GGC BEAR Center, located within the School of Business Administration, is to support the local business community, the state of Georgia, and beyond with economic and business-related research and to provide outreach services including statistical and business-related training in the community. The BEAR Center is also committed to furthering the mission of the School of Business Administration by fostering continuous improvement in faculty scholarship and student engagement in original research. The BEAR Center accomplishes its mission through various activities including publication of scholarly journal articles, sponsored research services, student research instruction, sponsorship of K-12 student instruction initiatives, and the Symposium.



EXACT plan

The EXACT Plan at Georgia Gwinnett College is a comprehensive initiative designed to embed experiential learning and critical thinking skill development across the curriculum. Beginning with the ITEC 1001 course, the program integrates high-impact practices such as ePortfolios, career readiness modules, and structured reflection to connect academic learning with real-world applications. This early engagement strategy improves student retention, career preparedness, and critical thinking skills in areas like communication, problem-solving, and information evaluation.

The plan employs a scaffolded approach, expanding from foundational courses to upper-division classes, supported by faculty training, continuous assessment, and innovative AI-assisted grading for scalability. Student participation and survey data demonstrate strong engagement and positive outcomes, while recognition programs like EXACT Scholars incentivize involvement. With ongoing research dissemination and grant support, the EXACT Plan aims to scale to 50+ courses by 2028, fostering a culture of experiential learning and career readiness across the institution.

# Academy of Business Education (ABE)

A Multidisciplinary Association Dedicated to:

- Enhancing the teaching of business education and improving the learning environment through educational research, curriculum development and creative pedagogy
- Fostering interdisciplinary interaction through multidisciplinary meetings and programs
- Encouraging and supporting faculty development



ABE manages the *Journal of the Academy of Business Education (JABE)*, a multi-disciplinary journal seeking the following kinds of papers

- Educational Research
- Pedagogy
- Curriculum
- Literature Reviews
- Multi-disciplinary
- Ethics and Moral Values

## Symposium Reviewers

**Ms. Charmaine Barnes** – Accountant III, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Alan Boss** – Assistant Professor of Management, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Ms. Emily Bowles** – Part-time Faculty, English, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Christian Brown** – Senior Economist, US Food and Drug Administration

**Dr. Steven Brown** – Associate Professor of Management, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Gerald Burch** – Associate Professor, University of West Florida

**Dr. Melinda Cline** – Professor and Interim Department Chair, Accounting, Finance, and MIS, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Rebecca Cooper** – Professor of Education, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Kathryn Deely** – Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Jason Delaney** – Professor of Economics, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Ms. Stephanie Denny** – Lecturer of English, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Wendy Dustman** – Associate Professor of Biology and Biochemistry, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Yvonne Ellis** – Associate Professor of Accounting, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Ms. Becky Fiorillo** – Instructor of Biology, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Rebecca Flynn** – Professor of English, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Tamara Gillis** – Professor of Communications, Elizabethtown College

**Dr. Eric Gresch** – Associate Professor of Management, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Ying Guo** – Associate Professor of Chemistry, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Dale Herndon** – Assistant Professor of Finance, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Will Holmes** – Associate Professor of Economics, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Justin Jernigan** – Interim Associate Provost for Academic Programs and Associate Professor of Linguistics, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Umar Khokhar** – Associate Professor, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Thea Liu** – Assistant Professor of Economics, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. John Marinar** – Associate Professor of Business Communications, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. S. Cathy Mccrary** – Associate Professor of Accounting, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. LaDessa Mitchell** – Executive Director, MERGE Inc.

**Dr. Anupam Nath** – Associate Professor of MIS, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Anthony Nikias** – Assistant Professor of Accounting, Albany State University

**Dr. Janita Rawls** – Professor of Management, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Darryl Romanow** – Assistant Professor - MIS, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Wes Routon** – Professor of Economics, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Mike Ryan** – Department Head - Economics & Finance, University of North Georgia

**Ms. Mandi Sena** – Instructor of English, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Julie Shearer** – Associate Professor of Biology, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Andrew Stephenson** – Associate Professor of Economics, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Ginger Stewart** – Assistant Professor of Management, Albany State University

**Dr. Kristin Stowe** – Professor of Economics, Wingate University

**Dr. Mark Sweatman** – Professor of Sociology / Human Development, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Luis Torres** – Associate Professor of Marketing and Director of Center for International Business & Exchange, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Hasan Uvet** – Associate Professor of Supply Chain Management, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Kristie Walsdorf** – Assistant Professor of Physical Education, Georgia Gwinnett College

**Dr. Victor Williams** – Associate Professor of Management Information Systems Technology, Albany State University

**Dr. Joshua Wludyga** – Associate Professor of Exercise Science, Georgia Gwinnett College

### **Thank You Reviewers!**

Each submission was blind reviewed by two independent reviewers.

## Symposium Program Summary

**Thursday, January 15, 2026**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Track</b>	<b>Location</b>
8:30 - 9:30 AM	Check in		SBA Dean's Suite
9:30 - 10:30 AM	Session 1.1 Global Markets, Policy, and Economic Change	non-SoTL	Stephens Family Executive Forum
9:30 - 10:30 AM	Session 1.2 Curriculum Transformation and Assessment	SoTL	Sim Lab
10:45 - 11:45 AM	Session 2.1 Human Development, Leadership, and Community Impact	non-SoTL	Stephens Family Executive Forum
10:45 - 11:45 AM	Session 2.2 Innovation in Instructional Technology and AI	SoTL	Sim Lab
12:00 - 1:00 PM	Lunch Break		GGC Dining Hall
1:15 - 2:15 PM	Session 3.1 Technology, Data, and Organizational Futures	non-SoTL	Stephens Family Executive Forum
1:15 - 2:15 PM	Session 3.2 Instructional Strategies	EXACT	Sim Lab
2:30 - 3:30 PM	Session 4.1 Student Motivation, Integrity, and Engagement	SoTL	Sim Lab
3:45 - 4:45 PM	Session 5.1 Learning Pathways, Identity, and Global Connectedness	SoTL	Sim Lab

## Friday, January 16, 2026

Time	Session	Track	Location
8:30 - 9:30 AM	Check in		SBA Dean's Suite
9:30 - 10:30 AM	Session 6.1 ABE Teaching Workshop	ABE	Sim Lab
9:30 - 10:30 AM	Session 6.2 Career Readiness	EXACT	Stephens Family Executive Forum
10:45 - 11:45 AM	Session 7.1 Information Technology and AI	EXACT	Sim Lab
10:45 - 11:45 AM	Session 7.2 Graduate Research	Student	Stephens Family Executive Forum
12:00 - 1:00 PM	Lunch Break		GGC Dining Hall
1:15 - 2:30 PM	Session 8.1 EXACT Student Research	Student	Stephens Family Executive Forum
2:45 - 3:45 PM	Session 9.1 Undergraduate Research	Student	Stephens Family Executive Forum

\*The Stephens Family Executive Forum is in room W-1210 and the Sim Lab is in room W-2111.

*All sessions are streamed live. Links to MS Teams meetings for each session appear below in the detailed schedule. Each session may contain both live, in-person presentations and live, virtual presentations. In-person or virtual is listed at the end of each presentation title.*

# Symposium Schedule

## Thursday, January 15, 2026 Schedule

### 9:30 - 10:30 AM Session 1.1 Global Markets, Policy, and Economic Change (non-SoTL Track)

**Location:** Stephens Family Executive Forum

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Dale Herndon

*Exploring the Fintech Payments Ecosystem: Innovations and Impact* (In-person)

**Author(s):** Dr. Dale Herndon — Georgia Gwinnett College

*Fiscal Reform, Growth, and Human Development: Evidence from an IMF-Sponsored Debt Reduction Program in Jamaica* (Virtual)

**Author(s):** Dr. Andrew Stephenson — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Nicholas A. Wright — Florida International University; Dr. Denvil Duncan — Indiana University; Mr. Alvin Harris — Bank of Jamaica

*Consumer Behavior in Mexico before and after the 2025 U.S. Tariffs* (In-person)

**Author(s):** Dr. Wes Routon — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Luis Torres — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Phillip Hartley — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Jorge Alcaraz — UDLAP Escuela de Negocios

*Linking Institutional Trust and User Adoption: A Framework for Cryptocurrency as a Payment Mechanism* (Virtual)

**Author(s):** Dr. Anupam Nath — Georgia Gwinnett College

### 9:30 - 10:30 AM Session 1.2 Curriculum Transformation and Assessment (SoTL Track)

**Location:** Sim Lab

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Mark Partridge

*A Comparison of Written Case Study Assessments versus Multiple-choice Case Study Assessments: A Preliminary Analysis* (Virtual)

**Author(s):** Dr. Tamara Gillis — Elizabethtown College

*Integrating Writing and Digital Media: A Case Study in Interdisciplinary Learning Community* (In-person)

**Author(s):** Dr. Hsi-Ling Huang — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Xin Xu — Georgia Gwinnett College

*Switching from Traditional Modeling to Using Computer Software—Feedback From Students* (Virtual)

**Author(s):** Dr. Pingping Song — Georgia Gwinnett College

*Student Confessions on Dishonest Behaviors: Sometimes it's Just Easier to Lie* (In-person)

**Author(s):** Dr. Alan Boss — Georgia Gwinnett College

**10:45 - 11:45 AM Session 2.1 Human Development, Leadership, and Community Impact (non-SoTL Track)**

**Location:** Stephens Family Executive Forum

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Jason Delaney

*Development of a business training model for women artisans: Empoderarte Mujer* (Virtual)

**Author(s):** Dr. Julianna Ramirez Lozano — Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru

*Exploring the Link: Narratives of Leadership Style on Job Satisfaction and Retention of Adjunct Faculty in Higher Learning Institutions* (Virtual)

**Author(s):** Dr. Ginger Stewart — Albany State University; Dr. Albertus Barnes — Albany State University; Dr. Carol Mitchell — Ohio State University

*Cross-domain support and work engagement: the mediating role of school-work enrichment* (In-person)

**Author(s):** Dr. Wenjuan Guo — Valdosta State University

**10:45 - 11:45 AM Session 2.2 Innovation in Instructional Technology and AI (SoTL Track)**

**Location:** Sim Lab

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Michael A. Lewkowicz

*Teaching in the Age of Intelligence: Transforming Learning with NotebookLM* (Virtual)

**Author(s):** Dr. Rebecca Cooper — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Elisabeth Javazon — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Jennell Talley — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Alessandra Barrera — Georgia Gwinnett College

*Beyond Narrated Slides: A Pilot Study on Video Format Preferences in Accounting Instruction* (Virtual)

**Author(s):** Dr. Brian Trout — Millersville University

*Artificial Intelligence in Grading: Balancing Innovation, Efficiency and Pedagogical Integrity* (In-person)

**Author(s):** Dr. Michael A. Lewkowicz — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Laura Young — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Dovile Budryte — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Rebecca A. Cooper —

Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Susan T. Quinn — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Maryann White — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Joshua Longmire — Georgia Gwinnett College

*Technology-Supported Cognitive Engagements Across Key Learning Stages in CS1 (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Dr. Wei Jin — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Xin Xu — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Evelyn Brannock — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Hyesung Park — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Tacksoo Im — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Tirza Leader — Georgia Gwinnett College

**12:00 - 1:00 PM Lunch Break**

**Location:** GGC Dining Hall

Meal ticket provided at check-in based on online registration. GGC Dining Hall provides a variety of options in an all you care to eat format. Reminder, no food or drink in the Stephens Family Executive Forum or SIM Lab.

