Fall Faculty Conference
2025-2026

2025 – 2026 Refine, Align, and Design Fall Faculty Conference AKA RAD 25!

Welcome to a conference that's all about making your teaching radically better! This year we're focusing on three powerful ways to elevate your impact in the classroom: Refine, Align, and Design.

Ready to refine your approach? We'll explore evidence-based tweaks and enhancements that can transform even your most challenging assignments into student engagement goldmines. With our new strategic plan and our reorganization of the JU family, it's the perfect time to align our efforts. We'll discover how to sync-up our courses and resources to create the most impactful and measurable outcomes for our students. From cutting-edge GenAI tools to our incredible on-campus experts, let's design learning experiences that truly come alive.

Each session block offers you choices across all three RAD elements, so you can customize your conference experience to match exactly what you and your students need most. Let's make this year radically transformative!

Monday, August 11, 2025 | 8:30 AM – 12:00 PM | Conference Presentations
Keigwin School of Nursing

8:30 - 9:00 AM Continental Breakfast, Lobby
9:00 - 9:50 AM Concurrent Sessions

SESSION	TYPE	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE
1A	Design	146	Dr. John Pauls	Defying Gravity: Learning Design Lessons from the Land of Oz
1B	Align	133	Anna Tilbury Olga Lucia Florez	Unlocking Potential: Faculty Members' Roles in Fostering Inclusive and Accessible Learning Environments
1C	Refine Online Pedagogy	144	Dr. Melissa McRae Dr. Amber Santos	Creative Alternatives to Replace Discussion Boards

10:00 - 10:50 AM Concurrent Sessions

SESSION	TYPE	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE
2A	Design	133	Dr. Colleen Wilson Dr. John Shaw Dr. Bill Penwell	Crossing Paths: A Conversation on Interdisciplinary Teaching
2B	Align	145	Dr. Lisa Sutherland Rob Berwick	Charting Our Path Forward: Jacksonville University's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan
2C	Align	144	Davina Hamilton	When Things Get Tricky: A Faculty Guide to Classroom Challenges and Campus Resources
2D	Refine	146	Dr. Dee Thornton Dr. Irina Toteva Dr. Carl Goforth	From Idea to Impact: Faculty Showcase Their Custom AI Assistant Journeys

11:00 - 11:50 AM Concurrent Sessions

SESSION	TYPE	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE
3A	Design	133	Dr. Deanna Seymour	Helping Students Help Themselves: Integrating Self-Care and Resiliency into Higher Education Curriculum
3B	Align	144	Dr. Kristie Gover DaVina Hamilton	Understanding Today's College Students: Mental Health, Motivation, and the Need for Meaningful Support
3C	Refine	146	Andrew Pemberton	Moving from Disposable to Renewable Assignments
3D	Align	Founders 8 CTL	Dr. Sarah Parker Kelsey Taylor	Safe Zone (2 hour session; 11:00 – 1:30 with lunch break included)

Lunch
Swisher Library
12:00-1:00 PM

Join us at the library for lunch as we reconnect with colleagues and prepare for the new academic year. While you eat, participate in a fun scavenger hunt designed to help you discover the many resources and services available to support your teaching and research throughout the year. Complete the scavenger hunt and qualify for a chance to win a $250 technology purchase.

Tuesday, August 12, 2025 | 8:30 AM – 12:00 PM | Conference Presentations
Keigwin School of Nursing

8:30 - 9:00 AM Continental Breakfast, Lobby
9:00 - 9:50 AM Concurrent Sessions

SESSION	TYPE	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE
4A	Design	144	Dr. Dee Thornton	Designing for Gen Z: Assignment Strategies and Content Design That Actually Engage Today's Students
4B	Align	146	Dr. Catherine Rushton	AI Tools for Research
4C	Refine	133	Dr. Lauren Holloway Dr. Amber Mason	Art-Based Learning in Higher Education

10:00 - 10:50 AM Concurrent Sessions

SESSION	TYPE	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE
5A	Design	146	Dr. John Pauls	AI-Powered Learning Design: Elevate Effectiveness and Productivity using Microsoft Copilot

SESSION	TYPE	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE
5B	Align	133	Sammy Jean LaTarsha Stallworth Katy Remich	System Updates Made Simple: MyCove, PhinSight, and Everything In-Between
5C	Refine	144	Dr. Dee Thornton Dr. Cathryn Meegan Dr. Lori-Ann Pietruski Dr. Caitlin Sockbeson	Making Reading Interactive: Annotate, Collaborate, Learn

11:00 - 11:50 AM Concurrent Sessions

SESSION	TYPE	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE
6A	Design	144	Andrew Pemberton	Accessible Course Design: Creating Inclusive Learning Experiences with Lasting Impact
6B	Align	133	Dr. Lisa Sutherland Rob Berwick	Charting Our Path Forward: Jacksonville University's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan
6C	Refine	146	Dr. Catherine Rushton	Teaching with Pop Culture: Engaging Students Through Story, Relevance, and Emotion

Welcome Back Lunch
Davis College of Business & Technology Conference Rooms
12:00-1:30 PM
Welcome back! Please join us for lunch as we celebrate and recognize colleagues who were Board-approved for tenure and promotion in May. This will be a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with colleagues and share our collective achievements. Come ready to celebrate our successes and enjoy meaningful conversations as we kick off the new academic year together.

Fall Faculty Conference

2025-2026 Abstracts

SESSION	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE & ABSTRACT
1A	146	Dr. John Pauls	**Defying Gravity: Learning Design Lessons from the Land of Oz** In today's rapidly evolving world, educators need courage to tackle the unknown, heart to meet learners' needs, and knowledge to do so effectively. Drawing inspiration from the magical land of Oz, this session explores how to create learning environments that are both engaging and empowering. Just as Dorothy and her friends embarked on a transformative journey, we'll travel the "Yellow Brick Road" of learning design to discover how storytelling, technology, and community can create captivating educational experiences. We'll examine practical strategies built on the principles of courage, heart, and wisdom that help learners think critically and creatively. By the end of this session, you'll have a toolkit of approaches to design learning experiences that truly defy gravity, lifting your learners to new heights of understanding and capability. Let's ease down the road towards effective and engaging design together and transform the way we approach learning in 2025.
1B	133	Anna Tilbury Olga Lucia Florez	**Unlocking Potential: Faculty Members' Roles in Fostering Inclusive and Accessible Learning Environments** Creating truly inclusive classrooms isn't just about compliance – it's about unlocking every student's potential to succeed. This session provides faculty with a comprehensive overview of disability support services and practical strategies for implementing reasonable accommodations that benefit all learners. We'll explore the collaborative partnership between faculty and our office. You'll learn about the range of services available to support both you and your students, including assistive technology, alternative testing arrangements, and classroom modifications. We'll also address common questions and concerns faculty have about accommodations, discussing how to maintain academic integrity while ensuring equitable access to learning opportunities.
1C	144	Dr. Melissa McRae Dr. Amber Santos	**Creative Alternatives to Replace Discussion Boards** Traditional online discussion boards often fail to engage students meaningfully. Educators can create more dynamic learning experiences by incorporating AI tools, breakout discussions, polling, and live conversations. AI-powered tools generate personalized prompts, summarize discussions, and provide instant feedback, while chatbots can simulate peer interactions and guide students through complex topics. Breakout discussions in small groups build community and improve discourse quality, while polling tools encourage quick engagement and serve as conversation starters. Live discussions through video or chat bring immediacy and authenticity to classroom dialogue, helping students feel heard and encouraging spontaneous collaboration. By integrating these interactive techniques, educators shift from passive posting to active participation, resulting in richer engagement, higher motivation, and

			improved learning outcomes that cater to different learning styles and foster genuine connection in online and hybrid courses.
SESSION	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE & ABSTRACT
2A	133	Dr. Colleen Wilson Dr. John Shaw Dr. Bill Penwell	**Crossing Paths: A Conversation on Interdisciplinary Teaching** Join us for a faculty dialogue exploring the value of crossing traditional subject boundaries. We'll reflect on how blending disciplines—whether STEM, the arts, or humanities—can enrich student learning, spark curiosity, and offer new ways to approach complex topics. This informal conversation is a chance to share ideas, ask questions, and imagine fresh possibilities for collaboration across departments and colleges.
2B	145	Dr. Lisa Sutherland Rob Berwick	**Charting Our Path Forward: Jacksonville University's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan** Join Jacksonville University's leadership team as they unveil the comprehensive 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, developed through an inclusive, community-driven process that prioritized transparency and collaboration. You'll discover how this five-year roadmap will serve as our institutional compass, guiding critical decisions around student success initiatives, facilities development, academic programming, and financial planning. We'll share how the plan establishes our institutional identity while providing the framework for collaborative decision-making that will shape JU's future. The presentation will also outline the next phase of implementation, including developing operational plans and key performance indicators to ensure we meet our strategic goals. This is your opportunity to see how your input shaped our direction and understand how we'll work together to achieve our shared vision for Jacksonville University's future.
2C	144	Davina Hamilton	**When Things Get Tricky: A Faculty Guide to Classroom Challenges and Campus Resources** Join us for a just in time primer on ways to work with students—so you can have your best teaching year ever. This session is about the tools and confidence to handle tricky situations while keeping your classroom a space for meaningful learning. We'll walk through what you can expect from students (hint: they still need to follow the Code of Conduct), explore the protocols you can use when things don't go as planned, and most importantly, introduce you to the amazing campus resources that are here to help both you and your students. From Care Forms for students of concern to Disability Support Services and accommodation needs, we will cover the practical stuff you need to know. You'll leave with a toolkit of resources, clear next steps for different scenarios, and the peace of mind that comes with knowing you're not handling these challenges alone.

SESSION	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE & ABSTRACT
2D	146	Dr. Dee Thornton Dr. Irina Toteva Dr. Carl Goforth	**From Idea to Impact: Faculty Showcase Their Custom AI Assistant Journeys** Ready to move beyond AI buzzwords and see what actually works? Join faculty who rolled up their sleeves and built custom AI solutions from scratch. This session will walk you through the process of creating your own AI assistant while hearing real stories from colleagues who've been there, done that. You'll learn the nuts and bolts of designing AI tools that solve actual problems in your classroom or department, plus get the inside scoop on what worked, what flopped, and what surprised everyone along the way. Whether you're AI-curious or ready to start building, you'll leave with practical strategies and honest insights for creating AI tools that actually fit your unique educational needs.
SESSION	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE & ABSTRACT
3A	133	Dr. Deanna Seymour	**Helping Students Help Themselves: Integrating Self-Care and Resiliency into Higher Education Curriculum** Burnout and psychological distress are significant issues in higher education, with 69% of students reporting burnout and 75% of students reporting moderate to severe psychological distress (Best Colleges Survey, 2023). Academic pressure, financial stress, and uncertainty about the future fuel higher levels of emotional exhaustion. Once students graduate, these statistics do not improve. Gen Z employees report the highest stress levels of any generation (APA, 2023) and employers have taken notice. In fact, 74% of employers say that Gen Z is more difficult to work with than any other generation and 12% avoid hiring Gen Z employees if at all possible. As faculty in higher education, we can promote student success at every level by acknowledging these realities and providing evidence-based solutions throughout student programs to promote mental and emotional wellness likely to translate into job procurement, performance, and success.
3B	144	Dr. Kristie Gover DaVina Hamilton	**Understanding Today's College Students: Mental Health, Motivation, and the Need for Meaningful Support** Today's Gen Z college students present a unique and complex profile shaped by the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising mental health concerns, and a hyperconnected digital world. As educators, understanding these shifts is essential to fostering student engagement, academic success, and personal growth. This presentation offers faculty a comprehensive look at the current generation of learners by highlighting their strengths, stressors, and expectations in the classroom. We will explore research-driven insights into how trauma, social media, and shifting cultural norms impact learning behaviors, communication styles, and motivation. Faculty will gain practical strategies for creating inclusive, relationship-centered learning environments that validate student experiences while maintaining appropriate boundaries.

