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**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
AND COMMUNITY
INNOVATION**
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY®

August 2026

Colleagues,

Welcome to the fall semester! I hope you had an opportunity to rest, recharge, and prepare for another year of helping our students learn and grow. As we begin a new academic year, we also face familiar challenges in new forms—from questions about AI to concerns about student preparedness.

Recently, I read an [article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*](#) about a professor who shifted to standards-based grading, focusing students on achieving course outcomes rather than simply earning a letter grade. More than the grading approach itself, what resonated with me was the reminder that effective teaching is always evolving. It challenges the notion that higher education never changes.

Each year when I read the teaching reflections in your workload reports, I'm reminded that many of you embody this mindset. You continually examine student learning, reflect on course outcomes, and adjust your teaching to better engage students and support their success.

One challenge is that these improvements are often invisible to your newest students. They weren't in your class to see the changes you've made. Consider being explicit about what's new in your course and why



you've made those changes. Inviting students to provide feedback throughout the semester can make them partners in the learning process while giving you valuable insights to continue refining your teaching.

There is tremendous value in sharing the intentional changes we make to meet students where they are and help them grow. Those efforts not only strengthen student learning and engagement but also contribute to our own growth as educators.

Many of you are already doing this. If you've tried a new approach, gathered mid-semester feedback, or found a strategy that has strengthened student engagement, I invite you to share your experiences in a future newsletter so we can continue learning from one another.

~Sherril Soman
CECI Dean



Please welcome new CECI Associate Dean, Dr. Karyn Rabourn!

CECI is pleased to announce that **Dr. Karyn Rabourn, associate professor in Educational Leadership and Counseling (ELC), has been appointed to the role of CECI associate dean**, effective August 24, 2026. Dr. Rabourn fills the vacancy left by former associate dean, Amy Schelling, who has returned to faculty as a professor in the Teaching and Learning (T&L) department. The announcement was made at the CECI Fall Kickoff Meeting, and a formal announcement will be sent to the college soon. Please join us in congratulating and welcoming Dr. Rabourn to the CECI Dean Team!

CECI Unit Spotlight



The Community Historians Workshops, by Leanne Kang, associate professor in the Literacy, Educational Foundations, and Technology (LEFT) department.

On Saturday morning, September 13, 2025, members of the Grand Rapids community gathered to explore the history of the Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) from the 1960s to the 1970s. Many in attendance were alumni of South High School. Some had lived through the infamous "mustache incident" of 1966, while others recalled learning on the day of their graduation that their beloved school would be closed as part of the district's integration plan.

Also present was a couple who had attended Ottawa High School in the early 1970s. The husband arrived carrying a stack of Ottawa yearbooks. Together, the yearbooks offered a striking visual record of the school's transformation from a predominantly White school to a predominantly Black and Brown school.

I began the workshop by talking about [Malcolm X speaking at the Fountain Street Church](#) in Grand Rapids in 1962, drawing specific attention to the city's history of the Black freedom struggle.

When I began working at GVSU in 2015, I had no clue that the city had attempted to desegregate its schools through busing or that it was home to a Black freedom struggle. After several years of researching this history, I was stunned when an attendee shared she was Malcolm X's niece. She then confirmed another participant's childhood memory: yes, Malcolm X had walked up and down her street on several occasions.

This is just a snapshot of the remarkable experiences that emerged during the monthly [Community Historians Workshops](#) held throughout the 2025–2026 academic year. Supported by a Community Collaboration Grant from the [Kutsche Office of Local History](#), the workshops were a collaborative effort

among the [Grand Rapids African American Museum & Archives \(GRAAMA\)](#), the [Grand Rapids People's History Project](#), and the [GRPS Uncovered Podcast](#).

Each session brought together an average of 12–15 community storytellers, including both returning participants and first-time attendees. Organized chronologically, the workshops worked progressively toward the present day.

Notably, we began the series at the SECOM Resource Center, just blocks from the former South High School (now the Gerald R. Ford Job Corps building), and concluded at the GRAAMA's new location on 41 Sheldon—where the museum will continue building on this work.



