

The University of Kansas

# Center for Teaching Excellence



Academic Year 23-24

# Annual Report

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## Director's Message

### Reflections on AY 2023-2024



#### Expanding Our Reach: KU's Robust Teaching Community

The 2023-2024 academic year marked a period of significant growth and impact for the Center for Teaching Excellence at the University of Kansas. As we reflect on our achievements and look toward the future, two things stand out: the expansion of our reach and the flourishing of KU's teaching community.

#### Diversifying and Scaling Our Programming

We successfully launched four new working groups, which proved to be an effective strategy for scaling participation. Each group maintained a robust membership, with 10 to 12 individuals participating in each meeting. We also added two new faculty seminars: one on interdisciplinary teaching and another on internationalizing courses (a partnership with International Affairs). Our 2024 Course Design Institute saw unprecedented demand, with applications doubling from 32 in 2023 to 60 in 2024. This surge reflects the growing interest in student-centered teaching and the reputation CTE has built as a campus hub for teaching improvement and innovation.

#### Fostering a Sense of Community

The expansion in CTE's programs and participation has not compromised our collaborative culture; rather, it has reinforced our commitment to supporting student and faculty success. Feedback from program participants consistently highlighted the value of peer interaction. Faculty members especially appreciated the opportunity to engage with colleagues across disciplines, sharing ideas and approaches. This sense of community has been a cornerstone of CTE's model for driving innovation and improvement in teaching practices across the university.

#### Exciting New Resources for Teaching

CTE's reach has been further enhanced by the development of multiple new, creative online resources to support teaching improvement and showcase teaching

excellence at KU. Among those are a rich and heavily trafficked set of materials on artificial intelligence and teaching developed by Doug Ward, a robust guide for writing course-level learning outcomes (supporting implementation of KU's new Syllabus Policy) designed by Drew Vartia and Mike Welchans, a year-long podcast series on Scaling Assessment produced by Drew, Mike and various faculty partners, and an online version of a department-level assessment simulation game developed for the Student Learning Symposium. This work enhances the visibility of innovative teaching at KU and of CTE's work in general.

#### Supporting KU's Quality Initiative

Over the last three years, CTE also played a crucial role in supporting KU's Quality Initiative for the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), which was approved in June of 2024 with a positive review. This initiative aimed to develop and scale an integrated structure and processes for evidence-based assessment, with a goal of university-wide participation in degree program assessment and continuous improvement. Working collaboratively with the office of Academic Affairs, CTE's Assessment Team helped academic departments across the Lawrence and Edwards campuses refine program-level learning outcomes, develop curriculum maps, and create sustainable assessment plans. Through programs, consultations, and feedback mechanisms CTE interacted with every degree program on the Lawrence and Edwards campuses (quite an achievement!), and the campus achieved its goal of nearly full (97%) participation in degree-level assessment processes.

#### National Networks and Collaborations

CTE continues to leverage external partnerships and grant opportunities, building a critical mass of faculty champions committed to educational excellence

and driving teaching improvement and innovation at KU and beyond. In December 2023, we hosted a regional AAU meeting to assist academic leaders at KU, the University of Iowa and the University of Missouri in envisioning how to value, coach, retain and reward the diverse educator workforce needed for effective undergraduate education. CTE staff also represented KU in two multi-institutional convenings: one focused on equitable support and reward for teaching faculty and the other on aligning university financial decisions with educational decisions that promote student success. We also led two multi-institutional grant proposals submitted to the National Science Foundation: one to improve racial equity in STEM (building on our Ideas to Action program), and another to create a national alliance of institutions around the reform of teaching evaluation (building on our Benchmarks/TEval initiative and envisioning a hub at KU).

Our growing community of practice is poised to lead KU into a new era of teaching excellence and innovation. Over the coming year, I hope to strengthen CTE's role as a hub for pedagogical innovation and scholarship, to actively engage faculty in KU's educational improvement efforts while also creating new avenues for research excellence and enhancing KU's national reputation as a leader in higher-education pedagogy. At the same time, CTE will remain committed to helping faculty develop high-quality academic programs and fostering educational practices that promote success for all students.

*Andrea Follmer*

CTE Director and Professor of Psychology

# CTE Staff



**Andrea Follmer**  
Director and Professor of Psychology



**Mark Mort**  
Associate Director and Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology



**Joshua Potter**  
Associate Director for Student Learning and Analytics



**Doug Ward**  
Associate Director and Associate Professor in Journalism and Mass Communications



**Kaila Colyott**  
Teaching Innovation Program Manager



**Judy Eddy**  
Program Manager



**Massa Mafi**  
Postdoctoral Researcher



**Omar Jamil Safir**  
Data and Assessment Coordinator



**Drew Vartia**  
Documenting Learning Specialist



**Mike Welchhans**  
Communication Coordinator

## CTE Full Time Staff

CTE welcomed Massa Mafi, a post doctoral researcher to the full time staff during the academic year. Before joining KU, Massa was a doctoral student and a secondary science teacher in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Massa graduated with a B.Sc. Nutritional Sciences and Chemistry from the University of Arizona, a Graduate Certificate of Public Health, an M.Sc. Biomedical Sciences from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, and Ph.D. With distinction in Teacher Education, Educational Leadership, and Policy from the University of New Mexico.

