

CTE 2025-2026 Highlights

Dear Colleagues,

We are excited to share with you highlights from our professional development activities and partnerships this past academic year 25-26. We are grateful for all our partnerships across the institution; your insights and expertise help us provide support and resources needed for all students and faculty colleagues to succeed.

Through our partnerships with multiple offices, colleges, and divisions, we offered a variety of professional development opportunities, which included monthly teaching conversations, speaker series, and workshops on various topics informed by feedback on workshop surveys and annual needs assessments. We continued to engage in critical and thoughtful partnerships with colleagues across the institution through our [Students as Learners and Teachers at a Hispanic Serving Institution \(SaLT HSI\) program](#), the first student partnership program at a Hispanic Serving Institution. We partnered with the Division of Research on our [Teaching and Learning Integration in the Classroom and Community \(TRICC\)](#) Speaker Series and the UTRGV Academy of Distinguished Teachers (ADT) to offer a [series of conversations](#) on how mentoring students beyond the classroom. Finally, we partnered with the University Library to develop a [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning repository](#) on scholarly publications on teaching and learning.

In this multi-page document, please find highlights from our various professional development offerings, programming, and partnerships. We include attendance details, short testimonios from participants, learning assessment data, and future goals. Our learning assessment data centers on highlighting what participants learned, how they intend to apply what they learned, and what they hope to learn in the future. We, alongside our students, are all responsible for advocating for teaching and learning practices in ways that help us build educational spaces where we all belong and thrive.

As we look forward to a new academic year, we are excited to share teaching and learning practices and strategies in response to your thoughtful reflections and feedback on workshop surveys throughout the year and in our Annual Needs Assessment survey. Some of the themes we intend to explore include: Engaged Teaching & Active Learning, AI, Technology & Digital Pedagogy, All-Encompassing Teaching & Student Success, Assessment, Curriculum & Accreditation, Faculty Growth, Research & Reflective Practice.

We will also continue to offer a diverse structure for our teaching conversations to fit different needs and purposes, including 20-minute teaching strategy, 40-minute teaching demo, and one hour or more hands-on workshops.

We look forward to continuing to build meaningful partnerships with faculty colleagues, students, and staff members across our institution and beyond. We invite you to participate in and facilitate teaching conversations with us this new academic year for collective impact!

Our best wishes,

Alyssa G. Cavazos, Ph.D.
Professor, Writing and Language Studies
Director, Center for Teaching Excellence

Adolfo Hernandez, M.A.
Program Coordinator,
Center for Teaching Excellence

The University of Texas
Rio Grande Valley
Center for Teaching Excellence



CENTER FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

OUR MISSION & VISION

We aim to provide professional development opportunities that foster success in teaching and learning through reflective, collaborative, and learner-centered practices with faculty members, staff, and students at UTRGV and beyond.

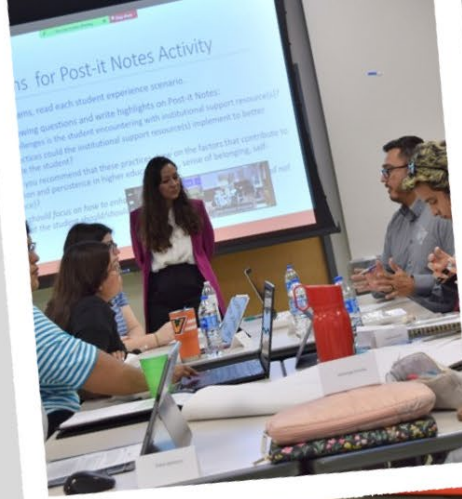
OUR VALUES

We value collective conversations on teaching and learning as a public practice where faculty, staff, students, administrators, and community partners learn from each other to create a sense of belonging for all.