**1:15 - 2:15 PM Session 3.1 Technology, Data, and Organizational Futures (non-SoTL Track)**

**Location:** Stephens Family Executive Forum

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Tracey King Schaller

*An Experimental Examination of the Effects of Competition from Relative Project Evaluation on Managers' Budget Requests (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Professor Anthony Nikias — Albany State University

*AI-Enhanced Local Government Fiscal Distress Using ACFR-Based Financial and Narrative Indicators (Virtual)*

**Author(s):** Dr. Yvonne Ellis — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Taewoo Park — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Karen McCarron — Georgia Gwinnett College

*AI warehousing in neighborhoods (good or bad), that is the question (Virtual)*

**Author(s):** Dr. Victor Williams — Albany State University; Dr. Amaechi Nwaokoro — Albany State University; Dr. Johannes Badejo, — Albany State University; Dr. Sandra Washington — Albany State University

*Digital Technologies and Supply Chain Adaptability: An Organizational Information Processing Perspective (Virtual)*

**Author(s):** Dr. Hasan Uvet — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. John Dickens — The Citadel

**1:15 - 2:15 PM Session 3.2 Instructional Strategies (EXACT Track)**

**Location:** Sim Lab

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Justin Jernigan

*Cultivating Care Through Service-Learning in Teacher Education* (In-person)

**Author(s):** Dr. Kinga Varga-Dobai — Georgia Gwinnett College

*FYC and EXACT: Reflection in First-Year Composition* (In-person)

**Author(s):** Dr. Justin Jernigan — Georgia Gwinnett College

**2:30 - 3:30 PM Session 4.1 Student Motivation, Integrity, and Engagement (SoTL Track)**

**Location:** Sim Lab

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Melinda Cline

*Gaining Soft Skills Experience with Compliments* (In-person)

**Author(s):** Dr. Melinda Cline — Georgia Gwinnett College

*An empirical investigation of the “mid-term slump” in engagement for first semester higher education students* (Virtual)

**Author(s):** Dr. Gerald Burch — University of West Florida; Dr. Stephen LeMay — University of West Florida; Dr. Jana Burch — University of West Florida; Dr. John Batchelor — University of West Florida

*Student Attitudes Towards Workload and Difficulty: Scale Development and Theoretical Integration* (Virtual)

**Author(s):** Dr. John Marinaran — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Lisa Chen — Quincy University; Dr. Steven Brown — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Marvin Bontrager — Georgia Gwinnett College

**3:45 - 4:45 PM Session 5.1 Learning Pathways, Identity, and Global Connectedness (SoTL Track)**

**Location:** Sim Lab

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Wes Routon

*From the Bronx to the World: The Hip Hop Literacy Laboratory* (In-person)

**Author(s):** Dr. Andre Mountain — The Hip Hop Museum; Dr. Edward Muhammad — Georgia Southern University

*Building Honors Pathways in Business Education: Insights from Program Models and Outcomes* (Virtual)

**Author(s):** Dr. Kristin Stowe — Wingate University

*Insights from two Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) experiences* (Virtual)

**Author(s):** Dr. Luis Torres — Georgia Gwinnett College

## Friday, January 16, 2026 Schedule

### 9:30 - 10:30 AM Session 6.1 Academy of Business Education (ABE) Teaching Workshop

**Location:** Sim Lab

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Janita Rawls

*Boldly Integrating AI Ethics and Critical Evaluation into Accounting Principles (Virtual)*

**Author(s):** Dr. Tomeika Williams — Albany State University

*From Classroom to Career: Experiential Learning Strategies That Build Transferable Critical Thinking Skills (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Dr. LaDessa Mitchell — MERGE Inc.

### 9:30 - 10:30 AM Session 6.2 Career Readiness (EXACT Track)

**Location:** Stephens Family Executive Forum

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Sherly Abraham

*The role of career centric classroom activities and self-reflection in enhancing career readiness (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Dr. Sherly Abraham — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Karen Perell-Gerson — Georgia Gwinnett College

*Student-Led Approaches to Career Readiness: Insights from the PROSPER Initiative (Virtual)*

**Author(s):** Dr. Marieke Schilpzand — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Amanda Wilsker — Georgia Gwinnett College

*ePortfolio a Bold Idea with a Big Impact on Students' Confidence and Connection to their Academic and Professional Growth: Creating Space for Perspective Change (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Ms. Wendy Anderson — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Kristie Walsdorf — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Karen Perell-Gerson — Georgia Gwinnett College

### 10:45 - 11:45 AM Session 7.1 Information Technology and AI (EXACT Track)

**Location:** Sim Lab

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Umar Kohkar

*Simulation-Based Learning in IT and Nursing: Bridging Theory and Practice Across Disciplines (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Dr. Umar Khokhar — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Binh Tran — Georgia Gwinnett College; Thao Tran — Georgia Gwinnett College

*Embedding Experiential Learning and Critical Thinking in ITEC 1001 for Career Readiness (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Dr. David Kerven — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Lissa Pollacia — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Karen Perell-Gerson — Georgia Gwinnett College; Ms. Stacy Jones — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Sherly Abraham — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Ying Guo — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Cindy Robertson — Georgia Gwinnett College

*Assessing the Impact of AI on Small Businesses in Southwest Georgia: Opportunities and Challenges (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Dr. Edwin Nyamwala — Albany State University

### **10:45 - 11:45 AM Session 7.2 Graduate Research (Student Track)**

**Location:** Stephens Family Executive Forum

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Wes Routon

*Preparing Tomorrow's Educators: Investigating Instructional Factors Affecting University Systems of Georgia First-Year Teachers' Classroom Management Self-Efficacy (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Arpan Bosmia — Columbus State University

*Faith, Freedom, and the Workplace: Analyzing the EEOC v. Aurora Renovations Case on Religious Discrimination and Retaliation (Virtual)*

**Author(s):** Salma Askar — The University of South Dakota; Mr. Joe Donovan — The University of South Dakota; Dr. Tyler Custis — The University of South Dakota

### **12:00 - 1:00 PM Lunch Break**

**Location:** GGC Dining Hall

Meal ticket provided at check-in based on online registration. GGC Dining Hall provides a variety of options in an all you care to eat format. Reminder, no food or drink in the Stephens Family Executive Forum or SIM Lab.

### **1:15 - 2:30 PM Session 8.1 EXACT Student Research (Student Track)**

**Location:** Stephens Family Executive Forum

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Wes Routon

*Learning by Doing: Applying Course Concepts Through Experiential and Reflective Projects (Virtual)*

**Author(s):** Hayley Moise — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Karen Perell-Gerson — Georgia Gwinnett College; Preston Dittman — Georgia Gwinnett College; Will Hermel — Georgia Gwinnett College; Ethin Vo — Georgia Gwinnett College; Bri Wilson — Georgia Gwinnett College

*EXACT Plan: Turning Student Experience into Actionable Insight and Leadership Growth (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Preston Dittman — Georgia Gwinnett College; Will Hermel — Georgia Gwinnett College; Hayley Moise — Georgia Gwinnett College; Ethin Vo — Georgia Gwinnett College; Brianna Wilson — Georgia Gwinnett College

*Creating a Culture of Engagement: The Role of Peer Collaboration in EXACT (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Brianna Wilson — Georgia Gwinnett College

*EXACT: Advancing Experiential Learning and Critical Thinking in Honors Education (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Will Hermel — Georgia Gwinnett College; Preston Dittman — Georgia Gwinnett College; Hayley Moise — Georgia Gwinnett College; Ethin Vo — Georgia Gwinnett College; Brianna Wilson — Georgia Gwinnett College

*Empowering Adult Learners Through Experiential Learning and Critical Thinking: The EXACT Plan (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Ethin Vo — Georgia Gwinnett College; Preston Dittman — Georgia Gwinnett College; Will Hermel — Georgia Gwinnett College; Hayley Moise — Georgia Gwinnett College; Brianna Wilson — Georgia Gwinnett College

#### **2:45 - 3:45 PM Session 9.1 Undergraduate Research (Student Track)**

**Location:** Stephens Family Executive Forum

**Virtual link:** [Join the meeting now](#)

**Moderator:** Dr. Wes Routon

*AI at the Ledger: Technology Readiness and Perspectives on AI Integration in Accounting (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Lynsey Smith — Truman State University; Dr. Isaac Ison — Truman State University

*Data breach effects on consumer sentiment (In-person)*

**Author(s):** John Foster — Georgia Gwinnett College; Mr. Cameron Wiley — Georgia Gwinnett College

*Algorithmic Tacit Collusion and the Future of Market Regulation (In-person)*

**Author(s):** Andrea Arroyo — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Vlad A. Bursuc — Georgia Gwinnett College

**Brief pause then announcement of undergraduate award winners**

**Thank you to our Student Track judges – Dr. Ben Akins, Dr. Yvonne Ellis, Dr. Luis Torres**

## Best in Track Award Winners

Best in Track: SoTL Research – **Dr. Brian Trout**, Millersville University. *Beyond Narrated Slides: A Pilot Study on Video Format Preferences in Accounting Instruction*

Best in Track: Non-SoTL Research – **Dr. Yvonne Ellis, Dr. Taewoo Park, and Dr. Karen McCarron**, Georgia Gwinnett College. *AI-Enhanced Local Government Fiscal Distress Using ACFR-Based Financial and Narrative Indicators*

Best in Track: EXACT Research – **Dr. Marieke Schilpzand and Dr. Amanda Wilsker**, Georgia Gwinnett College. *Student-Led Approaches to Career Readiness: Insights from the PROSPER Initiative*

Best in Track: Student Research – TBD on Friday, January 16, 2026 in person.

