

2026-2027 Faculty and Facilitators

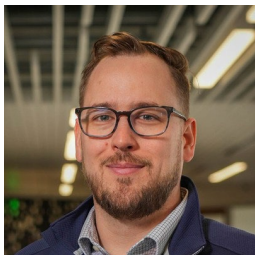
The faculty and facilitators leading this year's programs bring deep experience across teaching and learning, institutional leadership, AI governance, and workforce transformation.



Lola Banks, Ph.D.

AI Experience Designer, Strategies by Design Group

Lola Banks, Ph.D., is an AI Experience Designer at Strategies by Design, where she blends human-centered design, change leadership, and artificial intelligence to create practical, people-first AI experiences. Her work focuses on customer needs, adoption, and measurable impact, helping organizations integrate AI in ways that enhance performance, strengthen teams, and drive meaningful change. With more than a decade of experience in higher education operations, student success, and organizational development, she has led complex strategic initiatives ranging from presidential task forces to the implementation of multi-million-dollar grant programs, serving as a trusted advisor to senior leaders and developing data-informed operational strategies across multiple universities. Banks holds a Ph.D. in higher, adult, and lifelong education and a certificate in organizational communication for leadership, with deep expertise in stakeholder engagement, project management, process improvement, AI change, and AI design.



Chase Becicka

Systems Analyst, Kirkwood Community College

Chase Becicka is a Systems Analyst at Kirkwood Community College, where he focuses on AI strategy and enablement, business process improvement, workflow automation, and data-informed decision-making. He holds an M.S. in business analytics and a graduate certificate in AI and technology management from the University of Iowa. His work focuses on translating AI strategy into measurable organizational value through practical implementation, responsible governance, and scalable operational frameworks.



Michael A. Brown, Ph.D.

Leader, Facilitator, and Speaker, Higher Education

Michael A. Brown, Ph.D., is a higher education leader, facilitator, and speaker who specializes in turning meaningful conversation into action. With more than a decade of experience across community colleges and universities, his work spans academic support, libraries, instructional design, and educational technology, all grounded in student success and institutional growth. Relationship building sits at the center of his practice: He creates spaces where students, faculty, and executive leaders feel seen, heard, and productively challenged. His current work examines how emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, are reshaping higher education, and encourages institutions to align innovation with their mission, values, and the communities they serve. Brown holds a Ph.D. in curriculum, instruction, and design and a master's degree in educational psychology.



Francesca Caparas

Professor, English and Ethnic Studies, and Consultant, AI Adoption in Higher Education

Francesca “Chesa” Caparas is a Professor of English and ethnic studies as well as a public speaker and consultant on AI adoption in higher education. She previously served as one of the California Learning Lab’s AI Faculty Innovators in Residence, a Fulbright Scholar to the Philippines focused on media and information literacy, and a Stanford Human Rights Education Initiative Fellow. Her scholarly work has been published in the *Journal of Information Ethics*, *California English*, and the ASCCC’s Senate Rostrum. Caparas holds a B.A. and an M.A. in modern literature from UC Santa Cruz and is currently pursuing an M.S. in information and knowledge strategy at Columbia University. Her current teaching and research explore the ethical and equitable applications of artificial intelligence.



Judith Cardenas, Ph.D.

President and CEO, Strategies by Design Group, and Director, League AI Academy, League for Innovation in the Community College

Judith Cardenas, Ph.D., is President and CEO of Strategies by Design Group, a global consulting firm that helps organizations innovate and design impactful solutions. She also serves as Director for the League AI Academy, working with more than 400 League AI Fellows nationwide as they adopt artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies. Her executive background includes leadership of large public institutions, where she oversaw a \$146 million operating budget, \$30 million in federal funding, and a workforce of more than 3,000. She has designed and delivered programs for the World Bank, United Nations, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Cardenas holds doctoral degrees in education administration and in training and performance improvement, with postdoctoral leadership work at Harvard's Kennedy School and credentials in AI leadership (MIT), AI strategy, AI ethics, and design thinking (Harvard).



Stephanie Delaney, J.D., Ph.D.

Vice President, Instruction, Renton Technical College, and Owner, Monarch Productivity

Stephanie Delaney, J.D., Ph.D., is Vice President of Instruction at Renton Technical College in Washington State, where she oversees all instruction, the library, and e-learning. She is also the owner of Monarch Productivity, a coaching practice that supports leaders to be more effective at doing good. With more than 10 years in senior leadership and over 20 years in distance learning, she has served community and technical colleges as a faculty member, e-learning director, dean, and provost, and is a national voice on AI and the use of technology in teaching and administration. She co-lead development of an administrator toolkit for the What Works Clearinghouse practice guide on using technology to support postsecondary student learning. A certified executive coach, Delaney holds a Ph.D. in higher education leadership and distance learning from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and a law degree.



