
From: NCE Dean
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**NATIONAL LOUIS
UNIVERSITY**
National College of Education™

NCE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Summer 2025



Dean's Letter

Dear National College of Education Community,

Welcome to the summer term! As we move through these next few months, I'm energized by the work happening across our community. In a field that continues to grow and change, our strength lies in our ability to stay innovative and flexible in the face of new challenges and opportunities.

Our AI Summer Badge Series is an exciting success. Aligned with the UNESCO AI framework for teachers, AI Literacy Framework, Principles of Responsible AI and Justice, and ISTE standards, both the summer and upcoming fall sessions filled rapidly, prompting the creation of waitlists for each. This strong response is a clear indication that educators are eager to understand and lead through the evolving role of AI in K-12 education. This work is just one way we are positioning ourselves to be at the forefront of AI for educators. We are also exploring how we can further support principals and superintendents as AI begins to shape instructional leadership, operations, and the student experience in schools.

We remain deeply committed to our school and district partners. These relationships are foundational to our work, and we thrive when we collaborate meaningfully. This past year, our Office of Field Experiences supported over 1,700 student teaching placements, thanks to the dedication of our team and school partners. And we're already looking ahead—we are currently recruiting for our next Teacher Induction Program, which will launch in August and continue to offer a professional learning community and support new teachers in their critical first years.

We also had the joy of celebrating our Class of 2025 at a truly inspiring commencement ceremony. Seeing our graduates walk across the stage as future teachers, leaders, and advocates was a powerful reminder of why we do this work. These changemakers are stepping into the world prepared to make a meaningful difference, and we are proud to have been part of their journey. At the NCE ceremony, we were also honored to welcome Kay Nixon '96 MAT, '04 Cert, '14 Cert, as our Commencement Speaker. Kay is an NLU Life Trustee, a member of the NCE Brain Trust—an advisory group of NCE alumni and champions who provide insight and guidance on the College's strategy—and a generous supporter of several key NCE initiatives.

Thank you for your continued dedication to the future of education. We look forward to what we will build together in the months ahead.

Warmly,

Carolyn Theard-Griggs, Ed.D.

Dean, National College of Education

What's New

Tutoring Impact Report

The NLU Tutoring Impact Report has recently been published, highlighting NLU's tutoring partnerships and how they are essential for meeting needs in the education system. In 2024-2025, 21 NLU students participated in tutoring partnerships that impact children and youth.

- View the report: [NLU Tutoring Impact Report 2024-2025](#)

Faculty Awarded Scholarships



Associate Professor **Stephen Curda** has been selected for a prestigious Fulbright Foreign Scholarship—an initiative of the U.S. Department of State that connects U.S. scholars and professionals with institutions abroad for short-term collaborative projects. This fall, Dr. Curda will collaborate with scholars at Busitema University in Uganda.

Associate Professor **Sadia Warsi** has been selected to receive one of eight faculty scholarships for the May 2025 faculty-only cohort of the ISTE Certification program. This full scholarship, awarded on behalf of ISTE+ASCD, is an opportunity for faculty to deepen their experience in teaching about AI and using AI for teaching, learning, and research.



Thought Leadership

Publications

Associate Professor **Elizabeth Covay Minor**, Director of Educational Leadership Studies, co-edited a new book, [Opportunities for Learning: A Sociological Perspective](#), published by the University of Notre Dame Press, June 2025. One of Dr. Minor's co-editors is NLU alumna **Barbara Schneider**.

The *i.e.* editorial team has announced the publication of the Spring 2025 issue of *i.e.: inquiry in education*. Eight NCE faculty members are acknowledged as reviewers of this issue's submissions. Please enjoy Volume 17, Issue 1 at: <https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/ie/>.

Professor Emeritus **Carlos M. Azcoitia** published "[Mentoring Principals as Leaders of Community Schools](#)" in the *School Community Journal*, 2025, Vol. 35, No. 1. The article appears as a policy brief beginning on Page 281.

Professor **Kristin Lems** is a frequent contributor to her community news source, the Evanston Roundtable. In one of her recent articles "[ETHS Junior Writes Debut Book on Chicago's StreetWise Vendors](#)," Dr. Lems interviewed a local high school junior about his first book, [Who We Are: Stories from the Chicago StreetWise Community](#). The author's mother, mentioned in the article, is an Assistant Professor and Director of Communication Studies at NLU. There are a number of references to NLU in his book including

an interview with Pete Kadens, member of the NLU Board of Trustees and chairman emeritus at StreetWise.



Presentations

Several NCE faculty presented at the [56th Annual Conference of the Illinois Reading Council \(IRC\)](#) in Springfield, IL.