Celebrations

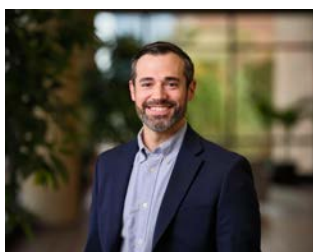


Sam Fisher of Traverse City, Michigan, has been awarded a Fellowship worth \$8,500 by [The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi](#) - the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. Fisher is one of 48 recipients nationwide to receive a Phi Kappa Phi Fellowship. As a Phi Kappa Phi Fellow, Fisher will pursue an MSW in the **School of Social Work (SSW)**. [Full press release.](#)



Lihua Huang, professor in the **School of Social Work (SSW)**, was recognized for serving on the Board of Accreditation (BOA) for the [Council on Social Work Education \(CSWE\)](#) for six years. The BOA convenes three times per year to deliberate on and ratify accreditation decisions and to address accreditation policies. The work of BOA members gives social work programs greater visibility within university settings, and universities greater visibility in the higher education accreditation community.

Additionally, Dr. Huang was recently appointed to the [CSWE Center for Gerontology Education Advisory Board](#) for a two-year term, starting July 2026.



Travis Milburn, assistant professor in the **School of Criminology, Criminal Justice, and Legal Studies (SCCJLS)**, recently had his co-authored article, "[Market Care and Custody: A Health Policy Analysis of Incarceration and Long-Term Care Systems in the U.S.](#)," published in the *Journal of Market Access & Health Policy*. The article explores the way in which "privatization within carceral and care sectors perpetuates health inequities and reinforces cycles of racial, gendered, and economic disadvantage."



Joshua Owens, 2018 MPA (SCLD) alum, was recently appointed as the Texas Township superintendent. Texas Township is located in Kalamazoo County, west of Portage, MI. Owens also previously served as an administrative analyst for the City of Grand Rapids. Owens brings several years of high-level public and private sector experience to his new role as superintendent. Outside of his work in Grand Rapids, Owens served as the deputy supervisor of Oshtemo Charter Township, and as the director of operations for Phoenix Construction Management & Services. [Full MLive article](#).



MaryJohn Pachuta-Rysak, assistant professor in the Literacy, Educational Foundations, and Technology (LEFT) department, was recently awarded a \$3,000 Pew FTLC Teaching Innovation Grant. Their project is titled, "Indigenous Methodologies and Data Sovereignty in Research-Focused Educational Foundations Courses."



John Piggot, Criminal Justice (SCCJLS) alum, was appointed by Governor Whitmer to the [Michigan Community Corrections Board](#) earlier this month. John is the chief of police at the Farmington Hills Police Department. The Michigan Community Corrections Board serves in an advisory capacity to the Director of the Michigan Department of Corrections and is charged with approving many components of community corrections programs, including goals, eligibility criteria, program guidelines, program standards and policies, the application process, procedures for funding, and criteria for evaluation.



Karyn Rabourn, CECI associate dean, will serve as the Strategic Faculty Lead for Unit Head Professional Development for the 2026-2027 academic year. In collaboration with senior associate vice president Ed Aboufadel, Karyn will continue the work she began as a [Presidential Fellow](#), to develop and lead monthly professional development workshops for GVSU unit heads, and to evaluate the current job description and compensation for unit heads.



The **School of Social Work (SSW)** recently welcomed faculty, students, alumni, field instructors, employers, and community partners for its Annual Social Work Convening on August 3, 2026. The event highlighted program assessment data and updates in preparation for the School's upcoming accreditation review and featured a professional learning session on ***Fostering Opportunities for Inclusive Communication*** presented by **Chasity Bailey-Fakhoury, CECI associate dean**, and **Laila McCloud, assistant professor in the Educational Leadership and Development (ELC) department**. Read the full story on the [Center for Educational Partnerships' blog](#).



Johngerlyn Young, two-time CECI alum, is the new vice president of Institutional Advancement at Livingstone College in Salisbury, North Carolina. Dr. Young has nearly 30 years of experience in philanthropy, nonprofit leadership, and institutional advancement. Her professional expertise includes major gifts, planned giving, endowment development, capital campaigns, annual giving, foundation and corporate relations, donor stewardship, and board engagement.

Dr. Young earned her bachelor's degree in **public administration (SCLD)** and **her master's degree in philanthropy and nonprofit leadership (SCLD)** from GVSU. She holds a doctor of business administration degree in organizational management from Indiana Wesleyan University. This new leadership role was announced in [*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*](#).

Campus Events



Faculty and Staff Fall Kickoff Celebration: President Philomena V. Mantella invites you and a guest to join her and the GVSU Senior Leadership Team in launching the new academic year at the Faculty and Staff Fall Kickoff Celebration on **August 26, 4:00-7:00 p.m., L. William Seidman Center**, Pew Campus. Celebrate the start of the academic year with colleagues from across the university. Enjoy great food, refreshing drinks, and live music by Brena as we reconnect and celebrate our shared purpose of empowering learners.



