

2026 Anchoring Higher Education Conference
*Rooted in Relationships:
Cultivating Learning through Human Connection*

Conference Program

9:30 am to
10:00 am

Registration & Breakfast

9:55 am to
10:45 am

Oral Session A

9:55 am to
10:15 am

[FULBRIGHT LECTURE: Relational Pedagogies in a Multilingual World: Nurturing Belonging and Success in Higher Education](#)

Sarita Monjane Henriksen

Fulbright Scholar in Residence, P3 Collaboratory, Rutgers University-Newark

10:15 am to
10:30 am

[Public Service Translation and Interpreting Training through Experiential Learning at an Anchor Institution](#)

Stephanie Rodriguez

Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies, School of Arts & Sciences, Rutgers University-Newark

10:30 am to
10:45 am

[NewGeo: A Newark Geoscience Ecosystem for Transformative STEM Community-Engaged Learning](#)

Shavonne Hylton, Alec Gates, Ashaki Rouff, NewGeo Graduate Students

Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, School of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University-Newark

10:00 am to
10:45 am

Panel & Workshop Session A

[Reducing the Novice-Expert Perception Gap: Student Voices on Compassionate, Connected, and Community Building in STEM \[P\]](#)

Sheila Tabanli, Department of Mathematics, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Arshel Fernandez, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Yvette Bogert, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Leah D'Altilia, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

[Disability Studies Pedagogy: Community-Building, Reparations, and Accessibility \[P\]](#)

Moira Armstrong, Department of American Studies, Rutgers University-Newark

Ali Howell, Department of Political Science, Rutgers University-Newark

Lauren Shallish, Urban Education, Rutgers University-Newark

Arron Wheeler, The Graduate School, Rutgers University-Newark

[Transparent AI Guidelines as a Relationship-Rich Pedagogical Practice: Strengthening Trust, Equity, and Engagement in the Classroom \[W\]](#)

Rahul Mittal, Department of Health Informatics, Rutgers School of Health Professions

[P] - Panel

[W] - Workshop

Sheila Tabanli, Department of Mathematics, Rutgers University-New Brunswick
Christelle Palpacuer, Department of Learning and Teaching, Rutgers Graduate School of Education

Rebecca Brody, Department of Clinical and Preventative Nutritional Sciences, Rutgers School of Health Professions

James Scott Parrott, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Rutgers School of Health Professions

Frederick Curry, Dance, Rutgers Mason Gross School of the Arts

Elizabeth Decker, Department of English, Writing Program, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Jason Henderson, Department of Kinesiology and Health, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Crystal Quillen, Institute for Teaching, Innovation, and Inclusive Pedagogy (TIIP), Rutgers University-New Brunswick

10:45 am to
11:00 am

Break

11:00 am to
12:00 pm

Keynote

Connections are Everything: How Trusting Relationships Drive Student Success

Dr. Peter Felten

Center for Engaged Learning, History
Elon University

12:00 pm to
1:00 pm

Lunch

1:00 pm to
1:45 pm

Oral Session B

1:00 pm to
1:15 pm

Making Friends as a Foundation for Group Assignments

Jamie Gorman

Department of Psychology, Rutgers University-Newark

1:15 pm to
1:30 pm

Why One Brain Isn't Enough: Teaching Students to Think Together

YoungMi Park

Rutgers Business School, Rutgers University-Newark

1:30 pm to
1:45 pm

Mattering Now: Contribution as a Key to Student Success and Wellbeing

AJ Ernst

College of Education, Rowan University

1:00 pm to
1:45 pm

Panel & Workshop Session B

Reimagining Courses to Support Student Success [P]

Tracie Addy, Institute for Teaching, Innovation, and Inclusive Pedagogy (TIIP), Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Elizabeth Decker, Department of English, Writing Program, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

[P] - Panel

[W] - Workshop

Amy D. Lewis, Department of Teaching and Learning, Rutgers Graduate School of Education
Jason Henderson, Department of Kinesiology and Health, Rutgers University-New Brunswick
Teona Williams, Department of Geography, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Inclusive and Trauma-Informed Pedagogy: Advancing Equity, Belonging and Student Success [W]

Audrey Redding-Raines

Department of Social Work, School of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University-Newark

Learning in the Age of AI [P]

Catherine Clepper, P3 Collaboratory, Rutgers University-Newark

Savayra Rao, Rutgers Student Government Association, Rutgers University-Newark

Student Panelists, Rutgers Student Government Association, Rutgers University-Newark

1:45 pm to
2:00 pm

Break

2:00 pm to
2:45 pm

Oral Session C

2:00 pm to
2:15 pm

Communicating About Academic Progress: Building Relationships through Technology Tools

Anne Van Der Karr, Student Retention, Rutgers University-Newark

Alyssa Sofman, School of Public Affairs and Administration, Rutgers University-Newark

2:15 pm to
2:30 pm

How to Leverage AI to Build Better Relationships with Students

Jesse Melvin

Associate Teaching Professor, Rowan University

2:30 pm to
2:45 pm

Change the Conversation with Rubrics

Natalya Voloschuk, Biochemistry & Microbiology, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences

Karen Harris, University Online Education Services, Rutgers University

2:00 pm to
2:45 pm

Panel & Workshop Session C

Beyond Groupwork: Relationship-Rich Teamwork Across Undergraduate and Health Professions Education [P]

Jesse Liss, Department of Sociology, Rutgers University-Newark

Karen Harris, University Online Education Services, Rutgers University

Adrienne Simonds, Department of Rehabilitation and Movement Sciences, Rutgers School of Health Professions

Lisa Palladino Kim, Department of Health Informatics, Rutgers School of Health Professions

Kyle Murphy, Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences

Mindful Connection: Strengthening Relationships with Students through Presence and Empathy [W]

Shannon Brantley

Rutgers School of Business, Rutgers University-Newark

[P] - Panel

[W] - Workshop

Reimagining Study Abroad: Strategies for Designating High Impact Local to Global Field Study Initiatives [P]

Clayton Walton, Office of Global Initiatives and Experiential Learning, Rutgers University-Newark

Nikita Pandit, Office of Student Life & Leadership, Rutgers University-Newark

Shelley Kurland, Graduate School, Rutgers University-Newark

2:45 pm to
3:00 pm

Break

3:00 pm to
3:45 pm

Oral Session D

3:00 pm to
3:15 pm

Relationship-Rich Education: Afrocentric and Intersectional Approaches to Professional Identity Development