## Faculty Fellows

Three new Faculty Fellows joined the CTE staff in AY 23-24.

- Sarah E. Ngoh**, assistant director of First Year Writing
- Benjamin Rosenthal**, associate professor of visual art
- Sara E. Wilson**, associate professor of mechanical engineering

The new Fellows joined CTE’s returning Faculty Fellows:

- Marie Brown**, associate professor of history
- Victor Gonzalez**, director of the undergraduate biology program

**Amy Leyerzapf**, director of instructional design and development at the Institute of Leadership Studies.

**Brad Osborn**, associate professor of music theory

CTE Faculty Fellows have responsibilities in specific areas of CTE programming, actively participate in CTE programs, contribute to the Center’s GTA preparation program, and guide individual faculty members through CTE resources for development of their teaching.

## Grad Student Fellows

The CTE Grad Student Fellows for AY 23-24 included:

- Aaron Beuoy**, graduate student in Educational Psychology
- Abby Breyer**, graduate student in English
- Beth Potter**, graduate student in Anthropology
- Sarah Unkel**, graduate student in Anthropology

Graduate Student Fellows assist staff and participate in CTE programs. They create posters for the annual Celebration of Teaching and build faculty course portfolios for the CTE website.

# Center for Teaching Excellence Mission

The core mission of the Center for Teaching Excellence is to build a community of instructors who are devoted to exploring teaching practices that lead to meaningful and equitable student learning, and to help make student learning visible.

We convene seminars, working groups and workshops to help faculty find time-efficient and effective ways to innovate teaching and assess and improve student learning, assist faculty with representing the intellectual work they perform as teachers, meet individually with faculty and instructional staff who want to discuss any facet of teaching and student learning.

One of our main goals at CTE is to foster cross-disciplinary intellectual

exchange around teaching and learning at KU. In doing so, we also seek to support the development and continuous improvement of teaching practice among faculty and graduate student instructors.

We also provide programming and leadership to advance KU's strategic goals and priorities related to undergraduate and graduate education, including improvements in retention, progression, inclusion, and equity. Our strategic work to support educational initiatives is informed by research in institutional and educational change and, often, partnerships with other universities and colleges. Many of our programs engage teams of faculty or whole departments in rethinking their curriculum, educational practices, or goals for student learning.

# Teaching Summit kicks off a concentration on community

Peter Felten issued a clear call to action at the 2023 Teaching Summit: Connect with students and help them connect with one another.

Felten, executive director of the Center for Engaged Learning and assistant provost for Teaching and Learning at Elon University, delivered the keynote address at the Summit, which brought together over 300 University of Kansas faculty and instructional staff in Budig Hall on Aug. 17. The annual event was co-sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence, the Provost’s Office, and the KU Medical Center.

This year’s event aimed to underscore the significance of building strong relationships within the educational community, and Felten drew on his research on the impact of relationships on students’ educational experiences in making a case for building community.

“In a world of challenges, it’s distinctly hard to be a student these days,” said Felten, who highlighted the vital role of fostering connections within the classroom to navigate these difficulties.

A strong sense of belonging in college is crucial to student success and well-being, Felten said and influences students’ lives for years afterward. These connections, which he said were part of relationship-rich education, “is preparing them not only to be successful in college; it’s actually preparing them to live longer and happier lives.”

Dea Follmer (Greehoot), director of the Center for Teaching Excellence, emceed the event,



Photo by Mike Welchhans / CTE

Peter Felten, executive director of the Center for Engaged Learning and assistant provost for Teaching and Learning at Elon University, delivers the keynote address at the annual Teaching Summit in Budig Hall.

laying the foundation for a day centered on community building and professional development, with more than 30 breakout sessions led by faculty and staff. Following Follmer’s opening remarks, Chancellor Doug Girod addressed the challenges and opportunities presented by a “really strong freshman class,” noting that it may be the largest in the history of the university.

Provost Barbara Bichelmeyer presented the Chris Haufler Teaching Award to the Jewish Studies department during the event. The Haufler Award acknowledges the innovative work of academic departments in developing or transforming exceptional core courses, aligning with the assessment of KU Core learning outcomes.

