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

September 2026

Colleagues,

September always feels like a time of possibility. Our classrooms and hallways are once again filled with students, our programs and community partnerships are moving into full swing, and across CECI, faculty and staff are returning to the work that connects us: preparing students to make a difference in their professions and communities.

This year, we will continue to focus on strengthening CECI's distinctive identity and culture, extending the reach and impact of our programs,

and finding new ways to work across our college. An important part of that work will be continuing the conversations we began last year about what it means to be a college that brings together education, community, and innovation—and how we make that distinctive combination visible in the work we do.

I hope, too, that we make space this year to notice and celebrate our progress. Much of what makes CECI special happens every day—in a conversation with a student, a new idea developed with a colleague, a partnership strengthened in the community, or a program finding a new way to meet an emerging need.

Thank you for all you do for our students, for one another, and for the communities we serve. I am looking forward to what we will accomplish together this year.

~Sherril Soman
CECI Dean



Welcome to CECI!



**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
AND COMMUNITY
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Welcome New Faculty and Staff!



SFC Bobby Capelle
*Senior Military Science Instructor
(Seniors)*
Military Science and Leadership



Billy Clayton
*Scholarship and Enrollment
Officer*
Military Science and Leadership



SFC Derek Gallegos
*Military Science Instructor
(Freshmen)*
Military Science and Leadership



CPT Benjamin Good
*Assistant Professor of Military
Science (Sophomores)*
Military Science and Leadership



Tirtha Karki
Assistant Professor
Literacy, Educational
Foundations, and Technology
(LEFT)



Agnes Krynski
Visiting Faculty
Literacy, Educational
Foundations, and Technology
(LEFT)



MAJ Zackery Poole
*Assistant Professor of Military
Science (Juniors)*
Military Science and Leadership



Dayna Smith
*Academic Department
 Coordinator*
 Educational Leadership and
 Counseling (ELC)



Jenny Tanis
Assistant Professor
 School of Social Work (SSW)



Cole Vickers
Data Analyst
 Office of Certification and
 Accreditation (OCA)

Not pictured: LTC Evan Palmer, *Department Chair and Professor of Military Science*, Military Science and Leadership.

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 PM: "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 JustAir. The platform provides actionable air quality data to support health, safety, and environmental regulation. **No registration or password needed for this free webinar!**

CECI Grant Writing Workshops

CECI Grant
 Workshop
 Registration

Grant Writing Workshops for CECI Faculty and Staff: Sign up for these interactive workshops 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, October 23 | 10-11:30 a.m. | 204A DEV**
Grant Writing: How to structure a persuasive proposal and writing for reviewers
- **Friday, November 13 | 1-2:30 p.m. | 204A DEV**
Budgeting: How to build a realistic budget, from summer salary to student stipends



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



We are excited to welcome **Dr. Karyn Rabourn** to her new role as associate dean of the College of Education and Community Innovation (CECI)! Dr. Rabourn is an associate professor of Educational Leadership and Counseling (ELC) and has been a member of the GVSU community since 2015. She brings extensive experience in academic leadership, faculty governance, program development, and university service, as well as a strong commitment to collaborative and transparent leadership.

As associate dean, Dr. Rabourn will work closely with faculty, staff, unit leaders, students, and community partners to support CECI's academic programs and strategic priorities. Her experience in program and curriculum development, assessment, leadership development, and community engagement will be particularly valuable as we continue to strengthen our programs and partnerships and advance the College's mission.



Jen Hunt, MPA alum (SCLD), has been named the new president and chief executive officer of the [Children's Advocacy Center of Kent County](#). Jen received her MPA in Nonprofit Management and Leadership and most recently was at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, where she served as a state administrative manager.



Congratulations to **Clay Pelon, director**, and **Vicky Wright, former assistant director of the Center for Educational Partnerships (CEP)**, who recently received \$12,000 from The Baldwin Foundation for a project titled: Groundswell FY26-28.

