



Adult Learning & Development EdD

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2024

A note from Dr. Ruttencutter

Hello, everyone, and welcome to the ALD Newsletter for Fall 2024! This semester certainly has held its challenges - from hurricanes to fires to general world weirdness. Yet, we persevere. As I talk with students and faculty colleagues, and hear the heaviness we carry, I am reminded of Tennyson's Ulysses:

Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

May you finish the semester striving, seeking,
finding, and never, ever yielding.

Until next time, I remain scholarly yours,
Gwen



WELCOME 2024 ALD COHORT

Fall 2024 marked a big year for the ALD EdD program, as we admitted the largest cohort in program history! Please join me in giving three cheers to our newest colleagues:

- Nakita Afaha -- University System of Georgia
- Jasmine Brown -- Middle Georgia State University
- Carolyn Clark -- Middle Georgia State University
- Cam Coburn -- North Carolina Dept. of Motor Vehicles
- Nancy Guyse -- Middle Georgia State University
- Eric Fanz -- Deli Star Corporation
- Margie Woodhurst Kersey -- Rotary Leadership Int'l
- Vanessa Madden -- DeKalb County (GA) Schools
- Elizabeth Maxwell -- Valdosta State University
- Joseph Moore -- East. Atl. States Carpenters Tech Center
- Christy Parker -- Pine Haven Stables
- Alexis Pope -- Middle Georgia State University
- Shantel Seevaratnam -- Dalat International School
- Melanie Stout -- Lake Dallas Ind. School District
- Andrea Strommen -- Atlanta College & Career Academy



STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDED THEIR DISSERTATIONS:

- Dr. Ira Andrews, chaired by Dr. James Martinez
- Dr. Michele Brock, chaired by Dr. C. Keith Waugh
- Dr. Nicole Levering, chaired by Dr. Steve Downey

SUCCESSFULLY PASSED COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS:

- Diane Gillaspie
- Ridge Harper

Do you have news you want to share? Or suggestions for our program? Send your items to gwescott@valdosta.edu

GRAD SCHOOL SYMPOSIUM - CALL OPEN!

Each Spring, the Grad School hosts the Grad Student Research Symposium. This year the event is April 11. Part of the symposium is the 3-Minute Thesis Competition and **you can participate virtually!**

[Learn more here!](#)

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IMPORTANT DATES FOR SPRING

Registration: Open Now

Spring Semester Begins: Jan. 13

MLK Day: Jan. 20

Spring Break: March 17 - 21

Grad Student Research Symposium: April 11

Dissertation Submission to Grad School: April 18

Spring Commencement: May 9



RESEARCH RESOURCES

Sage Publishing Webinar Series -

How to Do Research and Get Published:

Jan. 8 - How to select a journal

Feb. 12 - Breakdown of article types

Feb. 19 - Mastering nursing research

March 12 - How to write a manuscript

April 9 - How to write a systematic review

**Plus many recordings in the [webinar library!](#)

Nova Southeastern [The Qualitative Report](#)

[UGA QualPage](#) with Dr. Kathy Roulston

[QualLab Ohio State](#)

TIPS FOR ACADEMIC WRITING

- Use a “capture journal” to snag those ideas. Whether it’s voice memo or notepad, find a method to store ideas.
- Talk about your ideas with others, as this can aid in refining and stimulating your thinking.
- Know when to read more; when you hit a wall with writing it can signal you need to read more.
- When writing gets tough, don’t walk away; fight through the tough spots.
- Strive for excellence, but keep perspective that the dissertation is your final **student** work.
- **More tips here from Tenn Tech [here!](#)**

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Selecting a dissertation topic

- The ALD EdD coursework is designed for students to be identifying their potential dissertation topic during coursework
 - CIED 9400 - develop literature for Chapter 2
 - RSCH 9871 - identify topic, problem, research questions, potential design
 - RSCH 9872 - develop prospectus
 - Adv. methods - develop research design

Comprehensive exams

- Taken during the final semester of coursework (either SU or FA) when taking RSCH 9872 and advanced methods courses
- Four questions individually negotiated with each student
- Questions align with student work being completed in 9872 and adv methods
- Questions are designed for writing to be used in one’s proposal
- Students have four weeks to complete comps

Selecting a dissertation chair

- During RSCH 9872 students complete class activities that aid in identifying a chair
- Students should secure a chair during RSCH 9872

ALD STUDENT RESOURCES

- [LTWD EdD Program Handbook](#)
- [VSU Grad School Writing Resources](#)
- [Odum Library Resources for Grads](#)



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MEET THE ACED DOCTORAL
+ NEW RESEARCH FACULTY!



