

EDUCATION CONNECTION

Florida Atlantic College of Education

May/June 2026 Vol. 6 Issue 5



A BIMONTHLY eNEWSLETTER



Congratulations Graduates

Florida Atlantic College of Education conferred 525 degrees in 2025 for spring, summer and fall semesters during commencement ceremonies held on May 3, August 5 and December 12, 2025, respectively. Among the graduates were COE students receiving 27 doctoral, 46 specialist, 250 master's and 202 bachelor's degrees. Warm Congratulations are extended to all.

Kudos to those listed below who earned a doctoral degree:

Spring 2025

Rosemyrtle Louis
Christopher Boerum
Shellie Hennings-Donow
Marisa Schnirman
Dalel Bader
Christian Declé
Ernie Lozano
Etina Qirjo
Angella Wint

Summer 2025

Clara Bossie
Chelsea Fullilove
Sheria Kwok
Javier E. Ponce
Nicole Edwards
Veda F. Hudge
Bryan Duffy Hursh

(Continued on page 2)

TOP STORIES

COE 2026 DISTINGUISHED ALUM RECOGNIZED

Florida Atlantic University Alumni Association (FAUAA) recognizes Madeline Pumariega, Ph.D.

COE STUDY: VIDEO TRAINING HELPS YOUNG ADULTS WITH IDD

Department of Special Education findings show a video training program improved participant's skills navigating romance.

FAU HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS RECOGNIZED

Twenty Seniors have advanced to Finalist standing in the National Merit Scholarship Program.

'U.S. News & World Report' Releases 2026 Rankings for COE Graduate Programs

Florida Atlantic [College of Education](#) ranked No. 95 (tie) out of 263 ranked graduate schools of education in the *U.S. News & World Report* 2026 [Best Education Schools](#) released April 7, 2026.

The COE graduate program in [Rehabilitation Counseling](#) tied at No. 27, up from 29 in 2025. The COE graduate program in [Speech Language Pathology](#) tied at No. 204.

Rankings are based on two types of data: expert assessment data about program excellence and statistical indicators that include input measures, which reflect the quality of students, faculty and other resources, and output measures, which signal an institution's success in managing that process so graduates achieve desired results.

[FAU Ranks Among 2026 Best Graduate Schools in 'U.S. News & World Report'](#)



Congratulations Graduates

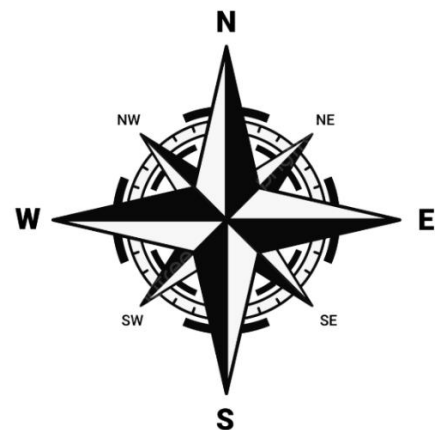
(Continued from page 1)

Marlynn Lopez
Gary Santos Mendoza
Jonathan Owens
Debra Szabo

Fall 2025

Maria Alayza Arca
Rebecca Nelson
Nicole Reid
Kimberly Theophile
Daniel Cornely
Ryan Iocco
Michael Miller

[COLLEGE OF EDUCATION DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS AND MASTER'S THESIS LISTING](#)



CSD Establishes Hearing Tinnitus Balance Research Laboratory

[Ali Danesh](#), Ph.D., a professor, [Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders](#) (CSD) within [Florida Atlantic University's College of Education](#) (COE) and a professor of biomedical science within FAU's [Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine](#) (COM), recently established the [Hearing Tinnitus Balance Research Laboratory](#) located on the fourth floor of the Education building, ED-47, on the Boca Raton Campus. This research facility "incorporates a variety of research in order to improve our understanding of a variety of conditions and ailments," noted Danesh. The lab is staffed with several research fellows and student members and collaborating scientists and faculty from the Florida Atlantic's [College of Engineering and Computer Science](#) and COM. The Lab's most recent research on vestibular diagnosis uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to detect dizziness and balance disorders remotely. ["Eye" on Health.](#)

