

Call for Proposals: 2026 Clemson Teaching Excellence Conference

January 6, 2026

8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Watt Family Innovation Center

We invite **faculty, post-docs, graduate students, and staff** to share their ideas, experiences, and strategies for connecting with students through teaching. Proposals may explore, but are not limited to, approaches to building trust, fostering belonging, or enhancing engagement in learning environments. The conference will also feature a student panel on AI and trust in learning, offering student perspectives on connection, belonging, and the role of technology in today's classrooms. Sponsored by the Office of Teaching Effectiveness and Innovation (OTEI).

After attending the conference, attendees will be able to:

1. **Build Trust and Connection:** Apply strategies that strengthen relationships and create a sense of community in the classroom.
2. **Enhance Student Engagement:** Implement practical approaches that encourage participation, motivation, and active learning.
3. **Navigate Connection in the Age of AI:** Explore how transparency and trust shape student–faculty relationships with technology.

Key Dates

- Proposals Open Wednesday, November 5th (direct questions to Claire Dancz at cdancz@clemson.edu)
- Proposals Q&A Friday, November 14th (join any time between 8:00 - 10:00 AM via bit.ly/DanczZoom)
- Proposals Q&A Friday, November 21st (join any time between 8:00 - 10:00 AM via bit.ly/DanczZoom)
- **Proposals due Monday, December 1st**
- Notification by Friday, December 5th
- **Presentations due Tuesday, December 30th**
 - **Presentations/materials due to Google Folder: bit.ly/TEC2026Folder**
 - Preferred deadline Thursday, December 18th
 - OTEI will have your session materials ready in your room on conference day

What to Include in Your Proposal

On the form, you'll be asked to select your **session format** (Quick Talk, Roundtable, Poster, or Workshop), provide a **short and descriptive title** (10 words or less), **briefly describe what participants will learn or experience** (in two sentences or less), and *if proposing a Roundtable or Workshop, outline how you will actively engage participants.*

Choose a Session Format

(1) Quick Talk – 20 minutes

Inspire and be inspired! **Quick Talks are energetic presentations** that spotlight key insights, lessons learned, or classroom breakthroughs that have strengthened student–faculty relationships. In 20 minutes, presenters focus on what worked, why it mattered, and how others can adapt it to their own teaching. These sessions are designed to spark new ideas and practical takeaways – whether you're exploring ways to build trust, foster belonging, enhance engagement, or navigate challenges in a changing learning environment.

(2) Roundtable – 30 minutes

Join the conversation! **Roundtables are open, focused discussions** where colleagues can ask hard questions, share challenges, and explore the emotional and ethical dimensions of teaching—like empathy, care, and vulnerability. These sessions create space for honest dialogue and collective problem-solving, offering a supportive environment to connect, reflect, and learn from one another's experiences. *Facilitators of round tables will have guides prepared to prompt discussion, pose key questions, and help participants share experiences.*

(3) Poster – 60 minutes

Bring your ideas to life! **Poster sessions showcase and highlight** inventive teaching practices, creative strategies, or research in progress. Whether you're experimenting with new ways to build trust, nurture belonging, or spark engagement, this is your chance to show how meaningful connection grows from even the smallest classroom shifts. *Posters will be digitally displayed in the Watt Atrium and presented during the Networking Lunch & Poster Showcase (12:00–1:00 PM).*

(4) Workshop – 90 minutes

Get hands-on and dive deep! **Workshops immerse participants in active learning** – practicing engagement strategies, experimenting with new teaching methods, and co-creating materials ready for immediate use. These sessions move beyond discussion to help participants *experience* authentic connection in action, showing how trust, belonging, and shared engagement between students and instructors can turn the classroom into a dynamic learning community. *Workshop presenters are encouraged to involve students they've worked with to model these collaborative approaches in real time.*

Topic Ideas

- **Building Trust and Connection**
 - Creating transparent grading and feedback practices that build student trust
 - Using storytelling and personal reflection to connect course content to students' experiences
 - Building rapport in large classes through presence, tone, and consistency
- **Fostering Belonging and Connection**
 - Designing group work that promotes meaningful participation and community
 - Incorporating student voice and identity into course design
 - Cultivating a sense of classroom community in online, hybrid, or commuter classrooms
- **Engaging Students Actively**
 - Shifting from lecture to active learning: small steps for big engagement gains
 - Integrating movement, play, or reflection to keep students energized
 - Using technology tools to deepen participation and curiosity
- **Empathy, Care, and Emotional Dimensions of Teaching**
 - Balancing empathy and accountability in challenging conversations
 - Exploring the role of vulnerability and authenticity in instructor-student relationships
 - Practicing care for both students and self to sustain connection and well-being
- **Transparency, Reflection, and Feedback**
 - Implementing transparent assignment design to reduce student anxiety and build clarity
 - Building feedback loops that encourage dialogue and improvement
 - Helping students reflect on learning progress through journals or other methods
- **Faculty and Student Partnership**
 - Involving students as co-designers or collaborators in course or assignment development
 - Building classroom leadership through co-created norms and peer facilitation
 - Partnering with students to establish ethical, transparent AI use in coursework
- **Balancing Well-Being and Workload**
 - Managing faculty energy and preventing burnout in engagement-heavy courses
 - Promoting student self-regulation and structured flexibility
 - Designing courses that balance challenging content with sustainable teaching and learning practices
- **Innovation and Future Directions**
 - Exploring trust and authenticity when integrating new technologies (AI)
 - Rethinking participation and engagement in hybrid or asynchronous formats
 - Experimenting with creative assignments that make learning visible, personal, and connected

Contact

Please contact Claire Dancz (cdancz@clemons.edu) with any questions. OTEI is here to support you.