- "The Impact of Reading and Writing Practices on Students' Social Justice Stances" **Hannah Graham**, Associate Professor
- "Literature Circles for English Language Learners" **Kristin Lems**, Professor
- "Orthographic Mapping in First and Second Language Decoding and Spelling" **Kristin Lems**, Professor
- "Bringing Joy Back to Writing Instruction" **Sophie Degener**, Associate Professor and **Tina Curry**, Adjunct Faculty

Associate Professor **Vishodana Thamotharan** was invited to serve on a panel facilitated by LEAP Innovations at the [AI Show @ ASU+GSV](#) held in San Diego, CA.

Dr. Tracee Farmer, Co-Director for the Reading Recovery Center for Literacy, was invited to present the keynote address at the Suzanne W. Cole Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Conference in Lewiston, Maine.

Associate Professor **Eun Ko** moderated a multigenerational panel as part of a Healing Illinois community event, where Korean American panelists shared deeply personal stories of identity, belonging, and healing—sparking heartfelt dialogue and reminding us of storytelling's power to bridge generations.

NCE faculty members presented their innovative educational research at the 2025 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), held in Denver, CO. Presentations included:

- [Mapping Children's Identity and Belonging through Mapping in Multimodal Composition](#) **Hyeju Han**
- [Borderlands Identities and Translanguaging Stance in Language Teacher Education](#) **Colleen Hamilton** and **Wendy Mendez**, UGC, **Joao Goebel**, UGC
- [Nothing About Us Without Us: Reflections on Building a Critical Disability Research-Practice Partnership](#) **Blanca Gamez-Djokic** and **Molly K. Buren** and **Shaunti Knauth**, Provost's Office
- [Unlocking the Joy of Mathematics: The Transformative Power of Play in Early Childhood Education](#) **Bilge Cerezci**
- [How Can We Improve Our Feedback? A Case Study of Student Feedback](#) **Elizabeth Covay Minor**, **Jennifer L. Engelland-Schultz**, and **Gloria McDaniel-Hall**
- [The Role of AI in Culturally Responsive STEM Teaching](#) **Eun Kyung Ko**, **Vishodana Thamotharan**, and **Xue Han**

Professor **Antonina Lukenchuk** presented "[Epistemology of Teaching and Learning: Paradigm Journey with My Doctoral Students](#)" at the 9th World Conference on Qualitative Research (WCQR2025) at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland.

Associate Professor **Jason Stegemoller** presented a paper co-authored with Associate Professor **Colleen Hamilton** entitled "Multilingualism in Postsecondary Planning, Policy, and Pedagogy" at the [American Association for Applied Linguistics \(AAAL\) 2025 Conference](#) in Denver, CO.

Associate Professor **Lee Tate** presented the session titled "Fostering Social Emotional Learning to Promote Academic Achievement: A Case Study in Early Childhood Education," at the [McCormick Institute's 2025 Leadership Connections National Conference](#) in Schaumburg, IL

Brian Morris, Associate Director of the Office of Field Experience, presented a session entitled "Field Experiences: In Pursuit of Transformative Transactions" at the [2025 Brothers Teaching Statewide Conference](#) at the University of Illinois Chicago.

Director of Teacher Preparation **Jamillah Gilbert** welcomed attendees and provided introductions at the [3rd Annual NLU Principal Panel](#), facilitated by Assistant Professor **Jimmy Caldwell** and Academic Project Coordinator **Sarah-Anne Lanman**. All current teacher preparation candidates were invited to attend and hear firsthand from school and district leaders about their tips and best practices for new graduates looking to be hired.

Assistant Professor **Blanca Gamez-Djokic** presented "Affective Currents in Research-Practice Partnerships: A Critical Race Perspective on Attachment in an RPP" at the [2025 Critical Race Studies in Education Association \(CRSEA\) Annual National Conference](#) in Detroit, MI.

Assistant Professor **Kathy Kotel** and Director of Teacher Preparation **Jamillah Gilbert** presented "Renovating Our Curriculum: From Comfortable to Transformational" at the [Deans for Impact \(DFI\) LbSD May Convening](#) in Houston, TX.

Dr. Xiaoli Wen and **Dr. Teri Talan**, Early Childhood Education faculty and researchers from McCormick Institute for Early Childhood at NLU, presented at the [Society for Research in Child Development \(SRCD\) 2025 biennial conference](#), in Minneapolis, MN, along with researchers from NAEYC, UIC, and Erikson Institute.

- Symposium Paper #1: [Building a Unified and Equitable Professional Framework for Early Childhood Program Leadership](#)
- Symposium Paper #2: [Impact of Race, Culture, and Language on the Leadership Journeys of ECE Leaders of Color](#)
- Poster Presentation: [Building Early Childhood Program Leadership: Defining Core Competences and Qualifications with Leadership Stakeholders](#)

Assistant Professor **Vishodana Thamocharan**, NCE Director of STEM co-present with Assistant Professor **Keisha Rembert**, UGEd Prep, at the LEAP Chicagoland Coalition for Human-Centered AI as featured "Spotlight" Speakers. They shared insights on NCE and UGEd Prep's evolving journey with AI and showcased the innovative ways our faculty are integrating AI into their teaching practices.