AT A GLANCE

We offer a wide range of programming and support to promote teaching and learning:

- **Weekly/Monthly Teaching Conversations**
 - showcases high-impact practices by faculty, students, and staff colleagues across UTRGV
- **Students as Learners & Teachers at a Hispanic Serving Institution (SaLT HSI)**
 - builds reciprocal partnerships between instructors and students to enrich educational practices
- **Teaching and Research Intersections in the Classroom and Community (TRICC) Speaker Series**
 - features scholars who explore teaching and research intersections for student success
- **Faculty Learning Communities**
 - interdisciplinary, peer-led groups committed to enhancing teaching around a specific theme



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CTE at a Glance: Academic Year 2024-2025

49

Professional
Development
Sessions

03

PROGRAMS/
INITIATIVES

FACULTY MEMBER
PARTICIPATION (Unduplicated)

397

TOTAL CUMULATIVE
ATTENDANCE:

868

ATTENDANCE BY COLLEGE:

College of Liberal Arts: 107

College of Sciences: 52

College of Health Professions: 47

Robert C. Vacker College of Bus & Entrep: 40

College of Education: 37

School of Social Work: 15

College of Fine Arts: 13

School of Nursing: 12

University College: 11

College of Engineering & Computer Science: 06

School of Podiatric Medicine: 06

School of Medicine: 05

School of Optometry: 02

Other: 44

ATTENDANCE BY FACULTY RANK:

Professor: 51

Senior Lecturer: 11

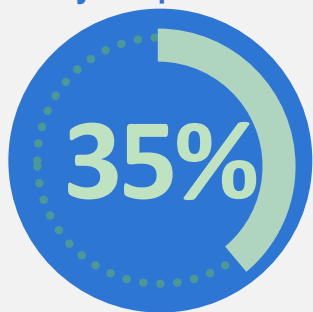
Assoc. Professor: 72

Lecturer: 106

Assist. Professor: 93

Other: 64

Survey Response Rate



93% of attendees specified they **learned** about new research and resources on teaching and learning practices in each session

93% reported a specific example of how they will **apply** what they learned in their teaching for student success

93% reported they will take specific actions toward **future learning** about the teaching and learning practices presented

Our Partners

Academic Innovation

BETTER in STEM

Center for Online Learning and Teaching Technology

College of Liberal Arts

Community Engagement

Division of Research

Office of Bilingual Integration

Office of Curriculum and Institutional Assessment

Office of Engaged Scholarship & Learning

Puentes

Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship

School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences

School of Social Work

Student Accessibility Services

University Library

Writing Center

Monthly Teaching Conversations

49 Sessions

**868
Attendance**

**35%
Response rate**

Feedback and Assessment

07 Sessions

"I appreciated that examples were given, being new to the profession, it allowed me to gauge what I could potentially ask my students in the course evals. I also appreciated the opportunity for dialogue among the participants, that also helped me feel like I was not alone in this process". -Faculty Participant

Student Engagement

11 Sessions

"I found it most impactful to see how research emphasizes the importance of student voice in creating meaningful learning experiences. The idea that students can be active partners in shaping teaching practices reinforced the value of reflection, collaboration, and inclusivity in the classroom."- Faculty Participant

High Impact Practices

07 Sessions

"So much was impactful. I was aware of CSP but not fully informed about the different ways that this goal could be achieved. Every one of the faculty who presented showed the relevance of these kinds of courses both to the university as well as our students. The data provided by Caroline Miles was very useful in framing the faculty's presentations".- Faculty Participant

Curriculum Development

07 Sessions

"I am always looking for CTE opportunities that can help be better at developing sound pedagogy to drive my classroom practices. I will continue to do that. CTE is my go-to place for relevant, research-based professional growth opportunities."-Faculty Participant

AI/ Educational Technology

09 Sessions

"The most impactful aspect of the workshop was seeing how course-specific chatbots can be intentionally designed to support student learning rather than simply provide answers. The research highlighted how well-structured prompts and curated course content allow chatbots to reinforce key concepts, provide immediate feedback, and promote student autonomy. It was especially useful to understand how aligning chatbot responses with course objectives can enhance clarity and consistency for students." - Faculty Participant

