2027 UCCS Teaching & Learning Conference
ABSTRACTS

Session 1 – Tuesday, 10:00-10:45

(re)Designing Around Student Agency
Classroom Methods and Management
Scott McLeod
Room 109
One of the primary factors that feeds human motivation is autonomy, yet our classes often are low-autonomy learning spaces for students. As the 'expert' instructors, we decide what our students are going to do and how, and then penalize them if they don't comply and complain that they're 'checked out.' In this freewheeling discussion, we will talk about some ways in which we might increase student agency, ownership, and engagement in our courses. Bring your strategies and techniques that foster student voice and choice; Scott will bring his too! Bring a computer and be prepared to work with others!

Humanizing Canvas: A Community of Practice Mini Workshop (Part 1)
Instructional Technology
Chris Creighton, Sara Friedman, Mike Larkin, and Gabriela Martinez Mercier
Room 132
Turbulent times in education present a critical opportunity to gather around to reimagine and humanize our educational practices. Thus, we invite you to connect with the Community of Practice on Humanizing Education & Reimagining Grading for a mini workshop on humanizing Canvas! We will lead a discussion of humanizing pedagogies followed by time to workshop the applications of these pedagogies including integration to Canvas design. You can expect to learn more about the Community, how we use evaluation methods to develop and evolve the Community, and leave with humanizing Canvas design pedagogies to implement in your next class.

Mapping the Boundaries: Helping Students Decide When AI Belongs in Their Learning
AI in Academics...or NOT!
Josie Smith and Dennis DeBay
Room 133
Most of us teach students how to use AI; few teach them how to decide. This interactive workshop introduces the AI Boundary Map, a framework from a CU Denver and UCCS project in which students sort their AI experiences into three zones: Amplifier (AI extended their thinking), Accelerator (AI sped them up but demanded vigilance), and Impediment (AI began replacing their own work). Participants will map their own AI moments, practice question-only thought partnering, and see early student findings. The framework works in any discipline, welcomes skeptics and enthusiasts alike, and participants leave with an open toolkit to adapt.

Revisiting Research Assignments in Light of Generative AI
AI in Academics...or NOT!
Norah Mazel
Room 233
This workshop will guide faculty through an exploration of resources branded as AI research assistants so they can develop assignment descriptions that clarify what tools are allowed or prohibited for students during a project. After collaboratively brainstorming research assignment learning objectives, participants will identify how a variety of AI tools may interfere with them. During the workshop, they will develop a list of tools they want to explicitly address with students when assigning research projects. This session is designed for all faculty – from those that want to prohibit AI use to those who want to encourage it for specific tasks.

Session 2 – Tuesday, 11:00-11:45

The AI Sandwich Model: A Middle Ground Between Banning AI and Anything Goes
AI in Academics...or NOT!
Pat McGuire and Mi Na Choo
Room 109

Not sure how to strike a balance between a total AI ban in your courses and allowing completely unstructured use? Well then this session is for you! The "AI Sandwich" model layers student thinking around AI use: students engage with a task on their own first, use AI purposefully in the middle, then return to critically evaluate and refine their work. We'll explore the model, share implementation strategies across disciplines, and discuss how it addresses concerns such as cognitive offloading. You'll leave with at least one new idea for adapting the AI Sandwich model in your own professional context.

Humanizing Canvas: A Community of Practice Mini Workshop (Part 2)
Instructional Technology
Chris Creighton, Sara Friedman, Mike Larkin, and Gabriela Martinez Mercier
Room 132
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From Socratic Support to SDLC Integration: AI in Software Engineering Education
AI in Academics...or NOT!
Kristen Walcott
Room 133
AI is becoming part of how students learn, work, and make decisions. But using AI isn't the same as knowing when to trust it. How do we teach that distinction? Drawing on software engineering education, I'll introduce QUELL, a multi-agent learning environment that challenges students to question feedback, examine their work, and defend their decisions. We'll explore how students integrate AI into professional workflows and design AI-enabled projects, where evaluating AI's limitations is as important as using its capabilities. Through examples and an activity, participants will explore how AI-supported learning can strengthen critical thinking, judgment, and student agency across disciplines.