**Join us next year for GGC Symposium 2027!**

## **Proceedings of the 2026 Georgia Gwinnett College Teaching, Learning, and Research Symposium**

### **Abstracts (alphabetical by first author, then abstract title)**

#### **The role of career centric classroom activities and self-reflection in enhancing career readiness**

**Author(s):** Dr. Sherly Abraham — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Karen Perell-Gerson — Georgia Gwinnett College

The current landscape of higher education emphasizes the need to narrow the gap between academic learning and real-world job requirements. This presentation will share insights on how career centric classroom activities, followed by self-reflection, can enhance career readiness among students. Our presentation will share examples of career centric activities that can be used to strengthen student career readiness. Specifically, we will share examples of implementing a career centric activity in two upper-level information technology courses. Additionally, we will highlight the importance of pairing career centric activities with self-reflection and discuss types of reflective questions that can guide learners to evaluate their career readiness, identify gaps, and reflect on areas for professional growth. We will also share student perspectives gathered from the implementation of these career-centric activities. The findings provide valuable insights for integrating career centric classroom activities into classrooms.

#### **ePortfolio a Bold Idea with a Big Impact on Students' Confidence and Connection to their Academic and Professional Growth: Creating Space for Perspective Change**

**Author(s):** Ms. Wendy Anderson — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Kristie Walsdorf — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Karen Perell-Gerson — Georgia Gwinnett College

This session will spotlight how intentional instructional design can connect academic content to real-life career competencies and reflective praxis. Using the USG IMPACTS career readiness framework, the ePortfolio classroom assignment served as an experiential learning activity that guided students, using a structured series of reflective questions, in analyzing and critically reflecting on their selected course artifact. This assignment allowed students to connect their course work to professional growth and awareness of long-term relevancy. They engaged in the high impact practices of critical reflecting and summarizing their course work learning in an ePortfolio, connecting the relevance to their proficiency in elements of career competencies. Through this process, students identified transferable skills and connected their classroom learning to future career goals and professional identity formation. Following the development of the ePortfolio, students were invited to provide their perceptions regarding the ePortfolio through an electronic survey. Students were asked their opinions on the development of ePortfolio in general and specifically related to connecting the course learning to real-world career skills and their career path. This hands-on ePortfolio experience generated space for a

potential personal shift in perspective, moving from a passive learner to an active participant who takes ownership in their personal and professional development. Ultimately, the ePortfolio experiential learning assignment generates space that may have a big impact on the student connecting academic learning to career readiness, helping students view themselves as active lifelong learners.

### **Algorithmic Tacit Collusion and the Future of Market Regulation**

**Author(s):** Andrea Arroyo — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Vlad A. Bursuc — Georgia Gwinnett College

This research investigates the profound challenge that Artificial Intelligence (AI) pricing algorithms pose to competitive markets by facilitating widespread tacit collusion (coordinated behavior without explicit agreement). Sophisticated AI can sustain stable, supra-competitive pricing outcomes even in markets characterized by high levels of competition resulting from a large number of distinct sellers, a scenario that defies conventional antitrust predictions based on human pricing models. The effects of algorithmic collusion extend beyond supra-competitive prices: illegal agreements among competitors without repercussions or liability as well as both intentional and unintentional forms of cartel behavior. Ultimately, these effects undermine consumer welfare and market integrity.

This analysis emphasizes the structural and regulatory shift caused by technological advancement. As data becomes increasingly available and the cost of powerful AI-pricing technology drops, its ubiquity will affect and render traditional antitrust practices (such as market concentration measures that reflect the dominance of major firms within a market) progressively less reliable for assessing the probability of cooperative pricing or manipulation. Originally, antitrust laws required proof of an illegal agreement among competitors. Thus, tacit collusion with no explicit agreement is not automatically illegal. We argue that as AI pricing keeps evolving and improving, the predictability of market competition declines significantly, introducing new dimensions of regulatory uncertainty. Finally, this leads to a critical policy paradox: if monopoly pricing is an inevitable feature in an AI-driven market, regulatory frameworks must evolve as well. Addressing this challenge requires refocusing foundational assumptions about market intervention and integrating adaptive, technology-aware approaches to competition policy.

### **Faith, Freedom, and the Workplace: Analyzing the EEOC v. Aurora Renovations Case on Religious Discrimination and Retaliation**

**Author(s):** Salma Askar — The University of South Dakota; Mr. Joe Donovan — The University of South Dakota; Dr. Tyler Custis — The University of South Dakota

This paper describes the alleged systematic religious discrimination and retaliation against employees by Aurora Renovations and Developments, LLC, as brought forth by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The EEOC's complaint focuses on the experiences

of two former employees: John McGaha, and Mackenzie Saunders. Both individuals identified as non-religious. This paper explores the facts of the case, the legal framework applied, and the broader implications for religious rights, workplace inclusivity, and employer obligations under federal civil rights law. Additionally, this case study provides a framework for understanding several key workplace law and civil rights concepts, including: (1) Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; (2) religious accommodation; (3) retaliatory discharge; (4) hostile work environment; and (5) ethical considerations in employer-employee relations. "Title VII protects more than just practices specifically mandated by an employee's religion." (EEOC, Compliance Manual, citing EEOC v. Townley Engineering & Manufacturing Co., 859 F.2d 610, 9th Cir. 1988). Furthermore, the case analysis invites students to assess employer obligations under federal anti-discrimination law and evaluate the ethical dimensions of religion in professional setting. This study is a tested teaching tool utilizing 91 surveyed student participants using a Likert scale. Student opinion surveys were also conducted for this study regarding the learning outcomes, and the results demonstrate increased understanding and positive feedback. Specifically, 94.5% of students agreed that this case is a useful learning tool and that similar studies should be included in the legal and human resource management components of business classes in future semesters.

### **Preparing Tomorrow's Educators: Investigating Instructional Factors Affecting University Systems of Georgia First-Year Teachers' Classroom Management Self-Efficacy**

**Author(s):** Arpan Bosmia — Columbus State University

Classroom management is a crucial skill for new teachers, yet many enter the profession feeling unprepared to handle student behavior effectively. My research aims to examine instructional factors from University Systems of Georgia (USG) Teacher Preparation Programs (TPPs) that affect first-year teachers' classroom management self-efficacy (CMSE). Understanding these instructional factors will allow USG TPPs to improve CMSE in pre-service and newly graduated teacher candidates. The study has not been completed. No data has been collected. The rationale for the study will be presented.

### **Student Confessions on Dishonest Behaviors: Sometimes it's Just Easier to Lie**

**Author(s):** Dr. Alan Boss — Georgia Gwinnett College

Unethical behavior is everywhere. In universities, cheating is common (Krou, 2021). Indeed, according to one summary "students in higher education are engaging in academic dishonesty behavior with increasing prevalence" (Chiang, 2022, p. 908). The percentage of students admitting that they cheat ranges from 30% to 96% (Diekoff, 1996). The concern over unethical student behavior is broadened not only by the fact that students who cheat are likely to be deceitful in other academic areas (ICAI, 2025) but also by the fact that "students who engaged in dishonest acts in college classes were more likely to engage in dishonest acts in the workplace" (Nonis, 2001, p. 69).

The student predisposition to cheat and carry cheating behaviors into the workplace raises the

important theoretical and practical question of why people are so inclined to behave unethically. To understand this, and other issues related to integrity, I asked undergraduate students to: “Select three consecutive days during which time you are to be 100% honest in everything you do and say. That means no lying, exaggerating, stealing, cheating, breaking the law—nothing that can be construed in any way as dishonest. Once the three days are over, write a short essay describing what took place, lessons learned, and what commitments—if any—you have consequently made.”

From a sample of 185 respondents, I found that students uniformly agreed that being honest is more difficult than being dishonest, and that before the class assignment they believed they were extremely honest. From this I infer that it is simply easier to cheat and that students do not have an accurate perception of their own integrity. Moreover, a high percentage of respondents concluded that “establishing integrity on a daily basis is challenging.” In short, convenience often determines the utility of honesty. Cheating is sometimes much easier.

### **An empirical investigation of the “mid-term slump” in engagement for first semester higher education students**

**Author(s):** Dr. Gerald Burch — University of West Florida; Dr. Stephen LeMay — University of West Florida; Dr. Jana Burch — University of West Florida; Dr. John Batchelor — University of West Florida

Student engagement is linked to many personal and university educational outcomes. Pressure therefore falls on college/university educators to find ways to increase student engagement. This study draws on Expectancy-Value Theory to examine the engagement of 238 first-year college students during their first semester in higher education to determine how engagement changes over time. Cluster analysis is used to show our assumption about first year students having a “mid-term slump” in engagement during their first semester in college is not exactly true. Only 36 percent of the students involved in the study presented themselves as hypothesized. These results indicate current efforts to increase student engagement may therefore be focused either on the wrong variables, or on the wrong students. This study is the first to acknowledge three groups of students with distinct engagement manners. Recommendations for educators and researchers are provided based on these results.

### **Gaining Soft Skills Experience with Compliments**

**Author(s):** Dr. Melinda Cline — Georgia Gwinnett College

Soft skills are consistently identified by recruiters and hiring managers as one of the top five skills needed by recent college graduates. This presentation focuses on how compliments—defined as positive feedback communicated to others—help develop these soft skills. Positive communication among friends, family, and colleagues fosters goodwill and trust, which are essential for successful relationships in various fields, including business, technology, medicine, and psychology. The presentation outlines an assignment in which students are required to verbally compliment others in a work environment and record their reactions. After delivering

ten compliments, students also reflect on their experiences in a written paragraph. Findings indicate that recipients of compliments typically respond positively, though some may appear indifferent. Through this exercise, students learn to recognize and enhance appropriate positive communication with others. The goal of this session is to provide suggestions for implementing this experiential learning activity across different disciplines. It highlights areas where students generally excel and addresses common challenges they may encounter. This presentation supports prior research indicating that student success is significantly enhanced when students actively engage in learning both inside and outside the classroom.

### **Teaching in the Age of Intelligence: Transforming Learning with NotebookLM**

**Author(s):** Dr. Rebecca Cooper — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Elisabeth Javazon — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Jennell Talley Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Alessandra Barrera — Georgia Gwinnett College

This project examines how integrating the generative AI tool NotebookLM reshapes teaching and learning in undergraduate biology and secondary education science courses. Designed to elevate engagement and deepen understanding, the initiative explores how AI can serve as a pedagogical partner—enhancing, rather than replacing, human instruction. By supporting critical thinking, and metacognitive growth, NotebookLM enables students to connect ideas, analyze complex texts, and create personalized study materials.

In upper-level biology courses, students used NotebookLM to build concept maps, study guides, and practice assessments, applying AI to synthesize challenging scientific content. In secondary education courses, faculty employed the tool to curate podcasts, videos, and other supplementary materials that enriched classroom discussion. Across both contexts, AI promoted active learning, creativity, and individualized exploration.

A mixed-methods design assessed its impact: surveys measured engagement, usage, and perceived learning gains, while qualitative reflections captured students' experiences. Early results were overwhelmingly positive—students expressed excitement about using AI academically, many for the first time, and described how it enhanced comprehension and curiosity.

This study contributes to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) by showcasing ethical and effective AI integration that advances transdisciplinary thinking and classroom innovation. The presentation features live demonstration and evidence-based best practices for responsibly embracing generative AI across disciplines.

### **EXACT Plan: Turning Student Experience into Actionable Insight and Leadership Growth**

**Author(s):** Preston Dittman — Georgia Gwinnett College; Will Hermel — Georgia Gwinnett College; Hayley Moise — Georgia Gwinnett College; Ethin Vo — Georgia Gwinnett College; Brianna Wilson — Georgia Gwinnett College

Through practical experience, the Experiential Learning and Critical Thinking (EXACT) plan enhances students' critical thinking abilities across curricula. This plan involves direct experience, reflection, conceptual understanding, and experimentation. Together, these elements encourage students to connect what they learn in classrooms to real-world applications, helping them develop the confidence and flexibility needed to address complex challenges. The plan aims to foster growth in essential skills such as problem-solving, effective communication, and collaboration while preparing students to apply their learning in meaningful ways. Serving on the EXACT Student Advisory Council provides members with valuable opportunities for both personal and professional development. Advisory Board members play an active role in program evaluation by conducting peer-to-peer interviews to gather feedback, enhancing the student experience with the plan. This process strengthens communication, leadership, and analytical abilities while teaching members to listen thoughtfully and engage with diverse perspectives. In addition to conducting interviews, members regularly participate in board meetings to discuss their findings, share insights, and collaborate on ideas to improve the program. These discussions encourage teamwork, reflection, and advocacy, allowing members to learn from one another's experiences and to apply those lessons constructively. Through these collaborative efforts, members develop as reflective leaders who can carry these skills beyond college into their academic, professional, and community pursuits. The EXACT Student Advisory Board exemplifies how experiential learning empowers students to transform knowledge into action and make lasting contributions both inside and outside the classroom.

### **AI-Enhanced Local Government Fiscal Distress Using ACFR-Based Financial and Narrative Indicators**

**Author(s):** Dr. Yvonne Ellis — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Taewoo Park — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Karen McCarron — Georgia Gwinnett College

Local governments are responsible for delivering essential public services, yet increasing fiscal pressures such as revenue volatility, pension obligations, and rising service demands continue to challenge their financial stability. Traditional approaches for assessing municipal fiscal conditions rely heavily on ratio analysis and trends derived from Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFRs/ACFRs). Although widely used, these approaches may fail to capture early indicators of fiscal distress, particularly when multiple risk factors interact in nonlinear or context-specific ways. This study proposes an AI-enhanced analytical framework to better understand fiscal distress among U.S. local governments. Using a panel of municipalities with populations exceeding 50,000 from 2006–2013 a period encompassing the Great Recession and early recovery, the analysis integrates structured financial indicators with narrative information obtained from Management's Discussion & Analysis (MD&A) sections of Annual Comprehensive

Financial Reports (ACFRs). Textual analysis techniques are used to extract tone, readability, and linguistic cues related to fiscal risk from MD&A disclosures. Statistical approaches are considered alongside machine-learning methods to examine whether narrative information contributes incremental insight beyond financial indicators alone. By combining textual and financial information, this study seeks to contribute to the development of a hybrid analytical approach that supports enhanced fiscal monitoring. The framework may assist policymakers, financial analysts, and community stakeholders in identifying emerging areas of fiscal stress sooner, improving transparency, supporting informed decision-making, and guiding more timely resource allocation.

### **Data breach effects on consumer sentiment**

**Author(s):** John Foster — Georgia Gwinnett College; Mr. Cameron Wiley — Georgia Gwinnett College

This study examines whether publicly disclosed data breaches materially affect consumer sentiment, using quarterly revenue as a proxy. We compiled a dataset of 49 publicly traded companies across 32 industries from 2006 to 2025, identifying breach events and tracking revenue changes for three quarters before and after each breach. Our methodology includes descriptive analysis, hypothesis testing, and regression models controlling for macroeconomic conditions, industry, and prior trends. Results indicate that while revenue fluctuates across quarters, differences are not statistically significant, suggesting that data breaches do not materially impact consumer purchasing behavior in the short term. Quantile regression reveals that large firms may experience revenue growth during breach quarters, possibly reflecting resilience or effective crisis management. These findings challenge assumptions about consumer sensitivity to cybersecurity incidents and provide insights for investors and corporate risk disclosure strategies.

### **A Comparison of Written Case Study Assessments versus Multiple-choice Case Study Assessments: A Preliminary Analysis**

**Author(s):** Dr. Tamara Gillis — Elizabethtown College

Case studies are a popular tactic for assessing students' understanding and application of business concepts and practices. Using written case analysis papers to assess students' understanding and application of theories and best practices can be burdensome to both students and instructors. Students report dissatisfaction with having to write these analysis documents and faculty report that scoring these papers consumes precious time they could spend on other faculty expectations, such as scholarship and service. The proposition of this paper is that in lieu of a written case analysis paper, a well-constructed written case narrative and a series of assertion-reason, multiple-choice questions in an exam format can assess application of theories and best practices with similar academic results for students and time-savings for faculty.

## **Cross-domain support and work engagement: the mediating role of school-work enrichment**

**Author(s):** Dr. Wenjuan Guo — Valdosta State University

Attending university while working has become increasingly common, with 39.6% of full-time and 77.7% of part-time college students employed in 2023 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). College students often hold part-time jobs or internships, offering businesses flexible labor (e.g., seasonal work) and serving as a recruitment pipeline (Smith & Green, 2021). Therefore, understanding how to enhance student workers' job engagement is strategically important for business.

Taking the resource scarcity perspective, prior research has primarily concerned with the interrole conflict that student workers may experience and its negative impacts on individual and organization outcomes (Choo et al., 2021), such as reduced school performance (Butler, 2007), diminished well-being (Cinamon, 2016), and decreased job satisfaction (Olson, 2014), as well as increased intentions to leave one's job (Laughman et al., 2016). However, the work-home resources model suggests that resources in one domain can also generate personal resources which facilitate performance in another (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). For instance, family-supportive supervision is linked to work-family enrichment and individual thriving (Russo et al., 2018). In line with the resource accumulation view, results of this study suggest that when supervisors and professors provide encouragement, flexibility, and understanding that acknowledge students' roles in another domain, they foster positive spillover between school and work experiences. Furthermore, school-work enrichment enhances individual's engagement at work. These findings highlight the importance of integrating support mechanisms within both educational institutions and workplaces to promote individual success, motivation, and sustained performance.

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### **EXACT: Advancing Experiential Learning and Critical Thinking in Honors Education**

**Author(s):** Will Hermel — Georgia Gwinnett College; Preston Dittman — Georgia Gwinnett College; Hayley Moise — Georgia Gwinnett College; Ethin Vo — Georgia Gwinnett College; Brianna Wilson — Georgia Gwinnett College

At Georgia Gwinnett College, there is the development of this idea of experiential learning. Experiential learning is a process of learning that contains the same curricula across other courses and instructors, but is presented in a way that, through applicable experience, critical thinking is built right in the classroom. The goal of Experiential learning is to target, facilitate, and promote real-world soft skills such as problem-solving, effective communication, and professional collaboration. This led to the development of the EXperiential Learning And Critical Thinking (EXACT) plan and the EXACT Student Advisory Council. The purpose of the Student Advisory Council is to allow members professional growth while conducting interviews and gathering qualitative data on the reactions and success of the EXACT program. EXACT went live on the GGC Honors program’s intro to information technology class in the fall of 2024, and the EXACT Student Advisory Council went live in the fall of 2025. The data being collected in this study is the students’ reaction to experiential learning, given that they are high-performing Honors students (Grade Point Average 3.5 or higher) and that they have seen experiential learning before. The reason to focus the sample on high-achieving students is that the GGC Honors Program has been implementing experiential learning into its own curriculum, alongside the development of the EXACT program, and this will cause students to become normalized to the unique presentation style of the various subjects, as the ideas of Experiential learning will be throughout their coursework, not simply a one-off class.

