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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INNOVATION
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY®

October 2026



Colleagues,

The Value of Connecting

One of the highlights of my semester so far has been our *Connect with the Dean* gatherings. I've really enjoyed the opportunity to sit down with colleagues, share a few laughs, and have conversations that aren't driven by an agenda or a list of things we need to accomplish.

I've especially appreciated seeing colleagues from different units across the college getting to know one another. In the course of our busy days, it's easy to become immersed in the work of our own departments and programs, with few opportunities to engage with colleagues elsewhere in the college. These gatherings have been a wonderful opportunity to learn more about one another and the people who make up our college community.

There is real value in making time for conversations that don't need to lead to a decision, a plan, or an action item. Sometimes, simply connecting is enough.

I've appreciated the openness, good humor, and collegiality that everyone has brought to these gatherings. I hope they continue to provide opportunities for us to strengthen relationships, discover shared interests, and build a greater sense of community across CECI.

Thank you to everyone who has joined me so far. I look forward to many more conversations and hope those who haven't yet had a chance to attend will join us. Sometimes the simplest conversations are the ones that stay with us.

~Sherril Soman
CECI Dean

CECI Give-Back Event









On September 25, 2026, 35 CECI faculty and staff—including one student, one visiting faculty from Poland, and one blue crocheted dinosaur named Rhett—participated in our 5th annual CECI Give-Back fall event. The CECI Give-Back event grows our awareness of local organizations doing good in our community and the people who champion them, while connecting CECI colleagues across units. This year, we partnered with a local urban farm, New City Neighbors (NCN). This youth-centered and radically inclusive organization is “dedicated to empowering young adults through hands-on learning and meaningful work."

Our morning began with a welcome and introduction from Farm Engagement Manager, Joanna Walters, who passionately described the mission and work of NCN. Volunteers spent the morning weeding, spreading mulch, and cleaning onions and garlic. CECI volunteers had the opportunity to engage in conversations with colleagues while they worked alongside one another to prepare NCN for their fall harvesting and planting. Our morning of volunteering was followed by an amazing lunch created by GV grad and NCN chef, Luke De Haan and his staff, who prepared pizzas and salads with farm fresh ingredients from their crops.

If you’re interested in checking upcoming events at New City Neighbors, there’s an upcoming Fall Festival on October 29th.

In camaraderie,

Members of the College Advisory and Communications Committee (CACC)

CECI Events



Link to PMASI webinar on Oct. 28 at 6 p.m.

The **Professional Master Arts in Social Innovation (PMASI - SCLD)** is hosting a webinar on **October 28 at 6 p.m.: "Community Data as Essential Infrastructure: Building Localized Air Quality Data for Climate Preparedness and Resilience,"** by Darren Riley. Darren Riley is the co-founder and chief executive officer of JustAir, a Detroit-based environmental tech company focused on creating cleaner air and healthier communities. After developing asthma in his mid-twenties while living in polluted Southwest Detroit, Riley was inspired to create Just Air. The platform provides actionable air quality data to support health, safety, and environmental regulation. ***No registration or password needed for this free webinar!***



The last **Connect with the Dean** gathering for Fall 2026 takes place on **Monday, November 2**. CECI faculty/staff are invited to join Dean Soman for some casual conversation and orchard treats from **12 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. in the University Club (107C DEV).** As always, this event is unscripted and you can drop in whenever your schedule allows. We look forward to connecting with you soon! *Connect with the Dean events will resume again in Winter 2027.*



It is Walktober, but it's also time to start thinking about plans for staying active through the cold, dark winter months. If you're anything like me (MaryJohn Pachuta-Rysak (LEFT)), it might help to have an exercise buddy to help motivate you to stay active once it's below freezing and gray (and you just want to stay in bed)!

To sign up for a workout or exercise buddy, click on THIS LINK.