Alan Foote, Ph.D.

Professor, Computer Information Management, Saddleback College

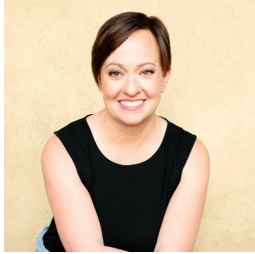
Alan Foote, Ph.D., is full-time faculty in Computer Information Management at Saddleback College, where he has taught for eight years, following a 30-year teaching career at Stevenson University in Baltimore, Maryland. With a decade of experience teaching and working with artificial intelligence, he has introduced AI across his courses and has taught Introduction to AI through the Saddleback Community Education program. He is currently piloting a range of AI tools in his classes, and developed a new AI course, which was added to the Saddleback College curriculum in spring 2026.



Lacey Gonzalez

Associate Professor and Coordinator, Business, Lehigh Carbon Community College, and Owner, LGH Tax & Accounting, LLC

Lacey Gonzalez is an Associate Professor of business and multi-department coordinator at Lehigh Carbon Community College. With nearly two decades of experience in higher education, she specializes in online learning, instructional design, workforce development, and the integration of artificial intelligence into teaching and learning. She is also the owner of LGH Tax & Accounting, LLC, and has held leadership positions with Intuit, where she managed tax professionals and led large-scale training initiatives across multiple states—a combination that allows her to connect academic innovation with real-world workforce needs. An award-winning educator, Gonzalez received the 2024 ACBSP Region 2 Teaching Excellence Award and the 2025 ACBSP Best in Region Presentation Award for her work on artificial intelligence in higher education. She is currently pursuing an Ed.D. in leadership and innovation, with research focused on standardized course design and online student success.



Amber Kinney

Founder and CEO, The AK Collective, and AI Marketing Strategist

Amber Kinney is a marketing strategist and fractional marketing director who specializes in simplifying complex marketing ecosystems and helping teams make data-informed decisions that lead to measurable results. With more than 15 years leading campaigns, brand positioning, and customer journey work, she is particularly skilled at mapping user journeys, identifying communication gaps, and aligning marketing efforts with organizational priorities. Her expertise spans modern marketing practice, from lifecycle communications and lead generation strategy to platform optimization and team alignment. Kinney also consults on the practical use of AI in marketing and operations, helping teams identify where automation and intelligent tools can strengthen engagement and efficiency. Her work centers on mission-driven organizations, where she focuses on mapping adult learner journeys, strengthening touchpoint experiences, and recommending AI integrations that hold up in practice.



Laura Lane-Worley, Ph.D., LMSW

Executive Director, Academic Programs, Lee College

Laura Lane-Worley, Ph.D., LMSW, is Executive Director of Academic Programs at Lee College, where she provides strategic oversight of six academic divisions, the library, Honors Program, and Learning Support Services. A 2026 League for Innovation AI Fellow, she leads campuswide AI literacy initiatives and authored an institutional AI governance framework, helping faculty redesign courses to build authentic assessment into an AI-saturated landscape. Lane-Worley brings more than 25 years of experience in higher education administration, instructional design, and faculty development, including leading the rapid transition of 300+ faculty to online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic and co-leading her institution's SACSCOC reaffirmation to a zero-findings outcome. A Quality Matters External Subject Matter Expert and Certified Peer Reviewer, she continues to teach sociology and social work courses as adjunct faculty and speaks frequently on AI integration, academic integrity, and ethical AI use in course redesign.



Melanie Leaver, Ph.D.

Associate Dean, Distance Learning and Instructional Design, North Central Michigan College

Melanie Leaver, Ph.D., is Associate Dean of Distance Learning and Instructional Design at North Central Michigan College, where she partners with faculty and staff to advance innovative, practical approaches to teaching and learning. With more than 25 years of experience in online higher education, she leads with curiosity, energy, and a commitment to meaningful learning experiences for both faculty and students. Her current work centers on the thoughtful integration of AI into institutional policies, workflows, and curriculum design, with an emphasis on experimentation, play, and accessibility. As an active member of a growing community of practice focused on academic integrity, she contributes to evolving conversations about how AI can strengthen a campuswide culture of transparency, trust, fairness, and respect. To stay close to students and the classroom, she also teaches English Composition and World Literature online.