Dr. Nicole P. Gunn brings over two decades of expertise in business communication, instructional technology, and higher education leadership. She holds a Doctorate in Education, specializing in Leadership from Valdosta State University, and is pursuing a Post-Doctoral Certificate in Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies at the University of Georgia. Her diverse academic and professional background includes teaching undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral courses in leadership, technology, workforce development, and digital applications.

Her research interests are centered on Leadership in Higher Education, Digital Technology Integration, and the advancement of African American Women in Leadership. Her scholarship emphasizes innovative solutions in educational leadership and equity, underscoring her commitment to fostering inclusive and technology-driven learning environments.

Dr. Gunn actively contributes to the discourse on minority leadership, online test security, and concept-based curriculum development. She is also an engaged community member, having served as Vice President of the Valdosta Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., member of Valdosta/Lowndes Section of the National Council of Negro Women, and mentoring emerging leaders through various university initiatives.

Dr. Mitchell teaches research design and qualitative research at VSU. She earned her doctorate in Curriculum & Instruction with a specialization in Qualitative Research Methodologies from the University of Central Florida. Dr. Mitchell has published and presented at academic conferences on a variety of methodological and practitioner-focused topics, including ethnography as epistemology, doctoral student education, arts-based methods and pedagogical approaches, organizational structure and team culture in higher education, and academic advising.

Before her career in academia, Dr. Mitchell spent 13 years as an NCAA Division I Women's rowing coach and has a lifelong background as a competitive athlete. Outside of her academic pursuits, she enjoys running marathons, gravel cycling, and spending time outdoors with her partner and three pups.

Her advice for doctoral students is to approach their work with a sense of play. Let curiosity and a desire to understand guide you, rather than a fear of making mistakes. Racing to win, versus racing not to lose. Mindset is everything: learning is not an outcome but a process.

Shannon Perry researches at the intersection of (w)holistic experiential adult learning, arts-inspired and multimodal inquiry approaches, and initiating and sustaining communities of creative practice. She holds a Ph.D. in Learning, Leadership, and Organization Development from the University of Georgia where she also earned an Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies certificate. Her anthropology-focused M.A. in Appalachian Culture and Regional Studies (Appalachian State University) and dual Bachelor's degrees in English and English Education (also from UGA) attest to her love for thinking across disciplines and nomadic movements across many kinds of borders.

Dr. Perry has published in a variety of adult education and qualitative methodology journals and loves to mentor graduate students in writing, especially for publication. Through the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education's (AAACE) Commission for Graduate Students (CGS), she leads an online writing group that is open to all grad students in our broad field (email her for more info: shanperry@valdosta.edu). **Her best advice for successfully navigating the doctoral education process:** Pursuing the doctorate is about becoming an in(ter)dependent scholar-practitioner capable of contributing something new to the world. Find the work only you can do and do not limit yourself to what you've seen others do.



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Dr. Gwen Scott Ruttencutter earned her PhD in Educational Psychology & Research with an emphasis in Adult Learning & Development from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Her dissertation examined the relationships among self-directed learning, grit, and degree completion among doctoral students at a large, R1 university. She also holds a graduate certificate in Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies from the University of Georgia.

Dr. Ruttencutter's scholarship broadly examines self-directed learning in higher education, equine-assisted learning, and animal-mediated classroom interventions. Her current study, with partner Dr. Emily Cantonwine, Professor of Biology, examines an innovative pedagogical approach, rooted in self-directed learning, called *Twisted Instruction* in an upper-level mycology course.

Dr. Ruttencutter's **best advice for doctoral students** is to embrace the novice learner's mindset: *Be curious about everything because you never know which questions will lead to new insights.*

Outside of academia, Dr. Ruttencutter embraces the novice learner's mindset by studying dressage with her 16.3 hand, beautiful bay, off-track thoroughbred Tessa, who teaches her professor something new every day.

Dr. Marsha Simon received her PhD. in educational research from the University of Alabama. She specializes in using mixed methods research to examine issues in STEM education in K12 as well as in higher education, the experiences of Black women in STEM, the impostor syndrome, K12 STEM professional development, mixed methods research, feminist epistemologies, and autism research. An educator for over 25 years, Dr. Simon is passionate about student learning and supporting students as they learn about education research. She enjoys playing pickleball and being a swim mom.

Dr. Jieun You earned her PhD in Human Resource Development and Adult Learning from the Ohio State University. She also holds two master's degrees in HRD from the Ohio State University and Yonsei University in South Korea. Her research interests lie in organizational learning, informal learning, women in leadership and career development, and meaningfulness and spirituality at work. Dr. You publishes widely in the human resource development field.

Her best advice for doctoral students: Doctoral study, including the dissertation, can sometimes feel like a long journey with no end in sight. Be patient. Keep reading, keep writing, and you will reach the finish line. Remember, I am here to support you every step of the way!

