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

November 2025

Reflecting on Purpose and Impact

"We should measure the prosperity of a nation not by the number of millionaires, but by the absence of poverty, the prevalence of health, the efficiency of the public schools, and the number of people who can [and] do read worthwhile books."

— *W.E.B. Du Bois, 1953*

Last week, during a professional development opportunity, I was reminded of the brilliance of some of our most influential thinkers. Reflecting on W.E.B. Du Bois' words from more than seventy years ago, I was struck by how relevant his message remains today. His call to measure prosperity not in wealth, but in well-being and collective advancement, speaks directly to the work we do every day in our college.

Across our programs, our students, faculty, and staff are engaged in the vital work of shaping healthier communities, strengthening systems of justice, and expanding access to opportunity. Each discipline contributes uniquely to fulfilling Du Bois' vision—whether through the education of future teachers, the advocacy of social workers, the service of public leaders, or the care and connection fostered through hospitality.



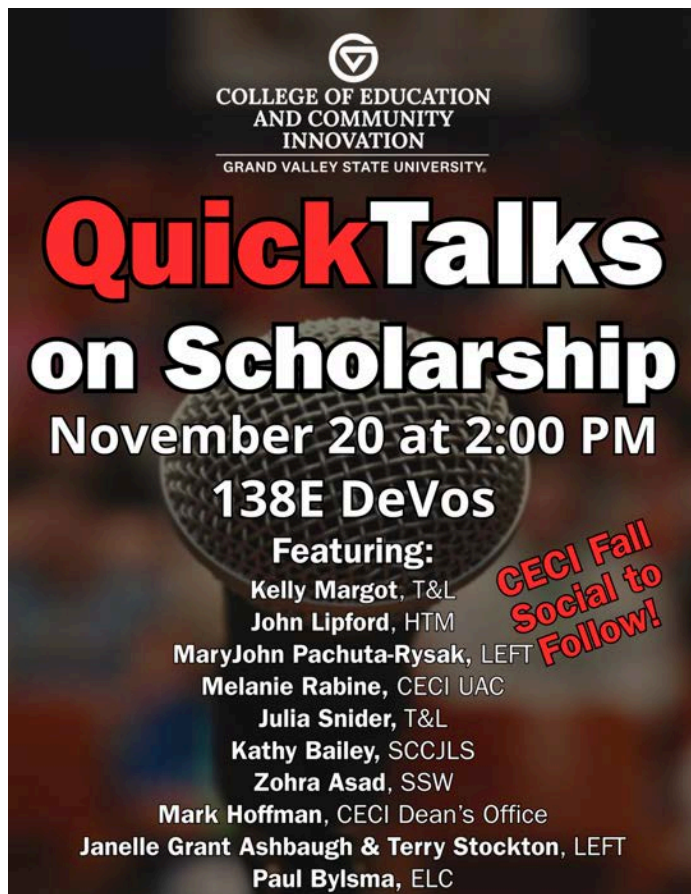
During the same week, I had the privilege of meeting with a Social Work alumna who is now a successful litigator in social justice spaces. What stood out from our conversation was not the theories she learned during her time at GVSU, but the relationships that sustained her—the faculty and staff who believed in her potential and supported her through both challenges and triumphs. Her story is one of many that remind us of the transformative power of community and mentorship in our college.

As we move through the semester, I encourage each of us to pause and reflect on the broader impact of our work. Whether we are teaching, researching, mentoring, or serving, we are collectively contributing to a future measured not by accumulation, but by compassion, learning, and shared prosperity.

In community,

~Sherril
CECI Dean

CECI Events



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
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QuickTalks on Scholarship

November 20 at 2:00 PM
138E DeVos

Featuring:

- Kelly Margot, T&L
- John Lipford, HTM
- MaryJohn Pachuta-Rysak, LEFT
- Melanie Rabine, CECI UAC
- Julia Snider, T&L
- Kathy Bailey, SCCJLS
- Zohra Asad, SSW
- Mark Hoffman, CECI Dean's Office
- Janelle Grant Ashbaugh & Terry Stockton, LEFT
- Paul Bylsma, ELC

CECI Fall Social to Follow!



PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE

FALL SOCIAL

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20
3:00 - 5:00 PM

HAGER-LUBBERS EXHIBITION HALL
(105E DEV)

FOOD PROVIDED.

CECI Unit Spotlight



On September 12 and 19, 2025, the GVSU department of [Teaching and Learning](#) partnered with [The Storehouse of Community Resources](#), a local non-profit organization that provides teachers with low- to no-cost classroom supplies. In this case, the beneficiaries were nearly 150 students from the Birth to Kindergarten, Special Education, PreK–6th, and GTC programs! The students from these programs dedicated over 9 hours in total to sorting pallets of books donated by Scholastic Books, who generously contributed over 2.5 million dollars' worth of reading materials.

In recognition of their hard work and community service, the students were rewarded with 240 books apiece to help jumpstart their own classroom libraries—an inspiring example of collaboration, service, and the power of literacy. **GVSU Teacher Candidates sorted 75 pallets, which contained over 90,000 books, and received a grand total of 28,385 new books for their future classrooms.** Faculty members Sheryl Vlietstra and Megan Freudigmann organized the event that was sponsored by [The Michigan Literacy Project](#), with colleagues Allison Philippe, Barb Lubic, Bill Smith, Lydia Saldivar, Kim Hughes, and Kathryn Ohle joining in. It was a tremendous success for all!

Below are a few impact statements from students who participated:

"So beneficial for new teachers like me. It makes me relieved that I have a starting point for my future classrooms."

"I found so many books to build classroom culture! I'm so excited! Thank you so much!"

"Thank you for kick-starting my classroom library. You are setting me up + my students up for success! I am so appreciative."

"This was such a fun and amazing opportunity to get my class library started! Thank you!"

"I know that these books will be so useful for small group assignments! Also a financial relief! Thank you!"



(Click on photos to enlarge them.)

Celebrations



The [Battle Creek Scholars Program](#), a partnership between the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Battle Creek Public Schools, and CECI, is featured in the Fall 2025 issue of *Grand Valley Magazine*. Read "[Educators, Scholars and a City's Future](#)" for the full story.



On October 15, the [School of Social Work \(SSW\)](#) hosted the annual [Ara Cary Lectureship Series](#) for social work and child welfare professionals across West Michigan. Ara Cary was a pioneer in social work education and served on the steering committee that helped establish Grand Valley State University's MSW program in 1984. The School of Social Work continues to honor Ms. Cary's legacy through the [Ara Cary Endowment](#), which supports a low-cost continuing education conference for professionals serving children and families.

This year's conference, coordinated by [Katie Scheuerle, Director of Field Experience \(SSW\)](#), featured a presentation titled "Creating a Safe and Thriving Home/Environment for Children with Trauma," led by [Kim M. Seidel, MA, LPC, NCC](#). Ms. Seidel is the author of *How To Love An Alien: Creating A Safe Place To Land for Children with Trauma*.

More than 80 professionals attended the event, and feedback about the conference was overwhelmingly positive.



[Chris Gale, '12 Public and Nonprofit Administration \(SCLD\) alum](#), is highlighted in [The 150 Most Influential Philadelphians Right Now](#) in *Philadelphia Magazine*. Gale is the Executive Director of the [Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia](#).



[Diana Giles, '24 Master of Public Administration \(SCLD\) alum](#), began this fall as a Legislative Fellow at the U.S. House of Representatives, and as a Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) Fellow in Washington, D.C. As the [CHCI Health Postgraduate Fellow](#), Diana is eager to work alongside policymakers to develop, implement, and evaluate health policies that reduce disparities and improve outcomes for Latino communities. She looks forward to deepening her understanding of the legislative process and contributing to policy solutions that contribute to a more just and inclusive healthcare system for all.



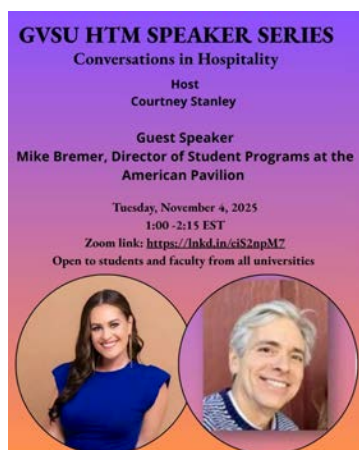
On October 28, the **Legal Studies Program (SCCJLS)** hosted a Career Event for all students interested in careers in law. The event explored the various types of legal careers available, what those careers might look like, and what you need to do to prepare for each particular career. The session included information about the law school admissions process, tips to make candidates more marketable as a paralegal, and other law or law-adjacent careers. The event was led by **Assistant Professor Courtney Topic**, and **Associate Professors Adrian Copeland** and **Joshua Sheffer**. Students also had the opportunity to learn from **Laura Marsh (SCCJLS Internship Coordinator)**, **Naoki Kanaboshi (Professor)**, and **Mike Ley (Adjunct Professor)**.



Lynne Ladner, '05 Master of Public Administration (SCLD) alum, has been named District Manager of the [Seminole Improvement District](#), which provides most of the infrastructure — from roads to utilities to drainage — for the City of Westlake, FL. Ladner previously served as the City Administrator for Hiawatha, KS, and City Manager for South Lyon, MI and Hart, MI.



Ronke Olawale, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work (SSW), received a [Pew FTLC Sandbox Learning Innovation Grant](#) to support on-going teaching and co-curricular learning strategies through in-class activities. The goal of these activities is to enhance engagement with course contents, which will boost retention and foster students' understanding. Additionally, the activities implemented will help students form connections with each other as they build community in their learning. Some of these initiatives come from the events that Olawale participated in during Spring/Summer 2025, offered through the FTLC.



On November 4, **Lorie A. Tuma, Associate Professor in the Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) program (SCLD)**, hosted the latest GVSU HTM Speaker Series: Conversations in Hospitality, featuring moderator Courtney Stanley and guest speaker Mike Bremer, Director of [Student Programs at The American Pavilion \(Cannes Film Festival\)](#). The session, themed **GET A PASSPORT & GO**, explored global career pathways in hospitality, with an inside look at the 10-year history of the Cannes Study Abroad experiential learning experience and the 121 students who have completed the program, originally created with **Patty Janes, Professor in HTM**; facilitated by Tuma.

The event was streamed live and reached 131 participants, including the majority from GVSU, plus attendees from six universities nationwide and two guests joining from the United Kingdom. Engagement was high, with students submitting questions throughout the broadcast and several requesting follow-up information about future international experiential learning opportunities.



On November 6, **Lorie A. Tuma, Associate Professor in the Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) program**, represented GVSU, while participating in the national webinar [Why Mattering Matters: How Valuing Students Fuels Engagement](#), led by researcher and author Dr. Zach Mercurio. The session explored the science behind mattering—the belief that students are seen, valued, and capable of making a difference—and its direct connection to motivation, classroom engagement, and retention.

The webinar offered evidence-based strategies for creating intentional “moments of mattering” in both in-person and virtual learning environments, emphasizing the distinctions between belonging, inclusion, and mattering. Dr. Tuma participated alongside educators from across the world, bringing the insights back to GVSU as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen student-centered learning and foster purposeful connection in the classroom.

'Tis the Season of Giving



**REPLENISH
FOOD DRIVE**
NOV 3 - DEC 4, 2025

More than 2,000 GVSU students don't have access to enough nutritious, affordable food, and our entire community is coming together to do something about it. Throughout the month of November and into early December, donate non-perishable food items to the [GVSU Replenish Basic Needs Center](#). **High demand items include:**

- Canned fruits & veggies
- Granola Bars
- Canned soup, chili, stew
- Dried beans
- Pasta, rice, lentils
- Peanut butter and jelly
- Cereal
- Spices (salt, black pepper, onion/garlic powder)
- Personal care items (soap, shampoo/conditioner, menstrual hygiene products)

Donated items may be dropped off at the following locations and events:

- **All Month** - Donation boxes are located on the 2nd, 3rd, & 4th floors of DeVos C as you exit the elevators.
- **November 19** - CECI is partnering with the GVSU Symphony Orchestra to raise awareness of Replenish's mission and to encourage students, faculty, staff, and friends to donate at the [Orchestra's November performance](#).
- **November 20** - CECI faculty and staff are encouraged to bring donations to the **CECI QuickTalks and Fall Social** and to make Replenish a beneficiary of their Giving Tuesday generosity.



(Click on images to enlarge.)



Giving Tuesday is set for Tuesday, December 2. Many Lakers face unexpected challenges that make it difficult to access nutritious food. Your support of the **Replenish Student Food Resource Fund** helps ensure no student has to go without the essentials they need to succeed—both in and out of the classroom.

This Giving Tuesday, your gift of any amount makes an immediate impact by keeping shelves stocked and students supported. As a token of our thanks, you'll receive a digital recipe book filled with favorite dishes from the Laker community—perfect for the holiday season. **Give today!**



The **School of Criminology, Criminal Justice, and Legal Studies (SCCJLS)** has organized a donation drive to help support formerly incarcerated community members returning to society. **Please drop off new hats, gloves, and socks in the designated boxes next to the Replenish food drive boxes on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors of DeVos C.** All items will be delivered to the Office of Offender Success (MDOC).

Donation Drive Flyer

Publications/Presentations



Salvatore Alaimo, Professor in the School of Community Leadership and Development (SCLD), recently published, "**The Evaluation Capacity of Czech Nonprofit Social Services Organizations.**" with my Czech research colleagues Jakub Pejcal from Masaryk University and Simona Smrčková from Charles University. The article is in Volume 11, Issue 1 of the *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs* and can be found here -

This is the research Alaimo and colleagues conducted while he was in the Czech Republic for his Fulbright Scholarship in 2022-2023.



At the October 2025 **Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education**, five **School of Social Work (SSW) faculty** shared presentations. **Zohra Asad**: "Challenges and resilience: Social workers experiences working with people with harmful sexual behaviors". **Joshua Bishop**: "Are social workers with disabilities impacted by their working conditions?" with Laurie L. Eldred, LMSW-C, CAADC, MPA and "Do university students comply with COVID-19 prevention guidelines?" with Laura Andres, MSW student. **Haresh Dalvi**: "How can the Implicit Curriculum Advance Disability Inclusion and Justice by Addressing Aesthetic Bias?" and "Advancing Disability Justice: Theoretical Foundations and Contemporary Contributions." **Ronke Olawale and Didar Hossain**: "Neuro-Inclusiveness and Accessibility in Social Work Education: A Journey to Effective Teaching."



Tova Hartle, faculty with Educational Leadership and Counseling (ELC), presented a roundtable session at the [Association for Counselor Education and Supervision \(ACES\)](#) conference in Philadelphia on October 10. The topic, "Ethical Risk Assessment: Equipping School Counselors to Evaluate Students Effectively," focused on providing Counselor Educators with practical tools and techniques for teaching school counseling students how to assess suicide risk ethically and legally while adhering to ASCA recommendations.



Lindsay Stoetzel, Jennifer Vanderground, and Elizabeth Stolle of Literacy, Studies (LEFT), presented in October at the [Lilly Conference](#). Their presentation, "Enhancing Student Comprehension with Concept Maps and Guided Notes," explored the use of concept maps and guided notes as effective strategies for enhancing student comprehension in higher education.



