Call for Applications
2026-2028 Research Seminar on
Rethinking Engaged Learning in the Age of GenAI

Deadline to Apply: February 16, 2026

The Center for Engaged Learning at Elon University is pleased to announce the 2026 – 2028 Research Seminar on **Rethinking Engaged Learning in the Age of GenAI**. This three-summer research seminar facilitates multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary research on generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) as a tool for fostering engaged learning in higher education.

We invite interested scholars and practitioners, regardless of discipline, to apply to join a multi-institutional cohort of researchers collaborating to investigate:

- What higher education learning entails in the age of GenAI;
- GenAI's (potential) role as a collaborator in teaching and learning;
- Decision processes for when and how to use GenAI as a collaboration partner;
- Assessing learning in an age of GenAI support; and
- Professional learning needs and strategies for students, faculty, and staff to support critical GenAI literacy.

Acknowledging Context

Many high-profile discussions about GenAI in higher education focus on the extremes—avoiding all AI or adopting AI for all activities. However, GenAI use falls along a more complex spectrum, and educators can learn from this range of alternate perspectives. Moreover, disciplinary knowledge, practices, and standards should inform how educators support students' development of critical GenAI literacy. Across disciplines, novice users initially might understand GenAI as a neutral tool. As engaged learners develop more expertise with GenAI, they might critically reflect on how GenAI could augment their work—or even view GenAI as a collaborator. Given this complex context, research on GenAI *in* higher education engaged learning must attend to GenAI use *beyond* higher education to prepare students to apply critical GenAI literacy in their professional, civic, and personal lives.

Extending the Center's long-standing tradition of facilitating focused, multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary scholarship of teaching and learning, the 2026-2028 research seminar offers an opportunity to explore the affordances and challenges of collaborating with GenAI to foster students' lifelong and lifewide engaged learning. At the same time, the research seminar is an opportune moment to experiment with GenAI in multi-institutional

scholarship of teaching and learning and to reflect on how GenAI informs educators' inquiry into learning, processes, and outputs in contemporary higher education.

Research Seminar on Rethinking Engaged Learning in the Age of GenAI

To examine GenAI as a potential collaborator for fostering engaged learning in higher education, accepted research participants will join multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary teams focusing on one of the following topics:

Higher education learning in the age of GenAI. Research questions could include:

- How do students develop from novices to experts in the age of GenAI, and how might GenAI inform that educational journey?
- How might higher education faculty and staff acknowledge and build on students' prior knowledge and experiences with AI tools?
- How do learners build expertise in their fields as they also build expertise in GenAI?
- How should higher education prepare students for critical AI use in work beyond college?
- How might GenAI support student agency in their learning—with attention to students' intentionality, forethought, self-regulation, and self-reflection (e.g., components of Bandura's conception of human agency and self-efficacy)?
- How could GenAI help educators enact the key practices for fostering engaged learning (e.g., acknowledging prior experience, facilitating relationships, offering feedback, framing connections to broader contexts, fostering reflection, promoting transfer and integration of learning; Moore 2023)?
- How might GenAI prompt society to reconsider the value of and goals for higher education, or conversely, how might GenAI reinforce the value of higher education?

GenAI's role as a collaborator in teaching and learning. Research questions could include:

- How do students learn prompt engineering, and what do collaborative moves with GenAI look like for novices versus experts?
- Which GenAI tools best align with different engaged learning goals and desired outcomes?
- What are the productive moments in a learner's journey—in a curricular unit, a course, or a holistic curriculum—for students to collaborate with GenAI?
- What strategies could guide educators' decisions to foster productive struggles with learning and when to introduce GenAI as a collaborator to reduce counter-productive struggles with learning?
- How might GenAI facilitate development of collaboration within a team—in the classroom and in anticipation of students transferring collaboration strategies to their future workplaces?
- What strategies for partnering with GenAI responsibly and ethically in higher education are transferable to lifelong and lifewide learning across disciplines and professional contexts?

Decision processes for when and how to use GenAI as a collaboration partner. Research questions could include:

- What frameworks might guide instructor and practitioner decisions about when to use GenAI with students?
- What frameworks could help students critically evaluate when to use GenAI in their work in and beyond the classroom?

- How do decision processes for GenAI use address learning goals, ethics, efficiency, and sustainability?

Assessment of learning and outputs in an age of GenAI-supported engaged learning. Research questions could include:

- How do students learn, practice, and advance strategies for assessing GenAI's outputs—as they develop from novice learners to experts in their fields?
- How might educators cultivate students' trust in their self-knowledge and learning, even as students explore their own sense of trust in GenAI?
- How might GenAI facilitate learners' self-assessment of learning?
- How might GenAI inform assessment and feedback practices to foster engaged learning?

