



# TEACHING AND LEARNING SPOTLIGHT

Newsletter of Eastern's Center for Teaching, Learning, & Assessment

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Welcome back! I hope the winter break provided some restorative moments for all faculty. Last week, the CTLA hosted our first workshop, focused on High-Impact Practices. The workshop featured

discussion on the 8 elements of high-impact practice, Team-Based Learning, Collaborative Learning Techniques, high-impact undergraduate research, and high-impact practice through the lens of sustainability. Thank you to facilitators Megan Heenehan, David Pellegrini, and Patty Szczys for their efforts to plan and implement the workshop, and to Caitlin Carenen, Suki Grandhi, and Kristen Morgan for discussing their assignment design during a panel discussion. A big thank



you as well to all the faculty who actively participated over the two days and provided specific feedback to help guide future workshops. If you weren't able to attend but are interested in learning more about the concepts covered in the workshop, please reach out to Julia DeLapp.

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## Join a Faculty Learning Community

This spring, the CTLA is launching several Faculty Learning Communities. As originally conceived by Milton Cox (2004), Faculty Learning Communities are designed for small, interdisciplinary groups of faculty to come together on a regular basis over a sustained period of time, with a focus on investigating and implementing new teaching and learning approaches. Faculty who participate in these communities often report a number of benefits, including developing lasting relationships with faculty in other departments, thinking deeply about their own pedagogical approaches, and developing new expertise.

For spring 2024, the CTLA will support up to 6 small Faculty Learning Communities focused on ELAC, particularly related to approaches for building students' skills in each of the 5 learning outcomes. Each community will meet 4 to 6 times and focus on one of the following:

- Teaching Communication
- Teaching Creativity
- Teaching Critical Thinking

- Teaching Ethical Reasoning
- Teaching Quantitative Literacy
- Creating ELAC courses focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice

For more information on the benefits of participating, expectations for learning community members, and how to apply to join a Faculty Learning Community, [visit the CTLA website](#). (Deadline to apply is January 26.)

## Participate in a Teaching and Learning Conversation

Thank you to all who submitted proposals for leading a Teaching and Learning Conversation (TLC)—we received more proposals than we can accommodate in the spring (so keep an eye out for Fall offerings!) TLCs are faculty-led conversations about specific teaching strategies over lunch at Hurley Hall. They are designed to provide faculty with an opportunity to explore new pedagogical ideas while building community among teaching faculty and showcasing innovation.

TLC sessions will generally feature a brief presentation on a specific teaching strategy, followed by time for participants to reflect and engage in small group discussions about how the strategy might be adapted and utilized in their own discipline. Please come prepared to think about your own teaching, write down some ideas (bring a pen and notebook), and share your thoughts with your peers!

The full spring schedule is posted on the [CTLA website](#). The first session of the semester is:

- January 24, 12 – 1 pm: **AI-Based Assignments and Activities** by Sarah Baires (Sociology, Anthropology, Criminology, and Social Work), Wayne Buck (Business Administration), and T. Caitlin Vasquez-O’Brien (Psychological Sciences).

*Description: ChatGPT and other generative AI tools provide exciting opportunities to engage students in new ways—while helping students learn to ethically navigate technology that they will likely encounter in their future careers. In this session, three faculty will each share an AI-based assignment or class activity they designed and describe the student outcomes.*

## Tech Tip (A periodic column from CIT)

### MS Bookings

This semester, use MS Bookings (an integrated scheduling tool) to set up appointments with students. Let MS Bookings help save you time and reduce the back and forth when scheduling appointments. Features include:

- It integrates with your Eastern Office 365 calendar, so your new appointments just show up, and students can’t schedule when you’re busy.
- You set your availability.
- MS Bookings can send automatic reminders to your students so they’re less likely to forget about their appointments.



For assistance in creating an MS Bookings Office Hours calendar, [book an appointment with a CIT staff member using CIT’s Bookings calendar](#).

## Spotlight on a Book in the CTLA Lending Library

### Grading for Growth: A Guide to Alternative Grading Practices that Promote Authentic Learning and Student Engagement in Higher Education

By David Clark and Robert Talbert

© 2023 by Routledge ([see publisher's description](#))

Written by two mathematics professors, *Grading for Growth* argues for new approaches to grading student learning. The authors describe a variety of alternative assessment models that emphasize formative assessment and/or opportunities for students to revise work until clearly outlined standards or specifications are met. The book reviews the research on alternative grading and includes case studies from a range of disciplines (e.g., mathematics, physics, philosophy, education, chemistry, biology, art history)—with faculty describing how and why they changed their grading strategies. The book also includes a workbook with steps for planning and implementing an “alternatively graded” class.