Legal Studies (SCCJLS) Assistant Professor Courtney Topic, and Associate Professors Adrian Copeland and Joshua Sheffer presented together at the most recent [American Association for Paralegal Education \(AAfPE\)](#) conference in Grand Rapids. Their presentation was titled, "The Bot Made Me Do It: Artificially Intelligent, Legally Questionable." The presentation examined the use (and misuse) of AI in legal and academic settings and included an interactive component with attendees.



Jennifer Vanderground, Affiliate Faculty of Literacy Studies (LEFT), presented in October at the [Lilly Conference](#). Her presentation, "Optimizing Interventions & Accommodations: Strategic Tips for Supporting Striving Readers," introduced facilitation routines that promote consistency and impact, alongside evidence-based accommodations that foster access and success for striving readers and writers in higher education.



Greg Warsen, Associate Professor in Educational Leadership and Counseling (ELC), hosted a webinar for the [International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership \(ICPEL\)](#) entitled, "We Live in a Polarized Nation; Now What? Civil Discourse for Educational Leaders." This webinar is part of a monthly series designed to bring ICPEL's global community together for meaningful dialogue and professional growth year-round.

Campus Events



SAVE THE DATE! The 30th Annual [Student Scholars Day \(SSD\)](#) is scheduled for **Wednesday, April 8, 2026**. Join OURS in recognizing the curiosity, dedication, and intellectual risk-taking that define our scholarly community. **This year's theme, "SSD at 30: Reimagining the Purpose of Our Scholarship,"** invites students to explore how academic knowledge can inspire, educate, and catalyze when shared beyond traditional boundaries.

Keynote Address: Dr. Keivan G. Stassun, Stevenson Professor of Astrophysics and Director of the Frist Center for Autism & Innovation at Vanderbilt University. **Tuesday, April 7, 2026, 4-5:30 p.m.**, Pere Marquette Room, Kirkhof Center. **Encourage your students to participate!**

Important Notices



IMPORTANT DECEMBER 2025 (End-of-Year) EXPENSE REPORT DEADLINES. To ensure timely processing of your expense reports before Winter Break, please see the below cut off dates:

- **November** expense/mileage reports must be submitted by **12/4**, with complete approval by EOD 12/8.
- **December** expense/mileage reports must be submitted by **12/12**, with complete approval by EOD 12/16.
- Anything received after 12/16 will be posted in January. **GVSU is CLOSED for business for Winter Break December 22, 2025 - January 4, 2026.** Expense reports will not be approved and processed during the closure.

Please remember to follow the [CECI Expense Report Guidelines](#) when completing your expense reports. Reports not following the guidelines will be returned for correction and any reimbursement you may be owed will be delayed. Please contact your unit's Cost Center Assistant (CCA) and/or Unit Head/Director if you have questions about the guidelines, need assistance with your expense report, or need the guidelines re-sent to you.



Winter is coming...Inclement Weather - Cancellation/Closure/Remote Policy: With the changing seasons and winter weather upon us, faculty and staff are encouraged to review the **Cancellation/Closure/Remote policy (SLT 6.3)**. [More details specific to teaching classes are also available.](#) (**Note:** Guidelines for Final Exam week will be updated soon based on timely work in faculty governance.)



SPGA Application Form

[The Graduate School](#) is now accepting applications for the **2026-27 academic year Special Projects Graduate Assistantships (SPGA)**. In collaboration with Provost Drake and to elevate GVSU's teacher-scholar model, *priority will be given to SPGA applications that support faculty research and/or GVSU student success initiatives.*

If you are interested in applying, please review [the application guidelines and details](#).