Join Student Affairs in Welcoming Our Newest Lakers During Laker Kickoff!

Friday, August 28, 2026

- 6-7 p.m. | New Student Welcome & Class Photo - Lubbers Stadium
 - 7 p.m. | Student Parade and Laker Spirit Tunnel
 - 7-11 p.m. | Kirkhof Lawn Party
 - 9:30 p.m. | Drone Show and Fireworks
-



Save the Date: Workday Student Kickoff Event October 13! This is an exciting year as the university begins transitioning student and course-related activities into Workday! Join us in celebrating this milestone and learn more about the changes ahead. Mark your calendar for the Faculty and Staff [Workday Student](#) Kickoff event on **October 13, 2026, from 1:00-2:30 p.m.** This event will be held in the Grand River Room, available live via Zoom, and will be recorded. Additional details will be shared as we get closer to the event.



GV Technology Summit: Submit Your Presentation Proposal. The 2026 GV Technology Summit will take place on the Valley Campus on **November 3**, and planning is well underway. An exciting agenda is coming together, highlighting the many ways technology is enhancing learning, research, and work at GVSU. There's still time to get involved! [Submit a proposal](#) to present a breakout session or showcase your work during the poster session. Students are also encouraged to submit presentation proposals and share their ideas.



GVSU's Annual Teach-In will return in November and the call for presenters is open! The campus-wide learning opportunity takes place on **November 10 on the Allendale Campus and November 11 on the Pew Campus** and is focused on education equity and its connection across disciplines. Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to submit session proposals and each session must have at least two presenters, with one preferably being a GVSU student, as this has been a hallmark of Teach-In since its inception. [The proposal deadline is Sunday, October 11 and you can click here to learn more.](#)

Publications/Presentations



Jennifer Groom, special education alum, turned her EDS 693 master's project into an article that was published in the peer-reviewed journal, *Inclusive Practices*. She published the article, "[From Barriers to Pathways: Strategies to Facilitate Friendship Opportunities for Elementary Autistic Students](#)," with guidance from **special education adjunct instructor, Rebecca Davis**, and **Julia Snider, associate professor in the Teaching and Learning (T&L) department**.



Tova Hartle, assistant professor of Educational Leadership and Counseling (ELC), authored a chapter called "Cognitive Theory" in the book, *Theories and Models of Counseling: An Integrative Perspective*. This textbook offers a fresh, integrative approach by organizing content around the major theoretical forces in psychology. Spanning foundational, postmodern, transformative, family systems, and emerging approaches, this text equips students with a strong foundation for real-world counseling. [More information about this chapter can be found here.](#)



Kelly Lormand, assistant professor in the Teaching and Learning (T&L) department, attended the [Biennial Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices at Herstmonceux Castle](#) (U.K.) to present a collaborative self-study called, "Amplifying the Soundtrack of Our Teacher Selves: Playlists as Maps of Our Becoming Justice-Oriented Educators."

Important Notices



DeVos Parking Lot Access Changes: Faculty and Staff will be required to scan their GVSU-issued ID in order to enter and exit the DeVos Lot. When approaching the machine, please scan the barcode on the back of your ID on the top right of the machine.

If the barcode on the back of your GVSU ID is faded or not readable, we recommend being issued a replacement. Hours for the Registrar's Assistance Center can be found by clicking [here](#).

Faculty and Staff Permit Registration: Only GVSU Faculty/Staff with *active appointments* are issued parking permits. Parking permits are only valid for adjunct Faculty/Staff if they have an *active appointment* and are either working for or teaching at GVSU during the semester in which the permit is being used. Faculty/Staff permits are for the exclusive use of the employee only. This permit is **not valid** in Pay-to-Park or other designated areas on campus.

Pew Campus Event and Visitor Parking Changes: In preparation for the increased demand for parking needs for the new Acrisure Amphitheater and Amway Stadium, there are some parking changes that are being implemented on the Pew Campus. **This will affect the Seward Ramp, Seward Flat Lot, DeVos, Fulton, and Mt. Vernon Lots with the expansion into more lots in the upcoming months.**

GVSU Event Parking for the affected lots will now require proper validation to exit instead of paper permits. Faculty/Staff will still submit an event request as normal; instead of permits being emailed, validation coupons will be delivered. Or your visitor will be prompted to pay on exit.