Partnering for Student Success: Introducing the UCCS SOS Program
Campus Mental Health and Resilience
Jackie Jones
Room 233
The Skills for Optimizing Student Success (SOS) program, housed within the UCCS Wellness Center, provides holistic, individualized support for students in areas such as time management, sleep hygiene, self-care, motivation, and social connection. Students receive up to three free hours of personalized coaching to build skills, identify strengths, and increase confidence. SOS also offers interactive classroom presentations that provide practical, evidence-informed strategies students can apply immediately. Faculty and staff attending this session will learn how SOS supports student success, discover ways to reinforce these skills in their courses, and gain referral tools to connect students with additional support resources.

Keynote Address – Tuesday, 12:00-1:30

Teaching for Meaning-Making
Scott McLeod
Room 180
Our students often struggle to find meaning in the learning tasks that we put before them. In his keynote, Scott will focus on what we know about powerful learning and how we might start designing in ways that get beyond point-counting and hoop-jumping. Our instructional choices can help students find sense, purpose, and engagement in our course material. Be prepared to interact with your neighbors!

Session 3 – Tuesday, 1:45-2:30

Writing with LLMs - The Good, The Bad, The Meh
AI in Academics...or NOT!
Colin Lewis

Room 109
The proposed session offers a prototype of an assignment designed to actively integrate one LLM (MS Copilot) into an iterative writing process (assignment details available on request). Doing so both complicates the practice of simply using LLMs to generate papers for a course while also yielding additional insights into individual students' writing and thought processes and styles. This in turn allows for feedback that is both more streamlined and better customized to a given student's needs. Following presentation of the design and some anonymized examples, the floor will open for discussion (*i.e.*, Q&A).

Peer Observations for New Faculty (Part 1)
Classroom Methods and Management
Emily Skop
Room 132
This two-part session examines evaluative peer observation, including departmental criteria, observation forms, and its role in annual review, reappointment, promotion, and tenure at UCCS. Participants explore strategies for gathering evidence and providing constructive feedback. After, we will address observation biases, observer positionality, and inclusive practices, then we discuss observations to develop your teaching such as the Student Engagement Observation Protocol. Participants practice distinguishing evidence from interpretation and using observation findings to support reflective dialogue, student engagement, and teaching improvement.

Neurodiversity-Informed Education
Accessibility for ALL Learners
Pam Chaddon
Room 133
Neurodiversity-informed education is an inclusive, strengths-based approach to teaching and learning that recognizes and respects variations in how students think, learn, communicate, and engage. It emphasizes accessibility in instruction design from the outset. This approach shifts from a deficit-based model and designing learning environments with, rather than about, neurodivergent learners. With support from the LAS Dean's Office, I attended the Stanford Neurodiversity Summit to bring these concepts back to UCCS. As a late-diagnosed autistic adult and parent of an autistic UCCS student, I hope to share insights and facilitate discussion about practical applications for accessible and inclusive teaching practices.

Flipped Classroom with Specifications Grading in CS 2910
Classroom Methods and Management
Will Wesley
Room 233
In the Fall 2026 Semester, I taught CS 2910: Secure Mobile Cloud Computing as a flipped classroom with specifications grading. Students engaged in passive learning activities outside class and worked on applications and active learning exercises during class. Students met specified objectives to demonstrate content mastery which were directly tied to course letter grading, including acting as a student assistant during class periods and participating in cumulative oral examinations. My presentation will cover how the course was designed, how it ran, lessons learned, and student perspectives and outcomes.

Session 4 –Tuesday, 2:45-3:30

From AI Answers to Research Evidence: Teaching Students to Search, Verify, and Think
AI in Academics...or NOT!
Jungmin Byun
Room 109
How can we help students move from AI-generated answers to evidence-based research? This librarian-led workshop demonstrates how Consensus, Elicit, and UCCS Summon OneSearch, including its Research Assistant preview, can support learning the research process. Participants will compare traditional searching with AI-assisted discovery, explore how to refine research questions, and examine why citations alone do not guarantee reliable claims. Through a brief verification activity, participants will compare a claim with its source and identify limitations. They will leave with a practical framework for integrating question development, source evaluation, and evidence verification into student research assignments.