Desiree Locker

AI Experience Designer and Community Manager, Strategies by Design Group

Desiree Locker is an educator, instructional technologist, and AI integration specialist focused on helping organizations and communities to use emerging technologies in meaningful, ethical, and accessible ways. A graduate of the League AI Fellows Program, she serves as an AI Experience Designer and Community Manager at Strategies by Design Group. She leads training initiatives, supports community engagement, and helps professionals build confidence with AI-powered tools and workflows. Locker holds an M.S. in digital age learning and educational technology from Johns Hopkins University and is pursuing an Ed.D. in educational psychology and technology at The Chicago School.



Debra McCusker

Department Head, Artificial Intelligence and Information Technology, Alamance Community College

Debra McCusker is an educator, creative leader, and champion for the thoughtful integration of artificial intelligence in higher education. As Department Head of Artificial Intelligence and Information Technology at Alamance Community College, she is helping shape how colleges prepare both students and institutions for an AI-driven future. Drawing on more than 25 years of data engineering and technology work before entering academia, McCusker blends strategic vision with practical implementation to empower educators through innovative, human-centered AI solutions. Her work focuses on workforce alignment, instructional innovation, and organizational transformation, demonstrating that the greatest promise of AI lies not in replacing people but in expanding their capacity to teach, lead, create, and serve.



Josie Milliken, Ph.D.

Executive Director, Digital Learning and Artificial Intelligence, Pima Community College

Josie Milliken, Ph.D., serves as Executive Director of Digital Learning and Artificial Intelligence at Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona. During more than 25 years in higher education, she has served in a range of faculty and leadership roles, including English faculty member, Online Department Head for English, Faculty Senate President, and Distance Education Dean. A frequent speaker and facilitator, Milliken presents on digital learning, artificial intelligence, and educational innovation. Outside of her work at the college, she is a yoga teacher and avid hiker with a strong interest in well-being, community, and meaningful connection.



Vicky Pigatt

Associate Professor, Information Technology, Community College of Baltimore County

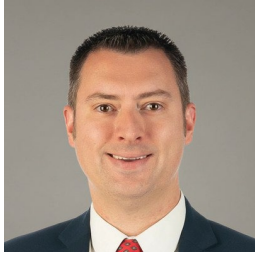
Vicky Pigatt is an Associate Professor at the Community College of Baltimore County and a former software engineering professional whose career spans industry, higher education, and emerging technologies. A League for Innovation AI Fellow and an AI Collective Facilitator and Coach with Strategies by Design, she supports faculty and institutional leaders in exploring practical, ethical applications of artificial intelligence in teaching and learning. Her teaching integrates artificial intelligence, instructional design, active learning, and educational technology to prepare students for today's digital workplace while equipping faculty with strategies for meaningful innovation. An ACUE-certified educator and President's Leadership Academy inductee, Pigatt has published book chapters on virtual reality, student engagement, and technology-enhanced learning, and has presented nationally on educational technology, ethics, and grit. She also partners with Belair-Edison Community Main Street to expand technology access and workforce development for youth and local businesses.



Debra Pozega Osburn, Ph.D.

Principal, Osburn Strategic Communications

Debra Pozega Osburn, Ph.D., is an executive leader with extensive experience across higher education and the nonprofit sector, specializing in institutional vision, strategic planning, and stakeholder engagement. She has served as Vice President of University Relations at both the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Alberta, leading work in reputation management, fundraising, government relations, and community engagement. Her expertise spans communications, external relations, and crisis management. Her career also includes senior leadership in U.S. higher education and consulting through Osburn Strategic Communications, where she advises organizations on innovative partnerships and strategic initiatives. A former journalist, Pozega Osburn has served on nonprofit boards, including United Way Centraide Canada and the Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education, and has held adjunct faculty positions at Michigan State University and the University of Alberta. She holds a Ph.D. in American studies from Michigan State University.



Drew Wilkerson, Ed.D.

President, Innovation and Online Learning, MCC-Online, Metropolitan Community College

Drew Wilkerson, Ed.D., is the inaugural President of Innovation and Online Learning at MCC-Online, where he oversees academic innovation initiatives across all Metropolitan Community College campuses and leads all operations of the online campus. He joined MCC in 2022 as Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, overseeing instructional services across all campuses, and was named to his current role in January 2026. Wilkerson has worked in education for 20 years at both the secondary and postsecondary levels, including more than 15 years in higher education. Previously at Jefferson Community and Technical College, he earned tenure as Associate Professor of Mathematics, and served as department head, division dean, and Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs. He led development of the Accelerate to College program, recognized nationally by the Southern Regional Education Board in 2021, and holds an Ed.D. in educational policy studies and evaluation from the University of Kentucky.