



# EDUCATION CONNECTION

FLORIDA ATLANTIC COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

VOL. 5, ISSUE 5

A BIMONTHLY eNEWSLETTER

MAY/JUNE 2025

## Congratulations Graduates

Florida Atlantic College of Education conferred 503 degrees in 2024 for the spring, summer and fall semesters during commencement ceremonies held on May 3, Aug. 6 and Dec. 12, 2024, respectively. Among the graduates were COE students receiving 15 doctoral, 35 specialist, 223 master's and 230 bachelor's degrees. Warm congratulations are extended to all.

Kudos to those listed below who earned doctoral degrees:

### Spring 2024

Alicia Haywood  
Michael Lewis  
Justin Grasing  
Allyson Miller

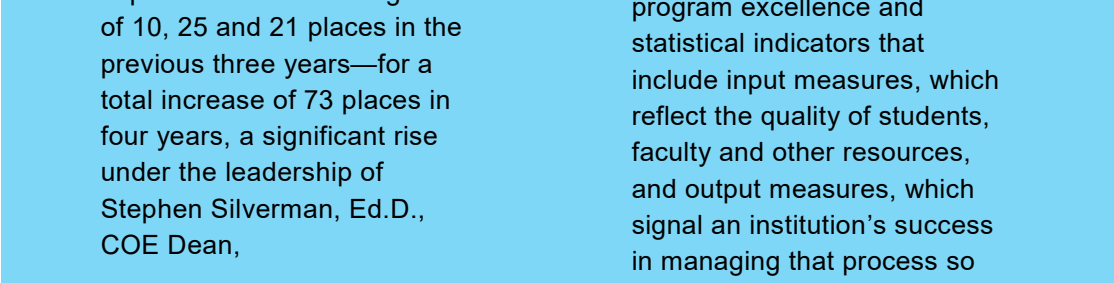
### Summer 2024

Nadiya Boyce-Rosen  
Siobhan Murphy  
Vivian M. Green  
Kaley Adams

### Fall 2024

Hannah Kammet  
Jason Coker  
Brittany Goins  
Deorajhee Mahabir  
Jodi Washington  
Jaeson Weber  
Denise Dowdie

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



## FAU's COE Moves Up for 4th Consecutive Year in U.S. News & World Report Rankings

Florida Atlantic [College of Education](#) climbed 17 places ranking at No. 90 out of 258 ranked graduate schools of education and 76th among public universities in the *U.S. News & World Report* 2025 "Best Graduate Programs," which merits a "[Best Education Schools](#)" designation. This improvement builds on gains of 10, 25 and 21 places in the previous three years—for a total increase of 73 places in four years, a significant rise under the leadership of Stephen Silverman, Ed.D., COE Dean.

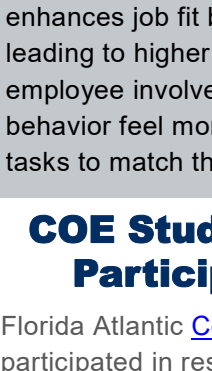
In addition, two COE graduate programs made considerable

gains: [Rehabilitation Counseling](#) tied at No. 29, a seven place gain from 36th in the previous ranking, and [Speech Language Pathology](#) tied at No. 155, up 38 places from No. 193 last year.

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. ... [Read More](#)

## CSD Introduces the CHAT Lab

The Department Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) in FAU College of Education established the speech and time (CHAT) lab in Spring



2025. Led by Assistant Professor and Principal Investigator [Anne van Zelst, Ph.D., CCC-SLP-L](#), the CHAT lab is at the forefront of research into speech learning and the temporal dynamics of learning processes. Utilizing advanced electrophysiological techniques, including electroencephalography (EEG) and event-related potentials (ERPs), the lab delves into the intricate mechanisms underlying speech perception and production.

A primary focus of the CHAT lab is the phenomenon of offline learning, which refers to the changes in speech perception and production that occur during periods of rest or sleep following active practice sessions. This line of inquiry is crucial for understanding how the brain consolidates and enhances learned material in the absence of further practice. By examining the electrophysiological indices during these offline periods, the lab aims to explore the neural processes that facilitate the retention and refinement of speech skills.