Breakout sessions delved into strategies for fostering connections and community within the classroom.

Felten urged attendees to cultivate classrooms where students engage with peers and course material. He emphasized that such interactions fuel students’ motivation to learn.

“If our classes can be places where students are interacting with lots of their peers, they’re going to find those people who are going to ignite the fire, who are really going to spark them to be motivated and learn,” Felten said.

# CTE Essential Facts

Last academic year we provided **\$92,500** to faculty and departments in the form of stipends and grants. The programs that offered funding impacted **11,123** credit hours and involved **72** faculty members.

552

Participants in CTE workshops or programs

449

Graduate students took part in the New GTA orientation

65

Posters created for the Celebration of Teaching

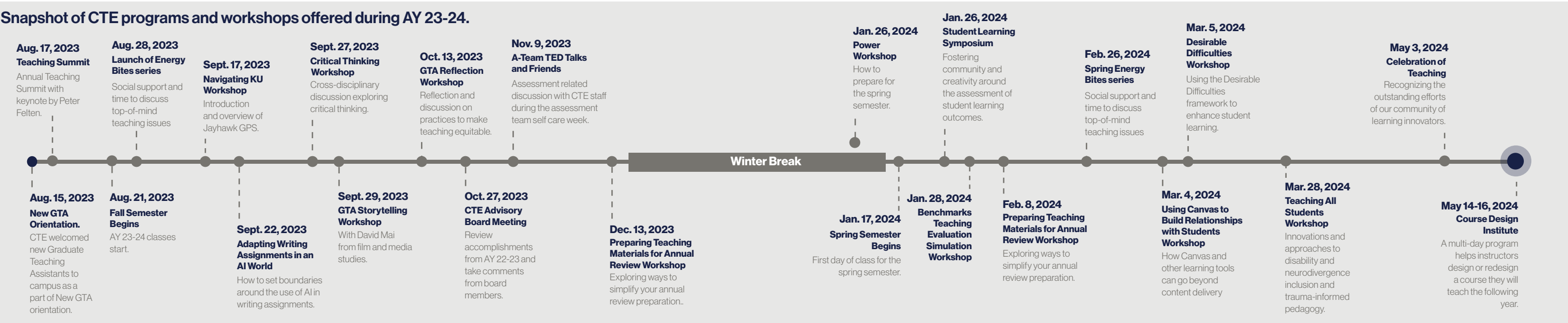
1005

Average email opens for monthly email newsletter distribution

11,123

Student credit hours served

Comparison to AY 22-23	AY 22-23	AY 23-24	Change
Participants in CTE workshops or programs	447	552	+ 23.4%
Graduate Students in CTE new GTA Program	441	449	+ 1.8%
Posters created for Celebration of Teaching	60	65	+ 8.3%
Monthly email newsletter message opens	857	1005	+ 17.2%
Student credit hours served	5,319	11,123	+109%



Program Poster Analysis	Faculty Seminar	CDI	Course Transformation Grants
Courses that incorporated more inclusive pedagogy	82%	80%	80%
Courses that incorporated more active and collaborative learning (e.g., peer teaching, group work, case study, group discussion)	82%	70%	80%
Courses that developed new forms of assessment (including rubrics, project-based assignments, staged assignments, and self and peer assessment)	73%	97%	89%

- Of the 49 courses that had been taught, or were being taught, when the posters were prepared:
- 35% of the instructors provided in their posters a rich description of the quality of student learning after the course modifications, and 78% mentioned some assessment of student learning.
  - 63% used student feedback (including surveys, reflection papers) to provide insight into how students experienced the course.
  - 67% reported meaningful improvements in student outcomes, such as student learning/achievement of desired learning outcomes or improved student engagement. (Note that final assessments had not been completed in about 1/3 of the courses at the time of poster preparation)

## CTE Program List

- ### Annual Events

  - Teaching Summit
  - Student Learning Symposium
  - Celebration of Teaching
- ### Department Programs

  - Ideas to Action
  - TEval/Benchmarks for Teaching Effectiveness
  - HHMI Inclusive Excellence in STEM Initiative: Building a More Inclusive Introductory Science Curriculum
- ### Faculty Programs

  - Course Transformation Grants
  - Faculty Seminar: Course Internationalization
  - Faculty Seminar: Interdisciplinary Teaching
  - Faculty Seminar: Equity & Inclusion
  - Course Design Institute
- ### Working Groups

  - Large Class Working Group
  - Alternative Grading Working Group
  - AI in Teaching Working Group
  - Competency-Based Teaching & Learning Working Group
  - Online Teaching Working Group
- ### Workshops & Consultations

  - Navigating KU: Using Jayhawk GPS for Student Care and Course Performance Feedback
  - Adapting Writing Assignments in an AI World
  - