
From: NCE Dean
Sent: Friday, October 3, 2025 12:49 PM
To:
Subject: NCE Fall Quarterly Newsletter - Advancing Excellence in Teacher Preparation & Educational Leadership



**NATIONAL LOUIS
UNIVERSITY**
National College of Education™

NCE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Fall 2025



Dean's Letter

Dear National College of Education Community,

Welcome to the fall quarter! The start of a new school year has always held special meaning for the National College of Education, as we are a college dedicated to preparing teachers and leaders who shape classrooms and communities. Fall is a season of new beginnings, new ideas, and new opportunities to learn and grow together.

This quarter, we are welcoming the third cohort into our New Teacher Induction Program, which offers a professional learning community and mentorship for beginning teachers as they navigate the critical first years of their careers. Recent participants shared that the group discussions and constructive feedback were especially valuable, giving them practical tools and encouragement they could immediately apply in their classrooms.

At the same time, we recognize the mental health challenges that often emerge in times of complexity. As dean, I am committed to ensuring that our faculty have the knowledge, resources, and professional preparation needed to guide candidates in ways that reflect the realities of today's classrooms. In doing so, we affirm our responsibility to prepare educators who can recognize, respond to, and address the diverse and immediate needs of learners with both competence and care.

Over the summer, the College advanced its work on emerging technologies, especially artificial intelligence, and their impact on education. We are committed to staying at the forefront of understanding how AI is being integrated into PK–12 schools and what it means for teaching, learning, and leadership. In partnership with districts, we are equipping teachers with the skills to introduce AI confidently and responsibly in their classrooms. At the same time, our faculty have developed AI guidance for NCE students, aligned with University policy, to clarify best practices and ease concerns. This work provides consistency across programs while preparing students to use AI thoughtfully and professionally in their future careers.

As always, I am grateful for the dedication of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Together, we continue to ensure that the National College of Education remains a place where innovation and care

for our community guide everything we do. We have much to look forward to and be grateful for this year as we continue our shared work in education.

Warmly,

Georges Lieh-Kwok
Dean, National College of Education

What's New

New Driver's Education Endorsement

NLU is now offering a Safety and Driver's Education endorsement aligned with the ISBE Illinois Driver Education Standards. This 18-semester hour program is designed for certified Illinois teachers who hold a secondary Professional Educator License (PEL), providing the opportunity to earn a subsequent endorsement to teach driver education at the high school level.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the endorsement.

Faculty Recognition



Nominated by the NLU community, two NCE faculty members received Faculty Excellence Awards at the 2025 National Louis University Connections. Congratulations to professor **Ayn Keneman**, recipient of the Excellence in Inquiry award and adjunct instructor, **Stephanie Shames**, recipient of the Excellence in Service & Engagement award.

Dr. Keneman also recently received a scholarship to pursue ISTE Certification through the AI for Tomorrow's Teachers Project 2025, with funding from GM. This fall, she'll join a select cohort exploring how to equip future teachers with the knowledge and confidence to use AI ethically and effectively in education.

Thought Leadership

Publications

Associate Professor **Sadia Warsi** has authored [Beyond Labels: Understanding Refugee Students with Disabilities in Educational Contexts](#).

Associate Professor **Xiaoning Chen** and Professor **Eun Kyung Ko** have published [Multilingual Learners in STEAM](#). Two chapters were written by NCE faculty members **Vishodana Thamotharan** and **Xiaoli Wen**. The book is a valuable resource for educators, teacher educators, and school leaders committed to equitable learning environments.

Associate Professor **Tracee Farmer** published "Notes from the Field: To Create Belonging, First Look Within" with colleague Kathleen Brown in the Fall 2025 edition of *The California Reader*.

Associate Professor **Gloria McDaniel-Hall** published "[What Happens When We Defund Belonging in Schools? The Silent Casualties Tell the Story](#)" in *TheGrio*.