Jamila Hughley, Social Work Services, Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care

Kaleena Rogers, Department of Social Work, Rutgers University-Newark

3:15 pm to
3:30 pm

From Policy to People: Cultivating a Culture of Belonging through The New Accessibility Mindset

Katherine Aquino

Office for Research-Training and Development, Rutgers University-Newark

3:30 pm to
3:45 pm

It Still Takes a Village: Supporting Undergraduate Students through Community

Ivette Rosario, Laura Troiano, Michael Loeffler

Honors College, Rutgers University-Newark

3:00 pm to
3:45 pm

Panel & Workshop Session D

Becoming the Example: Peer Leadership as a Pathway to Professional Growth [W]

Amy Lewis, Teacher Education Program, Graduate School of Education Peer Leaders

Madeline Beavis, Derek Carlin, Juliet Hamza, Sahar Khan

Rutgers Graduate School of Education

Metacognition is Uniquely Human: Developing it Builds Connections [W]

Pauline Carpenter, Eliza Blau

Office of Undergraduate Education, School of Arts & Sciences, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Professional Coaching for Persistence, Balance, and Success: A Grad Student's Advantage [P]

Shelley Kurland, Graduate School, Rutgers University-Newark

Francisco Aragon-Guiller, Management, Graduate School, Rutgers University-Newark

Rosheka Faulkner, Criminal Justice, Graduate School, Rutgers University-Newark

Min Jee Oh, Management, Graduate School

Gilbert Nuwagira, Global Urban Studies, Graduate School, Rutgers University-Newark

[P] - Panel

[W] - Workshop

10:00 am to
3:45pm

Poster Presentations Sessions A-D

Using Classroom Observation to Strengthen Inclusive and Relationship-Rich Teaching

Tracie Addy, Jamie Kim, Crystal Quillen, Sam Luxmikanthan

Institute for Teaching, Innovation, & Inclusive Pedagogy (TIIP), Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Presence at Scale: Human-Centered Online Learning in a Biomedical Graduate Program

Katherine Aquino, Rutgers Health-Research Training and Development, Rutgers School of Biomedical and Health Sciences-New Brunswick

Anne Rudnicki, Rutgers School of Biomedical and Health Sciences-New Brunswick

Lauren Burbank, School of Graduate Studies-Newark

Internships as student learning opportunities: A Department of Communication Internship Program Study, 2018-2025

Erin Christie

School of Communication and Information, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

MetaData and the Archive

Brooke Finister

Express Newark, New Arts Public Art Studio, Rutgers University-Newark

Connection Through Credentialing: "Certification Matrix" as Nexus of Partnership

Chris Friend

Center for Teaching Excellence, Kean University

From Exhaustion to Connection: Reclaiming Our Capacity to Learn Together

YoungMi Park

Rutgers Business School, Rutgers University-Newark

An Identity Informed Faculty/Student Mentorship Model: A Structured Approach to Supporting Students Holistically Through Community Building

Ramona Ross

Department of Psychology, School of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University-Newark

Integrating Career Development into Academic Coursework: Preparing Students for Life Beyond the Classroom

Monica Torres, Christina Ovemyer

Division of Life Sciences, School of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

[P] - Panel

[W] - Workshop

Keynote

Connections are everything: How trusting relationships drive student success

Research demonstrates that student relationships with faculty, staff, and peers are crucial to academic success and personal well-being in higher education. Drawing on almost 500 interviews with students, faculty, and staff at colleges and universities across the country, this interactive session will explore how helping students develop relationships – in and beyond the classroom – is a practical, flexible, scalable, and humane approach to ensuring that all students experience welcome and care, become inspired to learn, and explore the big questions that matter for their lives and our communities.



Dr. Peter Felten is executive director of the Center for Engaged Learning, assistant provost for teaching and learning, and professor of history at Elon University. He has published nine books about higher education, including *Connections are Everything: A College Student's Guide to Relationship-Rich Education* (2023) and *The SoTL Guide: (Re)Orienting the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (2025). Both of those co-authored books have an open-access online version free to all readers. Peter is on the advisory board of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and is a fellow of the Gardner Institute.

Presentation Descriptions

FULBRIGHT LECTURE: Relational Pedagogies in a Multilingual World: Nurturing Belonging and Success in Higher Education

Sarita Monjane Henriksen

Fulbright Scholar in Residence, P3 Collaboratory, Rutgers University-Newark

In an increasingly interconnected and linguistically diverse world, fostering meaningful human relationships has become central to student success and institutional resilience in higher education. This lecture explores the concept of *relationship-rich education* through the lens of multilingualism and intercultural communication, emphasizing how inclusive, language-aware relational pedagogies can enhance belonging, motivation, and academic achievement among diverse student populations. Drawing on research in sociolinguistics, intercultural education, and the scholarship of teaching and learning, the presentation argues that linguistic and cultural inclusivity are not peripheral but foundational to effective relationship-building in the classroom. It examines how educators' awareness of students' linguistic repertoires and cultural backgrounds can strengthen trust, engagement, and identity affirmation, thereby creating environments where students thrive academically and personally. Through examples from multilingual higher education contexts, particularly in the Global South, the lecture highlights the practical and ethical dimensions of relational pedagogy, inviting reflection on how human connection and linguistic diversity together sustain transformative learning and institutional equity.

Public Service Translation and Interpreting Training through Experiential Learning at an Anchor Institution

Stephanie Rodriguez

Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies, School of Arts & Sciences, Rutgers University-Newark

[P] - Panel

[W] - Workshop

This presentation will highlight Lives in Translation (LiT), a community-based translation and interpreting program at Rutgers University-Newark that trains undergraduate bilingual students through experiential learning with local community partners. Through these internship placements and through experiential learning with law clinics, schools, non-profits, and health and social service agencies, students both receive intensive mentoring and provide urgently needed language services in multiple languages. The curriculum is anchored in four pillars: (1) foundations of translation and interpreting studies to ground students in core concepts and terminology; (2) current industry trends, including critical, human-centered uses of AI and machine translation within ethical, human-led workflows; (3) structured reflection tools that guide students in self-assessing progress and identifying professional goals; and (4) attention to ethics, confidentiality, and standards of practice in public service contexts that often involve cases that include trauma and high-risk situations. Drawing on a recent empirical study of LiT's 15-week internship, we highlight how carefully scaffolded community-engaged programming supports students' academic and professional growth, while maintaining long-term collaborations with community partners as we collectively advance language access.