Professional learning needs and strategies for students, faculty, and staff to support critical GenAI literacy. Research questions could include:

- How can educators most effectively support students' development of critical GenAI literacy?
- How can educational developers most effectively support faculty/staff in developing their own critical GenAI literacy and evaluating when to collaborate with GenAI in teaching?
- How could GenAI be a partner in formative activities for lifelong and lifewide learning?

Research Cohorts and Seminar Logistics

The Center for Engaged Learning Seminar will support multi-institutional research addressing this theme over a three-year period. Research teams will use a mixed-methods approach to conduct qualitative and quantitative research, and some participants might opt to integrate GenAI tools into their research design. Selected applicants will meet on Elon's campus during the following weeks:

- **Year 1: July 5-10, 2026**: Participants will meet at Elon University to collaboratively develop and plan multi-institutional research projects to be conducted throughout the following year. These research cohorts will enable larger scale studies and explorations of the impact of different institutional and disciplinary contexts.

- **Year 2: June 27-July 2, 2027**: Participants will meet at Elon University to share their initial multi-institutional results and to plan a more sharply focused research agenda for the research cohort for year two.

- **Year 3: June 25-30, 2028:** Participants will reconvene at Elon University to share their year-two results, to plan continuations of their work, and to participate in the Conference on Engaged Learning (June 26-27, 2028), with a conference strand on the seminar theme.

Participants will produce significant, concrete outcomes. Past Center for Engaged Learning research seminars have generated edited volumes, journal articles and book chapters, white papers, and conference presentations – as well as local initiatives on participants' home campuses. Participants will be well-positioned to use evidence-based frameworks to inform engaged learning in the age of GenAI at their institutions.

Elon University will provide lodging and meals for seminar participants during the seminar's 2026 – 2028 summer meetings. In addition, each participant will be reimbursed up to USD $500/year (up to USD $1000/year

for international participants) for travel to the seminar's summer meetings at Elon University. Reimbursements are processed as checks, but wire transfers can be arranged if necessary for international participants. All reimbursements are made in U.S. dollars (USD). Full reimbursement policies will be distributed to accepted participants. Other participant expenses, including additional travel costs and any research costs, will be paid by the participants or their home institutions.

Seminar Leaders

The 2026 – 2028 Center for Engaged Learning Seminar will be led by Aaron Trocki and Amanda Sturgill, with support from the Center's director, Jessie L. Moore.

Amanda Sturgill, associate professor of journalism at Elon University, is the 2024-2026 Center for Engaged Learning Scholar. Her work with the Center focuses on the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and engaged learning in higher education. She is the author of *Detecting Deception: Fighting Fake News*, *#WeAreAltGov: Inside the Resistance on Social Media*, and editor of multiple other works, as well as the host of the UnSpun podcast, which covers news literacy and critical thinking. Amanda previously served as a seminar leader for the 2015-2017 research seminar on Integrating Global Learning with the University Experience.

Aaron Trocki, associate professor of mathematics at Elon University, was the 2023-2025 Center for Engaged Learning Scholar, focusing on models of assessment and feedback outside of traditional grading assumptions and approaches. He has studied artificial intelligence-supported assessments for learning, which he documented in several CEL blog posts and has presented as conference proceedings. His research interests include technology for teaching and learning and mathematics education.

Seminar participants also will work with two CEL Student Scholars as partners throughout the three years.

How to Apply

To apply, submit a completed application and abbreviated curriculum vita **by February 16, 2026**. The application, available online at https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/research-seminars/rethinking-engaged-learning-in-the-age-of-genai/, asks for the following information:

- Which research topic above are you most interested in examining, and why?
- How does this topic fit with your existing work as a scholar or practitioner?
- What is the institutional context for your work?
- How (if at all) does this topic align with institutional/organizational priorities at your campus/place of employment?
- Are there unique demographic variables or institutional characteristics at your campus/place of employment that are relevant to this research topic?
- What research methods do you anticipate employing to study this theme? Do you have experience using these methods? (Experience with diverse research methods is not required, but we appreciate knowing what prior experience you would bring to this collaborative SoTL.)
- What GenAI philosophies and experience do you bring to the study of GenAI as a collaborative tool for fostering engaged learning or for studying engaged learning?

More than one person per institution may apply with the understanding that cohorted projects will be multi-institutional. Applicants should not form teams before they apply; CEL seminar leaders will create initial, multi-institutional teams based on applicants' information, and accepted participants will have the opportunity to confirm or shift their team placement during the first summer meeting.

A review committee, including the seminar leaders, will review applications, make selections, and notify all applicants by March 16, 2026. Questions about the application and selection process should be directed to centerforengagedlearning@elon.edu.

To learn more about the 2026 – 2028 research seminar on **Rethinking Engaged Learning in the Age of GenAI**, visit: https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/research-seminars/rethinking-engaged-learning-in-the-age-of-genai/. We also encourage applicants to review our frequently asked questions about the research seminars: https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/research-seminars/frequently-asked-questions/.

To learn more about the Center for Engaged Learning, visit: http://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/

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