Teaching, Research, Service Intersections

08 Sessions

"I found it most impactful how the research emphasized the importance of community building as a foundation for equitable learning environments. The discussion on fostering authentic faculty engagement and collaboration across disciplines reinforced the idea that service can be a form of transformative pedagogy that benefits both educators and students." -Faculty Participant

Teaching and Research Integration in the Classroom and Community (TRICC)

TRICC Speaker Series featured faculty scholars who highlighted insights and innovations on how their teaching and research mutually inform each other through research-informed teaching practices, such as testimonio, undergraduate and graduate research, community engagement, self-study in teaching and student learning, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) among others.

100% of attendees indicated they **learned** about new research and resources on teaching and learning practices in each session

100% reported a specific example of how they will **apply** what they learned in their teaching for student success

100% reported they will take specific actions toward **future learning** about the teaching and learning practices presented

7 Sessions

**174
Attendance**

**27%
Response rate**

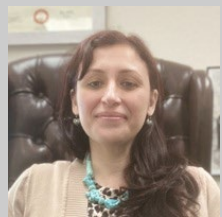
A Framework for Effective Teaching in Undergraduate Education



Dr. Cristina Villalobos,
Myles and Sylvia Aaronson
Endowed Professor
School of Mathematical and
Statistical Sciences, College of
Sciences

"I learned that applying this framework allows me to design clearly structured and aligned courses that enhance student motivation and academic success. I also commit to integrating the seven principles into my teaching practice to continuously strengthen my instructional effectiveness and better support diverse learners." - Faculty Participant

Fostering Belonging in the Applied Social Sciences Classroom through Modeling Empathy and Integrating Ancestral Ways of Knowing



Dr. Gabi Ortiz-Ramirez,
MS Graduate Program Coordinator
and Clinical Assistant Professor
College of Health Professions, School
of Rehabilitation Services and
Counseling

"There was a great discussion on pedagogy of water that enlightened my awareness of the region and its impact on learning and understanding." - Faculty Participant

Sharing the Process: Collaborating, Teaching, Organizing, and Publishing a Policy Memo on Community Policy Forum



Dr. Kriti Vashisht,
Assistant Professor,
School of Social Work
Division of Academic
Affairs



Dr. Pedro Hernandez,
Clinical Assistant
Professor,
School of Social Work
Clinical Assistant
Professor
BSW Practicum Director



Dr. Jo Redcliffe,
Associate Professor,
School of Social Work
Division of Academic
Affairs

“How to use research and connect it to teaching best practices”. “The info was highly valuable insights, especially the practical methods for intentional instruction.” - Faculty Participant

The Role of Mixed Reality Simulation for Service Management Teaching and Research



Dr. Arjun Singh,
Professor
Founding Director
Hospitality and Tourism
Management
Robert C. Vackar
College of Business &
Entrepreneurship



Chef. Marcel Fortuin,
Executive Chef
Lecturer I
Hospitality and Tourism
Management
Robert C. Vackar College
of Business &
Entrepreneurship

Dania Ruiz,
Director of the Mixed
Reality Simulation Lab
at UTRGV

Deidra Johnson,
Instructor in Hospitality
and Tourism
Management
Department

“Even though I was already familiar with this simulation, I learned about a few details that I was not aware of previously. For example, I did not know that even though in a specific session of the simulation there may be several avatars, they are all controlled by the same human being. It was also very interesting to learn more about specific settings/use cases for the simulation.” - Faculty Participant

UTRGV Academy of Distinguished Teachers Series

The goal of the series was to explore best practices related to requesting and providing meaningful peer observations of teaching as well strategies for reflecting on and implementing feedback received through peer observations of teaching.

