TEACHING AND LEARNING SPOTLIGHT

Newsletter of Eastern's Center for Teaching, Learning, & Assessment
Issue 25 • November 2026

In This Issue



- Upcoming workshops, discussions, and events
  - Roundtable discussions on making pedagogical shifts in response to GenAI: 11/12
  - Strategies for student engagement (save the date: 1/19)
  - Object-based learning strategies (save the date: 3/8)
- Tech Tips from CIT:
  - Options for Providing Feedback on Assignments in Blackboard Ultra (and how the feedback appears for students)
  - Blackboard updates to rubrics
  - Upcoming training on Gradebook: 11/12
- Spotlight on a Book: Joy-Centered Pedagogy in Higher Education
- News on Generative AI and Teaching & Learning
- Assessment Update
- External faculty development opportunities
- Opportunities to share your teaching and learning expertise

Workshops, Discussions, and Events

Roundtable Discussions on Making Pedagogical Shifts in Response to GenAI

Thursday, November 12, 11:00 – 12:15 or 12:30 – 1:45 pm (2 sessions)
Student Center 217 (Lunch covered by the CTLA)

As concerns grow about student use of AI to complete traditional assignments, many faculty are experimenting with new approaches to course design, assignments, and assessing student learning. Faculty are invited to join colleagues for a lunchtime discussion focused on how instructors are adapting their pedagogy to ensure students are actively engaged in their own learning.

Come ready to share an adjustment you've made, a challenge you're encountering, or a question you'd like to explore with peers. Small group discussions may include ways faculty have designed AI-resistant assignments, moved some work into class time, broken larger assignments into stages, designed more authentic or personally meaningful learning experiences, and helped students engage more deeply with course content—or what faculty are considering trying out next semester.

Whether you've already made changes or are just beginning to think about them, all perspectives are welcome. The goal is to create space for thoughtful, constructive dialogue about teaching practices and emerging opportunities and challenges (rather than a discussion about strategies for detecting AI use).

Note: A future discussion will focus on how faculty are incorporating AI into assignments.

Register for one of the two sessions by Tuesday, **November 10**. Space is limited to 24 faculty in each session.

Save the Date: Workshop on Student Engagement

Tuesday, January 19, 9:30 am – 12 pm (followed by optional lunch)
Johnson Community Room (Library room 204)

More information to be announced in coming weeks.

Save the Date: Object-Based Learning Strategies

Monday, March 8, 12 – 1 pm
Art Gallery (Lunch covered by the CTLA)
Led by Sarah Churchill, Assistant Professor and Art Gallery Director

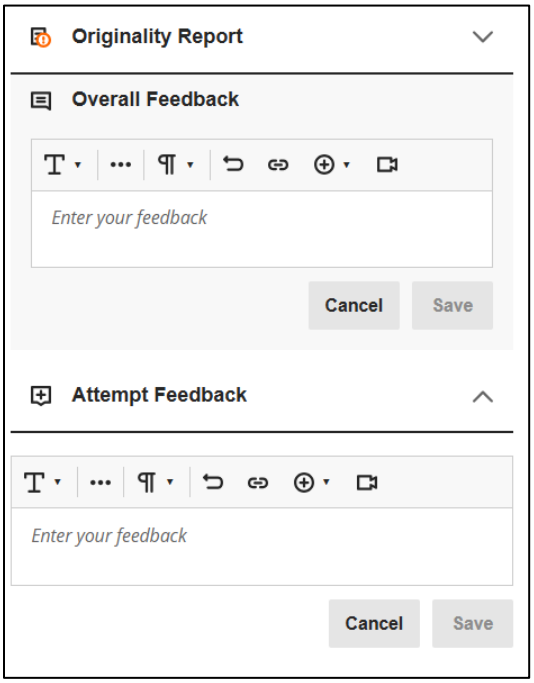
Watch future newsletters for session description and registration information.

