

CTE 2024-2025 Highlights

Dear Colleagues,

We are excited to share with you highlights from our professional development activities and partnerships this past academic year 24-25. 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 to engage in meaningful peer observations of feedback through intentional feedback request, reciprocal feedback strategies, and reflective implementation of feedback. Finally, we partnered with the Office of Engaged Scholarship and Learning and Community Engagement to offer a series of workshops on high impact teaching strategies related to Service 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: active learning, educational technology, aligning assessments to state, national, and program standards, conducting effective peer observations of teaching, and linking research, teaching, and service.

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

58

**Professional
Development
Sessions**

03

**PROGRAMS/
INITIATIVES**

**FACULTY MEMBER
PARTICIPATION (Unduplicated)**

461

**TOTAL CUMULATIVE
ATTENDANCE:**

1157

ATTENDANCE BY COLLEGE:

- College of Liberal Arts: **128**
- College of Health Professions: **52**
- Robert C. Vacker College of Bus & Entrep: **51**
- College of Sciences: **50**
- College of Education: **27**
- School of Nursing: **27**
- College of Engineering & Computer Science: **13**
- College of Fine Arts: **13**
- University College: **12**
- School of Social Work: **09**
- School of Medicine: **17**
- Other: **96**

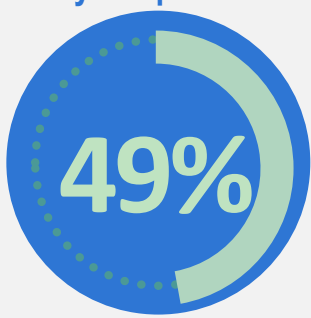
Our Partners

- 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

ATTENDANCE BY FACULTY RANK:

- Professor: 54
- Senior Lecturer: 18
- Assoc. Professor: 87
- Lecturer: 119
- Assist. Professor: 100
- Other: 83

Survey Response Rate



- 95% 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
- 95% reported they will take specific actions toward **future learning** about the teaching and learning practices presented

All reported data was collected from responses by attendees who completed a post-participation survey.

Monthly Teaching Conversations

49 Sessions

**1123
Attendance**

**33%
Response rate**

Feedback and Assessment

05 Sessions

The most impactful aspect of the peer observation research and resources was the emphasis on using this process as a collaborative, formative tool to enhance teaching and learning, rather than as a summative evaluation. This shift in perspective can foster a culture of continuous improvement and growth. -Faculty Participant

Student Engagement

04 Sessions

This was a well-organized session that showed good planning. The discussion of what cultural studies means and how it works in classes was informative. I found it impactful that multiple faculty were on the panel and shared about their teaching experiences. I liked how they modeled the interdisciplinary approach and had examples from multiple cultures, time periods, and places. -Faculty Participant

High Impact Practices

13 Sessions

One of the most impactful aspects of the research and resources on reimagining my syllabus was learning how to design it as a student-centered, engaging document rather than just an administrative contract. ...visually engaging syllabus, ... helps set a welcoming tone and builds a stronger connection with students from the outset.- Faculty Participant

Curriculum Development

09 Sessions

I feel aligned with the CTE's mission of creating a welcoming environment for students in the classroom.[Facilitator] gave insightful examples from [their] own experiences as a teacher, which were most effective and correlated with encouraging students to interact in the classroom. -Faculty Participant

AI/ Educational Technology

10 Sessions

During the training, I learned strategies for maximizing communication with AI tools through effective prompt design... that align with educational contexts and guiding questions and answers to suit specific teaching scenarios. - Faculty Participant

Teaching, Research, Service Intersections

08 Sessions

I learned how to reflect on and document my teaching values and beliefs over time in my teaching narrative focused on shift and growth of teaching experiences,... explore moments what was good and what does not work.- 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

98% 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

**183
Attendance**

**26%
Response rate**

“Graduate curriculum innovation and cutting-edge research: A lifelong-learning approach”



Dr. Bin Wang,
Professor, Information Systems,
Robert C. Vackar College of
Business and Entrepreneurship

The most impactful aspect of the research on curriculum innovation is the practical application of data collection and analysis techniques to improve educational outcomes. The ability to translate research findings into actionable strategies that enhance teaching practices and student learning is particularly valuable.- Faculty Participant

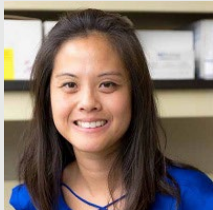
“Community and Service Learning – Addressing Local Issues with Global Significance.”