Dedicated to providing research training to Florida Atlantic's undergraduate and graduate students, van Zelst currently oversees four students comprising volunteers, interns and graduate research assistants. These students are learning how to utilize EEG instrumentation, speech assessment and acoustic analyses to work directly with participants. Recruitment for CHAT lab studies began in March, seeking Florida Atlantic students and individuals aged 18-25 from surrounding communities, with and without a history of speech sound disorders. ... [Read more](#)

## AI in Retail Study Answers: How to Spark Creativity and Improve Job Satisfaction

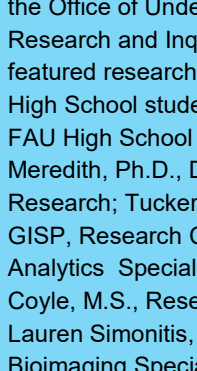
Researchers from [Florida Atlantic University](#) and Hanyang University in Seoul, South Korea, examined how perceived AI service quality influences retail employees' innovation, job fit and job satisfaction. The study looked at system-related factors such as reliability and transparency, as well as interaction-related aspects such as responsiveness and empathy. Researchers also explored the moderating role of AI adaptability, a key feature that allows AI systems to adjust their behavior based on user needs, for its potential to enhance service quality.

"Empathy in AI fosters trust and deeper connections, encouraging employees to engage in innovative behavior by making them feel supported," said [Sangbeak Ye, Ph.D.](#), co-author and an associate professor in the [Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology](#) within FAU's [College of Education](#). "In retail, empathetic AI enhances job fit by aligning personal attributes with job expectations, leading to higher job satisfaction, reduced turnover and increased employee involvement. Employees who actively engage in innovative behavior feel more aligned with their roles because they can tailor their tasks to match their strengths and aspirations." ... [Read More](#)

## COE Students Compete in 3MT®. GPSA and Participate in SAC, OURI Symposiums

Florida Atlantic [College of Education](#) students competed in competitions, participated in research symposiums and received recognition during a University-wide ceremony:

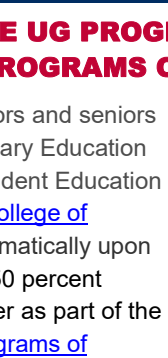
[The 9th Annual Three Minute Thesis \(3MT®\) Competition](#)—preliminary rounds were held in-person by Florida Atlantic Graduate College at the Boca Raton Campus Student Union on March 10-11, 2025 and the championship on March 12, 2025. This competition challenges graduate students to pitch their research in only three minutes to a live audience. The 3MT® Heat 3 First Runner-Up and People's Choice Winner went to COE student:



**Riane Santa Cruz De Melo** (left), who is pursuing a master's degree in Special Education, conducted her presentation, *Saving Grace: A Proposal for Parent Training for Families of Children with Autism Under the Age of 36 Months*, a proposal to apply the science of Applied Behavior Analysis to parent training, during the Championship Round. Faculty Advisor: Sharon Darling, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Special Education.

[16th Annual Graduate Research Day](#)—hosted by the Graduate & Professional Student Association at Florida Atlantic on March 17, 2025 on the Boca Raton campus Student Union's Live Oaks Room. This competition provides graduate students from all academic disciplines the opportunity to present their research to esteemed faculty judges from all disciplines. The winner in the Arts, Humanities and Communication category was COE student,

**Kathy Altidor** (right), who is pursuing a doctoral degree in Counseling (photo courtesy of the Graduate College).



All the graduate student winners earned scholarship prizes and were invited to present their poster at the 2025 Conference of Florida Graduate Schools (CFGS), hosted by Florida Atlantic on April 7 and 8, where Altidor competed with graduates from six universities, placing first as the poster winner in the Arts, Humanities and Communications category as well.

[Student Achievement Council \(SAC\) 24th Annual College of Education Research Symposium](#)—showcased 16 oral presentations from students in the College of Education during the virtual event on Thursday, April 10, 2025 focused on advancing collective learning related to the conference theme. Stephen Silverman, Ed.D., COE Dean, offered some inspirational remarks on the topic of research learned from his life and career in education. The event also



featured a presentation by Alicia Haywood, Ph.D., winner of the 2025 COE Outstanding Dissertation

Award. Haywood shared the findings of her dissertation titled, *Toward Media Literacy Parent Education: Identifying Characteristics of Media Use as Proximal Processes through the Perspectives of Mother of Adolescents in Current Media Dominant Biocological Structures* and delved into the psychology behind dissertation journeys. The oral presentations by students were offered in four sets of two concurrent break-out rooms moderated by SAC members, Shanna Lillis and Samantha Lopez. Participants, especially the student presenters who fueled the evening of research, insight and community, included Macie Barrett, Michelle Keba Knecht, Noelle Guay, Danielle R. Brown, Diego Rios, Jaclyn Sparks, Megan Togno, Brian Stonebraker, Savannah Wilkerson, Zofia Drake, Jodene Bailey, Sita Ramnarace, Christine Kassoover, Amber Mc Cune, Fedilia Guzman and Debra Szabo. The event drew approximately 50 attendees.