NewGeo: A Newark Geoscience Ecosystem for Transformative STEM Community-Engaged Learning

Shavonne Hylton, Alec Gates, Ashaki Rouff, NewGeo Graduate Students

Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, School of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University-Newark

Increasing representation and retention in STEM fields goes beyond recruitment initiatives; it requires a comprehensive redesign of the educational ecosystem that shapes students' STEM experiences. NewGeo (Newark Geoscience Ecosystem), an NSF-funded initiative at Rutgers University–Newark, promotes a community-centered, place-based approach to geoscience education. Rooted in scholarship on community-engaged learning, experiential education, and STEM identity development, this presentation introduces NewGeo's multi-experiential learning framework, which operates through collaborative research partnerships with Newark-based organizations, layered mentoring structures, volunteerism, K–16 outreach, and integrated training in communication and pedagogy. By focusing on relational, place-based ecosystem design, NewGeo supports workforce development, local problem-solving, and equitable university–community partnerships. This presentation will also share lessons learned, structural design principles, and adaptable strategies, inviting attendees to reflect on how institutions can evolve from isolated service-learning initiatives to sustainable, equity-driven STEM ecosystems that connect academic training with community well-being and environmental justice.

Reducing the Novice–Expert Perception Gap: Student Voices on Compassionate, Connected, and Community Building in STEM [P]

Sheila Tabanli, Department of Mathematics, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Arshel Fernandez, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Yvette Bogert, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Leah D'Altília, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

This student panel, co-presented by Rutgers–New Brunswick STEM students and their professor from Math 125 and Math 135 courses, highlights the 3C Pedagogical Framework—Compassionate Math Teaching & Learning in a Connected Community with Cognitive Apprenticeship—developed to reduce the novice–expert perception gap and strengthen relationship-rich teaching in mathematics. Grounded in the Guidebook for Reducing the Novice-to-Expert Perception Gap in Mathematics (Tabanli, 2024), the session demonstrates how compassion, connection, and cognitively mindful instructional design enhance belonging, motivation, and persistence in STEM. The 3C model integrates strategies such as judgment-free learning spaces, “Speak Up” participation points, exam-reflection assignments, first-day identity and goal surveys, study guides, and scaffolded solution keys—each rooted in empathy, transparency, and authentic dialogue between learners and instructors.

The student panelists - once students in Dr. Tabanli's introductory math courses and now pursuing advanced study and research in fields such as biotechnology, agricultural science, computer science, and education -

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[W] - Workshop

offer compelling narratives of growth from novice learners to emerging STEM professionals. Their stories illustrate how compassion-centered pedagogy humanizes rigor, promotes academic resilience, and sustains engagement long after the course ends. By centering student voice and co-reflection, this panel demonstrates how empathy, dialogue, and evidence-based design can reimagine STEM classrooms. Audience members will leave with actionable insights into designing classroom environments that honor both compassion and cognitive challenge, inviting students to see themselves not as outsiders to math, but as thinkers and collaborators within it.

Disability Studies Pedagogy: Community-Building, Reparations, and Accessibility [P]

Moira Armstrong, Department of American Studies, Rutgers University-Newark

Ali Howell, Department of Political Science, Rutgers University-Newark

Lauren Shallish, Urban Education, Rutgers University-Newark

Arron Wheeler, The Graduate School, Rutgers University-Newark

This session will bring together students and faculty to discuss the intersections and pedagogical applications of accessibility, community building, disability studies, and reparations and anti-eugenics in working toward an anti-ableist university. The session will open with brief presentations from each panelist. Arron Wheeler will offer insights into the ways that building a community of disabled students, faculty, staff, and allies supports disabled people's participation in the broader campus community and higher education, using the Disability Justice Coalition as an example. Moira Armstrong will provide resources for instructors across disciplines to incorporate disability studies frameworks and insights, supporting critical understandings of disability and ableism and promoting anti-ableism in the many professions students will enter after graduation. Lauren Shallish will explore how historical and contemporary eugenic practices in higher education have shaped attitudes and educational practices related to disability and summarize how pedagogy can contribute to reparations, other forms of repair, and disability justice. Ali Howell will discuss the importance of creating an accessible campus, from the built environment to educational practices to campus culture, promoting access for a diverse student population and serving as an example of disability justice in higher education in action. We will then place these threads in conversation, exploring how accessibility, community, disability studies, and anti-eugenic repair are intersectional and interconnected. Through this conversation, participants will gain a theoretical understanding and practical strategies for anti-ableist pedagogy, and with an interdisciplinary perspective, will be valuable to attendees from across the university.

Transparent AI Guidelines as a Relationship-Rich Pedagogical Practice: Strengthening Trust, Equity, and Engagement in the Classroom [W]

Rahul Mittal, Department of Health Informatics, Rutgers School of Health Professions

Sheila Tabanli, Department of Mathematics, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Christelle Palpacuer, Department of Learning and Teaching, Rutgers Graduate School of Education

Rebecca Brody, Department of Clinical and Preventative Nutritional Sciences, Rutgers School of Health Professions

James Scott Parrott, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Rutgers School of Health Professions

Frederick Curry, Dance, Rutgers Mason Gross School of the Arts

Elizabeth Decker, Department of English, Writing Program, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Jason Henderson, Department of Kinesiology and Health, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Crystal Quillen, Institute for Teaching, Innovation, and Inclusive Pedagogy (TIIP), Rutgers University-New Brunswick

This interactive session examines how transparent and relationship-centered approaches to generative AI guidelines can strengthen trust, equity, and learner engagement across diverse academic disciplines. Building on ongoing multidisciplinary work at Rutgers University, the session explores how clearly articulated expectations for AI use framed through relational pedagogy can cultivate a learning environment where students feel supported, respected, and connected to their instructors and peers.

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Drawing from student feedback collected across fields such as health sciences, writing studies, mathematics, and the arts, this session highlights how transparent AI policies function not simply as compliance tools, but as relationship building practices that promote fairness, clarity, and psychological safety. Participants will engage with examples of classroom strategies that position AI guidelines as opportunities to enhance communication, co-constructed trust, and inclusive learning. Discussion will also address the ethical integration of AI in ways that elevate not replace human connection in teaching and learning.