100% of attendees indicated they **learned** about new research and resources on teaching and learning practices in each session

100% reported a specific example of how they will **apply** what they learned in their teaching for student success

100% reported they will take specific actions toward **future learning** about the teaching and learning practices presented

4 Sessions

61
Attendance

38%
Response rate

Mentorship by Design: Scaling Purpose, Practice, and Pathways Beyond the Classroom



Dr. Dagoberto Eli Ramirez,
Lecturer III
Distinguished Teaching
Professor, University
College



Dr. Jessica Sanchez,
Associate Director for
Research & Innovation,
Center for On-Line
Learning & Teaching
Technology (COLTT)



Robert Longoria,
Program Manager,
Engaged Scholarship &
Learning (ES&L)

“The most impactful part of the session was the emphasis on mentorship as an intentionally designed practice that can be embedded into everyday teaching, even in content heavy courses like those in health sciences and professions. The research highlighted how structured, purposeful mentoring strengthens students’ sense of belonging and confidence, which directly supports persistence in rigorous health science pathways.” - Faculty Participant

The Academic Bucket List: Reimagining Mentorship through the Lens of Happiness



Dr. Marcela Hebbard,
Senior Lecturer
Distinguished Teaching Professor,
Writing & Language Studies

“Helping with mentoring students in the classroom can be done through visualizing and writing down their academic bucket list items. I liked the idea of accomplishing this both in a cultural way to learn about academic settings... like introduce myself to 5 different people in class by next month and also ones they'd like to accomplish like graduate by 2028.” - Faculty Participant

Research Mentorship: Fostering Research, Academic, Personal and Professional Growth



Dr. Sue Anne Chew,
Associate Professor
Distinguished Teaching Professor,
Health & Biomedical Sciences

“The tiered/scaffolded mentoring model resonated deeply with me. Seeing how Dr. Chew structures faculty-to-graduate-to-undergraduate mentoring hierarchies gave me concrete language and a practical framework for formalizing the peer mentoring I already encourage informally among my dissertation advisees.” - Faculty Participant

Writing as Process: Mentoring (Thesis) Writers Through Learning Journals



Dr. Alyssa G. Cavazos,
Professor, Writing and Language
Studies
Distinguished Teaching Professor,
Director, Center for Teaching
Excellence

“Seeing how learning journals function simultaneously as progress logs and rhetorical spaces, where doctoral writers develop scholarly voice, metacognitive awareness, and methodological confidence, validated and deepened my own dissertation mentoring approach.” - Faculty Participant

Empowering Faculty with AI-Enabled Planning

We offered a series of workshops on Empowering Faculty with AI-Enabled Planning. This professional development series equips UTRGV faculty with the skills to both use artificial intelligence for assignment development, as well as to integrate it into their teaching through evidence-based digital pedagogies.

99% of attendees indicated they **learned** about new research and resources on teaching and learning practices in each session

97% reported a specific example of how they will **apply** what they learned in their teaching for student success

99% reported they will take specific actions toward **future learning** about the teaching and learning practices presented

Service Learning

3 Sessions

**123
Attendance**

**45%
Response rate**



Dr. Leticia De Leon,
Professor, Teaching &
Learning
CTE Faculty Fellow for
Innovative Assignment
Design in the Context
of AI/LLMs

“What stood out most was how Dr. De Leon's presentation connected AI-enabled tools with practical strategies that genuinely strengthen formative assessment. I appreciated how the resources emphasized transparency, scaffolding, and learner-centered design.” - Faculty Participant

“What I found most impactful was the emphasis on shifting from AI detection to AI integration through authentic assessments. This highlighted how thoughtfully designed assignments can encourage higher-order thinking while reducing opportunities for misuse. I also appreciated the practical examples showing how AI can support, rather than replace, student learning.” - Faculty Participant

“The most impactful takeaway from the workshop was the emphasis on structured reflection and self-evaluation as essential components of effective teaching, especially when paired with ethical AI integration. It was particularly valuable to see how AI tools can support formative assessment and timely feedback while still maintaining instructor oversight, transparency, and academic integrity. This approach reinforced the idea that AI should enhance, not replace, thoughtful teaching practices.” - Faculty Participant

Students as Learners and Teachers at a Hispanic Serving Institution (SaLT HSI)

SaLT HSI aims to promote student success through partnerships among students and faculty and staff members across the university. Student partners provide rhetorically informed feedback on educational practices, build self-confidence and agency in learning, and foster engaging educational spaces as we build a culture of feedback, reflection, and revision of educational practices and programming at UTRGV and beyond.

