
From: NCE Dean
Sent: Thursday, April 10, 2025 1:31 PM
To: NCE Dean
Subject: NCE Spring Quarterly Newsletter - Advancing Excellence in Teacher Preparation & Educational Leadership



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

NCE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Spring 2025



Dean's Letter

Dear National College of Education Community,

Welcome to the spring term!

As the field of education continues to change, the National College of Education remains dedicated to its mission of preparing and empowering educators. We are committed to equipping our students with the knowledge, tools, and skills to navigate new challenges, including the increased and purposeful use of generative artificial intelligence in educational settings. This summer, we are excited to offer [AI Innovations in Teaching and Learning](#) badge opportunity for P-12 educators, preservice teachers, and educational leaders. This eight-week series, aligned with the UNESCO AI Competency Framework for Teachers, will explore how AI can enhance teaching and learning. Participants will gain hands-on experience, earn a digital badge, Illinois continuing professional development units (CPDUs), and walk away with practical AI resources to use in their classrooms.

Beyond embracing emerging technology, our faculty continues to go the extra mile to creatively and meaningfully support student success. They enrich their curriculum by inviting expert guest speakers, incorporating new resources, and fostering collaboration through research and conference presentations. Faculty members not only publish with students but also engage them on advisory boards, giving them a voice in shaping the future of education. Dr. Todd Price recently encouraged a student to speak in Washington, D.C., providing a platform to contribute to national discussions on language education. Dr. Gloria McDaniel-Hall led a family reading night event to help a student fulfill an internship requirement. I believe these moments are what set NCE apart - our commitment to student growth and success. Our faculty champions students not only through professional development and learning materials but also by providing experiences that prepare them for thriving careers.

We appreciate your commitment to the National College of Education. Wishing everyone a spring term full of innovation and growth!

Warm regards,

Carolyn Theard-Griggs

What's New

Two NCE Programs Nationally Recognized

- The **Secondary Education World Languages Program** is now nationally recognized by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).
- The **Educational Leadership Studies Program for Principal Licensure** is now nationally recognized by the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Specialized Professional Association.

NCE Adjunct Connections a Success

The Adjunct Connections event, held on January 11, featured professional development sessions run by NLU faculty and staff on topics of AI, academic honesty, and culturally responsive teaching, among others. Over 60 NCE colleagues participated in this engaging day.

We See the Teacher in You!

NCE is continuing its partnership with Grow Your Own Illinois to help address the teacher shortage. As one of 10 Universities promoting the **We See the Teacher in You** campaign, we are working to inspire and recruit underrepresented individuals into teacher licensure programs across Illinois. Learn more at BeTheTeacher.org.



Congratulations, Dr. Sparks!

Associate Professor Carla Sparks, was the recipient of the **FAPEL Distinguished Teaching Award!** This honor, presented by the Florida Association of Professors of Educational Leadership, recognizes excellence in teaching and dedication to educational leadership.

Thought Leadership

Publications

Associate Professor **Xiaoning Chen** co-authored the article "[Unpacking Chinese American Children's Identities Through Critical Visual Literacy Analysis of Multimodal Discourses](#)" in the *Journal of Visual Literacy*, published February 4, 2025.

NCE authors published two articles in the Illinois Reading Council Journal, Volume 53, Number 1, Winter 2025.

- [Professional Development: We Will Move Forward!](#) by Associate Professor **Sophie Degener**, Alumnus, **Adelfio Garcia**, Adjunct Alumna, **Dora M. Guzmán**, and Adjunct Alumna, **Ivy Sitkoski**.
- [Translanguaging: New Wine in an Old Bottle, or New Wine?](#) By Professor **Kristin Lems**.

Associate Professor **Xiuwen Wu** published an article titled "[Go Game and Mathematics Learning in Third-Grade Elementary Classrooms: An Explorative Study](#)" with the International Society of Go Studies in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Go Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2.

Associate Professor **Renee Gugel** published the essay "[I Work With New Teachers. Every One Wanted This PD](#)" in the March 4, 2025 issue of *EdWeek*. Dr. Gugel examines how new teachers benefit from peer observation opportunities as a critical component of their professional development and growth.

Professor **Kristin Lems's** book [Building Literacy with Multilingual Learners: Insights from Linguistics \(3rd ed.\)](#) was reviewed in the December 2024 edition of the *Bilingual Research Journal*. The review states that the book emerges as a seminal work providing comprehensive insights into effective English language teaching methods for English Language Learners.



Presentations

Associate Professor **Ruth Quiroa** presented " 'Bookjoy' Lost and Found: Teacher-Reported Professional Growth in a Postsecondary Youth Literature Course for Reading Specialists and Reading Teachers" at [Fostering Dialogue: Teaching Children's Literature and Reading for Fun at University](#).

The [2025 Annual Comprehensive Literacy and Reading Recovery Conference](#) was held January 22-24 in downtown Chicago at the Marriott on the Magnificent Mile. There were 339 registrants from 18 states and Canada who attended the event.

Conference speakers included:

- "Reflecting on Our Practices When the Child has a Limited Repertoire" by **Tracee Farmer**, Co-Director of the Reading Recovery Center for Literacy at NLU
- "Teacher, I don't remember...Considering Working Memory across the Less..." by **Dana Hagerman**, Co-Director of the Reading Recovery Center for Literacy at NLU & **Connie Obrochta**, Reading Recovery Teacher Leader
- "The Influence of L1 Orthography on the Development of English Learners" by **Kristin Lems**, NCE Professor
- "Word Work in Spanish for DLL Students" by **Lisa Bakken-Lawrenz**, NCE Adjunct Faculty & **Nancy Hanson**, NCE Adjunct Faculty
- "Embrace Oracy: Empowering Children to Build a Strong Foundation for Literacy" by **K. Mallery Keenan**, NCE Adjunct Faculty & **Heidi Marchetti**, Reading Specialist, Crystal Lake School District 47

Drs. Eun Kyung Ko and Vishodana Thamotharan presented their work, "Designing Culturally Responsive Lessons with AI (LLM): Enhancing Engagement and Inclusion," at the [Educational Advances in Artificial Intelligence](#) (EAAI) Conference in Philadelphia, PA.

Faculty Presented at the Critical Questions in Education (CQIE) Conference hosted by the [Academy for Educational Studies](#) in Savannah, GA.

- Assistant Professor **Molly Buren** presented "Research-Practice Partnerships: Rethinking Research, Disability, and Partnership Norms" with **Bari Fleischer**, Ed.D. student in Teaching and Learning.
- Associate Professor **Stephen Curda** presented "Navigating the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Revolution: What Faculty Members Want You to Know."

Associate Professor **Renee Gugel** presented a breakout session called "What Teacher Leaders Want You to Know About Professional Development" at the [Lake County Regional Office of Education "FeBRRuary" Institute Day](#). This was the second county-wide institute day for Lake County held at both Lakes High School and Mundelein High School.

Professor **Seema Imam** co-chaired the Islamic Schools League of America (ISLA) inaugural [Research Symposium](#). The event brought eighteen Muslim researchers together to present their work across six themes: Leadership, Character & Identity, Arabic & Islamic Studies, Governance & Well-Being, Classroom Curriculum, and Prophetic Pedagogy.

Drs. **Angela Elkordy**, **Jack Denny**, **Donna Wakefield**, **Stuart Carrier**, and **Ayn Keneman** (ECE) presented "[Exploring AI in Higher Education: Research-Informed Practices for Teaching and Learning](#)" at [IDEAcon 2025](#) (Illinois Digital Educators Alliance) held in Schaumburg, IL.

Additional NCE presentations at IDEAcon 2025 included:

- **Angela Elkordy**, Associate Professor, [Future Prep: A Practical Guide to Generative AI for Educational Leaders](#) & [Extend & Elevate Instructional Practice with Generative AI for Innovative Learning Design](#)
- **Donna Wakefield**, Associate Professor, [Google Tips, Tricks, and Tools for Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity](#), [Beyond the Hype: Harnessing AI to Empower Special Education Through Technology](#), [Using AI in Universal Design for Learning](#) & [AI Prompt Engineering to Meet the Needs of All Learners](#)
- **David Chan**, Adjunct Faculty, [Why Evanston Township HS Chose AI to Solve Its IT Challenges -- And What You Can Learn](#) & [Power Up Your PD: An Evolution of Effective EdTech PD at ETHS](#)
- **Douglas Van Dyke**, Adjunct Faculty, [Ctrl+Alt+Teach: Navigating the AI Revolution in Education -- Ethics, Algorithms, and Applications](#)
- **Mia Gutsell**, '18 M.Ed. Technology in Education, [Dispelling Myths of AI with History and Ethics](#)

Associate Professors **Eun Kyung Ko** and **Xiaoning Chen** presented their work titled "Advancing Linguistic Justice and STEAM Education through Translanguaging" at the Illinois Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages - Bilingual Education [ITBE 50th Annual Convention](#) in Lisle, IL.