Using brief case examples, participant interaction, and small-group reflection, the session will explore how relationally grounded AI guidance can support first-generation, multilingual, and non-traditional learners by reducing ambiguity and fostering a sense of belonging. This session aligns with the conference's commitment to relationship-rich education by demonstrating how transparent communication, shared expectations, and student-centered dialogue can transform technology-related policies into relational touchpoints that deepen engagement and support learner success.

Making Friends as a Foundation for Group Assignments

Jamie Gorman

Department of Psychology, Rutgers University-Newark

Students often dread group projects in class, as they expect challenges such as uneven workloads, "freeloaders," scheduling issues, and personality clashes. Yet, group projects provide a unique opportunity for students to build relationships and an appreciation for diverse perspectives while developing practical knowledge and skills. In this oral presentation, I will present research on the "Fast Friends" technique developed by social psychologist Aron et al. (1998) to study the dynamics of close relationships. I will review evidence from lab and field experiments that demonstrate its usefulness for building camaraderie (e.g., Chopik and Oh, 2024) and reducing interpersonal prejudice (e.g., Page-Gould et al., 2008). I will then discuss my classroom strategy of using the "Fast Friends" technique to help students build relationships with each other and improve their experiences with group assignments. I will highlight the feedback I have received from learners in both in-person and online classes.

Why One Brain Isn't Enough: Teaching Students to Think Together

YoungMi Park

Rutgers Business School, Rutgers University-Newark

Students today face a complex landscape: heightened divisiveness, reduced tolerance for disagreement, diminished engagement with reading and reflection, and increasing reliance on AI tools to shortcut cognitive effort. Yet contemporary workplaces demand the opposite — collaborative intelligence, perspective-taking, and the ability to navigate ambiguity alongside others. This talk explores how educators can help students understand the limits of individual perception and cultivate the relational and cognitive capacities necessary for shared inquiry and collective problem solving.

Drawing on research from psychology, leadership and team studies, cognitive science, neuroscience, and humanities-based learning, the session examines why isolated cognition produces bias, rigidity, and misunderstanding — and how educational practices can counter these tendencies. The talk highlights the urgency of fostering cognitive flexibility, intellectual humility, and effective teamwork, along with approaches for re-engaging students in expansive thinking through narrative, reflection, and structured dialogue.

Participants will learn approaches to:

- design team learning that encourages genuine interdependence
- help students recognize blind spots and broaden their perceptual horizons
- reduce polarized thinking by navigating, rather than avoiding, conflict
- use reflective and relational practices that deepen understanding
- reinforce the value of sustained reading and writing in the age of AI

[P] - Panel

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This session argues that one of the greatest contributions educators can make today is helping students move beyond the confines of a single mind and discover the personal and collective benefits of thinking with others.

Mattering Now: Contribution as a Key to Student Success and Wellbeing

AJ Ernst

College of Education, Rowan University

This round table discussion is designed for those interested in integrating inclusive pedagogy into campus programming and academics to promote students' awareness of their meaningful contributions to the surrounding world. Research suggests that individuals who believe their lives make a meaningful contribution to the world tend to be happier and healthier. Yet, with packed schedules, constant distractions, and a focus on future outcomes, students are often disconnected from the relationships that help them feel their actions matter in the present. In the face of uniquely modern challenges to their well-being, can students afford to postpone a sense that they can, and do, impact the world and the people around them?

After introducing this context, this presentation will highlight two recent campus initiatives rooted in relationship-building. First, the speakers will describe the components of a three-part workshop series focused on relational contribution: 1) orienting to the importance of human connection, purpose, and meaning in living well, 2) changing habits that get in the way of engaging with others, and 3) discovering habits and actions that contribute to the world and help us recognize our impact on our community. The presenters will also describe the development of a course entitled “Design a Meaningful Life After College,” which draws on positive psychology and the university’s “Thrive” framework to teach students how to prioritize actions and habits that can increase their sense of relational mattering. The presenters will share resources focused on increasing students’ sense of meaning and connection.

Reimagining Courses to Support Student Success [P]

Tracie Addy, Institute for Teaching, Innovation, and Inclusive Pedagogy (TIIP), Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Elizabeth Decker, Department of English, Writing Program, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Amy D. Lewis, Department of Teaching and Learning, Rutgers Graduate School of Education

Jason Henderson, Department of Kinesiology and Health, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Teona Williams, Department of Geography, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

During this panel discussion, faculty members across disciplines who were awarded the 2025 – 2026 Provost’s Teaching Fellowship at Rutgers University-New Brunswick will describe how they redesigned their courses to support student success and what they learned by working with an undergraduate student pedagogical partner trained to provide observational feedback on teaching. The course innovations of the fellows varied and included backward design of instruction; transparent assignment design; establishing guidelines for and integrating generative artificial intelligence; and incorporating course topics that support student connection and learning within and beyond the discipline. Participants will have the opportunity to ask the panelists questions to learn more about their course (re)designs and experiences.

Inclusive and Trauma-Informed Pedagogy: Advancing Equity, Belonging and Student Success [W]

Audrey Redding-Raines

Department of Social Work, School of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University-Newark

This presentation examines the integration of inclusive and trauma-informed pedagogical approaches as essential strategies for enhancing student engagement, academic achievement, and classroom belonging. As institutions confront widening equity gaps and increasingly diverse student populations, educators must recognize the varied lived experiences learners bring into academic spaces—including those shaped by systemic inequality, chronic stress, and community or individual trauma. Trauma-informed pedagogy, grounded in the principles articulated by Fallot and Harris (2009), emphasizes safety, trustworthiness,

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empowerment, collaboration, and cultural humility as cornerstones of effective and equitable teaching (Carello & Butler, 2015; Imad, 2021).

Anchored in the context of Rutgers University–Newark—recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the nation’s most ethnically diverse campuses—this presentation demonstrates how culturally responsive and trauma-aware practices can strengthen learning across intersecting identities (U.S. News & World Report, 2024; Milem et al., 2005). Participants will explore strategies such as transparent assignment design, predictable learning structures, low-stakes assessments, restorative communication, and community-building rituals that reinforce psychological safety and promote resilience (Winkelman, 2013; Hammond, 2015).

Drawing from research, applied classroom examples, and lessons from social work education, this session offers adaptable tools to support both academic and emotional well-being. Ultimately, participants will leave with practical methods for creating inclusive, stability-enhancing learning environments that reduce harm, foster belonging, and advance student success (hooks, 1994; Felten & Lambert, 2020).