- **FIRST:** Put your name and contact information under a desired exercise buddy schedule along with what kinds of exercise you're interested in. Then reach out to someone who wants the same/similar days and times and types of exercise!
- **THEN:** Strikethrough or delete your names when you have established an exercise buddy system. Or, put your names and preferred exercise types further down in the appropriate "Name" column with the times you regularly meet if you're open to having more people join at your routine times! Make sure you still leave a contact method for joining your day or group!

Hope to see you at the YMCA or out walking!



CECI Grant Workshop Registration

Grant Writing Workshops for CECI Faculty and Staff: Sign up for this interactive workshop that will help guide you through the process of pursuing external funding for your scholarly and creative work. Facilitated by Elizabeth Dale, Ph.D., of the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy, this opportunity is open to interested faculty and staff at all career stages - no prior grant experience is required or expected.

- **Friday, November 13 | 1-2:30 p.m. | Virtual**
  Budgeting: How to build a realistic budget, from summer salary to student stipends

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Click on image to view full event flyer.

Save The Date: Wednesday, November 18! Come discover the amazing work happening across CECI and connect with your colleagues at the second annual **CECI QuickTalks on Scholarship, followed by the Fall Social**.

CECI QuickTalks & Fall Social
QuickTalks | 2-3:00 p.m. | Loosemore Auditorium
Fall Social | 3-4:30 p.m. | Hager-Lubbers Exhibition Hall

Celebrations



Congratulations to CECI faculty who had successful personnel actions during the 2025-2026 academic year! Faculty members were recognized at an event hosted by Provost Drake back in September to celebrate their accomplishments.

- **Raymond Higbea (SCLD)** - Promotion to Professor
- **Cathy Meyer-Looze (ELC)** - Promotion to Professor
- **Christine Kenney (T&L)** - Tenure
- **Joseph Kuilema (SSW)** - Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor
- **Mohammed Lefrid (SCLD)** - Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor
- **Julia Snider (T&L)** - Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor
- **Lindsay Stoetzel** - Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor

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Carrie Buist, associate professor in the School of Criminology, Criminal Justice, and Legal Studies (SCCJLS), is the 2027 recipient of the Richard Tewksbury Award from the Western Society of Criminology. This award honors scholars and activists whose work advances understanding of the relationship between crime and sexuality. Carrie will be presented with this honor during the Western Society of Criminology annual conference in San Diego, CA, in February 2027.



On September 17, 2026, **Grand Valley State president emeritus and distinguished professor, Thomas J. Haas (ELC)**, was the inaugural recipient of the GVSU Athletics Faculty of the Year Award. Moving forward, the annual award will bestow his name as the Haas Athletics Faculty of the Year Award. Read more.



GVSU Partners with Grand Rapids Chinese School to Support Chinese Language and Culture: With the collaborative efforts of Dr. Aaron Lowen from the GVSU Provost's Office, **Dr. Rui Niu-Cooper from CECI-LEFT**, and Dr. Patrick Shan from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed on August 20, 2026, between Dr. Ed Aboufadel of the GVSU Provost's Office and Mr. Jiyuan Wang, Principal of the Grand Rapids Chinese Language School (GRCLS).

This partnership reflects GVSU's commitment to supporting local communities, including the Chinese community, and promoting the preservation and expansion of Chinese language and culture. To support GRCLS's continued development and educational mission, the GVSU Provost's Office and the CLAS Dean's Office, under the leadership of Dr. Christopher Jones, will share GRCLS classroom rental costs during the 2026-2027 academic year.

Through this collaboration, GVSU strengthens its connection with the local communities and helps create opportunities for cultural and linguistic learning.



Patrick Reagan, MPA '08 (SCLD), was recently appointed the new city manager of Sault Ste. Marie, MI. Reagan earned a master's degree in Public Administration in 2008 and a bachelor's degree in history from GVSU. He's also held previous municipal management roles in Rhinelander, Wisconsin; Lake Odessa, Crystal Falls, and Portland, Michigan. Read more about Patrick Reagan.