At the [2025 Early Childhood Symposium](#), hosted by the Collaboration for Early Childhood in Oak Park, IL, NCE faculty presentations included:

- Playful Pathways: Growing Strong Mathematical Mindsets in Early Years by Assistant Professor **Bilge Cerezci**
- Understanding and Responding to Infant Crying and Fussing: Strategies for Caregiving by Associate Professor **Leslie Katch**

At the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) 2025 Convention in Baltimore, MD, **Drs. Xiuwen Wu**, **Shannon Hammond**, **Eun Kyung Ko**, and **Kathleen Kotel** presented "Deepening Meaning for All Learners with Learning by Scientific Design (LbSD) Teaching Practices."

Dana Hagerman, **Tracee Farmer**, and **Connie Obrochta** from the Reading Recovery Center for Literacy presented at [LitCon 2025](#) in Columbus, Ohio.

Tracee Farmer, Associate Professor and Reading Recovery Trainer, presented the following three sessions:

- Small Changes for Big Impact: Improvement Science in Action
- [Blinded by Perceptions: Observing and Teaching the Whole Child](#)
- [Reflecting on Our Practices when the Child has a Limited Repertoire](#)

Dana Hagerman, Assistant Professor and Reading Recovery Trainer, and **Connie Obrochta**, Reading Recovery Teacher Leader, co-presented:

- [Connecting Executive Function Skills across the Lesson](#)

Connie Obrochta also presented:

- [The Reading Recovery Lesson Series: Creating a Growth Mindset Greenhouse](#)

Dr. Renee Gugel and **Dr. Geri Chesner** presented the Keynote address "Teacher Leadership and Professional Development: A Winning Combination" at the eighth annual [Illinois Teacher Leadership Summit](#) in Normal, Illinois.

In the Field

Associate Professor **Gloria McDaniel-Hall** joined the [Center for Success](#) panel on "Culturally Responsive Teacher and Leader Standards—Aligning, Enacting, Assessing, and Reflecting," discussing how NCE faculty integrate CRTL into professional development, fieldwork, and assessment.

Dr. McDaniel-Hall led a **Family Reading Night** for PreK parents at Carter Elementary (CPS), sharing strategies to make reading engaging. NCE student **Marquita Reese** incorporated the event into her Educational Leadership internship. "It was a joy to see her passion for family engagement in action!" McDaniel-Hall said.

Associate Professor **Eun Kyung Ko** hosted ten educators from Busan, South Korea, and the Director of the Chicago Korean Education Center at Bell Montessori and the NLU Wheeling Campus, offering insights into U.S. education. She highlighted NCE's mission and innovative teacher preparation programs.

Molly Seedhouse from the [Illinois Student Invention Convention \(ISIC\)](#) visited Associate Professor **Eun Kyung Ko**'s science methods class to share insights on the ISIC curriculum and opportunities for teacher candidates. The session introduced future educators to the transdisciplinary invention program designed for K-8 students across Illinois, which fosters innovation, problem-solving, and real-world application of STEM concepts. In another session, Dr. Ko's class welcomed Colleen Ross from [Learning Blade](#), who shared free STEM and AI resources for K-12 career exploration. Illinois schools now have free access to Learning Blade's resources, offering a fantastic opportunity for our teacher candidates to bring high-quality, career-focused STEM learning to their future students.

Associate Professor **Todd Price** has reported on the recent advocacy work of **Esmeralda Mora**, Ed.D. student in Teaching and Learning: Curriculum, Advocacy, and Policy (CAP), on behalf of world languages. Esmeralda participated in [Language Advocacy Days 2025](#) in Washington, D.C. "Our curriculum does not happen by accident; advocacy is needed from all of us," Esmeralda remarked. Gratitude was expressed towards Dr. Price for his guidance in advocacy for this event.