### **Exploring the Fintech Payments Ecosystem: Innovations and Impact**

**Author(s):** Dr. Dale Herndon — Georgia Gwinnett College

The financial world has been undergoing a seismic transformation, thanks to the advent of financial technology, popularly known as fintech. Characterized by its innovative application of technology to enhance and streamline financial services, fintech has revolutionized how individuals and businesses interact with money. From mobile payment systems to blockchain networks, fintech has created a dynamic ecosystem reshaping the global economy.

The trajectory of fintech points towards continued innovation. Trends such as open banking, AI-

driven analytics, and the integration of financial services into non-financial platforms (embedded finance) are expected to dominate. As technology evolves, fintech will continue to redefine the relationship between consumers, businesses and financial systems.

With recent Acts introduced into legislation, such as the Genius Act, Clarity Act, and Responsible Financial Innovation Act, stablecoins are moving from the fringes of the crypto world to the core of institutional payments. Their ability to offer a fast, cost-effective, and programmable medium for value transfer makes them a powerful tool for fintech firms to build innovative solutions and challenge traditional financial incumbents. As regulatory clarity increases and infrastructure matures, stablecoins are expected to play an increasingly central role in the future of finance.

This report will provide a breakdown of the key roles stablecoins will have in fintech and define how stablecoins will revolutionize our payment system.

### **Integrating Writing and Digital Media: A Case Study in Interdisciplinary Learning Community**

**Author(s):** Dr. Hsi-Ling Huang — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Xin Xu — Georgia Gwinnett College

Studies have shown that Learning Communities have many benefits, including “[f]ostering workforce skills, encouraging problem-solving skills, and increasing retention and success” for both faculty and students (Dodge and Kendall, *College Teaching*, 2004). In this project, we created an interdisciplinary Learning Community Project that allowed a Freshman Composition (FC) course to pair with a Digital Media (DM) course for students to work on a mini magazine. Students in FC were writers whose tasks focusing on writing and researching, whereas students in DM were copy editors whose tasks focusing on graphic design and layout. The goal was for students to collaborate in a learning community to improve student engagement and increase retention.

According to a study by Wenwen Cao and Zonggen Yu, “learning communities possess the capacity to enhance communication, motivation, and learning outcomes, while simultaneously alleviating learner anxiety.” (*Humanities & Social Sciences Communications* (2023) Building the student learning communities can also “provide students with a structured way to solve problems, share insight, and help one another continually develop new skills and expertise” (Fisher et. al, *Student Learning Communities: A Springboard for Academic and Social-Emotional Development*, 2021). This concept has been supported by our institute at GGC, from offering Block Schedule to creating Learning Community Courses. However, there have been challenges, such as students changing schedules during drop/add period, making it difficult to keep the same group of students. There are also challenges on faculty’s side, such as being assigned in groups they had not requested, being assigned to teach non-LC courses, or sharing only a handful of students.

This project created flexibility to overcome these challenges but also provided a unique

opportunity (forming an LC) for freshmen students to interact with experienced DM students and, therefore, socially and academically engage with each other. As a result, the LC could lead to a stronger bonding with the college for both groups and further improve the retention rate.

### **FYC and EXACT: Reflection in First-Year Composition**

**Author(s):** Dr. Justin Jernigan — Georgia Gwinnett College

The first-year Composition (FYC) course affords first-year college students a range of opportunities to engage with their classmates and others in meaningful ways, which can enhance their critical thinking skills development and sense of belonging in the campus community. Among the practices with demonstrated or strongly suggested positive effects in recent examinations are peer review (Cunningham, et al. 2022; Lineback and Holbrook 2024); and reflective writing (Coppens, et al. 2025; Hudig, et al. 2025). This interactive session presents the first stages of a broader research project on the first-year Composition course at a public, 4-year state college. Specifically, the role of reflective writing in enhancing critical thinking is examined in the context of the college's Experiential Learning and Critical Thinking (EXACT) plan. First-year students participating in the EXACT program submit a written reflection to their e-portfolio. For students in the First-year Composition course, this reflection task presents an important opportunity for thoughtful reflection on their English course assignments as tools for developing critical thinking skills. During this session, we will discuss initial survey-based data, analysis of success indicators, and interviews with selected students to demonstrate the ways in which peer review, regular reflective writing, and participation in the EXACT portfolio reflection assignment contribute to students' overall student success during their first-year experience (see, e.g., Banner, et al. 2023, for more on regular self-reflection as a best practice in FYC writing instruction). Attendees are encouraged to bring their questions and ideas about the interrelationships among First-year Composition, EXACT, and student success.

### **Technology-Supported Cognitive Engagements Across Key Learning Stages in CS1**

**Author(s):** Dr. Wei Jin — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Xin Xu — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Evelyn Brannock — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Hyesung Park — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Tacksoo Im — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Tirza Leader — Georgia Gwinnett College

Introductory programming (CS1) is widely regarded as one of the most difficult courses in computing education, with reported failure rates ranging from 30% to 50% in the literature. A meta-analysis found an average global failure rate of 33%, underscoring the persistent challenges students face in learning to program. At Georgia Gwinnett College, Programming Fundamentals (our CS1) shows similar DFW rates.

To address both cognitive and motivational challenges, we developed a six-component instructional model. This presentation highlights three core components: (1) Process-Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning (POGIL) for concept introduction, (2) auto-graded visual tracing exercises (TracingQuiz) to reinforce semantic understanding, and (3) a guided framework for

problem-solving strategy development. Supported by web-based tools such as TracingQuiz for interactive code tracing and Desmos for team-based guided inquiry, these components promote coordination, feedback, and scalability.

Piloted in eight CS1 sections over two semesters, the integrated approach led to statistically significant learning gains. Treatment students outperformed controls by 10.21 points (~8.5%) in the full dataset and 5.15 points (~4.3%) in a subset of instructors teaching both groups. Two of four instructors also achieved higher student passing rates, and three of four reported higher course evaluation scores in their treatment sections, suggesting both improved performance and more positive student perceptions.

Attitudinal results were mixed but encouraging: while confidence and perceived usefulness declined slightly, treatment students reported higher persistence and affective engagement, reflecting increased resilience and motivation.

### **Embedding Experiential Learning and Critical Thinking in ITEC 1001 for Career Readiness**

**Author(s):** Dr. David Kerven — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Lissa Pollacia — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Karen Perell-Gerson — Georgia Gwinnett College; Ms. Stacy Jones — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Sherly Abraham — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Ying Guo — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Cindy Robertson — Georgia Gwinnett College

This presentation outlines the integration and assessment of the EXACT Plan—Experiential Learning and Critical Thinking—within the ITEC 1001 course. The initiative embeds three core components into the curriculum: Experiential Learning Exercises, Critical Thinking Assignments, and Reflection Prompts. Students engage in Career Readiness Modules, which include resume building, reference list creation, and LinkedIn profile development. These materials form the foundation of the EXACT Scholars ePortfolio, fostering professional preparedness.

The Critical Thinking component, facilitated through the Focus2Career Reflection assignment, challenges students to interpret and evaluate career-related information. This assignment is submitted via D2L and is designed to cultivate analytical skills. The final component, the Career Readiness Reflection, serves as an assessment tool within SL&L to measure students' critical thinking abilities, contributing data to evaluate the effectiveness of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP).

Survey data collected across three semesters—Fall 2024, Spring 2025, and Summer 2025—reveals consistent student engagement and positive feedback. A majority of students reported that the activities “definitely” enhanced their learning experience, with increasing satisfaction over time. Specifically, students' perceptions of real-world applicability showed statistically significant improvement. The survey results support the conclusion that embedding experiential and reflective learning into general education courses significantly contributes to students' development of critical thinking skills.

Overall, the EXACT Plan demonstrates a successful model for integrating career readiness and cognitive skill development into foundational coursework, aligning academic content with real-world application and institutional assessment goals.

### **Simulation-Based Learning in IT and Nursing: Bridging Theory and Practice Across Disciplines**

**Author(s):** Dr. Umar Khokhar — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Binh Tran — Georgia Gwinnett College; Thao Tran — Georgia Gwinnett College

Simulation-based learning (SBL) has become a cornerstone of modern education, particularly in disciplines such as Information Technology (IT) and Nursing, where the practical application of knowledge is essential. In IT education, simulations allow students to engage with complex systems and real-world scenarios within a controlled environment, promoting a deeper understanding of theoretical concepts. Similarly, in Nursing education, high-fidelity manikin simulators and digital tools enable students to practice clinical skills and decision-making without posing any risk to patients. This experiential approach not only enhances technical proficiency but also builds confidence and reduces student anxiety in line with fundamental concepts from the EXACT – Experiential Learning and Critical Thinking Plans.

Research has shown that well-designed simulations—especially those that include structured feedback and debriefing sessions—significantly improve student engagement and learning outcomes. In our courses, Computer Networking (ITEC 3100) and Information Security (ITEC 3300), we have integrated tools such as Cisco Packet Tracer, the Linksys User Interface Simulation, Kali Linux, DVWA, BeEF, and Burp Suite. In Nursing courses (NURS 3020, 3021, 4020, and 4021), live simulations with high-fidelity manikins and volunteer patients have been effectively utilized to enhance clinical competence and decision-making skills.

### **Artificial Intelligence in Grading: Balancing Innovation, Efficiency and Pedagogical Integrity**

**Author(s):** Dr. Michael A. Lewkowicz — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Laura Young — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Dovile Budryte — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Rebecca A. Cooper — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Susan T. Quinn — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Maryann White — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Joshua Longmire — Georgia Gwinnett College

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools become increasingly embedded in academic life, their potential to streamline grading and enhance feedback has generated significant enthusiasm—and legitimate caution. While AI promises greater efficiency and consistency, it also raises important pedagogical and ethical questions regarding fairness, transparency, and the preservation of instructor judgment. This research-in-progress project investigates the use of AI-assisted grading within undergraduate political science courses, focusing on both its practical benefits and its broader implications for teaching and learning.

