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Colleagues,

While our academic schedules divide the year by semesters, the summer months invite us to experience time a bit differently. To mark this transition, we share an excerpt from the beloved poem, "Nature," by Jamaican poet and legal scholar, H.D. Carberry:

*We have neither summer nor winter, neither autumn nor spring.
We have instead the days, when the gold sun shines... - magnificently.*

*The days when the rain beats, like bullets on the roofs
and there is no sound, but the swish of water in the gullies
and trees struggling in the high ... winds.*

*Also there are the days, when leaves fade from off guango trees
and the reaped canefields, lie bare and fallow to the sun.*

*But best of all, there are the days, when the mango and the logwood blossom
When bushes are full of the sound of bees, and the scent of honey.
When the tall grass sways and shivers, to the slightest breath of air.
When the buttercups have paved the earth with yellow stars
and beauty comes suddenly, and the rains have gone.*

~Sherril Soman
CECI Dean



CECI Unit Spotlight



(Click on images to enlarge)

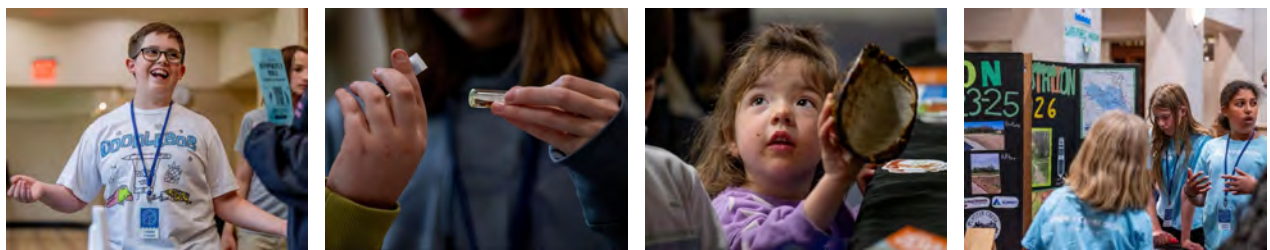
Despite a chilly, overcast evening that felt far more like early spring than mid-May, the Richard M. DeVos Center was filled with energy as families, teachers, and PK-12 students from schools across Kent and Ottawa counties gathered for a vibrant celebration of student learning, stewardship, and community impact.

Since 2009, local teachers have been corralling their students, packing up displays from their classrooms, and meeting together each spring to share stewardship projects conducted in the community. Over the last 17 years, this event has evolved and looked a little bit different year to year, but some things have stayed the same. There is a PBS character taking pictures with families, students share their projects and moments of learning with the community, and the evening is emceed by the incredible [Shelley Irwin](#) from WGUV Public Media. This is the [Groundswell Student Project Showcase](#), an annual celebration of local place-based stewardship education hosted by the **Center for Educational Partnerships (CEP)** as a part of the [Groundswell Stewardship Initiative](#). Staff work hard in the months leading up to this event to support PK-12 students in engaging with the outdoors through inquiry, exploration, and hands-on action projects.

The evening of May 13 saw all of these efforts coming to fruition in the 2026 Groundswell Student Project Showcase. Some educators have been working with this program since its inception, building on their knowledge and expertise in outdoor learning with a new group of students each year. Other teachers are brand new to the program, like Emma Witkovzky, who was featured in the [GVNext article](#) highlighting the event.

By late afternoon, teachers and students were already checking in with projects in tow, eager to begin setting up before the doors officially opened. Volunteers greeted attendees with warmth and enthusiasm in the DeVos Plaza, while in the south area of the building, WGUV interview stations buzzed with activity as our PK-12 presenters answered questions about their research and stewardship work on camera. Students shared insights about the projects they had spent months developing during the school year, interviewed by WGUV media hosts Shelley Irwin and Jennifer Moss. Throughout the hallways, excitement steadily built as families, educators, and community members poured in to experience the showcase firsthand.

A special reception was held in the University Club, where Dean Soman and the CEP team welcomed legislators, community leaders, donors, and sponsors. These special guests included Michigan State Senator Mark E. Huizenga, Grand Rapids City Commissioners Linda Knight and Melinda Ysasi, and Kent County Commissioner Kris Pachla. Staff from the offices of U.S. Representative Hillary Scholten, State Senator Winnie Brinks, and Representative Carol Glanville also attended to learn more about Groundswell. Long-time funders for Groundswell also attended, including leaders from the Great Lakes Fishery Trust, The Wege Foundation, and the Baldwin Foundation, to learn more from teachers and partners such as the John Ball Zoo, Grand Valley Metropolitan Council, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes Energy, and the Michigan Center for Civic Education. The reception offered these attendees a deeper look into the work Groundswell carries out during the academic year, highlighting both the scale of the program's impact and the meaningful relationships that make this work possible.



(Click on images to enlarge)

By 5:00 p.m., the student exhibits filled the halls, and attendees gathered in the Loosemore Auditorium to officially begin the evening's program. Guests were welcomed and the many educators, partners, volunteers, and organizations were recognized for their dedication to making place-based stewardship education possible in our community.

The evening also featured remarks from Provost Jennifer Drake, who spoke about the importance of empowering young people to become active stewards within their schools and communities. Several outstanding teachers were also recognized with awards for their outstanding outdoor teaching and leadership throughout the school year; to read about each teacher and their accolades, visit the [CEP Blog on the subject](#).

One of the evening's most memorable moments came when two special guests, Louie the Laker and The Lorax, made their appearance to enthusiastic applause. Their presence added an extra layer of joy, and after the presentation, they visited students around the event to take photos and meet with special guests and attendees.

Our 2026 Showcase saw an extraordinary range of projects that reflected both scientific inquiry and personal passion from the students. Visitors explored displays featuring live butterflies, native plant plugs, seed classification activities, live insects and macroinvertebrates, watershed models, posters, demonstrations, and detailed dioramas. Students eagerly shared their work with visitors and one another in an atmosphere of infectious enthusiasm and positivity.

Community partners added even more opportunities for hands-on learning and engagement. Attendees connected with community organizations and GVSU departments, including [Admissions](#), the [Sustainable Agriculture Project](#), and the [GVSU Regional Math and Science Center](#). Each offered interactive activities exploring their respective areas of engagement, sustainability, and stewardship. Outside, families enjoyed lawn games courtesy of the Grand Valley Career Center, while those in the plaza gathered over slices of Jet's Pizza and conversation between exhibits.

The evening concluded with a raffle celebration for participating students, featuring GVSU merchandise, tree saplings, and other prizes that sent students home smiling. After exhibits were packed up, teachers, volunteers, and Groundswell staff shared a well-earned meal together. The 2026 Groundswell Student Project Showcase was a powerful reminder of how stewardship doesn't wait, that passion is infectious, and that community support is what really creates ripples of change. From the youngest littles presenting their preschool projects to the graduating high school seniors, students demonstrated knowledge and creativity, and also a genuine commitment to making a difference. The evening was inspiring; a true celebration of stewardship in action.

Celebrations



The article, "[Reimagining Chemistry at Bellamy Creek](#)," was recently featured in [GVNext](#) about CECI/GVSU's [Bellamy Creek Program](#), which offers incarcerated students at Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility in Ionia the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree in **public and nonprofit administration (SCLD)**.



The **Center for Educational Partnerships (CEP)** has been awarded a grant through [The Wege Foundation](#) for the **Groundswell Stewardship Initiative** program to continue place-based stewardship education (PBSE) opportunities for PK-12 students and educators in Kent and Ottawa counties. Through this support, Groundswell will provide professional learning for educators, support student-centered environmental stewardship projects, and strengthen partnerships between schools and community organizations. A key component of this work will focus on measuring the impact of PBSE on student learning and engagement. Groundswell will collect and analyze student and teacher survey data to better understand how place-based learning influences student engagement, connection to local environmental issues, civic participation, and instructional practices. Findings will help inform future programming, strengthen professional learning opportunities, and further strategic planning. **Vicky Wright, assistant director for CEP**, will serve as the PI for this grant. Learn more about what the Groundswell program does at gvsu.edu/groundswell.



Larry Warkoczeski (center), affiliate faculty and executive in residence in the School of Community Leadership and Development (SCLD), was recognized by The Graduate School and the Graduate Student Association with the **Outstanding Teacher Award** at the [Winter 2026 Graduate School Citations for Academic Excellence](#). Congratulations, Larry, and well-deserved!



Duane Zuber, affiliate faculty in the Hospitality and Tourism Management program (HTM-SCLD), led a team of five outstanding HTM students to the [Asian American Hotel Owners Association Convention](#) in Philadelphia, PA, for the 2026 Hotel Turnaround Collegiate Championship in early April. This exciting competition allows students to tackle real-world challenges, showcase their skills, and connect with top industry professionals. This year, competing against 12 other universities, the two GVSU teams advanced to the finals. One team won in the simulation category and the other team won the overall competition! These students continue to make us proud!

Campus Events



The [Division of People, Equity, and Culture](#) and the [Milt Ford Legacy Collective: The Rainbow Resource Center](#) are sponsoring GVSU's booths at upcoming local pride festivals. Make sure you stop by!

- **Saturday, June 20** | [Grand Rapids Pride](#) (Booth #138) | 12 p.m. - 8 p.m.
- **Saturday, June 27** | [Holland Pride](#) | 1 p.m. - 6 p.m.
- **Saturday, July 11** | [Hudsonville Area Pride](#) | 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.



Join the [Division of People, Equity, and Culture](#) for an open-house style gathering to come together in community, enjoy a shared meal, experience an African dance performance, and reflect on the significance of Juneteenth.

Juneteenth Celebration at GVSU
 Thursday, June 18, 2026 | 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
 Pere Marquette Room (Rm 2204) - Kirkhof Center
 Allendale Campus



Join Pew FTLC for the [32nd Annual Fall Conference on Teaching and Learning](#) on **Thursday, August 13, 2026**. This milestone event promises a day filled with insightful discussions, innovative teaching strategies, and networking opportunities. Don't miss this opportunity to connect with fellow educators and enhance your teaching practice! Due to Eberhard Center construction, the event will take place at the L. William Seidman Center, which means capacity is more limited. Pew FTLC challenges you as a community to take this opportunity to practice living the mantra; if you sign up, show up. [Registering](#) means you are committing to attending the event. They understand emergencies arise, and if they do they simply ask you let Pew FTLC know you are no longer able to attend so they may enable others to attend.

Call for Proposals

Publications/Presentations



Tova Hartle, assistant professor in the Educational Leadership and Counseling (ELC) department, presented a roundtable session at the [Association for Humanistic Counseling](#) (AHC) conference in New Orleans, LA, on May 30. The session, "Forgotten Grievers: The Hidden Impact of Student Suicide on School Counselors," explored the largely overlooked bereavement experiences of school counselors following student suicide loss, highlighting ways that the profession can better support those who simultaneously serve as grievers and caregivers within the school community.



Melanie Rabine-Johnson, academic resources and retention specialist in the CECI Undergraduate Advising Center (UAC), is scheduled to present, *Removing Language Barriers to Student Success and Belonging in Academic Advising*, at the [2026 NACADA Annual Conference](#), and has been selected by the Advisor Training and Development Community to be one of its sponsored sessions. Community-sponsored status is awarded to sessions that exemplify topics and practices of particular interest to the sponsoring community. This designation will be noted in conference materials, helping attendees identify sessions aligned with their professional interests and community focus. Congratulations again on this outstanding achievement!

Important Notices



CECI Expense Report
Guide 2025-2026
(Full Guide)

Fiscal Year End (FYE) deadlines for CECI faculty/staff: Please connect with your unit's Cost Center Assistant (CCA - your Department Coordinator) and Unit Head for assistance completing your report(s) by the **CECI FYE deadlines**.

CECI FYE Deadlines:

- **Tuesday, June 16 - LAST DAY TO:**
 - Use **GVSU Expense Card** (formerly p-card) for purchases
 - *May resume use on July 1, 2026*
 - **Book flights** using Lightning
 - Place **Amazon** or **Office Depot orders** via Workday
- **Wednesday, June 24 - LAST DAY** to submit **EXPENSE REPORTS** for **June 2026**
 - ***ALL expense reports for FY 2025-2026 need to be submitted by this date!***

Please turn on "Tasks" and "To-Dos" notifications in Workday. This is the **only way you'll be notified** if your expense report is sent back to you for correction. Both expense reports and corrections **must be completed in a timely manner**. Instructions for how to turn both notifications on are on page 4 of the CECI Expense Report Guide.



Major impacts coming up for the intersection of Lake Michigan Dr. NW and Winter Ave. NW: In the next couple of weeks, the traffic signal at Lake Michigan Dr. NW and Winter Ave. NW will be removed to begin preparations for the bridge from the Seward Ramp to the YMCA. **This area will be a 4-way stop through December.**

Additionally, **Lake Michigan Dr. from Seward Ave. to Mt. Vernon will be closing at end of August through December.** Access to Seward Ramp - access from west if construction allows, or from Fulton/south side.

[View map](#)

IMPORTANT



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.

University Governance

[University Committees](#)

[Representation List](#)

College Governance

[CECI Governance Committees](#)

[Governance Website](#)

[Representation List](#)

Important Dates

IMPORTANT DATES!



June 16 - **FYE (CECI Deadline)** - LAST DAY to use GVSU Expense Card (may resume use on July 1, 2026)

June 16 - **FYE (CECI Deadline)** - LAST DAY to book flights using Lightning

June 16 - **FYE (CECI Deadline)** - LAST DAY to place Amazon and/or Office Depot orders via Workday

June 18 - Juneteenth Celebration at GVSU | 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. | Kirkhof Center

June 20 - GVSU Booth (#138) at Grand Rapids Pride | 12 p.m. - 8 p.m. | Calder Plaza - Downtown GR

June 22 - S26 1st 6 weeks classes end

June 23-24 - S26 1st 6 weeks examinations

June 24 - **FYE (CECI Deadline)** - June 2026 expense reports dues in Workday - ALL expense reports for FY 2025-2026 need to be submitted by this date.

June 27 - GVSU Booth at Holland Pride | 1 p.m. - 6 p.m. | Kollen Park - Holland, MI

June 29 - S26 2nd 6 weeks classes begin

June 30 - Fiscal Year 2025-2026 ENDS

July 3 - Independence Day Observed - **GVSU CLOSED**

July 11 - GVSU Booth at Hudsonville Pride | 12 p.m. - 6 p.m. | Location TBA as of 6/11/26

August 24 - CECI Fall Kickoff Meeting | 1008 L. William Seidman Center

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 June 2026 edition of *CECI Connections*:

Neal Buckwalter, Tova Hartle, Bill Herbst, Katie Humphrey, Breeann Mann, Sherril Soman, Mara Spears, Victoria Stubbs.

Submit a story for the July 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 | gvsu.edu/ceci

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