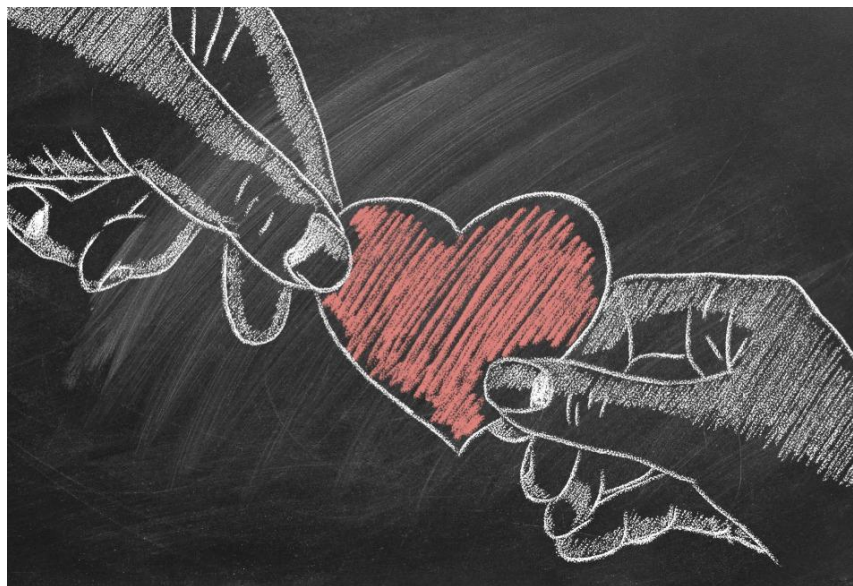
Study Shows Video Training Helps Young Adults with Disabilities Navigate Romance

Researchers from [Florida Atlantic University's College of Education](#) developed an 80-video training program depicting appropriate and in appropriate romantic scenarios, which effectively helped young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities recognize and respond to both safe and unsafe situations.

Results of the study, published in the journal [Sexuality and Disability](#), show that the intervention dramatically improved participant's accuracy—from 20% at baseline to 76% during training—and that skills mostly persisted after the program ended.

“Romantic and sexual education is not a luxury – it is a fundamental aspect of dignity and independence for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This study shows that with the right tools, these individuals can learn to navigate complex relationship situations safely and confidently,” said [Brianna Miller](#), Ed.D., senior author and an instructor in FAU's Department of Special Education and the Academy for Community Inclusion.

Study co-authors are Lauren Berlingo, Ph.D., an assistant professor, Troy University; as well as Kaley Adams, Ph.D., a visiting instructor; Kelly Kearney, Ed.D., an assistant professor; Elisa Cruz, Ed.D., an instructor; and Lisa Finnegan, Ph.D., an associate professor, all within FAU's Department of Special Education. [Video Training Helps Young Adults with Disabilities Navigate Romance](#)



Study: STEM Teacher Pipeline Resilient Amid Challenges



A landmark multiyear collaborative National Science Foundation study conducted by researchers at [Florida Atlantic University](#), the Brookings Institution and Texas State University, as well as four partnering Noyce institutions, sheds new light on the state of the STEM teacher workforce in high-need schools across the United States. The research highlights both the resilience of STEM teachers under significant pressures and the ongoing challenges that threaten equitable access to high-quality STEM education for students in underserved communities.

“Strong STEM instruction is vital not just for student success, but for the country's future in a high-tech global economy,” said [David Devraj Kumar](#), Ed.D., one of the principal investigators of the collaborative study and a professor of science education and founding director of the STEM Education Laboratory, [Department of Curriculum and Instruction](#), within FAU's [College of Education](#). “This research shows that, despite these pressures, the qualifications of STEM teachers in high-need schools have remained surprisingly stable over the past two decades. This resilience reflects the impact of targeted policies, programs, and collaborative initiatives designed to support teachers and maintain access to quality STEM instruction for students who need it most.” [Study Shows STEM Teacher Pipeline is Resilient Amid Challenges](#)