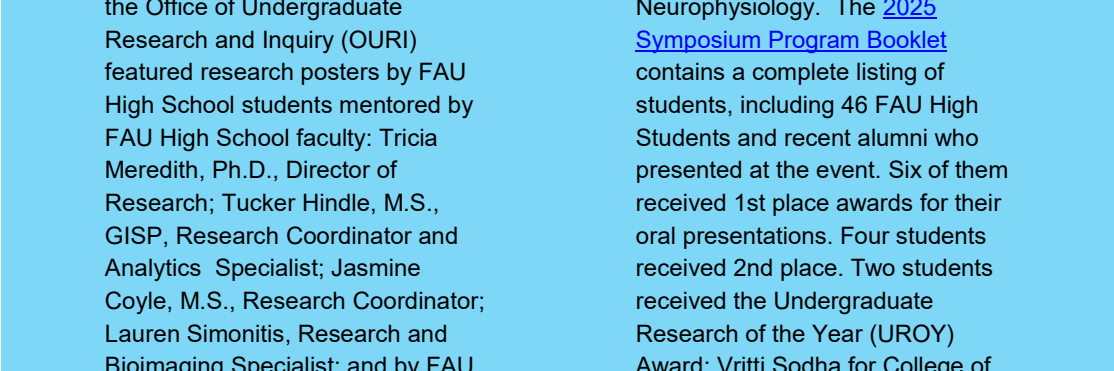
[The 15th Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium](#)—hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry (OURI) was held on April 4, 2025 on the Boca Raton campus. Maria Vázquez-Colina, Ph.D., Associate Professor, ELRM, mentored Vritti Sodha, Undergraduate Researcher of the Year (UROY) for the COE. A FAU High School student dually-enrolled as a junior majoring in business in the College of Business, Sodha presented a research poster titled, *Learning About Gujarati: Cultural Identity and Family Language*. OURI awards one UROY per college each year. Vázquez also mentored other students (Isabelle Yi and Shihab Siddique) who presented at the symposium. Information about the presentations can be found in the [2025 Symposium Program Booklet](#).

[The 2025 Student Publication Ceremony](#)—hosted by the Writing Across the Curriculum Program at Florida Atlantic University was held on March 19 in the Wimberley Library on the Boca Raton campus. The following COE graduate students were recognized during the ceremony for written work published Summer 2024, Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 either as a primary author or co-author:

- ◇ Robert Bogle (CI)
- ◇ Danielle R. Brown (CI)
- ◇ Sheria Kwok (CE)

To view the awardees' publication titles, visit Writing Across the Curriculum 2024-2025 Student Publication Awardees.

Congratulations to these student researchers and their faculty advisors.



## FAU High School Students Recognized at OURI Research Symposium

[Florida Atlantic University High School](#) students took part in OURI's annual symposium on April 4, 2025 on the Boca Raton campus.

[The 15th Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium](#)—hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry (OURI) featured research posters by FAU High School 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, 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 [2025 Symposium Program Booklet](#) contains a complete listing of students, including 46 FAU High Students and recent alumni who presented at the event. Six of them received 1st place awards for their oral presentations. Four students received 2nd place. Two students received the Undergraduate Research of the Year (UROY) Award: Vritti Sodha for College of Education and Hannah Epstein for the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science. OURI awards one UROY per college each year.

Congratulations to these student researchers and their faculty mentors.

## FAU Stiles-Nicolson STEM Teacher Academy Holds Inaugural Brainwave Symposium

[FAU Stiles-Nicolson STEM Teacher Academy](#) (SNSTA) hosted the inaugural Brainwaves: Brain-Based Learning & Action Research Symposium at the [FAU Stiles-Nicolson Brain Institute](#) (SNBI) on March 31, 2025, drawing nearly 50 educators from [FAU Lab Schools](#), Broward, Palm Beach, and Martin counties. This transformative event showcased the power of neuroscience and action research in education.