Learning in the Age of AI [P]

Catherine Clepper, P3 Collaboratory, Rutgers University-Newark

Savayra Rao, Rutgers Student Government Association, Rutgers University-Newark

Student Panelists, Rutgers Student Government Association, Rutgers University-Newark

What is it like to attend college in the AI-era? In this panel, which will make use of both direct Q&A and anonymous polls, current RU-N student will share their experiences of using or rejecting GenAI, navigating the murky terrain of campus- and course-level AI policies, and trying to make the right choices for themselves and their generation. This panel provides an opportunity for students to candidly talk about how GenAI is shaping their learning experience, their work habits, and their thinking about the future. Instructors and staff attendees will have opportunities to submit questions to the student panel both in advance and during the session, but in the spirit of mutual understanding, we ask that all attendees keep an open mind and listen with generosity during the panel itself. This panel seeks, in part, to bring greater clarity and empathy to a technological disruption we are all still wrestling to correctly position in our lives and world.

Communicating About Academic Progress: Building Relationships through Technology Tools

Anne Van Der Karr, Student Retention, Rutgers University-Newark

Alyssa Sofman, School of Public Affairs and Administration, Rutgers University-Newark

How can I effectively build rapport with students so that they receive timely feedback and respond to it? This is a question often asked by faculty, advisors, and other support staff within the university. Recent research shows that it is possible to connect with students digitally if done with intention (Wang & Houdyshell, 2021; Yan & Pourdavood, 2024). At Rutgers University – Newark, one tech tool for creating intentional connections among students, faculty, and advisors is the Progress Report feature in Navigate360. We will discuss the Progress Report process and outcomes, demonstrating how timely interventions can spur staff collaboration and student action and improve success in courses.

How to Leverage AI to Build Better Relationships with Students

Jesse Melvin

Associate Teaching Professor, Rowan University

Artificial intelligence can meaningfully enhance communication and connection between faculty and students. This session introduces two practical AI workflows that help instructors identify and contact students who may need support, and free up time while grading for more personalized, high-quality feedback.

Change the Conversation with Rubrics

Natalya Voloschuk, Biochemistry & Microbiology, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences

Karen Harris, University Online Education Services, Rutgers University

[P] - Panel

[W] - Workshop

In this session we will share a formative assessment strategy that fosters scientific conversations and supports relationship-building in a classroom. We pair weekly assignments with action-oriented rubrics that guide students in their learning process and TAs in their effective support and feedback. Rubrics offer students and TAs evidence of learning gaps and strengths, around which weekly conversations are fostered. The gaps and strengths in scientific knowledge and skills become the topics of conversations, and rubric criteria offer the necessary language to frame questions and offer explanations. Aligning criteria with course-level outcomes within the rubric build opportunities to expand conversations around larger connections. Conversations have moved away from assignment grades to engagement in science.

Ongoing engagement leads to frequent communication that establishes the development of these important relationships:

1. Instructor with TAs
2. TAs with TAs
3. TAs with Students
4. Students with Students
5. Students with Instructor

We will share specific examples of how conversations have evolved since the addition of rubrics to the course, and how relationships have strengthened to better support teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes. And we will share some specific examples of rubrics from the Biochemistry course, as well as guide an activity for building a similar rubric in any subject matter area.

Beyond Groupwork: Relationship-Rich Teamwork Across Undergraduate and Health Professions Education [P]

Jesse Liss, Department of Sociology, Rutgers University-Newark

Karen Harris, University Online Education Services, Rutgers University

Adrienne Simonds, Department of Rehabilitation and Movement Sciences, Rutgers School of Health Professions

Lisa Palladino Kim, Department of Health Informatics, Rutgers School of Health Professions

Kyle Murphy, Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences

Teamwork is widely recognized as essential for career readiness and professional practice. Yet many students enter graduate and professional programs underprepared for genuine collaboration. Instructors face significant barriers to implementing teamwork in the curriculum, and it often appears as “groupwork” (group coordination such as dividing tasks and stitching individual pieces together at the end).

This panel treats teamwork curriculum as a form of relationship-rich education: designing conditions where learning depends on structured human connection. Panelists will first highlight teamwork curricula in the Rutgers School of Health Professions, emphasizing active learning approaches that build collaboration through structured interaction, shared accountability, and positive interdependence (designed reliance on teammates’ contributions to succeed). Instructors will share concrete course designs and activities that make teamwork visible, practiced, and assessable in clinical and health-science training contexts.

Mindful Connection: Strengthening Relationships with Students through Presence and Empathy [W]

Shannon Brantley

Rutgers School of Business, Rutgers University-Newark

Faculty and staff play a pivotal role in shaping students’ sense of belonging, motivation, and success, yet the pressures of higher education often leave little time for genuine connection. This interactive workshop explores how mindfulness-based strategies can help educators and advisors cultivate presence, empathy, and emotional awareness to enhance interactions with students.

[P] - Panel

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Participants will engage in brief guided mindfulness activities designed to reduce stress, increase focus, and foster compassionate listening. Through experiential activities, reflection, and discussion, attendees will explore practical ways to integrate mindfulness into everyday interactions with students fostering more meaningful, supportive, and effective connections.

The session highlights inclusive approaches that:

- Deepen trust and communication between students and educators
- Support faculty and advisor well-being and prevent burnout
- Encourage authentic engagement and belonging among diverse learners

Attendees will leave with a toolkit of adaptable mindfulness exercises and reflective prompts to strengthen relational teaching and advising practices. By learning to pause, listen deeply, and connect intentionally, faculty and advisors can model the kind of mindful presence that helps students thrive—academically, socially, and emotionally.

This workshop aligns with the conference theme, *Rooted in Relationships*, by demonstrating how mindfulness cultivates meaningful human connection as a foundation for transformative learning and advising.

Reimagining Study Abroad: Strategies for Designating High Impact Local to Global Field Study Initiatives [P]

Clayton Walton, Office of Global Initiatives and Experiential Learning, Rutgers University-Newark

Nikita Pandit, Office of Student Life & Leadership, Rutgers University-Newark

Shelley Kurland, Graduate School, Rutgers University-Newark

The Rutgers University-Newark (RU-N) Office of Global Initiatives and Experiential Learning (OGIEL) is the central hub for global initiatives, driving the university's strategic agenda through community-engaged learning and capacity building in under-resourced communities. Leveraging local and global partnerships, OGIEL facilitates student-centered study away and experiential programs that prioritize relationship-building for transformative education. The office oversees faculty-led programs, the Local to Global STEAM Initiative, and the ILE Global Scholars initiative, all fostering partnerships aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs).