Tech Tip from the Center for Instructional Technology

Options for Providing Feedback on Assignments in Blackboard Ultra

When providing feedback on student submissions, there are two options: Overall Feedback and Attempt Feedback. Below are the differences between the two and how students view such feedback after an assignment has been graded.

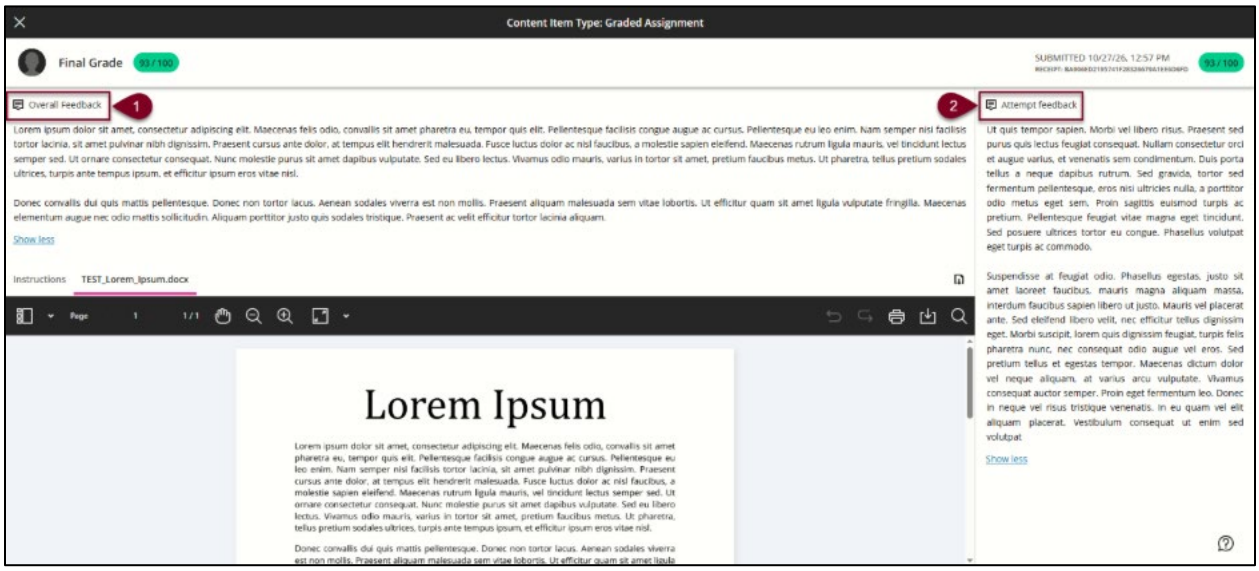
Overall Feedback (at the top of the feedback section for instructors – see image to the right) provides comments on the assignment as a whole and is not associated with a specific submission attempt. When you provide feedback in this section, the feedback will appear at the top of the screen for the student viewing it on a laptop or desktop, which reduces the amount of screen space available for them to see their submission and any comments you made on it (see screen shot below).



Attempt Feedback (underneath the section for Overall Feedback section) provides comments on an individual submission attempt. If a student submits multiple attempts, each attempt can have its own separate feedback. This feedback appears to the right of the submission when students view it on a computer, leaving more space for them to see any comments you provided directly on their submission.

The image below shows the student view of Overall Feedback (1) and Attempt Feedback (2) on a sample graded assignment as viewed on a computer (the

view on a phone is different). As shown, providing comments in Overall Feedback greatly reduces the amount of screen space available for a student to see any comments a faculty member may have made on the document submitted.



Tip: You may want to use Student Preview to submit a sample assignment, exit Student Preview to "grade" the submission, and then view the grade in Student Preview to see how things will appear for students. It's also recommended that you demonstrate in class how students can find your comments and feedback (particularly for first-year students who may be less familiar with Blackboard).

Provide Audio and Video Feedback

In addition to written feedback, audio or video feedback can be provided directly within the Overall Feedback and Attempt Feedback fields (limited to 5 minutes). Instructors can provide personalized feedback on student assignments using audio, video, screen recordings, or a combination of these options. Add clarity and a personal touch to your feedback while helping students improve their work. See instructions from Blackboard on recording audio and video feedback.