When requesting a visitor permit, you will have two options:

1. Provide a **license plate** and **email** for a virtual QR code to be emailed to the visitor to park in the GVSU lots.
2. Have the visitor bring the ticket to you, and you can now request a validation request through the same portal that you would request a visitor permit, but you would select: "[City Campus Validation Request](#)." **Or your visitor will be prompted to pay on exit.**



Dean of Students Office Reorganization: The Dean of Students Office has restructured its team and student support model to better meet growing student needs, following increased CARE referrals and Student Integrity cases and the departure of an associate dean. Ben Witt has been appointed Associate Dean of Students overseeing Care and Student Integrity. The Student Ombuds role has been sunset, and Takeelia Garrett has been promoted to Assistant Dean of Students, overseeing Student Voice and Agency. [Read more about the restructure on the Dean of Students website.](#)



New Academic Year, New Names! Please be aware of the following recent name changes to university centers:

- [Barbara and Stuart Padnos Center for Global Experiences](#)
(formerly "Barbara and Stuart Padnos International Center")
- [Center for Student Research and Scholarly Engagement](#)
(formerly "Center for Undergraduate Scholar Engagement")

- [Faculty Research and Innovation Center](#)
(formerly "Center for Scholarly and Creative Excellence")



Fall 2026 Final Grading Change: The Provost's Office and the Office of the Registrar are working together proactively to make plans for grading at the end of the Fall 2026 semester.

The Fall 2026 semester begins Monday, August 31. Based on current scheduling guidelines, this is the latest the fall semester could ever begin. This means that grades would be due on Tuesday, December 22 at noon. The university will be closed for Winter Break Wednesday, December 23-Sunday, January 3. Staff will be back at work on Monday, January 4, and the Winter 2027 semester will begin Monday, January 11.

Given that the grading process takes about three days to complete, it has been decided to **move the university grading deadline to Monday, December 21 at noon for the Fall 2026 semester only.** Undergraduate academic review will occur on Monday, December 21-Wednesday, December 23. Graduate academic review will occur early in the week of January 4, 2027.

The Provost's Office and Office of the Registrar recognize that **faculty with exams near the end of finals week will have less time than normal to complete their grades.** Hopefully knowing ahead of time will allow them to plan their exams/culminating experiences in a way to minimize stress in the grading process.

A notification will be sent to all instructors prior to the beginning of the fall semester as well as several reminders as the semester nears completion.



New Grants and Grant Cycles! FTLC has done a lot of work to better align their offerings to faculty, and make them more concise and predictable. They started with changes to the dissemination and mini grants:

Faculty Travel Support Grant: FTLC has expanded the Dissemination Grant to include any travel related to your research and creative practice. It is now called the **Faculty Travel Support Grant**. Faculty may apply for one of these \$600 grants per fiscal year (July 1 - June 30).

Momentum Fund: FTLC has re-imagined the Mini Grant and are calling it the **Momentum Fund**. This is a more competitive grant than the Mini was, but the award has been raised to \$2,000! Faculty may apply for one per fiscal year (July 1 - June 30).

FTLC is also working on a change to the Catalyst Grant, which will be called the **Seed Grant**. It will still offer up to \$5,000 for project support, and be reviewed by the Faculty Research and Development Committee. The focus will be more on the "seed" aspect. More information will be coming before the first deadline for this grant. **The Seed Grant and the Collaborative Grant will be on the same funding cycles: two rounds per academic year (August - July) with deadlines on December 15th and March 1st.**

University Governance

University Committees

Representation List

College Governance

CECI Governance Committees

Governance Website

Representation List



Join us for the CECI Technology and Innovation Committee's fall events. Big Byte webinars and committee meetings are open to all CECI faculty and staff. Committee meetings will follow each Big Byte webinar. We encourage you to attend!

Monday, September 21, at 11:30 a.m.

Topic: Finding Balance

Format: Zoom Webinar

Explore how overreliance on technology can impact well-being in academic environments and consider strategies for finding a healthy balance in our use of technology.

Monday, October 19, at 11:30 a.m.

Topic: Blackboard—Addressing Gradebook Updates and Learning Module Development

Format: Zoom Webinar

Get ready for fall grading with an overview of Blackboard gradebook updates. Then, start looking ahead to the next term by exploring learning module development and other technology resources.

Monday, November 16, at 11:30 a.m.