This interactive workshop will guide participants in designing high-impact study away itineraries that integrate sustainable development theory with practice, combining classroom learning and field experience. The curriculum focuses on sustainable living, cultural/eco-immersion, health and wellness, and traditional farming practices, fostering meaningful dialogue around global challenges. Importantly, the curriculum is designed to promote personal and professional skill development, empowering under-represented populations to actively engage in change work through lectures, assignments, and field observations.

Drawing from OGIEL's proven International Leadership Exchange Global Scholars program model, participants will explore how these itineraries cultivate empathy, critical thinking, and global citizenship by connecting students with communities engaged in environmental stewardship. The session will highlight evidence-based strategies, including growth across interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive dimensions measured by the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI). This demonstrates how short-term, high-impact study away experiences strengthen belonging, deepen intercultural understanding, and inspire long-term civic and environmental responsibility.

Relationship-Rich Education: Afrocentric and Intersectional Approaches to Professional Identity Development

Jamila Hughley, Social Work Services, Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care

Kaleena Rogers, Department of Social Work, Rutgers University-Newark

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This oral presentation explores how relationship-rich education can serve as a powerful vehicle for professional identity development and learner success across various educational and professional contexts. Grounded in Afrocentric and intersectional scholarship and informed by applied research with Black helping professionals, the presentation explores how mentorship, sponsorship, community-connected learning, and culturally grounded professional socialization function as critical supports for academic persistence and workforce readiness.

While the foundation of this session is rooted in a social work–centered case study and professionalization research, the implications extend well beyond a single discipline. Participants will be invited to consider how relational approaches can be intentionally integrated within classrooms, training programs, student support services, and professional development spaces to promote a sense of belonging, confidence, and long-term engagement.

Through applied examples and reflective dialogue, this session translates research into practice by offering adaptable strategies that can be used across fields where learning, leadership, and professional formation intersect.

Participants will leave with relational tools they can integrate into teaching, supervision, mentorship, and organizational learning contexts. A projector for PowerPoint presentations, colored markers, and poster boards are needed to facilitate small reflective & interdisciplinary discussions to share with the larger group.

From Policy to People: Cultivating a Culture of Belonging through The New Accessibility Mindset
Katherine Aquino

Office for Research-Training and Development, Rutgers University-Newark

Higher education is at a critical inflection point in how it understands and enacts accessibility. The New Accessibility Mindset is a conceptual framework that repositions accessibility not as a compliance requirement or individual accommodation, but as a collective, relational practice rooted in human connection and shared responsibility. Drawing from recent socio-political shifts, the global impact of COVID-19, and the rapid rise of generative AI, this framework argues that accessibility must be embedded into the very DNA of institutional culture.

Three drivers propel this paradigm shift: advocacy and involvement, emphasizing that accessibility requires engagement from students, faculty, staff, and administrators; contextual awareness, recognizing that external forces—from legislation to public discourse—shape institutional responses; and technological understanding, urging institutions to employ technology, including AI, in critical, creative, and inclusive ways.

These drivers intersect with three key players: environment, institutional culture, and stakeholders, each influencing how accessibility is perceived and practiced. Central to the framework is the principle of continuous review, which ensures ongoing assessment and accountability to align policy with lived experiences.

This session invites participants to explore how The New Accessibility Mindset can strengthen relational ecosystems within higher education—connecting people, purpose, and practice to cultivate environments of belonging. Through dialogue and reflection, attendees will consider actionable strategies to foster accessibility as a shared institutional commitment that advances equity, inclusion, and student success.

It Still Takes a Village: Supporting Undergraduate Students Through Community
Ivette Rosario, Laura Troiano, Michael Loeffler

Honors College, Rutgers University-Newark

“It takes a village to raise a child.” — African Proverb

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Most of us are familiar with this proverb and recognize the vital role a supportive community plays in a child's development. But what happens when that child goes to college? Who becomes their village—and do they still need one?

At RU-N's Honors College, we believe the answer is yes, they still need a village. Our student population is diverse in numerous ways, including race/ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, major or school affiliation, residential/commuter, first-generation status, and veteran status. Our mission centers on inclusive education and engaged community. Thus, our challenge—and our commitment—is to use relationships, technology, and intentional programming to foster a sense of belonging to a village: a welcoming community that encourages growth and supports students throughout their undergraduate journey.

Our program is designed to sustain that sense of community and belonging through multiple interconnected components, including alumni mentorship, targeted advisement campaigns, intentional programming, a Teams channel, and a dedicated Canvas site.

In this session, we will explore how these elements work together to create a cohesive “village” for our students, and how the pivots we made during COVID-19 evolved into lasting practices that continue to foster connection and support. Student interviews, data on engagement in program activities, and reflective narratives will be used to further illustrate how the program cultivates community belonging.

Becoming the Example: Peer Leadership as a Pathway to Professional Growth [W]

Amy Lewis, Teacher Education Program, Graduate School of Education Peer Leaders

Madeline Beavis, Derek Carlin, Juliet Hamza, Sahar Khan

Rutgers Graduate School of Education

This collaborative workshop introduces the structure and purpose of the Internship Seminar Peer Leadership Program, while engaging participants in the practices that define effective leadership in accordance with National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) career readiness competencies. Designed to mirror elements of the Internship Seminar itself, the session positions peer leaders as the models of what it means to inhabit this role, how this identity shaped peer leaders' professional and social growth, and how peer leadership enhanced connections within academic and internship settings.

Peer leaders will mix personal experiences and presentations with engaging activities to both illustrate the importance of these competencies and demonstrate their effective implementation, while also giving participants firsthand experience of what they look like in practice. Modeling leadership, teamwork, communication, inclusive & equity-orientated behaviors in real time, peer leaders will demonstrate how intentional relationship building transformed group dynamics, forged new connections, and resulted in professional and social development.

At the end, participants will spend time reflecting on how they can implement these competencies in their lives to help themselves and others around them to succeed, just like a peer leader.