Associate Professor **Angela Elkordy** co-authored the book chapter "[Generative AI in Academic Research: A Practical Guide for Scholars](#)" in *AI Applications and Pedagogical Innovation* (IGI Global, 2026).

Jamillah Gilbert, Director of Teacher Preparation, has co-authored [The AI Survival Guide for Parents](#).



Presentations

Associate Professors **Jason Stegemoller** and **Colleen Hamilton** presented “[Multilingualism in Postsecondary Policy, Planning, and Pedagogy](#)” at the International Conference on Multilingualism and Minority Languages in a Global Context, held in Davos, Switzerland.

Associate Professor **Stephen Curda** and **Jon Oelke**, NLU Director of Faculty Engagement and Development, presented “*Beyond Artificial Intelligence (AI) Revolution: Transforming Higher Education Through Faculty-Driven AI Integration*” at the [United States Distance Learning Association \(USDLA\)](#) National Conference in St. Louis, MO.

NCE faculty presented multiple sessions at [ISTELive 25: Inspiring Bold Innovation](#), hosted by the International Society for Technology in Education in San Antonio, TX. Presentations included:

- [AI-Powered Inspiration: Empowering Teachers to Spark Student Engagement](#) **Angela Elkordy, Jack Denny, Stuart Carrier, Donna Wakefield, and Ayn Keneman.**
- [Imagination Unbounded: P-20 Educator Learners Share Successes Using GenAI](#) **Angela Elkordy** and Internal Program Evaluator **Douglas van Dyke**, with doctoral students Karla Clark and Katie Girardot.
- [Powering Up: Computer Science for Every Learner Through Culturally Responsive Professional Development](#) **Angela Elkordy**; Silvia Rogel, Illinois Resource Center; Abril Vela, CS for Success; plus Suzanne Carlson & Heather Cunningham from BootUp.
- [Cultivating Success for Minority Graduate Students Using ISTE Standards](#) **Stuart Carrier** and **Geri Chesner.**
- [Tapping into Hidden Talent: Building a Paraprofessional to Teacher Pipeline](#) **Julie Sidarous**, Director of the Hawkins Grant, and **Douglas van Dyke.**
- *Visual Metaphors and Collaborative Dialogue: Fostering Professional Growth and Resilience in Education (Virtual)* **Karen Tardrew.**

At the [Teacher Leader Institute](#) (TLI) in Ann Arbor, MI, **Dana Hagerman**, Co-Director of the Reading Recovery Center for Literacy, served as a conference coordinator. **Tracee Farmer**, also Co-Director, participated in the Updates Session and moderated the closing session, “*The Heart of the Work: Staying Inspired, Engaged, and Whole.*”

Associate Professor **Angela Elkordy** presented at the Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA) 2025 Annual Conference in Cleveland, OH. Together with colleagues from the Illinois Resource Center, CS for Success, and BootUp Professional Development, Dr. Elkordy presented “[Powering Up: Computer Science for Every Learner and Culturally Responsive Professional Development.](#)” sharing results from the first year of a three-year research project.

Dr. Elkordy was also invited to present a workshop at Beibu Gulf University in Qinzhou, China. Her session, “*Enhancing Teaching Outcomes with Artificial Intelligence: Practical Pedagogies and Global Perspectives,*” was delivered bilingually in English and Mandarin, with support from colleagues **Xiaoning Chen** and **Xiuwen Wu.**

At the Texas Computer Education Association (TCEA) [AI for Educators Conference](#), an online national event, **Dr. Elkordy** delivered multiple sessions. These included:

- *The SCALE Framework for Co-Designing with AI* (with Michael McVey)
- *Amplifying Your Teaching: AI Tools in Early Childhood Education* (with doctoral candidate Kimberlee Hendricks)
- *Language Learning through Computer Science in K–5 Classrooms* (with Silvia Rogel),

- *Future Prep: A Practical Guide to Generative AI for Educational Leaders*

Professor **Eun Kyung Ko** delivered an invited talk on equity-based STEM education as part of a professional learning exchange for 47 STEM teachers and administrators from Busan, South Korea. The delegation, hosted at Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development, engaged with U.S. educators on innovative strategies for STEM teaching and learning.