Peer Observations for New Faculty (Part 2)
Classroom Methods and Management
Emily Skop
Room 132
This two-part session examines evaluative peer observation, including departmental criteria, observation forms, and its role in annual review, reappointment, promotion, and tenure at UCCS. Participants explore strategies for gathering evidence and providing constructive feedback. After, we will address observation biases, observer positionality, and inclusive practices, then we discuss observations to develop your teaching such as the Student Engagement Observation Protocol. Participants practice distinguishing evidence from interpretation and using observation findings to support reflective dialogue, student engagement, and teaching improvement.

Developing Management Skills with Artificial Intelligence (AI): Innovative AI Applications in Human Resources and Negotiation Courses
AI in Academics...or NOT!
Dayna Herbert Walker
Room 133
As a recipient of a 2026 CU AI Recognition Award for Teaching & Learning, I am required to present the relevant projects at UCCS. Dave Anderson reached out to the award recipients inviting us to submit to UCCS' Teaching and Learning Conference (TLC). I have integrated artificial intelligence (AI) into major assignments across two of my courses, including both undergraduate and graduate learners, and collected data on the assignments' efficacy. In my session, I would share specific details about the assignments as well as broader thoughts on using AI to support students' independent judgement and critical thinking.

For or Against "Intersectionality?" Regardless, It's Necessary
Curriculum Design
Tre Wentling
Room 233
The concept of intersectionality, coined by black feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, is almost 30 years old and, before its sudden emergence in popular discourse a few years ago, was likely unknown (unless one taught in women's studies or ethnic studies, or was steeped in black feminist thought).

- What does intersectionality actually mean?
- Why did it become so politicized?
- Is it really a "woke" concept?

This interactive workshop will define intersectionality, contextualize why it became politicized, and, despite its recent weaponization, show its importance in designing inclusive curricula.

Session 5 – Wednesday, 9:15-10:45

(Re)Discovering Your Path: An Interactive Workshop on Meaning Through Awareness and Finding Your Anchor
Campus Mental Health and Resilience
Benek Altayli
Room 132
Deriving meaning from our jobs; knowing and feeling good about "why and how we do what we do" is one of the most significant losses we experience as a result of burnout and sustained distress. Our "why" is one of the most important internal resources we have available for resilience, growth, and a sense of wellbeing. In this workshop, through a series of exercises we will explore, remember, and consolidate the meaning we individually draw from our work and how we show up every day.

AI or NOT? Putting Teaching First
AI in Academics...or NOT!
Janice Thorpe
Room 133
AI can provide answers, but does that mean we should use it? In this hands-on workshop, faculty will explore when, why, and whether customized GPTs can enhance learning without replacing instructors or diminishing student thinking. Drawing on the development of a graduate Research Coach GPT, participants will examine how teaching

philosophy, expertise, and course materials inform intentional AI design. Through guided reflection and practical activities, faculty will identify a learning challenge, establish pedagogical boundaries, and begin designing a customized GPT for one of their courses. Emphasis remains on productive struggle, student ownership, ethical considerations, and human judgment.

Session 6 – Wednesday, 11:00-12:30

Well, That Backfired: Rethinking Guidelines, Power, and Classroom Dialogue
Classroom Methods and Management
Alice Allis
Room 132
Community guidelines are often developed with good intentions, but do they actually create equitable classroom environments? In this interactive workshop, participants will collaboratively develop classroom guidelines before examining how seemingly neutral expectations can reinforce existing power dynamics and influence participation. Drawing on scholarship addressing classroom dialogue, positionality, and Glenn Singleton's Courageous Conversations framework, participants will explore discomfort, instructor accountability, and inclusive facilitation. Participants will then revisit and revise their original guidelines, translating broad expectations into actionable instructional practices. The workshop emphasizes critical reflection, practical application, and the ongoing responsibility of educators to examine how classroom expectations function in practice.

Adaptive Leadership: Thriving Beyond Your Frontier of Competence
Teaching and Learning Outside of the Classroom
Brenna Faricy
Room 133
Leadership isn’t about having all the answers. It’s about helping people navigate challenges when the answers aren’t clear. This interactive workshop introduces students to adaptive leadership, a practical framework for leading through uncertainty, change, and complex problems. Students will learn to distinguish technical problems from adaptive challenges, “get on the balcony” to recognize patterns and perspectives, engage resistance with curiosity, and understand how change impacts others. Through discussion, reflection, and real-world scenarios, students will practice asking powerful questions, sharing responsibility, and creating conditions for others to lead. Participants will leave better equipped to lead change from any position.