Metacognition is Uniquely Human: Developing it Builds Connections [W]

Pauline Carpenter, Eliza Blau

Office of Undergraduate Education, School of Arts & Sciences, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Today's educational landscape and technological advances, which is currently dominated by generative AI, may threaten both the relationship between students and instructors and student learning. But it's not inevitable. Metacognition, or “thinking about thinking”, is uniquely human, and nurturing it in the classroom can increase understanding and rapport between students and instructors (Soetaert, 1998), and it can encourage deeper learning (Schraw & Moshman, 1995). In general, enhancing metacognition builds connections between students and instructors, and between students and their own learning processes. Further, developing metacognition among our students is equitable teaching; learners with higher metacognition are more academically successful (McGuire, 2015; Schraw & Moshman, 1995; Tanner, 2012).

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Like all of us, however, learners vary in their levels of metacognition and this is in part due to opportunity gaps in who gets exposure to explicit metacognitive training and practice and who doesn't (McGuire, 2015; Muijs & Bokhove, 2020; Veenman, et. al., 2006). So, how can we find ways to incorporate metacognitive development across courses and programs?

This session provides an overview of the research behind metacognitive classroom practices and quality of instructor-student relationships, and metacognition and learning. Presenters will share how they have promoted and modeled metacognitive practices to encourage instructors to do the same. Participants will see examples from face-to-face and asynchronous course design programs and workshops. Finally, this session encourages participants to share their own experiences and gather new ideas for incorporating metacognitive strategies into their own work.

Professional Coaching for Persistence, Balance, and Success: A Grad Student's Advantage [P]

Shelley Kurland, Graduate School, Rutgers University-Newark

Francisco Aragon-Guiller, Management, Graduate School, Rutgers University-Newark

Rosheka Faulkner, Criminal Justice, Graduate School, Rutgers University-Newark

Min Jee Oh, Management, Graduate School

Gilbert Nuwagira, Global Urban Studies, Graduate School, Rutgers University-Newark

This session will explore how professional coaching serves as a powerful advantage with a transformative impact on graduate students. We will begin by covering the core principles of professional coaching, which the International Coaching Federation (ICF) defines as "partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential."

At its core, professional coaching is a collaborative exploration that fosters personal growth and maximizes both academic and professional potential. Through powerful questioning and insightful dialogue, the coach acts as a strategic partner, empowering students to discover their own solutions to challenges and pursue goals beyond initial expectations. By cultivating deep, lasting change rather than focusing on surface-level improvements, professional coaching drives significant transformation for graduate students.

The moderator will introduce the principles and process of coaching, while the panelists will share their practical experiences and realized outcomes with coaching.

Using Classroom Observation to Strengthen Inclusive and Relationship-Rich Teaching

Tracie Addy, Jamie Kim, Crystal Quillen, Sam Luxmikanthan

Institute for Teaching, Innovation, & Inclusive Pedagogy (TIIP), Rutgers University-New Brunswick

During this presentation we will share what we have learned from conducting a multi-institutional study at six research institutions focused on the observation of inclusive teaching practices using a validated, data-driven protocol. Specifically, we will share how instructors across disciplines and teaching contexts reflected upon the feedback received from the observations, and what they planned to change in their teaching practices as a result. We will also describe the value that the instructors found in the feedback. This session will be particularly valuable for instructors invested in implementing inclusive teaching approaches and staff who partner with instructors on effective teaching that promotes relationship-rich education. Those attending the presentation will be offered the opportunity to attend a follow-up virtual session with the Institute for Teaching, Innovation, & Inclusive Pedagogy at Rutgers-University New Brunswick to learn more about the classroom observation protocol.

Presence at Scale: Human-Centered Online Learning in a Biomedical Graduate Program

Katherine Aquino, Rutgers Health-Research Training and Development, Rutgers School of Biomedical and Health Sciences-New Brunswick

Anne Rudnicki, Rutgers School of Biomedical and Health Sciences-New Brunswick

Lauren Burbank, School of Graduate Studies-Newark

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As higher education continues to expand its online footprint, cultivating authentic human connection remains central to meaningful learning. The Master of Biomedical Sciences (MBS) program at Rutgers University is developing a new online track designed to uphold the rigor, engagement, and relational depth of its in-person counterpart while expanding accessibility for a geographically and professionally diverse student population. This initiative combines asynchronous coursework with synchronous mentorship, advisement, and community-building opportunities to ensure students experience personalized support and a sense of belonging. Faculty and advisors will host virtual office hours, advisement meetings, and mentoring sessions that emphasize relationship-building and student success. To strengthen connections across cohorts, the program is developing a “One Stop” digital hub within the learning management system—an accessible, centralized space for guidance, policies, announcements, and interactive communication.

In addition to coursework, the online program will integrate experiential and scholarly engagement through an annual virtual symposium, providing students a venue to showcase capstone research, connect with peers, and engage with guest scholars in the biomedical field. Guided by Rutgers University’s digital accessibility standards, this initiative models a human-centered, inclusive approach to online learning that prioritizes connection, accessibility, and student achievement. This session will share the program’s design strategies, lessons learned, and relational frameworks that anchor accessibility and engagement at the heart of online biomedical education—demonstrating how technology can extend, rather than replace, the human connections that define transformative learning.

Internships as student learning opportunities: A Department of Communication Internship Program Study, 2018-2025

Erin Christie

School of Communication and Information, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Internships are learning opportunities for students across disciplines while providing real-world contexts to support learning and personal growth (Yardley, 2012). Additionally, internships develop thinking skills and promote life-long learning (Coco, 2000). When embedded within the curriculum, they significantly improve graduate employment rates (Silva et al., 2018), and are beneficial in reinforcing technical competencies and developing thinking skills (Coco, 2000; Eyer, 2009). This proposed research submission provides an opportunity to examine, through lecture and discussion, college student experiences with internships as one aspect of career readiness. Through the analysis of data collected from 2018-2025 as undergraduate internship coordinator and faculty member within the School of Communication and Information (SC&I) at Rutgers University, my discussion seeks to shed light on these central questions: first, can students apply and transfer what they have learned as a result of their internships to the field of Communication more generally? Second, do internship supervisors think that students are successfully applying what they have learned at their internships? Lastly, what can we learn about career readiness gains generally that exist for students who complete internships, and when completing internships within a specific for credit curriculum?