Campus Events



FDTF RSVP

The Future Design Task Force (FDTF) invites Academic Affairs faculty and staff to participate in an upcoming Campus Conversation. **Your perspectives and ideas are important as the Task Force develops recommendations for the future design of Academic Affairs.**

- **October 28** - FDTF Campus Conversation for **Faculty**
  12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. | Allendale Campus
- **October 29** - FDTF Campus Conversation for **Faculty**
  3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. | Pew Campus
- **November 2** - FDTF Campus Conversation for **PSS**
  3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. | Allendale Campus

Please RSVP on the Campus Conversations webpage. Sessions are limited to 25 participants, and it's asked that you register for only one session to allow as many colleagues as possible to participate.



December Commencement Ceremony Information: You're invited to process! Your participation in the ceremony procession will make this milestone even more special as Lakers mark the culmination of their hard work and begin the next chapter of their professional and personal journeys.

Saturday, December 12, 2026
4:00 p.m. | Van Andel Arena

RSVP by November 24 if you plan to attend and process during the ceremony.



The 2026 GV Technology Summit will take place on the Allendale 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.

2026 GV Technology Summit Details & Schedule

GVSU TEACH-IN
Lifelong Learning Toward Educational Equity & Action

GVSU's Annual Teach-In will return in November! 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. Bringing together students, faculty, and staff, the Teach-In creates opportunities to explore how educational equity shapes teaching, learning, research, and practice across disciplines, including technology, healthcare, engineering, business, the arts, and beyond.

Publications/Presentations



Geoffrey Collard, director of the GVSU Police Academy, was interviewed by the Iron Mountain Daily News for a story about recruitment issues among Michigan's law enforcement agencies.



Tova Hartle, assistant professor in the Educational Leadership and Counseling (ELC) department, presented a roundtable session at the North Central Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (NCACES) conference in Des Moines, Iowa, on October 17. The session, *Beyond Crisis Response: Building Bereavement Competencies in School Counseling Curricula*, invited counselor educators to examine research on school counselor bereavement following the loss of a student to suicide and discuss how programs can better prepare school counseling students to navigate grief as both caregivers and grievers within their school communities.



Brian Johnson, professor in the School of Criminology, Criminal Justice, and Legal Studies (SCCJLS), wrote a chapter, "Human Rights and the Private Security Industry: The Need for Alignment," in the book, *Citizens, the State and Justice: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*, published by Routledge.



Ronke Olawale, assistant professor in the School of Social Work (SSW), was recently featured in the "GVSU Expert" section of *GVNext.* Read the full Q&A session here: GVSU Expert: A Q&A on what disease outbreaks reveal about public health.



Elizabeth Stolle, professor in the Literacy, Educational Foundations, and Technology (LEFT) department, recently had a new publication released. The book chapter, "Continuous Understandings: Evolving Possibilities for Artificial Intelligence as a Critical Friend," in, *Self-Study as Continuous Mapping: The Provisional and Evolving Nature of Educational Inquiry,* is based on a presentation she and a colleague gave at the Castle Conference in August 2026 in East Sussex, England.



Legal Studies (SCCJLS) faculty members Courtney Topic, Adrian Copeland, and Joshua Sheffer recently published the article, "Virtual Reality Tours: Exploring Student Perspective-Taking in a 360-Degree Courtroom Tour," in the *Journal of Educators Online,* along with former GVSU Research Analyst, Jacob Fortman. The article is one component of ongoing pedagogical and research development surrounding the utilization of virtual reality (VR) in legal studies curriculum.



Adrienne Wallace, MPA alum (SCLD) and professor of advertising and public relations, wrote a chapter, "Who Will Watch the Watchers," in the open access book, *Provoking Generative AI Futures*, published by Taylor and Francis Group. Wallace was also recently elected to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's Professional Freedom and Responsibility committee.

Important Notices



Faculty Travel Support Grant: this application has closed for the second quarter. **It will reopen on November 15th for travel between January 1st and March 31st (third quarter travel).** We have 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 receive one of these $600 grants per fiscal year.