Made possible through funding from a Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program Grant awarded to [FAU Lab Schools](#), this collaborative effort was jointly organized by leaders within SNSTA, [FAU Lab School Educator Research](#), and the [College of Education](#) (COE): Pilar Forero Taylor, Ph.D., Director, SNSTA; Tricia Meredith, Ph.D., Director of Research, FAU High School; Michelle Vaughan-McGovern, Ed.D., Associate Professor, Curriculum and Instruction, COE; and Elisa Calabrese, Ph.D., Javits Grant Project Director, FAU Lab Schools. ...[Read more](#)

## DID YOU KNOW?

### ELEM ED & ESE UG PROGRAMS NOW ELIGIBLE FOR STATE OF FLORIDA PROGRAMS OF STRATEGIC EMPHASIS WAIVER

Undergraduate juniors and seniors majoring in Elementary Education and Exceptional Student Education at Florida Atlantic [College of Education](#) now automatically upon eligibility receive a 50 percent tuition and fee waiver as part of the State of Florida [Programs of Strategic Emphasis Waiver](#).

Effective for the 2024-2025 academic year, the Florida Board of Governors (BOG) extended the waiver program, which was created in 2021 when the Florida Legislature amended Section 1009.26 of the Florida Statutes, to the two selected state-approved teacher programs by the Florida Board of Governors (BOG). In 2024-2025 a total of 193 COE students qualified and received the waiver.

To be eligible for the waiver, undergraduate students in the B.A. or B.A.E. in Elementary Education

or in Exceptional Student Education: ESOL Endorsement must be Florida residents for tuition purposes and must complete 60 credits within the first two years of starting at a Florida public postsecondary institution (dual enrollment and other accelerated mechanisms count). Upon eligibility, the Controller's Office applies the 50 percent discount on tuition and fees to 3000 and 4000 level classes required for completing the degree. Eligible students receive a notification from the Controller's Office. Students who believe they meet the requirements, but did not receive a notification, may submit an [Eligibility Appeal](#) to have the information reviewed. See [FAQ](#) for complete details. If faculty would like additional information for their recruiting events, contact OASS at [ceoadvising@fau.edu](mailto:ceoadvising@fau.edu). ...[Read more](#)

### REGISTER FOR INFORMATION SESSIONS ON GRAD DEGREES

The Graduate College is holding virtual [information sessions](#) on May 15 and June 26, 2025 from 5 p.m. – 6:15 p.m. See important dates below. This hour-long session will include information regarding Financial Aid, Testing and Test Preparation and Graduate Admissions. Application deadlines may be searched by program, degree or college at [Graduate College Graduate Programs](#).

Students seeking information on specific master's, specialist or doctoral degree programs in the College of Education, may contact the appropriate advisor listed at [COE Graduate Advisors and Contacts](#) for the following departments:

- [Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders](#)
- [Department of Counselor Education](#)
- [Department of Curriculum and Instruction](#)
- [Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology](#)
- [Department of Special Education](#)

For graduate advising and admissions, contact Jessica Stupecc, Assistant Director, Office of Academic and Student Services, [jstupec@fau.edu](mailto:jstupec@fau.edu).

### Important Dates

#### Students

May 3—COE Commencement

May 15—[Graduate College Information Session](#)

May 30—Last day to submit Summer [Application for Degree](#) (use the online form)

June 1—Summer [applications and security clearance for field experiences and practicum placements](#) due to the Office for School Engagement

June 16—Dissertation Defense Deadline

June 26—[Graduate College Information Session](#)

June 23—Summer Dissertation due in the Dean's Office

### Publications

#### Peer-Reviewed Articles

Castle, M., Gilreath, R., **Fields, A. M.**, Smith Hill, R. B., Sookwah, R. D., Burdiss, A., & Ohrt, J. H. (2024). Wellness counseling group intervention for college students with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A pilot study. *Journal of Specialists in Group Work*, 49(4), 161-180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2024.2440461>

**Gagnon, J. C.**, Gurel, S., Barber, B. R., Houchins, D. E., Lane, H., McCray, E., & Lambert, R. G. (2025). Teacher instructional approaches and student engagement and behavioral responses during literacy instruction in a juvenile correctional facility. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 33, 39-53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10634266241231976>

Flanagan, S. M., & **Miller, K. M.** (2025). Teacher-reported characteristics of students with disabilities with written expression needs. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2025.2457648>

**Kumar, D. D.**, Moffitt, S., Hansen, M., & Feng, L. (2025). STEM teacher preparation for high need schools: Inventory of selected Robert Noyce programs. *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, 34(1), 236-251.

Thompson, C. M., **Fields, A. M.**, Limberg, D., & Whitty, K. (2025). Infusing adverse childhood experiences research across the CACREP core curriculum. *Trauma Counseling and Resilience*, 2 (1). <https://doi.org/10.33470/2997-7088.1036>

#### FAU Lab Schools Research Newsletters:

[March 2025](#)

[April 2025](#)

#### FAU Stiles-Nicolson STEM Teacher Academy Newsletter:

[Quarter 3](#)

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