FAU High School Students Join OURI Research Symposium

[Florida Atlantic University High School](#) students participated in the Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry (OURI) 16th Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium on Friday, April 3, 2026, on the Boca Raton Campus. The Symposium featured research posters by the students mentored by FAU High School faculty: Tricia Meredith, Ph.D., Director of Research; Tucker Hindle, M.S., GISP, Research Coordinator and Analytics Specialist; Jasmine Coyle, M.S., Research Coordinator; Lauren Simonitis, Ph.D., Research and Bioimaging Specialist; and by FAU High School—Jupiter Campus in partnership with Max Planck Academy faculty Jennifer Krill, Ph.D., University School Assistant Professor and an Experiential Research Lab Coordinator of Neurophysiology.

The [2026 Symposium Program Booklet](#) contains a complete listing of students, including over 70 FAU High Students and recent alumni who presented at the event. Five oral presentations from FAU High School presenter(s) received 1st place category awards and another five received 2nd place. Two poster presentations were selected for the people's choice session awards. Four students were college awardees for the Undergraduate Research of the Year (UROY) Award:

- Isabelle Yi, College of Education (Mentor: Dr. Maria Vásquez-Colina)
- Kezia Abraham, Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts & Letters (Mentor: Dr. Katharina Rynkiewich)
- Mark Zagher, College of Engineering & Computer Science (Mentor: Dr. George Sklivanitis)
- Shyla Grant, Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College (Mentor: Tracy Mincer).

At the event, two FAU High School students, Danylo Fedkiv and Kyle Loh, were recognized as awardees of the Goldwater Scholarship, a national prestigious fellowship for undergraduate research.

RESEARCH

[FAU Lab Schools Research
Newsletters](#)

[The Center for Educational
Strategy and Innovation
Workshop Blog](#)

[LAB SCHOOLS STUDENTS
NAMED NATIONAL MERIT
FINALISTS](#)

Twenty seniors from [Florida Atlantic University High School](#) have advanced to Finalist standing in the prestigious National Merit Scholarship Program.

COE Faculty Mentor Students at OURI Research Symposium

Florida Atlantic [College of Education](#) faculty mentored undergraduate students who participated in the Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry (OURI) 16th Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium on Friday, April 3, 2026, on the Boca Raton Campus.

Maria Vásquez-Colina, Ph.D., Associate Professor, ELRM, mentored six students: Kenny Rojoas, a social science education major in the COE; June Gray, Shradha Nair, Vritti Sodha and Mritsa Vasquez, FAU High School students, who made oral presentations or presented posters; and Isabelle Yi, the 2026 Undergraduate Researcher of the Year (UROY) for the COE and a FAU High School student dually enrolled as a junior majoring in mechanical engineering in the College of Engineering & Computer Science. Yi won first place as a 2026 Oral/Performing Arts winner in the Behavioral, Educational & Social Sciences category for her presentation of research she coauthored with a doctoral student and Vasquez titled, *Educators' Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence Use to Support Feedback*.

Anne van Zelst, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, CSD, mentored Brielle Walter, an undergraduate student majoring in linguistics in the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts & Letters, who won second place in Session 1 of the Symposium's 2026 Poster People's Choice Award for her poster titled, *Beyond Practice: Examining the Effects of Post-Practice Daytime Sleep and Quiet Rest on Speech-Motor Learning*.

Lisa Finnegan, Ph.D., Associate Professor, SE, mentored Kiara Jones, an undergraduate student majoring in exceptional student education in the College of Education, who presented a poster titled, *Seeing Success; How Visual Supports Help Students with Disabilities Thrive in the Classroom*. [2026 Symposium Program Booklet](#)

Congratulations COE Distinguished Alumna



Madeline Pumariega, Ph.D., President, Miami Dade College, was honored as one of nine 2026 Distinguished Alumni Award recipients for her career accomplishments by the Florida Atlantic University Alumni Association (FAUAA) during the Hall of Fame and Distinguished Alumni Award Ceremony on Friday, April 10, 2026 at 6 p.m. on the Boca Raton Campus.

