



GATEWAYS, NOT GATEKEEPERS: Empowering Faculty Access and Growth Speed Learning Symposium



Welcome to our Event!

Hosted by the PCOE Access and Opportunity Committee

Event Overview



February 27, 2026
9:00 AM-12:00 PM



Baker Pattillo Student Center
Regents Suite A



Session Format: 20-minute speed learning sessions in roundtables, providing concise, practical insights into navigating various opportunities at SFA.



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PCOE Access and Opportunity Committee Members



Dr. Luis Aguerrevere



Dr. Mihae Bae



Ms. Lynsey Cortines



Dr. Heek Jeong



Dr. Edwin Jung



Dr. Nandhu Radhakrishnan



Dr. Sarah Straub



Dr. Henry Wanakuta



Dr. Tingting Xu



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Empowering Faculty Access and Growth
Speed Learning Symposium

Symposium Program

Time	Speaker	Presentation
9:00-9:15	Sarah Straub & Nandhu Radhakrishnan	Welcome to Gateways, Not Gatekeepers

Roundtable Presentation 1 (9:15-9:45 AM)

Table 1	Heather Olson Beal	From R & R to Publication: Practical Strategies for Success
Table 2	Roslyn Fraser	Fulbright Pathways: Long-Term, Short-Term, and Flexible Opportunities for Faculty and Students
Table 3	Lacey Folsom	Faculty as Connectors: Strengthening Belonging through Student Engagement
Table 4	Michael Tkacik	Supporting Honors Students and Contracts
Table 5	Dustin Knepp and Joyce Johnston	Reimagining Our Future: Faculty Opportunities in a Transforming College Landscape
Table 6	Rebekah Raney and Emmerentie Oliphant	What is the IRB and How to Submit at SFA



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Roundtable Presentation 2 (9:50-10:20)

Table 1	Cynthia Kilpatrick	Connecting, Learning, and Leadings through the TWHE
Table 2	Amanda Rudolph	Reimagining Mentorship for Midcareer Faculty
Table 3	Flóra Faragó and Court Carney	Leave, Learn, Level Up: Faculty Development Leave
Table 4	Abby Coker	From Gatekeepers to Gateways: Supporting First-Generation Student Success
Table 5	J. Lindsey Kennon	No Magic, Just Momentum: Repeatable Strategies for Enrollment Growth
Table 6	Rachel Jumper, Melissa Hulings, and Sarah Straub	Virtual Conferences: High Impact, Low Cost Professional Engagement for Educators



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Panel

10:30-11:15

Megan Weatherly

Panelists: Kim Childs, Choya Coleman, Emmerentie Oliphant, and Clare Fite

From "Sorry" to Strategic: A Panel on Navigating Authority and Bias in Higher Education

Community Dialogue

11:15-11:20

Joyce Johnston

Future Role of Access and Opportunity

11:20-11:30

Christina Sinclair
Interim Dean, James I. Perkins
College of Education

Closing Remarks

Thank you for coming!

This event was funded by the James I. Perkins
College of Education Office of the Dean



Session Abstracts

(alphabetical order by last name)



Presenters:

Court Carney, Professor, Department of History
Flóra Faragó, Associate Professor, School of Human Sciences and Professional Studies



Title: Leave, Learn, Level Up: Faculty Development Leave

Abstract: Join us for an engaging workshop designed to demystify the what, why, and how of Faculty Development Leave (FDL). This session will introduce faculty to the purpose and structure of FDL, explaining what it is, the kinds of projects it supports, and the opportunities it creates for research, curriculum development, creative work, and professional growth. Participants will explore why FDL is a vital tool for scholarly renewal—how dedicated time away from teaching and service can spark innovation, deepen expertise, prevent burnout, and enhance long-term contributions to the university. The workshop will also address how to successfully navigate the application process, including crafting a strong proposal, developing a realistic timeline, and articulating institutional benefits. Whether you're considering a future leave or simply curious about what it entails, this session offers practical guidance, examples, and encouragement to help faculty envision and plan an impactful FDL experience.