SESSION	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE & ABSTRACT
3C	146	Andrew Pemberton	**Moving from Disposable to Renewable Assignments** Let's be honest – how many of our assignments end up in the digital trash bin right after we grade them? We've all been there and so have our students. But what if we could flip that script? This workshop digs into renewable assignments, a game-changing approach where students create work that lives on and makes a difference beyond our classroom walls. We'll explore how open pedagogy can help us design learning experiences that give students real ownership over their work while boosting engagement and creating genuine impact in the world. You'll see examples of renewable assignments from different disciplines (and probably think "why didn't I think of that?") and have time to brainstorm how to revamp your own assignments. Come ready to rethink what student work can be – and maybe get a little excited about grading again.
3D	CTL Founders 8	Dr. Sarah Parker Kelsey Taylor	**Safe Zone (2 hour session)** Safe Zone training provides faculty with the opportunity to learn about LGBTQ+ identities, gender and sexuality, while examining prejudice, assumptions, and privilege. Trainees receive a Safe Zone sticker and certificate to display as a sign that their office and classroom are safe spaces for LGBTQ+ community members. Many people feel nervous about "saying the wrong thing" when discussing sexuality and gender – including those who identify as LGBTQ+! This training offers a safe place to ask questions, be vulnerable, and learn without judgment. While many faculty want to be LGBTQ+ inclusive, we don't always feel comfortable with the language or know where to deepen our understanding. Safe Zone training provides that space to learn about LGBTQ+ identity and issues and even explore our own gender and sexuality. This is a TWO-HOUR commitment requiring attendance at both sessions to receive certification. Previous Safe Zone participants are welcome to attend for a refresher but must commit to the entire session.
SESSION	**ROOM**	**PRESENTER(S)**	**TITLE & ABSTRACT**
4A	144	Dr. Dee Thornton	**Designing for Gen Z: Assignment Strategies and Content Design That Actually Engage Today's Students** Now that we understand who Gen Z students are and what makes them tick, let's get practical about what this means for our classrooms. This follow-up session translates those insights into concrete assignment designs and content presentation strategies that actually work for today's students. You'll discover how to leverage Gen Z's traits through innovative assignment formats that go beyond traditional papers and exams. We'll explore content delivery methods that speak to their visual learning preferences, need for frequent feedback, and expectation of relevance to real-world applications.

SESSION	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE & ABSTRACT
4B	146	Dr. Catherine Rushton	**AI Tools for Research** Curious about how AI can assist with research without compromising academic integrity? This workshop explores Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) models—AI tools that do not just generate content but ground it in sources. Learn how to use RAG-based platforms like Research Rabbit and SciSpace to identify related research articles, summarize literature, draft outlines, and extract insights from documents or datasets. Whether you're designing a study or mentoring student projects, this session will help you use AI more powerfully and responsibly.
4C	133	Dr. Lauren Holloway Dr. Amber Mason	**Art-Based Learning in Higher Education** This study evaluates the implementation and impact of Art-Based Pedagogy (ABP) as an innovative teaching strategy in higher education curricula, grounded in David A. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. The research methodology involved organizing students into small groups, each assigned to study a theorist with significant global impact on health, education, and nursing, requiring them to visually express their perceptions using various art media and present their interpretations to classroom peers. This non-prescriptive approach facilitates multiple perspective understanding while strengthening connections between students and educators, designed to enhance essential skills including observation, problem-solving, critical thinking, team building, empathy, resilience, and cultural sensitivity. By emphasizing adult learner participation and reflection as key mechanisms for promoting student engagement and knowledge development, this pedagogical innovation aims to foster transformational learning experiences that extend beyond traditional educational boundaries. Preliminary findings suggest that ABP implementation shows promise for expanding curriculum applications across various academic programs in higher education, with the visual and collaborative nature of this approach creating meaningful learning opportunities that engage students in deeper critical analysis and perspective-taking. This research contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting innovative pedagogical approaches in higher education.
SESSION	**ROOM**	**PRESENTER(S)**	**TITLE & ABSTRACT**
5A	146	Dr. John Pauls	**AI-Powered Learning Design: Elevate Effectiveness and Productivity using Microsoft Copilot** In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, AI is no longer a futuristic concept; it's an essential tool for enhancing learning design. This interactive session explores how Microsoft Copilot can revolutionize course planning, personalized instruction, and student engagement. Through real-world examples, we'll demonstrate how educators can harness AI to streamline workflows, spark creativity, and create more impactful learning experiences. Whether you're a tech-savvy instructor or just starting to explore AI, you'll leave with actionable strategies to implement immediately.