Submit your request online through **MyApps**. Applications must be received NO LATER THAN 7-10 business days prior to your first day of travel, though early applications are encouraged to ensure available funds. Please allow **5-7 business days** for FRIC to review **after your Unit Head approves your request**.

***Note:** Incorrect unit head emails are a common hang-up in the review process. Copy and paste your unit head's email to reduce typos.*



Fall 2026 Final Grading Deadline 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. 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. ***Several reminders about this earlier deadline will be sent as the semester nears completion.***

University Governance

University Committees Representation List



FFPAC October Announcement: Greetings from your CECI Faculty Facilities Planning Advisory Committee (FFPAC) representatives. FFPAC plays a role in identifying issues with GVSU facilities and recommending improvements to ensure accessibility and functionality. CECI has two FFPAC representatives, and we are here to bring any suggestions, questions, or concerns you may have to our monthly meetings which take place on the first Friday of every month. Please contact either or both of us:

Adrian Copeland, SCCJLS (copelaad@gvsu.edu)
Christine Kenney, T&L (kennechr@gvsu.edu)

We met on October 2nd and wanted to share a few updates. We have heard reports regarding access issues with the newly installed entrance and exit arms for the DeVos parking lot. We spoke with a member of Facilities Services today regarding this issue and were assured they are aware of the problem and are working to fix it as quickly as possible. However, if you encounter any issues a help number has been posted on newly installed signs near these parking arms. Additionally, when entering or exiting the lot please do not place your ID card directly on the screen. Hold it a few inches away from the screen so it can read the entire code on the back of your card.

We will continue to use *CECI Connections* to provide FFPAC updates throughout the year. Always feel free to reach out to either of us if you have any questions or concerns.

College Governance

CECI Governance Committees Governance Website Representation List

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The **CECI Technology and Innovation Committee** invites you to attend our November Big Byte webinar. Join us for an overview of the Blue Dot Innovation Lab and an exploration of its potential applications within the CECI community.

Directly following this Big Byte is the CECI Technology and Innovation Committee meeting, which all are welcome to attend!

Monday, November 16, at 11:30 a.m.
Topic: Blue Dot Innovation Lab
Format: Room 203D DeVos and Zoom Webinar link

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.

Important Dates



October 26-27 - **Fall Break** - GVSU Offices **OPEN**
October 28 - **Future Design Task Force Campus Conversation for Faculty** | 12-1 p.m. | Allendale Campus | RSVP
October 29 - **Future Design Task Force Campus Conversation for Faculty** | 3-4 p.m. | Pew Campus | RSVP
October 28 - PMASI Webinar, "Community Data as Essential Infrastructure.." | 6 p.m.
November 2 - **Future Design Task Force Campus Conversation for PSS** | 3-4 p.m. | Allendale Campus | RSVP
November 2 - Connect with the Dean | 12-1:30 p.m. | University Club (107C DEV)
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 13 - CECI Grant Writing Workshop: Budgeting | 1-2:30 p.m. | 204A DEV
November 16 - CECI Big Byte - Blue Dot Innovation Lab | 11:30 a.m. | 203D DEV/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.**
December 23 - January 10 - Winter Break (University **CLOSED** 12/23-1/3)
January 4, 2027 - University Re-Opens for Business
January 11, 2027 - W27 Semester Begins

CECI Resources

Acronyms	**CECI Connections Guide**	**CECI Newsletter Repository**
Experts Guide	**Organizational Chart**	**Student Flowchart**



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 October 2026 edition of *CECI Connections*:
Adrian Copeland, Jackie Doyon-Martin, Tova Hartle, Bill Herbst, Mark Hoffman, Noah Houchlei, Katie Humphrey, Kelly Lormand, Rui Niu-Cooper, MaryJohn Pachuta-Rysak, Dayna Smith, Sherril Soman, Elizabeth Stolle, Victoria Stubbs

Submit a story for the November 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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Connect with us!



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