Dr. Teresa Patricia Feria,
Professor, School of Integrative
Biological and Chemical Sciences
(SIBCS), College of Sciences
Associate Dean for Faculty Success,
Interim Director of SIBCS

I found most impactful that all these students were able to travel while also helping the planet. It's impressive to me how you can have fun and also do something good to the environment.- Faculty Participant

“Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experience: An Avenue to Provide More Students Research Experience and an Opportunity for Faculty to Increase Their Research Productivity”



Dr. Sue Anne Chew,
Associate Professor
Health and Biomedical Sciences,
Health Professions

The course-based work explained by Dr. Chew emphasizes the value of experiential learning by engaging undergraduates in real-world research projects within their courses. I found this impactful because it allows students to directly apply classroom concepts to hands-on research, which can deepen understanding, foster critical thinking, and increase motivation as they see the relevance of their learning in practical contexts.. - Faculty Participant

“Empowering first generation college students; navigating success through community engagement”



Dr. Leticia Zavala,
Lecturer II, Sociology,
College of Liberal Arts

I found the information shared truly helpful in teaching first gen students. There were some aspects I hadn't considered (such as sharing on campus resources and guest speakers) which resonated with me.- Faculty Participant

“How Critical Thinking in relation to Creative Research Can Enrich Classroom instruction”



Dr. David Bennett Carren,
Professor, Theatre,
College of Fine Arts

The most impactful thing I learned from this training was that if you are passionate about your research it will translate over to how you engage with students about your research. This passion helps students get excited about what we as faculty research.

- Faculty Participant

“Meshing Teaching with Research through Autohistoriando”



Dr. José Luis Cano Jr.,
Assistant Professor, Writing and Language Studies
College of Liberal Arts

The most impactful aspects of this session was gaining more info about gloria anzaldua's autohistoria and how it can be applied in teaching moments--i also enjoyed learning more about the idea of drawings and visuals being used as sources
-Faculty Participant

“From Data to Global Impact: Leveraging Service Learning & Collaborative Online International Learning”



Dr. Xuan Wang,
Associate Professor, Information Systems
Robert C. Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship

I like her idea of combing service learning and community engagement together with an international reach. I know it is a lot of work involved. This can really give the students a different learning experience.- 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

97% reported they will take specific actions toward **future learning** about the teaching and learning practices presented

3 Sessions

**98
Attendance**

**56%
Response rate**

“Exploring Intentional and Purposeful Requests for a Peer Observation of Teaching”



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



Dr. Art Brownlow,
Professor,
Music
Faculty Fellow for
Academic Innovation

The most impactful aspect of the research and resources on Peer Observation was the emphasis on intentionality and reciprocity in the observation process. Rather than a purely evaluative tool, peer observation fosters a collaborative learning environment where instructors can engage in meaningful reflection and pedagogical refinement. The research highlighted how structured, purposeful feedback enhances teaching effectiveness and cultivates a culture of continuous professional growth. - Faculty Participant

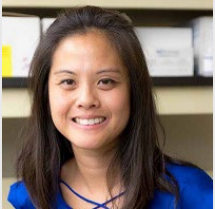
“Conducting Growth-Oriented Peer Observations of Teaching Through Reciprocal Learning”



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



Dr. Dagoberto Ramirez,
Associate Professor,
Health and Biomedical
Sciences



Dr. Sue Anne Chew,
Associate Professor,
Health and Biomedical
Sciences



Dr. Teresa Feria Arroyo,
Professor and director
of the School of
Integrative Biological
and Chemical Sciences
(SIBCS),
College of Sciences

Considering peer observations as a reciprocal rather than evaluative process was particularly impactful. This approach allows for meaningful dialogue and shared learning, encourages a supportive teaching community where feedback is constructive and growth-focused, and ultimately enhances individual and collective teaching practices. - Faculty Participant

“Reflecting on Peer Observation of Teaching Feedback: Exploring Implementation and Impact”



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



Dr. Constantine
Tarawneh,
Professor,
Mechanical Engineering



Dr. Shaghayegh
Setayesh,
Senior Lecturer,
Mathematical &
Statistical Sciences

I found the presentations by the two panelists to be very informative! I attended the session because I have been providing several peer observations to colleagues in my college. I found the session to be useful from the perspective of how to provide feedback in a way that will be helpful to colleagues in enhancing their teaching. Further, I found the information to be helpful in thinking about how to act upon peer observation feedback that I received for my own class.

- Faculty Participant

Service Learning

We offered a series of workshops on service learning and how to get started. Each session approaches provided high impact practices for student engagement and success.