NCE faculty presented their research and chaired sessions at the [European Conference on Educational Research \(ECER\)](#) 2025 in Belgrade, Serbia:

- Assistant Professor **Blanca Gamez-Djokic**: *"Affective-DisCrit Research-Practice Partnerships: Recognizing Affective-Spatio-Temporal Glitching in RPPs."*
- Associate Professor **Todd Price**: *"What Counts as Evidence? A Study of US Education Policy as Curriculum"* within the symposium *"Theoretical Perspectives on Evidence: US and German Educational"* (chaired by Dr. Price).

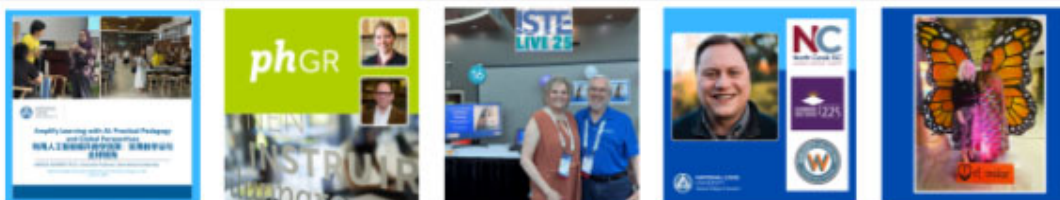
In the Field

Professor **Ayn Keneman**, Board Member at El Valor, co-led an MAT in Early Childhood Education Application Workshop at El Valor's Carlos Cantu Children & Family Center in Chicago. The event guided early childhood educators through MAT program options as they prepare for new state licensure requirements.

Assistant Professor **Lee Tate** attended the 2025 Smithsonian National Education Summit in Washington, DC, participating in sessions on equity, community, SEL, and professional learning communities, with takeaways to strengthen NLU's Teacher Preparation program.

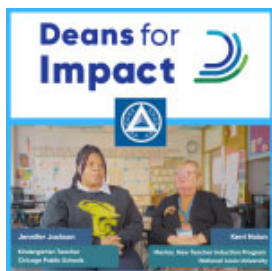
Ayn Keneman, Jamillah Gilbert, Elizabeth Mehringer, Rick Yaconis, Lionel Sarti, Kimberlee Hendricks, and Sasha Villagrana-Frost represented NLU at El Valor's 52nd Anniversary Don Quixote Gala, *"Noche de Monarca,"* in Chicago. As an event sponsor, NLU supported dual-language early childhood programming and housing for adults with disabilities.

Assistant Professor **Tim Dohrer** recently presented across the Chicago area, including book talks and workshops on mental health in schools at the North Cook Intermediate Service Center, wellness and SEL sessions at Glenbrook High School District 225's Institute Day, and a keynote on thriving schools at Wolcott College Prep.



In the Media

NTI Featured in Deans for Impact Article



NCE's New Teacher Induction (NTI) program is featured in a recent Deans for Impact article, "How ed-prep programs can strengthen new teacher retention through mentorship and induction," highlighting NTI as a model for supporting early-career educators.

Through mentorship and community, NTI helps new teachers thrive and stay in the profession.

Read the article [here](#).

Dean Theard-Griggs Featured in Podcast

Dean **Carolyn Theard-Griggs**, is featured in the Deans for Impact new podcast, "[Hand in Hand, Place to Place: Transforming Teacher Preparation.](#)"

Episode 2: Leading in a Changing Landscape examines how the role of leaders has evolved over the last decade, and the mindsets and actions necessary of Educator-Preparation Program (EPP) leaders to champion accessible, high-quality pathways in teaching looking ahead.