- A complete application (includes responses to all applicable prompts)
- A fully developed SPGA job description
- A completed Supervisor Agreement Form

The deadline for SPGA applications is 5 p.m. ET, Friday, December 5, 2025. The application process is now completed through an online form. *It is important to note that the form cannot be saved, so please plan to fully complete and submit when you start.*



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED for GVSU Commencement on Saturday, December 2. Volunteers are needed to assist with set up, greeting guests and grads, and more! *Doors will open to guests and grads at 2:30 p.m. Ceremony start time is 4 p.m. and is expected to last no longer than 2.5 hours.*

Sign up to volunteer by Friday, November 21



CECI Dean's Innovation Grant Application

Now accepting submissions for the [CECI Dean's Innovation Grant](#)! The Dean's Innovation Grant is designed to support **faculty** in developing innovative projects with the potential to secure external funding.

- **Eligibility:**
 - Faculty members (tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track)
 - Collaborations between faculty (internal and external to the College) and students are highly encouraged
- **Grant Use:**
 - Funding may be utilized for activities directly related to the development of a competitive proposal for external funding
- **Grant Exclusions:**
 - Funding cannot be used for standard operational expenses such as salaries, equipment purchases that are not directly related to the proposal development, or travel that is not specifically for proposal development

CECI Dean's Innovation Grant Application Deadline: Sunday, March 15, 2026.



Updated Mandatory Reporter Training is here. As a mandatory reporter at GVSU, you are **required** to participate in an annual mandatory reporter compliance training.

This year, the training module for **faculty, staff, student employees, and graduate assistants** is available in **Workday Learning** and has been assigned to you as **required learning**. You should have received a system notification from Workday indicating that you've been enrolled in the "**Mandatory Reporter Training 2025-26**" module. **The deadline to complete the training is December 31, 2025.**

If you have any questions about the Policy or your reporting obligations, please contact the [Office of Civil Rights and Title IX](#) at titleix@gvsu.edu or (616) 331-9530.

University Governance

[CECI University Committees](#)

[Representation Slidedeck](#)

[Representation List](#)

College Governance

[CECI Governance Committees](#)

[Governance Website](#)

[Representation List](#)

Important Dates

IMPORTANT DATES!



November 20 - CECI QuickTalks on Scholarship | 2 p.m. | 138E DEV
 November 20 - CECI Fall Social | 3 p.m. | 105E DEV Hager-Lubbers Exhibition Hall
 November 26-30 - Thanksgiving Recess | **GVSU CLOSED**
 December 6 - [Fall 2025 Commencement](#) | 4 p.m. | Van Andel Arena | [RSVP by 11/21](#)
 December 6-13 - Final Exam Week
 December 15 - **CECI Final Grades Due by 5 p.m.** | Banner Self-Service
December 22 - January 4 - Winter Break | GVSU CLOSED
 December 31 - Mandatory Reporter Training **DUE** | Workday Learning
 January 5 - GVSU Business Hours Resume
 January 12 - Winter 2026 Semester Begins

CECI Resources

[Acronyms](#)[CECI Connections Guide](#)[CECI Newsletter Repository](#)[Experts Guide](#)[Organizational Chart](#)[Student Flowchart](#)The logo features the text "CECI HAPPENINGS" in a bold, sans-serif font. "CECI" is in white and "HAPPENINGS" is in a light blue color. The text is set against a dark blue background with a light blue diagonal stripe.

[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 November 2025 edition of *CECI Connections*:

Salvatore Alaimo, Mary Bair, Neal Buckwalter, Rita Cooper, Jackie Doyon-Martin, Megan Freudigmann, Tova Hartle, Mark Hoffman, Jamie Langlois, Cray Mulder, Katie Scheuerle, Sherril Soman, Victoria Stubbs, Courtney Topic, Lorie A. Tuma, Jennifer Vanderground, Greg Warsen.

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

You may also send items to share in future editions of *CECI Connections* directly to Victoria A. Stubbs at stubbsvi@gvsu.edu.

Questions? cecidean@gvsu.edu | (616) 331-6821 | gvsu.edu/ceci

Connect with us!



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