MetaData and the Archive

Brooke Finister

Express Newark, New Arts Public Art Studio, Rutgers University-Newark

Our collective “breakup” with social media and passive consumption is shaping our digital lives. As AI-driven surveillance, algorithmic bias, and platform moderation increasingly determine what we see, we must ask: How do we remain intentional in digital spaces, and what does it mean to build audiences beyond platforms that control our visibility? Peer-reviewed history, archival data, and marginalized narratives are being censored or rewritten across digital and political landscapes. What happens when the archives that hold our stories lose stability? Who decides what remains accessible, legible, or safe to publish While social platforms disseminate information freely, they also amplify conspiracy, trolling, and ideological polarization; yet these same spaces

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often serve as people's primary communities. How do we navigate digital community-building without surrendering our intellectual autonomy or contributing to the erasure of knowledge?

The call-to-action centers on creating and sustaining personal archives as a form of resistance. What does it mean to build an archive that protects truth, preserves context, and resists political manipulation? How can print, physical media, and independent platforms counter the vulnerabilities of algorithm-driven information systems? And what are the broader implications of shifting facts and restricted access across disciplines? Through an oral presentation and demonstration, this session explores who creates information, how it is preserved, who gains access to it, and how it circulates. Grounded in archiving, visual culture, and academic research, I examine digital relationships, theoretical development, and methods for cross-examining knowledge gaps and the ethical curation into public domains.

Connection Through Credentialing: "Certification Matrix" as Nexus of Partnership

Chris Friend

Center for Teaching Excellence, Kean University

This year, Kean's Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) grew from one faculty member to two faculty, seven fellows, and five adjuncts. Kean grew from a Master's College to a Research-2 in just seven years. On July 1, we absorb NJCU. Like any expanding school, we have multiple administrative initiatives, each in-volving the CTE. We have much to do, little time, and limited resources.

To focus our efforts, we prioritize relationships by pairing each initiative with:

- a Faculty Fellow excited to present/spearhead
- an office on campus with expertise/insight
- digital credentials to indicate achievement

These connections position the CTE as a nexus of engagement, showing our value while promoting offices and opportunities across campus.

To connect with attendees, this oral presentation features hints of work-shop approaches. After attendees brainstorm administrative initiatives at their schools, I'll ask them to identify one local person/office with expertise/knowledge of each initiative. With those possibilities in mind, I'll introduce our Faculty Development Certification Matrix, which leverages our connections to build a brand, an identity, and a faculty credentialing system.

I will break down the rationale behind, and templates for, our standardized set of four-level professional-development sessions. Each track, offered both live and asynchronously, teaches faculty how to implement an initiative. The tracks show what can be learned, the credentials show how involved faculty are, and the partner offices demonstrate how collaboration shapes success.

From Exhaustion to Connection: Reclaiming Our Capacity to Learn Together

YoungMi Park

Rutgers Business School, Rutgers University-Newark

Burnout is rising among both students and faculty, contributing to diminished attention, disengagement, and a weakening of the relational bonds that underlie effective learning. This talk introduces a brain-body-awareness framework that clarifies why chronic stress, attention fragmentation, and unexamined inner narratives leave people feeling disconnected and depleted. Rather than focusing on instructional design, the talk centers on the inner conditions that make genuine human connection possible in classrooms, advising relationships, and collaborative work. Drawing on insights from neuroscience, embodied cognition, emotional regulation, and mindset theory, the session examines how stress, distraction, and distorted inner narratives reduce our capacity to be present with ourselves and others — and how awareness can restore

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connection, clarity, and belonging. The talk highlights how relational presence and perspective-taking interrupt reactive patterns and reorient learning communities toward curiosity, groundedness, and trust.

Practical, research-informed strategies will be presented for:

- shifting from threat responses to growth-oriented mindsets
- supporting students experiencing anxiety, exhaustion, or cognitive overload
- building psychological safety in diverse classrooms• strengthening faculty wellbeing without sacrificing rigor
- integrating ethical AI tools to reduce administrative burden and preserve time for human connection

[An Identity Informed Faculty/Student Mentorship Model: A Structured Approach to Supporting Students Holistically Through Community Building](#)

Ramona Ross

Department of Psychology, School of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University-Newark

As director of the Psychology Professionals of Tomorrow (PPOT) mentorship initiative, I have developed a structured approach to undergraduate student mentorship that emphasizes supporting students holistically and is grounded in building community. This mentorship approach is unique in that it is intentionally designed to support students from underrepresented backgrounds who may be minorities in their fields when it comes to representation, but they in fact represent the global majority. We are in our 5th year of programming. To date, our program has served twenty-seven (27) participants across 5 cohorts. Of the 18 students who have entered into the graduate school application cycle, 12 mentees (67%) are attending master's level clinical psychology programs, 3 (17%) are attending doctoral level clinical psychology programs (PsyD), and 3 (17%) have found work in the mental health field that did not require an advanced degree. I am proposing to facilitate a workshop that includes review of our curriculum around efforts to prepare students to advocate for more inclusive forms of psychology, intentional networking opportunities with professional organizations that reflect a commitment to honoring student diversity (i.e. New Jersey Association of Black Psychologists), identifying strategies for funding graduate school. The curriculum also includes opportunities for students to form community within their cohort and to foster a safe space to share concerns about readiness for graduate school, as well as how to navigate imposter syndrome. In a workshop, I would share potential prompts and tips on how to facilitate this type of community building and holistic level of support.

[Integrating Career Development into Academic Coursework: Preparing Students for Life Beyond the Classroom](#)

Monica Torres, Christina Ovemyer

Division of Life Sciences, School of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

This session shares a successful approach to integrating career readiness into an undergraduate STEM course with high enrollment.

The initiative comprises two key components. First, it supports students in exploring research and experiential learning opportunities, while emphasizing the recognition of skills developed through coursework and encouraging reflection on how these hands-on experiences contribute to professional growth and résumé development. Second, the initiative strengthens the professional development of Teaching Assistants by integrating career readiness training into our professional development TA program, thereby enhancing their pedagogical and employability skills.

Implemented within the Biological research Laboratory Course the initiative consisted of three interactive seminars:

1. Finding Research Opportunities, highlighting strategies for engaging in faculty and identifying programs;

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2. Developing Transferable Skills for a Dynamic and Evolving Workforce, connecting course-based competencies to career pathways; and,
3. Panel of leaders from Local industries and the New Jersey Department of Labor, where speakers shared their personal professional journeys, the skills needed for their positions, and skills needed for the evolving job market.

Student feedback indicated significant gains in awareness of career resources, and improved ability to describe skills gained through coursework. Post-seminar surveys showed that over 85% of participants identified at least one new opportunity to pursue research or experiential learning after attending the seminars.