Pumariega, who holds an M.Ed. in Educational Leadership and Administration from the College of Education at FAU, has been a trailblazer in academia during her 20 years of service at Miami Dade College in positions of ascending responsibility; as a champion for youth while serving as President and CEO of Take Stock in Children; and as a catalyst for transformation by championing a new strategic plan for the College with input from more than 1,000 stakeholders.

[Madeline Pumariega Biography](#)

Seven COE Students Recognized During Ceremony for Published Written Work

[The 2026 Student Publication Ceremony](#), hosted by the Writing Across the Curriculum Program at [Florida Atlantic University](#), was held on Wednesday, March 25, 2026 in the Wimberley Library on the Boca Raton campus. The following seven COE graduate students were recognized during the ceremony for eleven written works published Summer 2025, Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 either as a primary author or co-author:

Macie Barrett (CI) three	Maria Soto (CI) one
Allison Dobuler (CSD) one	Isabel Springer (CE) one
Kelli Listermann (ELRM) one	Daniel Suarez (CI) one
Alonso Reyna Rivarola (ELRM) three	

To view the awardees' publication titles linked to their articles, visit [Writing Across the Curriculum 2025-2026 Student Publication Awardees](#).

Teacher-Led Action Research Case Studies Transform into Conference Presentations

Teacher-led action research case studies are required for coursework in several Reading courses at Florida Atlantic College of Education. Three students, mentored by Philomena Marinaccio, Ph.D., a visiting instructor, within the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, went beyond course expectations by transforming their research into professional conference presentations for the Florida Literacy Association (FLA) Conference with the theme, Time to Shine, in Orlando, Florida from January 23 – 25, 2026. The students are Zachary Welsch, an undergraduate student majoring in Elementary Education; Carlos Garcia, a graduate student pursuing an M.Ed. in Secondary Education plus Certification with a concentration in Art Certification; and Kenneth Tibodeau, a graduate student pursuing an M.Ed. in Elementary Education with a concentration in ESOL plus Certification.

During the conference, these students participated in the Preservice Teacher March that opened the event, presented their research during the poster session, and attended sessions led by prominent literacy scholars and authors, including Timothy Shanahan and Wiley Blevins, author of the RED 4308 course textbook. They were also honored at a preservice teacher breakfast, received complimentary professional and children’s texts, and networked with fellow preservice teachers, practicing teachers from across the state, and nationally renowned literacy researchers and children’s literature authors. [Teacher-Led Action Research Case Studies Transform into Conference Presentations](#)

Students Spotlight



Jillian Powers, Ph.D.(left), an associate professor, and Susannah Brown, Ph.D. (right), a professor, within the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Florida Atlantic College of Education, present research from the Creativity and Innovation Lab with three doctoral students at the Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education (SITE) Conference in Philadelphia held March 23 – 27, 2026.

The doctoral students, who are pursuing a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at FAU, are (from second to left) Samantha Lopez, Robert Bogle and Danielle R. Brown. All of them serve as co-chairs of Special Interest Group (SIG) Technology Policy & Practice, SIG Information Literacy and SIG Social Studies Education, respectively. Powers serves as co-chair of SIG Computational Thinking, having been reelected for a second two-year term at the 2026 SITE conference.

COE Students Participate in SAC 25th Annual Research Symposium

The Student Achievement Council (SAC) 25th Annual College of Education Research Symposium, themed, Envisioning Tomorrow: Research that Shapes the Future, was held virtually on Thursday, April 16, 2026. SAC President, Erica Cheva and Vice President for Research and Chair of the Research Symposium, Danielle Brown led the event.