GATEWAYS, NOT GATEKEEPERS:
Empowering Faculty Access and Growth
Speed Learning Symposium



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Presenter:

Abby Coker, Student Success Coordinator, Cole Student Success Center

Title: From Gatekeepers to Gateways: Supporting First-Generation Student Success

Abstract: First-generation students often enter higher education academically capable but unfamiliar with the unspoken expectations that shape college success. These hidden rules, both in and out of the classroom, combined with delayed intervention and a lack of belonging, can create barriers that faculty may not immediately recognize. This roundtable invites faculty to reflect on their role as either gatekeepers or gateways to student success. Participants will explore examples of hidden curriculum in academic and co-curricular spaces, discuss the importance of early outreach when students begin to struggle, and examine how faculty actions influence students' sense of belonging. Through guided discussion and practical prompts, attendees will identify small, intentional strategies that make expectations explicit, encourage help-seeking, and foster connection. The session emphasizes that supporting first-generation students does not require lowering academic standards, but rather increasing transparency and proactive engagement. Faculty will leave with actionable practices they can immediately apply to better support first-generation student persistence and success.



Presenter:

Lacey Folsom, Associate Dean of Students, Division of Enrollment and Engagement

Title: Faculty as Connectors: Strengthening Belonging Through Student Engagement

Abstract: This session explores the intentional design of campus events and engagement opportunities that foster student confidence, independence, and a strong sense of belonging. By examining the strategic timing and structure of involvement experiences, participants will learn how these touchpoints support students' developmental needs throughout the academic year. Drawing on recent research highlighting the role of involvement in stress management and overall mental well-being, the presentation will demonstrate how meaningful engagement contributes to healthier, more resilient learners. Faculty will also gain insight into the powerful impact they can have by serving as advisors to student organizations or by actively encouraging participation in campus activities. Through practical examples and evidence-based practices, this session invites faculty to partner more intentionally with Student Involvement to create a vibrant, supportive environment where students feel connected, capable, and empowered to thrive.



GATEWAYS, NOT GATEKEEPERS:

Empowering Faculty Access and Growth Speed Learning Symposium



Presenter:

Roslyn Fraser, Associate Professor, Department of Government and Sociology

Title: Fulbright Pathways: Long-Term, Short-Term, and Flexible Opportunities for Faculty and Students

Abstract: This presentation will highlight a range of Fulbright programs designed to support scholars and students across institution types and life circumstances. Drawing on the presenter's own experience, this session emphasizes that Fulbright is not limited to R1 faculty, those with year-long sabbaticals, or individuals without family or caregiving responsibilities. Instead, the program offers multiple pathways—long-term placements with family allowances, short-term Specialist opportunities, and flexible "Flex" awards that allow projects to be completed in segments. The Fulbright program is also a space where students can thrive, especially those with bilingual abilities and an interest in teaching English abroad. Fulbright opportunities are both realistic and attainable, even within demanding teaching schedules or complex personal lives. Participants will leave with a clearer, more inclusive understanding of how Fulbright can fit their goals, their timelines, and their students' futures.



Presenters:

Melissa Hulings, Assistant Professor, Education Studies

Rachel Jumper, Associate Professor, School of Human Sciences and Professional Studies

Sarah Straub, Associate Professor, Education Studies



Title: Virtual Conferences: High Impact, Low Cost Professional Engagement for Educators

Abstract: Struggling with limited travel funding doesn't have to mean missing out on high-quality professional learning. This session explores how virtual conferences provide a practical, flexible, and cost-effective alternative to face-to-face events. Participants will hear about real experiences presenting and attending events such as the Peralta Online Equity Conference, ConnectUR, and ICRSME. The session will cover typical costs, session accessibility, and strategies for being an engaged attendee or presenter in an online space. Learn best practices to maximize learning, networking, and scholarly impact—without leaving your desk.