SESSION	ROOM	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE & ABSTRACT
5B	133	Sammy Jean LaTarsha Stallworth Katy Remich	**System Updates Made Simple: MyCove, PhinSight, and Everything In-Between** Join us for an essential update session covering all the new digital tools and processes rolling out across campus. Our Admissions team will walk you through the new MyCove Student portal, showing you, what students are seeing and how it might impact your interactions with them. Meanwhile, our IT team will get you up to speed on the new faculty/staff PhinSight portal, updated password requirements, Okta integration, and changes to student email systems. Whether you're tech-savvy or just trying to keep up, this session will give you the practical information you need to navigate these changes smoothly. We'll save plenty of time for your questions because let's face it – we all have them with change.
5C	144	Dr. Dee Thornton Dr. Cathryn Meegan Dr. Lori-Ann Pietruski Dr. Caitlin Sockbeson	**Making Reading Interactive: Annotate, Collaborate, Learn** Remember when reading assignments felt like sending students into a black hole? Hypothes.is changes that game entirely by turning any text into a collaborative learning space where students can annotate, discuss, and build understanding together. This session explores the powerful benefits of social annotation for learning while featuring faculty who've successfully integrated Hypothes.is into their courses across different disciplines. You'll discover how annotations can transform passive reading into active engagement, create opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, and provide faculty with real-time insights into student comprehension and thinking processes. From literature courses where students analyze texts collaboratively to science classes where annotations help decode complex research papers, you'll see practical examples of how this tool supports deeper learning and student connection. Whether you're looking to revitalize reading assignments, create more interactive discussions, or simply find new ways to engage students with course materials, this session will give you both the pedagogical foundation and real-world strategies to make annotations work in your classroom.
SESSION	**ROOM**	**PRESENTER(S)**	**TITLE & ABSTRACT**
6A	144	Andrew Pemberton	**Accessible Course Design: Creating Inclusive Learning Experiences with Lasting Impact** This workshop invites faculty to reimagine their course design through the lens of accessibility and inclusion. Participants will explore the foundational principles of accessible teaching, including strategies aligned with Universal Design for Learning and best practices for digital accessibility. Through real examples from higher education, attendees will learn how to identify and remove barriers in course materials, evaluate tools for designing accessible content, and apply inclusive strategies that support all learners. Additionally, we will look closely at how to implement these tips and tricks in Blackboard Ultra. Whether you are new to accessibility or looking to deepen your practice, this session offers practical insights and actionable ideas to foster equity and meaningful learning outcomes for every student.

6B	133	Dr. Lisa Sutherland Rob Berwick	**Charting Our Path Forward: Jacksonville University's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan** Join Jacksonville University's leadership team as they unveil the comprehensive 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, developed through an inclusive, community-driven process that prioritized transparency and collaboration. You'll discover how this five-year roadmap will serve as our institutional compass, guiding critical decisions around student success initiatives, facilities development, academic programming, and financial planning. We'll share how the plan establishes our institutional identity while providing the framework for collaborative decision-making that will shape JU's future. The presentation will also outline the next phase of implementation, including developing operational plans and key performance indicators to ensure we meet our strategic goals. This is your opportunity to see how your input shaped our direction and understand how we'll work together to achieve our shared vision for Jacksonville University's future.
6D	146	Dr. Catherine Rushton	**Teaching with Pop Culture: Engaging Students Through Story, Relevance, and Emotion** In a world where students are immersed in media, storytelling, and cultural references, pop culture offers a powerful—and often untapped—tool for teaching and learning. This interactive workshop explores how TV shows, movies, and cultural narratives can be leveraged to deepen student engagement, foster critical thinking, and humanize the classroom. Using examples from Wednesday, Hunger Games, Doctor Who, and Alice in Wonderland, participants will unpack the pedagogical value of familiar stories and design their own pop culture–infused activities or lessons. Whether you're teaching ethics, science, leadership, or literature, this session will help you bridge the gap between academic content and students' lived experiences.