To celebrate SAC’s 25th anniversary of its research symposium, its members invited three past Presidents of SAC to share their memories of leading the club and to reflect on how leadership in SAC had influenced and guided their future professional trajectories. Jo Ann Bamdas, Ph.D., Lydia Bartram, Ph.D., and Paul Massy, Ph.D., each noted the foundational impact of working in collaboration with others, complex planning and responsiveness to unexpected challenges (e.g. COVID19), and the specific insights gained from organizing and participating in the research symposium on their current roles as researchers, teachers and

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FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Publications

Book

Bousalis, R. (2025). The Florida sponge war: Conflict between Key West and the gulf towns. *The History Press, Arcading Publishing*.
[Book Review](#)

Book Chapter

Kearney, K. B., Miller, B., Downey, A., & Carey, G. (2026). Using an extended job coaching model for gaining and maintaining employment. In M. Martin & A. Puliatte (Eds.), *Implementing Inclusive Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities*. IGI Global. <https://www.igi-global.com/gateway/chapter/402244#pnlRecommendationForm>

Peer-Reviewed Articles

Gagnon, J. C., Honkasilta, J., & Tapio, H. S. (2026). Finnish lower secondary special needs teachers' reported responsibilities and supports for students with behavioral problems. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, Online*, 1-16.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10634266261431273>

Gagnon, J. C. (2026). Finnish lower secondary special needs and special class teachers' approaches to mathematics instruction. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, Online*, 1-17.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2026.2642593>

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GRANTS

Percival, J. & Scott, J.
(2026) *Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at Florida Atlantic University*. Mangurian Foundation. \$500,000.

IMPORTANT DATES

STUDENTS

May 7—COE Commencement
May 14—[Graduate College Information Session](#)

SUMMER DEADLINES

June 1—[Applications and Security Clearance for field experiences and practicums](#)
June 5—[Application for Degree](#)
June 15—Dissertation Defense
June 22—Dissertation due in Dean's Office
June 22—Thesis Defense deadline
June 29—Thesis due in Dean's Office

Publications

(continued from page 7)

Peer-Reviewed Articles

- Emelianchik-Key, K.,** Labarta, A., & Ponce, J. (2026). A twenty-year content analysis of eating disorder research in counseling journals. *The Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 48(1), 24-46.
<https://doi.org/10.17744/mehc.48.1.02>
- Moleón González, M. d. C., Danesh, F., & **Danesh, A. A.** (2026). Integrating the Sensation–Emotion–Cognition (SEC) Model into Tinnitus Care: A Preliminary Exploratory Study of a Comprehensive Tinnitus Management Protocol. *Audiology Research*, 16(2), 43.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/audiolres16020043>
- Ramírez, A.** (2026). Translenguaje pedagógico por géneros textuales: Una trayectoria educativa completa, continua y de calidad para la enseñanza de idiomas [Genre-based pedagogical translanguaging: A complete, continuous, high-quality educational trajectory for language teaching]. *Educación y Ciudad*, (50), e3534.
<https://doi.org/10.36737/01230425.3534>
- Torres A.,** Krause-Parello, C. (2026). Operation Red-White-Blue: A Community Engagement Project Supporting Veteran Mental Health. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, 19(1).
<https://doi.org/10.54656/ttx9dj47>
- *Springer, I., & **Emelianchik-Key, K.** (2026). The Feminist Imposter Phenomenon Approach (FIPA): A Feminist Approach to Addressing Impostor Phenomenon in Novice Counselors. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 20(1), 3.

SAC 25th Annual Research Symposium

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leaders. They underscored the importance of getting involved no matter how big or small one's contribution, finding ways to integrate one's passion into the work one does and recognizing the value of the symposium in propelling one's career as a scholar and researcher.

Rebecca Nelson, Ph.D., the winner of the 2026 COE Outstanding Dissertation Award, shared the findings of her dissertation titled, *Safe and Sound: A Polyvagal Intervention for Trauma and Therapeutic Engagement*.

Oral presentations by students were offered in three sets of concurrent break-out rooms featuring 20 round table, poster and paper presentations moderated by SAC members. Presentations included completed dissertation studies, policy analyses, pilot studies, action research, concept papers and literature reviews.

Charles Dukes, Ed.D., Ph.D., COE Interim Dean, gave the closing remarks offering inspirational reflections on students' research as "candles in the darkness" lighting the way for new ways of seeing the world. Approximately 68 participants representing students and faculty members from all five departments in the college attended the event.

**Florida
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College of
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