Campus Events



September 15 through October 15 is Hispanic Heritage Month, a time to recognize and celebrate the histories, cultures, and contributions of Hispanic and Latine/Latinx Americans, and to reflect on the many ways those contributions have shaped our communities. Grand Valley is proud of the Hispanic and Latine/Latinx students, faculty, staff, and community members who bring their experiences and talents to the university. There are numerous ways for the GVSU community to engage in the celebration over the coming weeks:

- [Talent Summit: Leaders en Acción 2026](#) | October 9 | 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. | LMCU Ballpark
- [Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month](#) | October 9 | 6 p.m. | Kirkhof Center
- [Flores y Cultura: A Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration](#) | October 15 | 12:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. | Kirkhof Center



All GVSU faculty and staff are invited to join the [Workday Student](#) Project Team on **October 13, 2026, from 1–2:30 p.m. for the Workday Student Launch Event**. Learn about upcoming activities that will impact faculty, staff, and students, and how the university community can prepare and stay engaged throughout the transition. The event will be held in the Grand River Room, be available live via Zoom, and recorded for later viewing.

[Register for Workday Student Kickoff Event](#)



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. There's still time to get involved!

[Register for 2026 GV Technology Summit](#)



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.](#)





Mackenzie Ritsema, principal, and William Wright, assistant principal, of **Westwood Middle School (GRPS)** invited CECI to support the school's effort to create a college-going culture at the school. Representing CECI at the August Open House was the first engagement in what we hope becomes the establishment of a regular CECI presence. **Chasity Bailey-Fakhoury, associate dean**, was able to talk with students, parents, caregivers, community partners, and school faculty and staff. Any CECI faculty/staff with interest in engaging with the 6th - 8th graders or providing interactive programming is encouraged to reach out to Chasity.

Important Notices

Temporary Hiring Pause: Oct. 9-22

Important October Dates for Hiring Activities: As part of the first phase of Workday Student going live in October, **there will be a temporary pause on moving candidates through the "Ready for Hire" stage**, which is the final step of the recruiting process. This stage comes after application review, an offer has been made and accepted, and the background check has been completed.

The pause will affect the following hires:

Faculty, staff, and graduate assistant hires: October 9–22

Student employee hires: October 13–22

During this time, new faculty, staff, and student hires cannot be processed in Workday. However, all other parts of the hiring process can continue. You will still be able to create new job requisitions, receive and review applications, conduct interviews, make offers, and complete background checks. New employees can also have official start dates assigned during this time, as long as they are fully hired and have received credentials.

If an offer is made and a background check is completed during the dates provided, candidates can move through the hiring process up to the "Ready for Hire" stage, but cannot be processed as a hire until after October 22. **To avoid delays, ensure any candidates you intend to hire are through the "Ready for Hire" stage and credential generation before October 9 (faculty, staff, and graduate assistants) or October 13 (student employees).**



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



Greetings from your CECI **Faculty Facilities Planning Advisory Committee (FFPAC)** representatives. FFPAC plays a role in identifying issues with teaching spaces 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 (copelaad@gvsu.edu)
Christine Kenney (kennechr@gvsu.edu)

We met on September 4th for our first meeting of the academic year. Here are a few updates and announcements:

1. There will be a new IT Hub coming to the Pew Campus (125C DeVos). You may see activity in this space as they set up, but the official opening is scheduled for around November 14, 2026.
2. If you experience any issues in your classroom or workspace with computers or audio-visual equipment and need immediate assistance, call 616-331-2101. If the issue is not urgent, you can submit a work ticket using the [FIXIT website](#).

College Governance

CECI Governance Committees

Governance Website

Representation List



Did you know that CECI has a mascot? His name is Rhett, and he resides with the **College Advisory and Communications Committee (CACC)**. Rhett wants to learn all about CECI, and he wants to share what he learns with the college. He will be traveling throughout the year to each unit to learn and participate in classes, events, and activities. In August, he attended Paul Bylsma's class and was properly introduced to higher education and student affairs administration! Keep an eye out for Rhett at the CECI Give Back event in September and see what he learns about New City Neighbors.



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, 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.

Important Dates

IMPORTANT DATES!



September 25 - CECI Give Back Event | 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. | New City Neighbors
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 23 - CECI Grant Writing Workshop: Grant Writing | 10-11:30 a.m. | 204A DEV
October 26-27 - Fall Break - GVSU Offices Open
October 28 - PMASI Webinar, "Community Data as Essential Infrastructure..." | 6 p.m.
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. | 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](#)



[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 September 2026 edition of *CECI Connections*:
Chasity Bailey-Fakhoury, Paul Bylsma, Jackie Doyon-Martin, Bill Herbst, Mark Hoffman, Jamie Langlois,
Sherril Soman, Victoria Stubbs, Courtney Topic

Submit a story for the October 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

Connect with us!



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INNOVATION
ENGAGE. ENRICH. TRANSFORM.

Discover the rewarding majors in GVSU's College of Education and Community Innovation.

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