Dr. Price, alongside Kenosha Unified School Board Members Sabrina Landry, Bob Tierney, and Superintendent Jeff Weiss advocated for increased special education funding at the Wisconsin Association of School Boards 2025 Day at the Capitol.



In the News

Professor Emeritus **Carlos M. Azcoitia** was interviewed on the Univision Chicago 10 pm News regarding the 2024 NAEP scores in Chicago that were recently received. The [National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\)](#) is often called "The Nation's Report Card." [Watch the video here.](#)

Associate Professor **Stuart I. Carrier** was recognized at the [Gasparilla Distance Classic](#) (GDC) annual luncheon in Ybor City, FL as one of two Gasparilla Legacy Runners who have run in the GDC for its entire 47-year history. ABC-TV News in Tampa reported on Dr. Carrier as a Legacy Runner in anticipation of his 48th race in a row this year. Watch the news video and read more at: [Gasparilla Distance Classic Legacy Runners Reflect on 47 Past Race Weekends.](#)

Celebrations

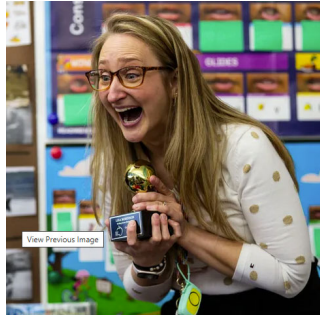


Alumna **Safiyah Jackson**, '06 M.Ed. Early Childhood Administration & '16 M.Ed. School Psychology, was elected to represent District Two on the Wake County, NC Board of Commissioners.

Current M.Ed. in Curriculum & Instruction ESL/Bilingual student **Victor Gomez** was named Cook County Co-Regional Teacher of the Year by ISBE.

Alumna **Millicent Borishade**, '08 Ed.D. in Educational Leadership has been named the new superintendent of St. Louis Public Schools.

Dr. Borishade also received an MAT in Elementary Education and a Certificate of Advanced Study in Administration and Supervision from NLU.



Congratulations to NCE M.Ed. in Curriculum & Instruction alumna, **Lisa Robinson** (pictured left), on being one of six elementary school teachers from across the Rockford region to be recognized with a Golden Apple Award for excellence in teaching.



Congratulations to alumna **Megan Forsythe** (pictured left), '05 M.Ed. in Curriculum & Instruction, who is the recipient of the Golden Apple Foundation's 2025 Outstanding Principal award.

Alana Brown, '17 Ed.S. and current Ed.D. Educational Leadership candidate, was promoted to Principal of Seminole High School in Seminole, Florida.

New Faces



Nancy Battaglia joins us as an Undergraduate Field Experience Specialist after a 30-year career in K-12 education. She spent 10 years teaching social studies and technology before becoming a high school assistant principal and technology director. Her experience in both small and large districts, including the Archdiocese of Chicago, gives her valuable insight into student placements. Nancy holds an undergraduate degree from St. Mary's College in Notre Dame, IN and graduate degrees from Northwestern University and DeVry University.



Dr. Courtney Plotts is a licensed school psychologist, certified special education teacher, and expert in culturally responsive interventions. She has been a full-time faculty member, higher education leader, and consultant for the past 15 years. With over a decade of experience, she has collaborated with the Council for At-Risk Student Education and Professional Standards, advocating for inclusive practices and supporting educators.

Known for her approachable nature, Dr. Plotts bridges the gap between theory and practice, empowering teachers and improving student outcomes through cultural responsiveness. Her commitment to fostering inclusive learning environments makes her a valuable resource for any educational institution or professional community. She is excited to join the NLU family and looks forward to connecting with colleagues in Tampa and Chicago.

Events



Save the Date!

NLU Doctoral Research Symposium

Thursday, May 15, 2025

4:30-7:00 pm CST | 5:30-8:00 pm EST

Via Zoom | More information can be viewed [here](#).



AI Innovations in Teaching and Learning Badge

June 18 - August 6 2025

8 Wednesday Sessions, 9:30-10:30 am CST

\$50 for the entire series

Register [here](#)

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