Updates to Rubrics in Blackboard

Blackboard made two recent updates to the management of rubrics:

- Manage rubrics from the Course Rubrics page: Instructors can now manage course rubrics together in a searchable, sortable table, with options to filter by type and create, generate, edit, or delete rubrics via the Course Rubrics page. The centralized workspace makes it easier to maintain consistent assessment criteria and find the right rubric when designing assignments.
- Reuse rubrics across courses: Blackboard now allows instructors to export rubrics from one course and import them into another. Rubrics are exported as ZIP files and can be imported through the Course Rubrics page. This is particularly helpful for instructors teaching multiple sections or collaborating on shared assessment standards.

Upcoming Blackboard Training on Gradebook

Blackboard will be offering **Navigating Blackboard Gradebook: Tips for Instructors and Course Builders**, on Thursday, November 12, from 11 am to 12 pm. The session will cover Gradebook setup and organization, grade categories and weighting, the flexible grading interface, and overall grade setup.

Register for Navigating Blackboard Gradebook (offered by Blackboard, not CIT).

Can't attend live? A session recording will be available in the Blackboard Community after the webinar.

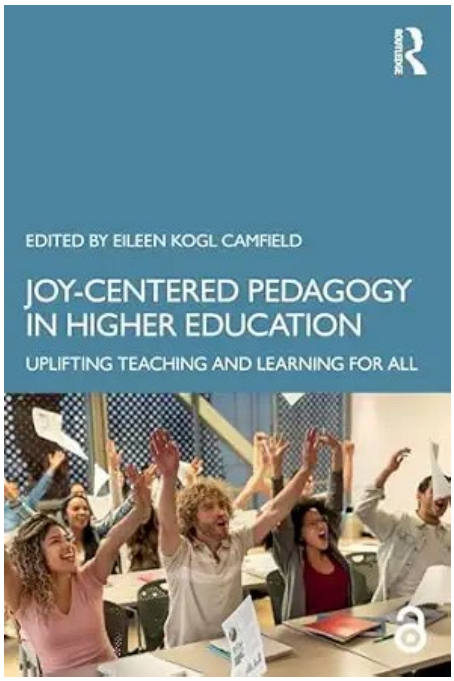
Ongoing Support for Blackboard

Faculty needing one-on-one support with their course can book a virtual training with CIT.

Spotlight on a Book in the CTLA Lending Library

Joy-Centered Pedagogy in Higher Education: Uplifting Teaching and Learning for All

Edited by Eileen Kogl Camfield
© 2026 by Routledge (see publisher's description)



"Recall a moment when you felt elevated in a classroom, when you felt a soaring sense of well-being. For teachers, this might be a moment when a lecture, discussion, or assignment really connected. For students, this might be a moment when you felt seen, heard, and valued… This book is about how to make these happen more intentionally and more consistently, and about the restorative effects that ensue." So begins editor Eileen Kogl Camfield's preface to *Joy-Centered Pedagogy.* Camfield acknowledges that many faculty are experiencing feelings of overwhelm, burnout, and frustration at perceived student apathy—and that this takes a toll on faculty engagement and mental health. Similarly, students are experiencing higher rates of isolation, anxiety, and depression.

Camfield suggests that centering joy in course planning could help both students and faculty feel less depleted and, in fact, flourish. She acknowledges that "learning and fun are not frequently thought of together" and that faculty who talk about hope and care are sometimes dismissed as "hand-holding" students or even accused of toxic positivity. But she notes that current practices and norms in higher ed can trigger cascading stress responses in students, which negatively impacts their learning. In contrast, designing moments of joy into the classroom can result in more powerful student learning. Camfield argues that "joy-centered pedagogy promotes intellectual vigor and disrupts…traditional notions of rigor that suggest learning should hurt."