Topic: Blue Dot Innovation Lab

Format: Live Presentation + Zoom Webinar

Join us for an overview of the Blue Dot Innovation Lab and an exploration of its potential applications within the CECI community.

Looking for additional information? Visit our **CECI Big Byte org** in Blackboard. Take some time to catch up on previous sessions, share questions/ideas with your hosts in the Discussion Board, and find the links to join our Zoom webinars.

Interested in creating a technology project? Schedule a call with the Technology Teaching Specialist Graduate Assistant, [Noah Houchlei](#). Noah is available to assist and collaborate with faculty on creating immersive learning experiences for students using educational technologies.

CECI Events



2025 QuickTalks Participants

Save the Date! Please save the date for **QuickTalks and the CECI Social** happening on **Wednesday, November 18** in the Hager-Lubbers Exhibition Hall.

QuickTalks

2:00–3:00 p.m. | TBD

CECI Social

3:00–4:30 p.m. | Exhibition Hall (105E DEV)

Important Dates

IMPORTANT DATES!



August 26 - GVSU Faculty/Staff Kickoff Celebration | 4 p.m. | Seidman Center

August 28 - Laker Kickoff | 6 p.m. | Lubbers Stadium

August 31 - Fall 2026 Semester Begins

September 6-7 - Labor Day Recess - **GVSU CLOSED**

September 10 - Nonprofit Volunteer & Internship Fair | 1:00 p.m. | Kirkhof Lawn (*share with your students!*)

September 21 - CECI Big Byte - Finding Balance | 11:30 a.m. | Zoom

September 23 - GVSU Study Abroad Fair | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. | Kirkhof Center (*share with your students!*)

October 2 - [JCPenney Suit Up Event](#) (Fall Career Fair Prep) | 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. | JCPenney - Rivertown Crossing Mall (*share with your students!*)

October 5 - [Prepare for the Career Fair](#) | 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. | DeVos Knowledge Market - Pew Campus (*share with your students!*)

October 6 - [Prepare for the Career Fair](#) | 12 p.m. - 2 p.m. | 200 Student Services - Allendale Campus (*share with your students!*)

October 6 - [Undergraduate Research Fair](#) | 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. | Grand River Room (*share with your students!*)

October 13 - [GVSU Career & Internship Fair](#) | 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. | DeVos Place Convention Center (*share with your students!*)

October 13 - Workday Student Kickoff Event | 1 p.m. | Grand River Room/Zoom

October 19 - CECI Big Byte - Blackboard - Gradebook & Learning Mod Dev | 11:30 a.m. | Zoom

October 26-27 - Fall Break - GVSU Offices Open

November 3 - GV Technology Summit | 8:30 a.m. | Kirkhof Center

November 10 - GVSU Teach-In | Allendale Campus

November 11 - GVSU Teach-In | Pew Campus

November 16 - CECI Big Byte - Blue Dot Innovation Lab | 11:30 a.m. | TBD/Zoom

November 18 - CECI QuickTalks & Fall Social | 2 p.m. | Hager-Lubbers Exhibition Hall (105E DEV)

November 25-29 - Thanksgiving Recess - **GVSU CLOSED**

December 12 - Commencement

December 12-19 - Examination Week

December 22 - **F26 Final Grades Due from Faculty by 12:00 p.m.**

CECI Resources

[Acronyms](#)

[CECI Connections Guide](#)

[CECI Newsletter Repository](#)

[Experts Guide](#)

[Organizational Chart](#)

[Student Flowchart](#)

**CECI
HAPPENINGS**

[CECI Happenings](#) is an informational form that can be submitted by any faculty, staff, or student to promote an event, publication, etc. that they would like shared to CECI social media platforms and/or the newsletter.

Newsletter Contributions

Thanks to all those who contributed to the August 2026 edition of *CECI Connections*:

Neal Buckwalter, Rita Cooper, Jackie Doyon-Martin, Bill Herbst, Mark Hoffman, Leanne Kang, Kaithlyn Koomson, Kelly Lormand, Cray Mulder, MaryJohn Pachuta-Rysak, Julia Snider, Sherril Soman, Victoria Stubbs, Courtney Topic, Vicky Wright

Submit a story for the September edition [here!](#)

You may also send items to share in future editions of *CECI Connections* directly to Bill Herbst, director of communications, at herbstw@gvsu.edu, and/or Victoria A. Stubbs, office assistant, at stubbsvi@gvsu.edu.

Questions? cecidean@gvsu.edu | [\(616\) 331-6821](tel:6163316821) | gvsu.edu/ceci

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