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Empowering Faculty Access and Growth Speed Learning Symposium



Presenter:

J. Lindsey Kennon, Assistant Professor and Program Coordinator, Education Studies

Title: No Magic, Just Momentum: Repeatable Strategies for Enrollment Growth

Abstract: Discussion of enrollment growth often frames success as context-specific - driven by highly visible, high-interest programs with inherited momentum - or as dependent on hard-to-replicate “magic”. This discussion challenges that narrative by highlighting practical, repeatable strategies that strengthened the undergraduate enrollment pipeline in an educator preparation program. Grounded in the Gateways, Not Gatekeepers ethos, this work centers on openly sharing what has worked, from one hard-working faculty member to another. The approach focuses on clarifying pathways into the program, reducing unnecessary barriers within our control, and strengthening existing pipelines while intentionally developing new ones. This session outlines concrete actions that contributed to measurable enrollment growth, including targeted outreach, clear program messaging, relationship-building with internal and external partners, and small structural changes that improved access and follow-through for prospective students. Emphasis is placed on why these strategies worked and how they can be adapted across disciplines and institutional contexts. Participants will leave with transferable ideas and a practical framework for viewing enrollment growth as collaborative, transparent, and momentum-building work.



Presenters:

Cindy Kilpatrick, Director, Center for Teaching and Learning, Lumberjack Learning Commons

Title: Connecting, Learning, and Leading through the TWHE

Abstract: Come discover how Texas Women in Higher Education (TWHE) creates gateways to connection, professional growth, and leadership development for women in higher education through community-building, shared learning, and intentional support across institutions and roles. Participants will first explore highlights from the 2026 TWHE conference, to be held virtually from 8am-12:30pm on March 25-26 (<https://www.twhe.org/twhe-2026-conference/>), including an overview of the schedule and the role of the Common Book Initiative. Second, we’ll review TWHE funding opportunities, including conference scholarships and grants that open gateways to participating in institutional programming and leadership development. We’ll wrap up by examining recent TWHE webinar offerings, with participants selecting one to engage with at their convenience. Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of how TWHE helps create gateways to opportunity, support, and success for women in higher education.



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Presenter:

Dustin Knepp, Dean, College of Liberal and Applied Arts
Joyce Johnston, Associate Dean, College of Liberal and Applied Arts

Title: Reimagining Our Future: Faculty Opportunities in a Transforming College Landscape



Abstract: In this interactive session, the Dean's office seeks to open candid and forward-looking conversations about the significant university reorganization that will bring together the College of Education and the College of Liberal and Applied Arts, while also creating newly aligned departments within a re-envisioned college structure. While reorganization naturally brings uncertainty, it also opens meaningful gateways for faculty to shape the academic, cultural, and collaborative future of our institution. Session participants are invited to provide input and engage with leadership about their priorities and ideas for the future, which might include curriculum alignment, interdisciplinary program design, community partnerships, and strategic initiatives that advance student success.



Presenter:

Emmerentie Oliphant, DSW Director and Professor, School of Social Work
Rebekah Raney, Compliance Coordinator, Office of Research and Graduate Studies

Title: What is the IRB and How to Submit at SFA



Abstract: Many faculty have applied for IRB approval during their graduate or post-graduate work. However, some may not have applied for an IRB before, or it has been several years since their last application. Applying for a proposal can be scary the first few times, but we are here to make that process easy for you. We would explain what the IRB is and the importance of the IRB for the faculty and the students. What makes an application a Full, Expedited, or Exempt review, and how to start a proposal in Cayuse.