To borrow this book, stop by the CTLA Lending Library in room 425 of the Eugene Smith Library, or [fill out a request](#) to have the book sent to you via interoffice mail (enter book #23 under question 1).

The authors of this book have also created a [Grading for Growth blog](#) where they post weekly with their thoughts and experiences about alternative grading.

Interested in learning more about alternative approaches to grading? Attend Barbara Liu's Teaching and Learning Conversation on collaborative grading (February 14), or check out the books [Grading for Equity](#) or [Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning \(and What to Do Instead\)](#) from the CTLA Lending Library.

GRADING

FOR

GROWTH

A Guide to Alternative Grading Practices  
that Promote Authentic Learning and  
Student Engagement in Higher Education

DAVID CLARK AND ROBERT TALBERT  
FOREWORD BY LINDA NILSON

## Additional Faculty Development Opportunities

### Free opportunities

- January 26 – 27, 11am – 3pm: [Student Learning Outcomes \(SLO\) Symposium](#). This free online conference by the California Outcomes & Assessment Coordinator Hub (COACHes) will feature breakout sessions on integrating artificial intelligence in SLO assessment, competency-based education, promoting equity in learning outcomes assessment, and engaging students in the assessment process.
- Beginning February 5: [“Undoing the Grade” Book Club](#). The Maple League Teaching and Learning Committee invites faculty to join their book club to read and discuss *Undoing the Grade: Why We Grade, and How to Stop* by Jesse Stommel. Book groups will meet 5 times bi-weekly over the semester; 4 different time slots are available. Deadline to register: January 31.
- February 20 (2-3 pm): [AI Ethics in Teaching and Learning](#). This panel discussion hosted by Stony Brook University will cover topics such as mitigating AI biases in teaching tools and content, ensuring the privacy and security of student data, and preparing students for an AI-driven future.

- February 26 – March 1: [Teaching and Learning Symposium on Social Justice in Higher Education](#). This free online conference will feature dozens of thought leaders in racial and social justice from within and outside of academia. Register for one or all five days.
- February 27 (2-3:30 pm): [“Grading for Equity” Discussion](#) (link is the actual Zoom link for the discussion). Sponsored by the CSCU Connecticut Higher Education Professionals for African American Male Students, this online discussion will focus on the book *Grading for Equity: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms* by Joe Feldman (which is available in the CTLA’s [Lending Library](#)).
- Monthly, beginning February 28 (2-3 pm): [Universal Design for Learning Guidelines webinar series](#). Co-sponsored by Goodwin University and the University of Bridgeport, this 9-part webinar series will provide tools and strategies for implementing the [UDL guidelines](#) to ensure that all students can access, meaningfully engage with, and demonstrate their learning of course content. (Pre-registration required. January session is listed as “sold out.”)

### Other opportunities

- February 5 (1-2 pm): [Going Gradeless: Exploring Ungrading as an Assessment Innovation to Enhance Student Outcomes](#). This online presentation is free for members of the New England Educational Assessment Network (NEean) and \$15 for others.
- February 28 – March 1: [SoTL Commons Conference](#). Hosted by Georgia Southern University, this conference in Savannah, GA, will focus on the scholarship of teaching and learning.
- June 5 – 7: The Association for Faculty Enrichment in Learning and Teaching is hosting its [annual ICED Conference](#) at the United States International University Africa in Nairobi, Kenya (online options also available). The theme of the conference is “Advancing Higher Education Ecosystems for Competency Development.”
- June 13 – 14: [National Higher Education Teaching Conference](#). The annual conferences of the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) will be held in Minneapolis, MN. The theme of this year’s conference is “Accelerating Student Success and Belonging.”

### Opportunities to Present on Teaching and Learning

- Due January 26: The University of Central Florida is currently accepting proposals for its second annual [Teaching and Learning with AI Conference](#), which will be held in Orlando July 22-24. The theme of the conference is “Courageous Practices: Equity, Diversity, and Belonging in Postsecondary Education.”
- Due March 15: The Center for Innovative Pedagogy at Kenyon College is currently accepting proposals for their virtual [What Works in 2024 Conference](#) to be held May 29-31. Proposals should focus on teaching undergraduates in small colleges and universities.

## Write for the Teaching and Learning Spotlight

Do you have a successful teaching strategy or quick tip you think other faculty might be interested in? Consider writing about it in an upcoming CTLA newsletter. Contact Julia DeLapp to discuss possibilities.