Celebrations



Amber Schmittiel, '15 MEd Educational Leadership, who was named the new principal of Parcels Middle School in Gross Pointe Woods, Michigan.

Educational Leadership candidates Margaret Bohlin, Kristian Clarke, Lauren Farris, Tiahanna Robinson, and Tracy Royer have been awarded scholarships from the Illinois Principals Association through the School Leader Pipeline Program.

Danielle (Livengood) Brewer, '22 Ed.D. Educational Leadership was appointed interim superintendent of Marion County Public Schools, FL.

Ben Whitehouse, '07 Ed.S. in Educational Leadership and NLU adjunct instructor, was appointed deputy superintendent of Marion County Public Schools, FL.

John Pope, '22 Ed.D. Educational Leadership and NLU Adjunct instructor, was appointed principal of Marion County Public Schools, FL.

New Faces



Matt Adams is an Assistant Professor of Middle Grades Education. Dr. Adams earned his Ph.D. in Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education from Michigan State University with a focus on science education. A former 8th grade science teacher in Denver, he is passionate about supporting novice teachers in creating student-driven, socially conscious classrooms. His research explores ways to integrate social justice into teaching, support early-career educators, and understand how teachers and students make meaning in their learning.



Alexandra Cruz English is an Assistant Professor of Curriculum & Instruction. A dedicated scholar-practitioner with 17+ years of experience in secondary and post-secondary education, Dr. Cruz English is a proud NLU alum whose research focuses on education policy, school reform, and the Latino/a/x experience in education. A lifelong Chicagoan, she is passionate about addressing systemic inequities and supporting diverse learners.



Lisa Kay Dickey is an Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education. With over 30 years of experience as an educator and leader, Lisa brings expertise in program administration, faculty preparation, and the design of innovative, inclusive learning environments. A proud NLU alum, she recently served as Program Manager for NCE's Early Childhood Faculty Preparation program. Lisa is passionate about preparing the next generation of early childhood professionals to lead with vision, creativity, and purpose.



Carla D. Foord is an Assistant Professor for Florida NCE Programs (EDL and MAT).

An accomplished educator and leader with 25+ years of experience from early childhood to higher education, Dr. Foord has taught in NLU's EDL and MAT programs for the past three years. She brings expertise in innovative teaching practices, educator development, and school leadership, along with a passion for preparing the next generation of teachers and leaders.



Nicholas Kryczka is an Assistant Professor of Secondary Education for Social Studies.

A historian and educator with 20 years of experience in secondary and post-secondary classrooms, Dr. Kryczka brings deep expertise in U.S. history education and teacher preparation. He earned his Ph.D. in History from the University of Chicago and most recently served as research coordinator and lead author for the American Historical Association's national study of secondary U.S. History instruction.



Benjamin Lathrop is an Assistant Professor of Secondary Education.

A National Board Certified Teacher with 23 years of experience in English language arts and teacher education, Dr. Lathrop brings a passion for preparing future educators to navigate today's complex media landscape. He joins us from Purdue University, where he completed his Ph.D. in Curriculum & Instruction and served as a Dean's Doctoral Fellow.



Julie Sidarous is an Assistant Professor of Special Education.

An award-winning educator, researcher, and former Program Director of the Hawkins Grant, Dr. Sidarous brings deep expertise in culturally responsive teaching, special education, and teacher preparation. A proud NLU alum, she holds a doctorate in Curriculum, Advocacy, and Policy and has taught in NLU's CPS residency programs for nearly a decade. Dr. Sidarous is passionate about fostering strong student relationships and supporting diverse learners in high-need schools.



Mary Quest is an Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education.

With over a decade of classroom experience, Dr. Quest brings a deep commitment to relationship-based learning and inclusive early childhood education. She earned her Ph.D. in Child Development from Erikson Institute and Loyola University and has taught at several institutions across the Chicago area. Her research explores how equity-focused, care-based teaching in higher ed can shape future early childhood classroom practices.