The study employs a mixed-methods design combining quantitative data (student surveys on fairness, trust, and feedback quality, along with measurements of grading time) and qualitative

data (faculty narratives and reflective accounts describing experiences with AI-supported grading). Together, these perspectives provide a balanced understanding of AI's impact on efficiency, instructional integrity, and student perception.

The presentation will highlight both the strengths and caveats of AI-assisted grading, exploring where it can meaningfully enhance teaching practice and where caution is warranted. In alignment with the Symposium's theme—**Bold Ideas, Big Impact**—this session invites open discussion on how to use AI responsibly in ways that preserve authenticity, fairness, and human connection in learning assessment.

### **Student Attitudes Towards Workload and Difficulty: Scale Development and Theoretical Integration**

**Author(s):** Dr. John Marinan — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Lisa Chen — Quincy University; Quincy University — Quincy University; Dr. Steven Brown — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Marvin Bontrager — Georgia Gwinnett College

The research establishes the Student Attitudes Toward Workload and Difficulty (SAWD) scale which assesses students' diverse perspectives about their academic workload. The SAWD scale addresses existing measurement gaps by evaluating student workload perceptions based on multiple factors which include their responsibilities and their views on task difficulty and their sense of fairness and their feedback and grading perceptions and their motivation levels and their sense of entitlement. The initial item pool received theoretical and sector-based input before undergoing exploratory factor analysis (Study 1 at a Southeastern public institution) and confirmatory factor analysis (Study 2 at a Midwestern private institution). The seven-factor structure of SAWD demonstrated stability through high internal consistency and excellent model fit and strong convergent and discriminant validity and measurement invariance between institutions. The research paper combines three main sections which (1) review the theoretical basis of SAWD content (2) explain the development and validation process of the instrument through two studies and (3) discuss practical applications for research and educational assessment and student support systems. The research demonstrates SAWD serves as a useful assessment tool which connects various workload-related constructs.

### **From Classroom to Career: Experiential Learning Strategies That Build Transferable Critical Thinking Skills**

**Author(s):** Dr. LaDessa Mitchell — MERGE Inc.

This workshop explores how experiential learning can cultivate transferable business and critical thinking skills in high school and college students. Drawing on my experience as an internship coordinator and instructor at a collegiate academy, I demonstrate how integrating workplace communication, career readiness, and community partnerships transforms business education from theory into practice. The teaching activity at the center of this session involves a semester-long workplace communication course that combines project-based learning, reflective writing,

and off-campus internships across business and nonprofit sectors. Through structured experiences such as professional correspondence, mock interviews, and business presentations, students developed communication, problem-solving, and teamwork skills that align with real-world business expectations. Partnerships with local organizations provided authentic contexts for applying classroom knowledge, allowing students to see direct connections between academic learning and professional growth. Participants in this workshop will explore adaptable strategies for embedding similar experiential elements into their courses, including tools for internship coordination, reflective assessment, and partnership development. The session will also discuss how experiential design supports equity and engagement by giving all students access to authentic learning environments. Attendees will leave with sample templates and reflection prompts that help bridge academic instruction with practical skill building. This workshop embodies the conference theme, “Bold Ideas, Big Impact,” by showing how intentional experiential teaching empowers students to think critically, communicate effectively, and transition confidently into the professional world.

### **Learning by Doing: Applying Course Concepts Through Experiential and Reflective Projects**

**Author(s):** Hayley Moise — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Karen Perell-Gerson — Georgia Gwinnett College; Preston Dittman — Georgia Gwinnett College; Will Hermel — Georgia Gwinnett College; Ethin Vo — Georgia Gwinnett College; Bri Wilson — Georgia Gwinnett College

The EXACT (Experiential Learning and Critical Thinking) program empowers students to engage more deeply with their education by promoting intentional learning, critical thinking, and real-world application of academic concepts. Through experiential activities embedded in coursework, students are encouraged to move beyond passive learning and actively apply theoretical knowledge in meaningful ways. For example, in MKTG 4300 – Advertising, one student explored the principles of effective advertising by analyzing visual media and creating original marketing content. A key project involved developing a personal brand campaign, which required the student to design a logo, storyboard a video, and produce a final advertisement.

This student chose to create a podcast series as a reflection of her introspective nature and commitment to self-growth. The project not only demonstrated her understanding of advertising strategies but also allowed her to express her identity through creative media. Such experiences exemplify how the EXACT program fosters both academic and personal development.

Being an EXACT student means more than completing assignments—it involves connecting course content to authentic experiences, thinking critically about one’s learning, and recognizing the broader value of education. By integrating experiential learning into the classroom, the program helps students develop transferable skills, deepen their self-awareness, and prepare for success beyond the academic environment.

### **From the Bronx to the World: The Hip Hop Literacy Laboratory**

**Author(s):** Dr. Andre Mountain — The Hip Hop Museum; Dr. Edward Muhammad — Georgia Southern University

This presentation explores how Hip Hop culture can serve as a transformative framework for teaching literacy, global citizenship, and peace education in elementary classrooms. Drawing from classroom-based research and practice in upper elementary literacy instruction, The Hip Hop Literacy Laboratory reimagines how culturally responsive and justice-centered pedagogy can empower young learners to see themselves as readers, writers, and change agents.

The Laboratory engages students in critical inquiry using texts that explore immigrant experiences, biodiversity and conservation, and human rights, while connecting these themes to the language, creativity, and ethos of Hip Hop culture. Students analyze lyrics, poems, and narratives to develop literacy skills and critical consciousness, linking their own lived experiences to broader global issues such as migration, environmental sustainability, and equity. Through performance writing, visual art, and collaborative dialogue, students practice empathy and civic responsibility—core components of education for peace.

This session demonstrates how integrating Hip Hop pedagogy with global education frameworks fosters literacy growth and nurtures students' sense of identity, agency, and belonging. It offers concrete classroom examples, student work samples, and strategies that educators can adapt to empower youth as cultural producers and critical thinkers. By bridging the local and the global, this approach positions Hip Hop as both an academic tool and a moral compass for cultivating compassion, dialogue, and collective responsibility in the next generation of world citizens.

### **Linking Institutional Trust and User Adoption: A Framework for Cryptocurrency as a Payment Mechanism**

**Author(s):** Dr. Anupam Nath — Georgia Gwinnett College

Cryptocurrencies have become new methods for monetary transactions, challenging traditional ideas of financial trust and the legitimacy of institutions. This research introduces a theoretical framework that explains how trust in institutions influences the adoption of cryptocurrency as a payment method. It is based on institutional trust theory, which highlights three key aspects: structural assurance, situational normality, and regulatory legitimacy. These facets reflect users' confidence in the presence of strong protections, the reliability of cryptocurrency transactions, and the credibility provided by proper regulations. In decentralized financial environments, where personal trust is often low, users seek signals from institutions—such as platform reliability, technology standards, and regulatory guidance—to mitigate uncertainty and risk. This institutional trust acts as both an initial influence and a connector, shaping users' perceptions of usefulness, risk, and legitimacy, ultimately influencing their willingness to use cryptocurrency for payments. By integrating concepts from technology acceptance and perceived risk, this framework shows how institutional support can reduce skepticism and encourage broader adoption of cryptocurrencies. This work links broader institutional factors with individual

behaviors in digital finance. It paves the way for future research on how clear regulations, transparent governance, and accountable platforms can build public confidence. Ultimately, the model emphasizes that successful cryptocurrency adoption depends not only on technical efficiency but also on the trust structures supporting its daily use.

### **An Experimental Examination of the Effects of Competition from Relative Project Evaluation on Managers' Budget Requests**

**Author(s):** Professor Anthony Nikias — Albany State University

Prior theoretical research has shown that relative performance evaluation (RPE) can help improve the efficiency of motivating managers compared to independent evaluation when project costs are positively correlated. Prior experimental research has found that RPE can also induce managers to make social comparisons with peers which might increase competition and performance when peers' abilities are more similar. I conduct an experiment to examine if, in addition to social comparisons managers might become more motivated to outperform peers when the difficulty of competing for project funding increases. I separate the predictions of social comparison and task difficulty theories by correlating managers' project costs when owners commit to alternative RPE funding restrictions which affect equilibrium reporting strategies. The results found evidence consistent with task difficulty theory, as 1) managers submitted significantly lower budget requests when project costs were correlated compared to independent when competition from task difficulty and social comparisons was predicted to increase, and 2) when the predictions of task difficulty and social comparison theories were directionally opposed there was not sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis of no difference in budget requests across cost structures. Further evidence found the difference in budget requests when costs were correlated compared to independent when the predictions of the two theories were directionally aligned in region 1) was significantly greater compared to when they were directionally opposed in region 2). The results found evidence consistent with the contention that the difficulty of competing for funding was important to managers' budget reporting decisions.

### **Assessing the Impact of AI on Small Businesses in Southwest Georgia: Opportunities and Challenges**

**Author(s):** Dr. Edwin Nyamwala — Albany State University

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the way business operate- offering new opportunities for innovation, efficiency, and growth. But for small businesses in Southwest Georgia, embracing AI is a journey filled with both excitement and hurdles. This study, "assessing the Impact of AI on Small Businesses in Southwest Georgia: Opportunities and Challenges," takes a closer look at how local entrepreneurs are beginning to utilize AI tools in areas such as marketing, customer service, and everyday operations. Through survey, interviews, and real-life case studies, it captures their stories -- the wins they're celebrating and the roadblocks they're running into. Many Business owners say AI helps them save time, cut costs, and make smarter decisions. But

others are facing challenges like limited tech know-how, high setup costs, spotty internet access, and worries about data privacy. The research reveals a growing gap between what AI could offer and what's actually possible right now. To bridge that partnerships. By focusing on the unique social and economic landscape of Southwest Georgia, it gives a platform to small business owners who are often left out of national tech conversations. Ultimately, this research offers practical insights for policy makers, educators and community leaders who want to help rural businesses not just keep up with the AI wave--but ride it toward long-term success.