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Empowering Faculty Access and Growth Speed Learning Symposium



Presenter:

Heather Olson Beal, Professor, Department of Education Studies

Title: From R & R to Publication: Practical Strategies for Success

Abstract: The revise and resubmit (R&R) process can feel like one of academia's most daunting gateways, yet it is also one of the most powerful opportunities for professional growth. This session will offer practical strategies for navigating R&Rs with confidence and efficiency. Drawing from personal experience publishing in peer-reviewed journals and as a (former) co-editor of a national educator preparation journal, I will share lessons learned about interpreting reviewer feedback, crafting clear and persuasive response letters, and tracking revisions systematically. Participants will gain insight into how to "play the long game," identify the best publication outlets, and strengthen their scholarly writing through revision. The goal is to demystify the publishing process and empower faculty to view R&Rs not as gatekeeping hurdles but as collaborative pathways to successful publication. Because let's face it—publications aren't just nice to have; they're essential for tenure, promotion, and merit pay. Learning how to turn an R&R into a publication can make all the difference.



Presenter:

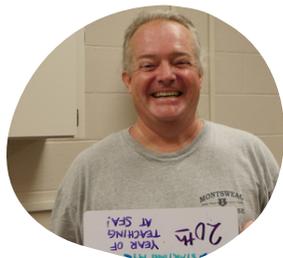
Amanda Rudolph, Professor, Department of Education Studies

Title: Reimagining Mentorship for Midcareer Faculty

Abstract: Do you have tenure? Are you already promoted? Are you beginning to feel stuck? You may be a midcareer faculty member! These faculty members are critical yet often overlooked in academic institutions, facing unique challenges that traditional mentorship models fail to address. Unlike junior faculty who receive structured support through tenure-track programs, midcareer scholars frequently navigate complex demands across research, teaching, and service with minimal guidance. This roundtable will be a discussion about strategies and approaches to reignite your passion for research, excitement for teaching, and joy for service. This session will address reimagined mentorship models including peer mentoring networks, cross-institutional collaborations, and reciprocal mentoring that leverages midcareer faculty expertise while providing strategic guidance for advancement. Special attention is given to balancing the competing demands of sustaining scholarly productivity, developing teaching innovation, and managing substantial service commitments without sacrificing career progression or well-being.



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Presenter:

Michael Tkacik, Honors Director

Title: Supporting Honors Students and Contracts

Abstract: This session introduces opportunities for faculty to teach Honors courses and to support Honors students through supervising Honors contracts. Participants will learn what distinguishes Honors pedagogy, how Honors contracts function within non-Honors courses, and the benefits of engaging with Honors students. The session highlights pathways to involvement, expectations for faculty mentors, and strategies for designing meaningful, rigorous contract experiences that align with course outcomes. Attendees will also explore how Honors teaching and mentorship can enhance student engagement, promote academic excellence, and contribute to professional development, teaching portfolios, and institutional service while supporting high-achieving, motivated learners across disciplines campus.



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Discussant:

Megan Weatherly, Executive Director, Lumberjack Learning Commons

Panelists:

Kimberly Childs, Dean of the College of Sciences and Mathematics

Choya Coleman, Project Analyst, Informational Technology Services Department

Emmerentie Oliphant, Buddy Zeagler Endowed Professor for Community-Based Research, School of Social Work

Clare Fite, Director of Counseling Services, Enrollment and Student Engagement

Title: From "Sorry" to Strategic: A Panel on Navigating Authority and Bias in Higher Ed

Abstract: Women in higher education—whether in the classroom or an administrative office—often navigate a “double bind”: assert authority and risk being labeled “difficult,” or prioritize likeability and risk being seen as less competent. This panel features a diverse group of faculty and staff moving beyond personality critiques to share tangible communication strategies. Panelists will discuss “strategic scripts” across three critical domains: student interactions, exploring “warm demander” strategies for managing grade disputes and policy enforcement; professional boundaries, focusing on the “art of the professional no” regarding service loads and scope creep; and career advancement, exploring strategies for effectively narrating one’s value in annual reviews and tenure files. Attendees will leave with a toolkit designed to protect their time, expertise, and authority.



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