In the Field

Professor **Ayn Keneman**, Board Member at El Valor, attended the El Valor Policy Council meeting at the El Valor Guadalupe Reyes Children and Family Center in Chicago, IL. The Policy Council meets monthly to discuss family issues and policy approvals.

Associate Professor **Gloria McDaniel-Hall** presented "My BECOMING Story" at the NLU [BSEEN](#) Sankofa Session at the Chicago Campus. Author of the acclaimed book [Gloria Finds Her Voice](#), Dr. McDaniel-Hall shared from her stories and experiences as one of the first Black students enrolled during the time of education integration in the United States and how she went from being a non-speaking person to a national speaker and consultant.

Julie Sidarous, Director of NCE's Hawkins grant, was selected to participate in the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE)'s prestigious [Emerging Scholars Program](#), which pairs early-career scholars with experienced ATE mentors to prepare research for publication. Dr. Sidarous collaborated with her mentor,

Dr. Nancy Gallavan, on a paper and presentation titled "Cultivating Cultural Confidence: Teacher Candidate Self-Efficacy Growth with a Culturally Responsive Curriculum."

Associate Professor **Xiaoning Chen**, co-director of the 2023–2025 NLU STARTALK grant, hosted a special end-of-grant celebration at our Lisle campus. Participants shared their appreciation for the program, which built a strong, supportive community of Chinese language educators. Student accomplishments include: one participant earning a bilingual endorsement, many progressing in ESL/Bilingual endorsements, and two graduates of NLU's Secondary MAT program!

Kimberlee Hendricks, Managing Director of the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, and a doctoral candidate in NCE's Teaching and Learning: Curriculum, Advocacy, and Policy program, recently attended the 2025 Public Policy Forum of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in Washington, D.C.



In the News

Professor Emeritus **Carlos M. Azcoitia** was interviewed on the Univision Chicago 10PM News regarding the federal investigation of Title IX alleged violations of student rights in Chicago Public Schools, the Illinois State Board of Education and suburban Deerfield Public School District 109. [Watch video here.](#)

Professor **Kristin Lems** was featured in a story aired on WNIJ Northern Public Radio. Dr. Lems spoke of her long-established ties through her maternal family to Jane Addams, activist. Listen to the broadcast: [Jane Addams' Influence Travels Through Generations.](#)

Celebrations



Jasmyn Portee-Haywood ('13 MED Urban Teaching), current Ed.S. in Educational Leadership student, on receiving AUSL's Teacher of Excellence Award.

Priya Amin, '20 Ed.S. in Educational Leadership, on being named Director of Social Studies for District 219's Niles North and Niles West High Schools, starting in the 2025-26 school year

The Chicago Board of Education has appointed Macqueline King, '18 Ed.D. Educational Leadership, as interim CEO of Chicago Public Schools.

Dr. King is an NLU triple eagle, having also received a BA in Elementary Education in 2000, and an M.Ed. in Curriculum & Instruction in 2007.



Victor Gomez (left), '25 M.Ed. in Curriculum & Instruction, has been named the 2025 Illinois Teacher of the Year by ISBE!

Victor was also named Cook County Co-Regional Teacher of the Year this past April.

Mario Ford, '19 MAT Middle Grades Education, was appointed

Allie Ontaneda, current Ed.S. in Educational Leadership student,

Anquineice Brown, a current Ed.S. in Educational Leadership

as principal at Western Avenue School, Flossmoor School District 161.

on receiving a scholarship from Delta Kappa Gamma's Iota Chapter, part of the International Society for Key Women Educators.

student, has been awarded the Charles and Elizabeth Iwert Scholarship for 2025–2027 by the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International.



Mike LaScola (left), '08 M.Ed. in Educational Leadership, and principal at Everest Satellite High School, is the recipient of the 2025 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Leadership,

Michael Lubelfeld, '09 Ed.S. in Administration & Supervision, was named one of District Administration's Top 100 influencers representing the most important voices in K-12 education. Michael also serves as a valued member of the NCE Ed Leadership Advisory Council and Dean Theard-Griggs's Alumni Brain Trust.

New Faces



Chaidan Leshinski recently joined us as a Field Supervisor Coordinator in our Master's program. While this is a new role for Chaidan, she is no stranger to National Louis University. She has served for many years as an adjunct professor, teaching various Math Methods courses and supervising student teachers in the field.

Before joining NLU, Chaidan was a classroom teacher, primarily teaching middle school Math and Language Arts. She earned her undergraduate degree from DePauw University and a Master of Education from Loyola University Chicago.

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