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Rio Grande Valley
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3 Sessions

21
Attendance

33%
Response rate

“I found out that reflective questions help students a lot to keep clear what they are learning in class. Participation and group setting also aids in class integration.” - Faculty Participant

“I found it most impactful to see how research emphasizes the importance of student voice in creating meaningful learning experiences. The idea that students can be active partners in shaping teaching practices reinforced the value of reflection, collaboration, and inclusivity in the classroom”- Faculty Participant

100% of attendees **learned** about new research and resources on teaching and learning practices

100% reported a specific example of how they will **apply** what they learned in their teaching for student success

100% reported they will take specific actions toward **future learning** about the teaching and learning practices presented

(SaLT HSI)
Faculty Members’ Reflections on SaLT HSI Feedback on Teaching

“The survey conducted and the report written by the students to highlight major challenges and opportunities to improve my teaching will be extremely helpful as I continue to revise these as well as my syllabus for upcoming semesters.”
- Faculty Participant

“Some of the comments helped me feel better, as they confirmed that I was headed in the right direction. Since the syllabus is supposed to be neuroaffirming, some of their suggestions aligned with what I was trying to convey. I liked their input on how they felt as students when professors were unclear or did not provide a safe space to ask questions.”- Faculty Participant

88% of attendees **learned** about new research and resources on teaching and learning practices

88% reported a specific example of how they will **apply** what they learned in their teaching for student success

88% reported they will take specific actions toward **future learning** about the teaching and learning practices presented

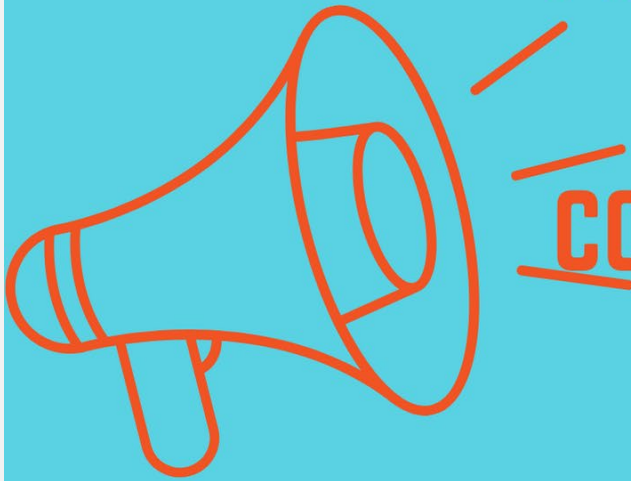
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Repository

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) repository is a collection that represents the intersections between teaching and research through peer-reviewed scholarly publications on and about teaching and learning practices.

In an effort to highlight scholarly research by UTRGV faculty members, we have partnered with the University Library to develop a [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Repository](#). If you would like to add your peer-reviewed scholarly research pieces to the SoTL repository collection, please contact us at cte@utrgv.edu.

125 Total papers	28,755 Total Downloads	12,152 Downloads in the past year.
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INTERESTED IN FACILITATING A TEACHING CONVERSATION



- [Teaching Conversation](#)
- [Teaching and Research Integration in the Classroom and Community \(TRICC\)](#)
- [Faculty Learning Community \(FLC\)](#)
- [SaLT HSI Partnership & Feedback Request](#)
- [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Repository](#)