The book includes the following 15 chapters, contributed by 17 different authors:

1. Introducing Joy-Centered Pedagogy
2. Disrupting the Culture of Fear: Finding Joy for Students and Educators in a K-12 Setting and its Implication for Higher Education
3. Transforming Trauma: The Joy of Student-Written Stand-Up Comedy
4. Choosing Joy over Dread: Bringing Art, Playfulness, and Agency to Learning
5. Joyful Justice
6. The Joy is in the Inclusive (Teaching) Journey
7. Struggling Together: How Activating Student Resilience Promotes Joyful Responses to Computer Coding Challenges
8. Re-membering: Personhood, Joy, and the Body in Education
9. The Joy of Embodied Learning
10. The Joy of Unlearning Failure to Promote Student Resilience

11. Overcoming STEM Imposter Syndrome through Joyful Curiosity
12. Celebrating Silence: Making Space for Quiet Joy in the Classroom
13. Embracing Anger to Find Joyful Agency: Experiments in Communal Vulnerability
14. We Don't Have to Be Heroes: The Joys of Pedagogical "Quick Wins" and Community to Disrupt STEM Instructor Burnout
15. Joy: A Compass through Failure
16. Appendix: Teaching Tips to Spark Joy in Your Classroom

Don't have time to read the book right now?

Listen to the editor discuss some of the concepts in the book on the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast with Dr. Bonnie Stachowiak.

To borrow *Joy-Centered Pedagogy*, stop by the CTLA Lending Library in room 425 of the J. Eugene Smith Library, or fill out a book request to have the book sent to you via interoffice mail (enter #207 in response to question 1).

News and Resources on Generative AI and Teaching & Learning

Members of Eastern's AAC&U AI team have been meeting with various stakeholders on campus to discuss our institution's participation in the year-long Institute on AI, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum. So far, team members have met with 7 academic departments and the Student Government Association.

Reflections from the October Faculty Meeting

At the Faculty Meeting on October 22, the AAC&U team shared information about generative AI discussions and surveys on campus to date. The team then asked participants to consider whether there are factual statements about generative AI that most faculty can agree on that can guide future discussions and decisions about AI on campus. Participants reviewed a sample set of principles as a starting point for discussion.

Participants then reviewed the 7 values outlined in Eastern's Strategic Compass and discussed when use of and education about AI might align with our values and public liberal arts mission, and when it would NOT align with our values and mission. The hope is that this information can support the development of an AI Position Statement to guide future policies and initiatives related to AI.

Below are some themes that have emerged so far:

- Faculty have a diversity of perspectives and experiences when it comes to Generative AI
- Most faculty are "worried" about GenAI today, but some are happy/excited
- For each of Eastern's values, faculty have identified circumstances where AI *may align* with the value and ways in which AI *would not* align
- One of the biggest concerns regarding AI use is how it can negatively impact student learning and resilience, which is counter to our value of Academic Excellence
- Faculty saw opportunities to use AI to support Academic Excellence, e.g., as a tool for faculty and as a way of making knowledge more accessible for students
- Faculty saw AI as a potential way of removing barriers to learning, but have concerns over equitable access to AI models as well as their accuracy
- Integrity requires responsible and transparent AI use that should consider the environmental impact of AI
- Faculty expressed a need for more training and more opportunities for discussion (stay tuned!)

View slides, handouts, and notes from the meeting.

Student Survey

The AAC&U team will soon be asking Eastern students to complete an anonymous survey about student use of and attitudes about generative AI use in college courses. Stay tuned!

Assessment Update

Assessing Communication and Creativity

Faculty who are teaching an ELAC course with either Communication or Creativity as a primary learning outcome are asked to submit an assignment prompt and student artifacts associated with the course's primary learning outcome by **December 31st.** Instructions for submitting these items is available on the ELAC Assessment Sharepoint site. (The site also includes a Frequently Asked Questions section for faculty who wish to learn more about the purpose of and process for ELAC assessment.) Contact Suki Grandhi with any questions at grandhis@easternct.edu.