### **Development of a business training model for women artisans: Empoderarte Mujer**

**Author(s):** Dr. Julianna Ramirez Lozano — Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru

The research describes the design and implementation of the teaching model for Peruvian women artisans, which has been created as a social intervention and applied research program developed by a business school in partnership with public agencies. This is a good example of public-private partnerships. It also contributes directly to SDG 4, SDG 8, and SDG 17.

The program content focuses on three pillars: female empowerment and leadership, business training, and improving their artistic creations. The program has been designed at a business school and the teachers are volunteers, who are also conducting applied research on the ecosystem of female artisans and microentrepreneurs in Peru.

<https://empoderartemujercentrum.com/>

### **Consumer Behavior in Mexico before and after the 2025 U.S. Tariffs**

**Author(s):** Dr. Wes Routon — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Luis Torres — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Phillip Hartley — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Jorge Alcaraz — UDLAP Escuela de Negocios

Tariffs, taxes on imports, are well-known to affect real income and wages, business costs, economic growth, government revenue, and employment, among other important economic variables. They are also expected to impact consumer behavior in both the nation imposing the tariff and the one being targeted. In 2025, the United States, Mexico's biggest trading partner, imposed new and significant tariffs on a wide variety of Mexican products. Using a unique survey of Mexican consumers, which was administered soon before and after the tariffs, we investigate changes in consumer behavior resulting from these new policies. We find that Mexican consumers made relatively few adjustments in where they shopped, but became more price sensitive, more responsive to promotions, and increasingly concerned with product durability. Consumer age, gender, and income are all shown to be related to the strength of these impacts. Overall, 21 consumer adjustments and 7 general economic impacts are investigated. Finally, respondents were administered a financial literacy quiz, demonstrating a positive relationship between financial literacy and the degree to which Mexican consumers adjust their behavior post-tariffs.

## **Student-Led Approaches to Career Readiness: Insights from the PROSPER Initiative**

**Author(s):** Dr. Marieke Schilpzand — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Amanda Wilsker — Georgia Gwinnett College

With over half of college graduates nationwide struggling to secure employment aligned with their degrees, questions arise about the alignment between student competencies and workplace expectations. For the past six years, faculty in the School of Business have investigated students' self-perceptions of career readiness. This research began with the validated Career Competency Index (2019–present), expanded in 2022 to include an adaptation of the eight NACE competencies, and in 2023 explored shifts in perception before and after the pandemic.

Building on these findings, we launched PROSPER (Peer-Led Readiness Opportunities for Student Professionalism and Education Refinement), a SEED-funded initiative focused on qualitative insights through peer-led focus groups. While this presentation will briefly share focus group findings, it emphasizes two key extensions of our work.

First, we detail the development and training of PROSPER student researchers. After a selective application and interview process, students completed training modules to build confidence and competence in conducting focus groups. Under faculty guidance, they crafted questions, recruited participants, analyzed transcripts using Co-Pilot AI, and presented their findings in Spring 2025.

Second, we outline the future of PROSPER. Faculty will select a new cohort for PROSPER 2.0. These students will collaborate with faculty to design and implement targeted programming that addresses the career readiness needs identified by their peers.

This initiative not only deepens our understanding of student competencies but also equips students to enter the workforce with greater confidence, leading to stronger employment fit and more meaningful career outcomes.

## **AI at the Ledger: Technology Readiness and Perspectives on AI Integration in Accounting**

**Author(s):** Lynsey Smith — Truman State University; Dr. Isaac Ison — Truman State University

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the accounting field could have revolutionary effects on the entire field, ranging from more individuals not using accounting firms to the replacing of humans at accounting firms as well as an increase in the fluidity of technology readiness. Previous research has demonstrated that AI systems have provided the opportunity for enhancement in efficiency, accuracy, and fraud detection. Additionally, studies have shown a link between technology readiness (TR)—the degree to which a technology is mature enough to be successfully developed, integrated, and operated (Anh et al., 2024)—and the adoption of AI.

Furthermore, studies have suggested that skill requirements and professional roles will change with more integration of AI systems into accounting. Previous studies have focused the use of AI in accounting only within smaller countries around the world, rather than larger countries like the United States of America. This study proposes interviewing accounting professionals to gain knowledge on how accountants and auditors perceive the integration of AI in their profession. It will also study how AI has affected jobs and positions within their field.

### **Switching from Traditional Modeling to Using Computer Software—Feedback From Students**

**Author(s):** Dr. Pingping Song — Georgia Gwinnett College

The class of Management Science (or Operation Management) is a quantitative class for decision making. I have been using traditional modeling methods in this class, which focus on developing models using mathematical expressions to solve problems in various applications. This is the most value creating part in decision making. With the help of computers, it is easy to find the solutions upon entering the model into some computer software. Some examples were used to show this process step by step, but the class didn't spend lots of time on using computers. In recent semesters, I modified the allocation of class time so that students have more hands-on activities using computer software (Excel-Solver) to solve application problems. Once the appropriate model is entered into Solver, students are able to view the solutions instantly and make recommendations accordingly. Assessments used for the class are also modified such that problem solving with Solver is emphasized. Traditional mathematical models are still shown to the class to help illustrate the problem solving reasoning. Feedback from students will be reported on what students think about the modified method compared with the traditional method and how they assess their learning.

### **Fiscal Reform, Growth, and Human Development: Evidence from an IMF-Sponsored Debt Reduction Program in Jamaica**

**Author(s):** Dr. Andrew Stephenson — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. Nicholas A. Wright — Florida International University; Dr. Denvil Duncan — Indiana University; Mr. Alvin Harris — Bank of Jamaica; Bank of Jamaica — Bank of Jamaica

High public debt is widely recognized as a source of macroeconomic instability, and many countries struggle to restore fiscal sustainability despite repeated adjustment efforts. Jamaica now represents a notable exception: by 2013, debt had exceeded 140 percent of GDP, prompting the government to adopt an IMF-supported program that was exceptional in scope. The program had one of the most ambitious primary surplus targets (7 percent), included a novel debt restructuring program, and implemented far-reaching institutional reforms to strengthen fiscal accountability. Using quasi-experimental approaches, we provide the first causal evidence on the program's impact. We find that Jamaica reduced its debt-to-GDP ratio by 37.5 percentage points between 2010 and 2019, primarily through sharp expenditure cuts and debt restructuring. However, these gains came at significant social costs: average income declined, unemployment increased, and health and educational outcomes worsened. These

findings underscore the welfare consequences of aggressive fiscal consolidation and the complex trade-offs faced by highly indebted countries, where improvements in macroeconomic stability may come at the expense of household welfare and long-term human capital.

### **Exploring the Link: Narratives of Leadership Style on Job Satisfaction and Retention of Adjunct Faculty in Higher Learning Institutions**

**Author(s):** Dr. Ginger Stewart — Albany State University; Dr. Albertus Barnes — Albany State University; Dr. Carol Mitchell — Ohio State University

Adjunct faculty comprises a significant portion of the workforce today, as many higher education institutions rely heavily on them. Gaining a better understanding of the leadership styles that improve job satisfaction levels is important as adjunct faculty directly impact student learning, student retention, institutional stability, and workplace culture. Leadership plays an important role in adjunct faculty job satisfaction. Innovation and the agility of adjunct faculty can also be impacted by leadership. It highlights the importance of effective leadership in enhancing faculty satisfaction and retention while navigating the complexities of organizational dynamics. Challenges for Adjunct Faculty: Adjunct faculty face unique challenges, including low salaries, lack of benefits, and limited communication, which can hinder their job satisfaction and sense of inclusion within the university.

### **Building Honors Pathways in Business Education: Insights from Program Models and Outcomes**

**Author(s):** Dr. Kristin Stowe — Wingate University

This project examines how honors opportunities are structured within business schools at small and mid-sized universities, focusing on the balance between academic challenges, program feasibility, and student benefits. Honors opportunities—through enhanced prestige and targeted admissions practices—influence freshmen enrollment decisions and draw applicants who might not otherwise have chosen the institution. Moreover, honors participation is consistently associated with higher retention and graduation rates, even after controlling for academic preparation and background variables. A review of published studies and institutional reports identified common components of business honors programs—such as selective admission, small seminar formats, research or capstone requirements, and professional skill development—but also highlighted wide variation in implementation. To extend this work, data were collected from institutional websites and catalogs for more than 40 small to medium sized AACSB- or ACBSP-accredited schools. Details include GPA standards, honors credit hours, and program structure. Analysis revealed three consistent design patterns: (1) course-based programs emphasizing seminar engagement; (2) integrated tracks linking honors work to major-specific courses; and (3) cohort-based models combining community and research. From these findings, a practical framework emerged that small business schools can adapt.

### **Insights from two Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) experiences**

**Author(s):** Dr. Luis Torres — Georgia Gwinnett College

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) is a form of virtual engagement in which students connect with peers from institutions across national borders. It can be viewed as a learning process where faculty members, in any discipline, use technology to facilitate international education while remaining at their home institutions. These virtual programs provide students with opportunities to develop international and intercultural competencies through experiential learning and collaborative tasks structured within a set number of class activities.

Although COIL is a relatively new type of virtual exchange, it has gained popularity among higher education institutions aiming to expand their global reach without incurring significant costs. COIL typically involves connecting two or more classes in different countries, enabling students to work together on shared assignments and projects.

After offering several COIL engagements in a higher-level business class, insights, reflective thoughts, and takeaways are presented. They include challenges encountered in developing effective activities, as well as success stories and positive student feedback. The main assignments involved case studies and international business simulations, where student groups from two Latin American universities and one U.S. institution collaborated to apply their knowledge and identify optimal solutions.