98% of attendees indicated they **learned** about new research and resources on teaching and learning practices in each session

98% 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

Service Learning

5 Sessions

**111
Attendance**

**31%
Response rate**



Erika Perez,
Lecturer III,
University College

I learned the importance of incorporating service learning into our curriculum. In addition, I learned the basic requirements for being a service-designated course. Finally, I came to know where I can get the help I need. - Faculty Participant

I can enhance my students' future career choices; I can give credibility to the importance of the course. I can open doors for my students to get to know stakeholders of the service learning process.-Faculty Participant

The most impactful area of the presentation was awareness of Service Learning as a whole. It was an eye opener, and I will follow up with perhaps incorporating Service Learning into my courses. -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.

The University of Texas
Rio Grande Valley
.....
Center for Teaching Excellence



10 Sessions

**46
Attendance**

**48%
Response rate**

“The most impactful aspect of the research on transparent writing is its demonstrated ability to significantly improve student outcomes, particularly for underrepresented and first-generation students. The findings of increased academic confidence, sense of belonging, and retention rates for these student groups are especially compelling. Additionally, the emphasis on clearly communicating purpose, tasks, and criteria for assignments aligns well with principles of effective pedagogy and equity in education.” - Faculty Participant

“Most impactful to me was the idea that faculty may profit from regarding retention strategies and goals from the students' point of view as persistence. I had not quite thought about it this way before, or at least not formally. And the model used to illustrate what goes into persistence helped me to get a deeper knowledge of it.” - Faculty Participant



“I can enhance students' academic growth by implementing transparent assignment design in several ways:

- a) Revising existing assignments to clearly state the purpose, tasks, and criteria for success.
- b) Provide examples of high-quality work and discuss them with students to clarify expectations.
- c) More opportunities for peer review and self-assessment based on transparent criteria should be incorporated, helping students internalize academic standards.”

- 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 is a critical partner in the Title V Department of Education grant titled, "Puentes: A Cultural Wealth model for Student Success" where student partners engage in collaborative discussions with faculty and staff members via review and feedback on teaching materials, such as course syllabi and assignments as well as other educational programming. The following quotes highlight reflections from faculty and staff participants on the impact of their collaborations with student partners during the 24-25 academic year.

"I would say it's all important. I found the student's comment useful on breaking down my grade scale so students can see how points relate to grades. I also found students' questions both to be helpful. I do provide opportunities for students to give me feedback on my class at the beginning of the semester and mid-semester and I aim to have space for students to provide feedback on my syllabus which is something I had not thought of."

- Faculty Participant

"The assets and strengths are the community engagement activities, planning to incorporate some of the suggested articles about Cultural Considerations. Thank you, I believe this will help to recognize the cultural wealth as suggested. Suggestion was to move the Standards Practice section to before the BSN Learning Outcomes section so the students can remember the proper acronyms as they read the outcomes and the linkage with the standards. (I will try this change this coming semester and ask the students view) There is a paragraph that needs re-wording, it's about classroom expectations. (I appreciate your feedback)" - Faculty Participant

"The student partners really gave us an insight on the students perspective about advising. I am very interested on pre and post student advising service surveys to better grasp the voice of our students and their experiences. We can start by implementing it for all students who come in and consistently making sure it is a part of our practice each year. We will also need to make sure we close the loop and reflect on the feedback to improve advising here at the center."

- Puentes Staff Participant

"Students gave me great feedback on how to improve my course. Their feedback will help me to give a better teaching experience to my students. I will continue asking for SaLT HSI student feedback when I have the opportunity."

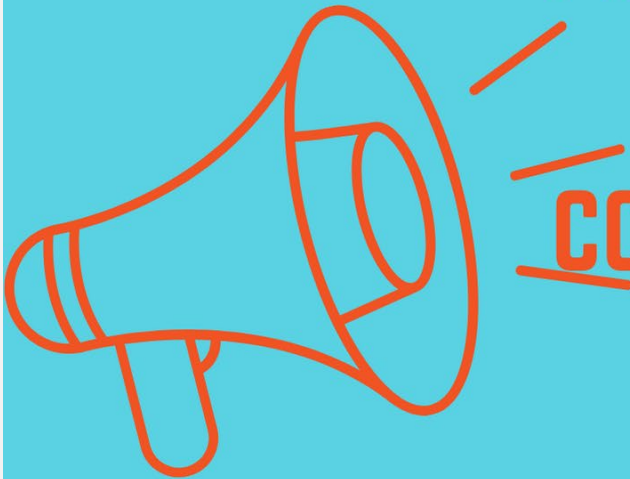
- Faculty Participant

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

92% reported a specific example of how they will **apply** what they learned in their teaching for student success

86% reported they will take specific actions toward **future learning** about the teaching and learning practices presented

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](#)