External Faculty Development Opportunities

Free (or very low cost) opportunities

- November 11, 1 – 2 pm: Dr. Liz Norell will be leading **Sparking Motivation, Deepening Learning: Engaging Students in Meaningful Learning in the Age of AI**, a free webinar sponsored by HigherEd+.
- November 12, 3 to 4:30 pm: University of Massachusetts Amherst is hosting **Teaching in the Age of AI: What Matters Most for Learning**? The free seminar is designed to help faculty "critically examine AI's influence on learning, reasoning, and decision-making, while exploring practical strategies for supporting students' independent thinking."
- November 16, 12 – 1 pm: The New England Educational Assessment Network is hosting **Making Authentic Assessment Work in the Age of AI**. The virtual workshop will explore how authentic assessment can reposition assessment as a relational practice that makes human thinking, judgment, creativity, and meaning-making visible. The webinar is $15.
- November 17, 11 am – 12 pm: Stony Brook University is offering **Writing AI Use Statements That Support Student Learning**, a free, virtual workshop.
- November 17, 2 – 3:15 pm: Educational developers Carter Moulton, Liz Norell, Derek Bruff, and Tolu Noah are leading **Reclaiming the Humanity of Teaching**, a free seminar sponsored by Magna's Teaching Professor. Through discussion, activities, reflection, and play, each presenter will explore a different aspect of human-centered education, including personal values, authentic voice, wellbeing, and connection.
- December 11, 11 am – 12:30 pm: The Tech Talent Accelerator is hosting **Translating Employer Needs into Curriculum**, a free workshop for faculty. The workshop will feature computer science and business faculty from across Connecticut discussing ways to bring the employer voice into program and curriculum design and how AI is changing the skills employers value and expect.

Other opportunities

- November 13: The Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education is hosting the **STLHE virtual conference**. The conference offers "opportunities to connect with colleagues from across the higher education and scholarship of teaching and learning communities."

- November 19 – 21: The **Original Lilly Conference on College Teaching** will be held at Miami University in Oxford, OH. Conference organizers describe the annual conference as "one of the nation's most renowned conferences presenting the scholarship of teaching and learning" with an emphasis on sharing innovative pedagogies and discussing questions, challenges, and insights about teaching and learning.
- January 20 – 22: **AAC&U's Annual Meeting** will be held in Seattle, WA. COPLAC is sponsoring several sessions, including Rethinking Liberal Arts education in the Age of AI.
- March 10 – 12: AAC&U is sponsoring the 2027 **Conference of Learning and Student Success (CLASS)** at the Mohegan Sun Resort in Connecticut. This year's theme is "Together by Design."

Opportunities to Share Your Teaching and Learning Expertise

- Due November 15: The proposal deadline has been extended for the 11th Annual **Teaching for Learning (T4L) Conference**, to be held February 25-26 in Provo, UT. This year's theme is "Empowering Student Success in a Digital Age."
- Due December 11: Pennsylvania State University is currently accepting proposals for their **Tech-Free Teaching and Learning Conference**, to be held May 18-19 on campus in University Park, PA.
- Due December 14: Chapter proposals are currently being accepted for ***The Messy Middle of Teaching & Generative AI: How We Know Students Are Learning When Teachers Use—or Refuse—AI***, a peer-reviewed volume in Utah State University's Empower Teaching Open Access Book Series. The editors are seeking contributions that explore purposeful AI use, intentional limits, and decisions to teach without it.
- Due December 15: Abstracts are being accepted for **Pedagogical Wellness Day 2027**, to be held June 16-17 at the University of California Irvine. The theme of this year's event is "Community & Equity", the first dimension of the Pedagogical Wellness Framework.
- Due December 28: The call for proposals is now open for the 2027 **Teaching Professor Conference**, to be held June 11-13 in Atlanta, GA.
- Due January 22: Proposals are being accepted for the 5th annual **Teaching and Learning with AI Conference**, to be held June 1-3 in Orlando, FL.