### **Beyond Narrated Slides: A Pilot Study on Video Format Preferences in Accounting Instruction**

**Author(s):** Dr. Brian Trout — Millersville University

As higher education expands hybrid and online course delivery, video instruction has become essential for communicating complex accounting concepts. Yet research remains limited on how video design influences student engagement and learning in accounting. This study explored student perceptions of an “instructor-on-screen” format developed for managerial and intermediate accounting courses. The videos replaced narrated PowerPoints and whiteboard screencasts with recordings of the instructor teaching at the board in a classroom environment. Fifty-four undergraduates completed an anonymous survey comparing this approach with traditional screencasts. Ninety-five percent of respondents rated the instructor-present videos as better or much better, and all indicated they were more likely to watch this format. Students repeatedly described the videos as “personal,” “clear,” and “like class,” emphasizing how instructor visibility created a sense of connection and realism. These findings correspond with multimedia learning and social-presence theory, both of which suggest that visible human cues and gestures direct attention and increase motivation. While prior research across disciplines shows mixed effects on measurable performance, this pilot revealed strong perceived gains in engagement, clarity, and satisfaction. The results imply that instructor embodiment may be particularly effective in problem-oriented subjects such as accounting, where modeling and real-time demonstration enhance understanding. For accounting faculty, instructor-on-screen videos

represent a practical strategy to humanize asynchronous instruction, reinforce conceptual learning, and sustain student attention. Future research will extend this analysis using experimental design to assess how instructor presence influences actual performance outcomes.

### **Digital Technologies and Supply Chain Adaptability: An Organizational Information Processing Perspective**

**Author(s):** Dr. Hasan Uvet — Georgia Gwinnett College; Dr. John Dickens — The Citadel

In today's volatile global landscape, international trade disruptions driven by tariff conflicts and geopolitical tensions have revealed the fragility of supply chains. Supply chain disruptions threaten firms in today's competitive global economy. To stay resilient against dynamic conditions, organizations are being urged to reimagine how they innovate, communicate, and adapt across their supply ecosystems.

Emerging digital technologies such as radio frequency identification (RFID) and blockchain provide the ability to enhance the visibility, traceability, and security of supply chain operations. Because of the significant number of suppliers within the global supply chain, focal firms lack visibility beyond their first-tier suppliers to build their entire supply chain map. However, these technologies offer potential for greater visibility, agility, and responsiveness during disruption. This study investigates the influence of digital technologies, RFID, and blockchain technology on supply chain adaptability, focusing on the mediating role of IT integration. Anchored in organizational information processing theory, it examines how firms gather, interpret, and respond to information in uncertain environments—and how digital solutions enhance these capabilities.

We conducted an online survey targeting manufacturing professionals across operations, logistics, marketing, and R&D. After screening, 197 valid responses were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis and covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) via AMOS 30. Findings offer insights into how digital transformation can strengthen supply chain adaptability. This research provides practical guidance for managers seeking to navigate ongoing disruption and build more adaptable operations in an increasingly unpredictable world.

### **Cultivating Care Through Service-Learning in Teacher Education**

**Author(s):** Dr Kinga Varga-Dobai — Georgia Gwinnett College

Service-learning is an experiential approach that integrates community engagement with academic study to foster authentic learning (National Commission on Service-Learning, 2002). This study examines service-learning projects designed and implemented by pre-service teachers as part of a leadership experience in a teacher preparation program. Projects focused on expanding Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) practices and strengthening family engagement in practicum classrooms. Strategies included implementing Restorative Circles to support SEL competencies such as self-awareness and problem-solving, as well as organizing both face-to-face and virtual family circles to enhance parent participation in school activities.

The process followed by pre-service teachers paralleled a service-learning cycle: identifying classroom needs (preparation), designing inquiry-based activities (action), assessing impact (action), presenting findings (celebration), and reflecting on outcomes (reflection). Through this process, student teachers not only addressed authentic classroom and community needs but also examined their emerging identities as teacher-leaders and agents of change. A central goal of the project was to support their development in these roles. Findings illustrate how service-learning can foster emotionally attuned leadership by integrating SEL practices with classroom engagement. Findings also demonstrate the potential of service-learning as a framework for preparing teachers to connect leadership, wellbeing, and community responsiveness in their practice. The effectiveness of the study is considered in relation to project outcomes and student reflections on leadership development.

### **Empowering Adult Learners Through Experiential Learning and Critical Thinking: The EXACT Plan**

**Author(s):** Ethin Vo — Georgia Gwinnett College; Preston Dittman — Georgia Gwinnett College; Will Hermel — Georgia Gwinnett College; Hayley Moise — Georgia Gwinnett College; Brianna Wilson — Georgia Gwinnett College

The EXACT (Experiential Learning and Critical Thinking) Plan was developed to provide students with access to experiential learning opportunities that foster essential critical thinking skills. These skills include effective communication, critical evaluation of information, problem-solving, and the analysis of alternative perspectives. Adult learners (typically learners over the age of 25 years old), however, face a distinct set of challenges in higher education, often balancing academic responsibilities with work and family obligations. These competing demands can impact their engagement, performance, and overall learning experience.

This study aims to qualitatively assess the impact of the EXACT Plan on adult learners' academic outcomes and engagement. Through the use of peer-led interviews, participants provided feedback on course difficulty (low, intermediate, or high), completion rates, and the relevance of course content to real-world applications. The research compares the experiences and performance of EXACT participants with those of non-participating contemporary students to determine the program's effectiveness.

Preliminary expectations suggest that students involved in the EXACT Plan will demonstrate improved academic performance, deeper engagement, and enhanced critical thinking skills. The study also seeks to explore how experiential learning can be tailored to meet the unique needs of adult learners, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and effective educational practices. Findings from this research will inform future curriculum design and support services aimed at fostering successful adult learning experiences in higher education.

### **Boldly Integrating AI Ethics and Critical Evaluation into Accounting Principles**

**Author(s):** Dr. Tomeika Williams — Albany State University

This ongoing mixed-methods study looks at how using artificial intelligence (AI) comparison activities in introductory accounting courses may affect student learning and ethical reasoning. The instructional design focuses on the Sweet Bean Café case. In this case, students prepare a bank reconciliation, identify weaknesses in internal controls, and critique an AI-generated version of the same assignment.

The study suggests that structured AI comparison activities will improve students' understanding of cash controls, strengthen their ability to evaluate digital tools critically, and raise ethical awareness when using automated reasoning in financial decision-making.

A mixed-methods design captures both numerical and descriptive aspects of student learning. The numerical data includes survey responses measuring confidence, ethical awareness, and accuracy in spotting accounting errors, as well as performance metrics from the assignment. The data collected will consist of reflection essays and open-ended surveys, which will be analyzed thematically to explore how students think ethically and apply critical thinking when faced with AI assisted outputs. Combining these data sources provides a comprehensive view of how AI affects both technical skills and moral reasoning in accounting education.

By the time of the conference, preliminary analyses will reveal emerging trends in students' confidence, analytical accuracy, and ethical reasoning. This teaching session will share early findings of sample reflection prompts, and various teaching strategies for accounting faculty interested in incorporating AI responsibly into their curriculum. The study links technological innovation with professional integrity, ethical awareness, and critical evaluation skills that are essential for the evolving accounting profession.

### **AI warehousing in neighborhoods (good or bad), that is the question**

**Author(s):** Dr. Victor Williams — Albany State University; Dr. Amaechi Nwaokoro — Albany State University; Dr. Johannes Badejo, — Albany State University; Dr. Sandra Washington — Albany State University

The fast growth of artificial intelligence (AI) in warehouse operations has changed world logistics and supply chain management (Lee & Zhang, 2022). However, the growing need of AI-warehouses in or near residential areas has caused increased social, economic, and eco-friendly concerns (Nguyen, 2023). While automation improves operational efficiency, systematic accuracy, and cost reduction, it instantaneously introduces problems for surrounding communities. These facilities often cause traffic congestion, noise contamination, and carbon emissions due to continuous delivery and freight activities (Smith et al., 2021). In addition, the loss of human labor by automated systems contributes to local job losses and economic inequality (Rodriguez & Patel, 2020). The use of information systems and surveillance technologies for AI-warehouse optimization has caused ethical concerns regarding confidentiality and community monitoring (Kumar, 2022). In many cases, too little zoning regulations and no urban planning exacerbate these effects, leading to conflicts between industrial growth and

residential welfare (Chen & Davis, 2023). This paper looks at the economic, social, and environmental consequences of AI warehousing in neighborhoods, highlighting the urgent need for balanced policies that promote technological progress without undermining community well-being.

### **Creating a Culture of Engagement: The Role of Peer Collaboration in EXACT**

**Author(s):** Brianna Wilson — Georgia Gwinnett College

Building community and collaboration is central to the mission of the EXACT Student Advisory Board (SAB). This presentation will explore how peer collaboration within the SAB fosters a culture of engagement, belonging, and innovation at Georgia Gwinnett College. Through structured interviews and team-based reflection, students not only gather feedback from their peers but also develop essential leadership, communication, and research skills. The SAB serves as a bridge between students and faculty, providing a platform for shared dialogue that shapes the future of experiential learning on campus. By encouraging active participation and ownership, the program transforms students into co-creators of their learning environment. The presentation will share best practices for organizing peer-led initiatives, maintaining student motivation, and leveraging data from interviews to influence program design. Ultimately, this session will showcase how the SAB's collaborative framework promotes professional growth, inclusion, and sustained engagement, demonstrating that when students are empowered to work together, they can drive meaningful institutional change and enrich the academic experience for all.

## 2026 Symposium Participating Institutions

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Location</b>
Albany State University	Albany, Georgia
Bank of Jamaica	Kingston, Jamaica
Boston College	Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts
Columbus State University	Columbus, Georgia
Elizabethtown College	Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania
Florida International University	Miami, Florida
Georgia Gwinnett College	Lawrenceville, Georgia
Georgia Southern University	Statesboro, Georgia
Indiana University	Bloomington, Indiana
MERGE Inc	Lawrenceville, Georgia
Millersville University	Millersville, Pennsylvania
Ohio State University	Columbus, Ohio
Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru	Lima, Peru
Quincy University	Quincy, Illinois
The Citadel	Charleston, South Carolina
The Hip Hop Museum	Bronx, NY
The University of South Dakota	Vermillion, South Dakota
Truman State University	Kirksville, Missouri
UDLAP Escuela de Negocios	San Andrés Cholula, Mexico
US Food and Drug Administration	Silver Spring, Maryland
University of North Georgia	Dahlonega, Georgia
University of West Florida	Pensacola, Florida
Valdosta State University	Valdosta, Georgia
Wingate University	Wingate, North Carolina

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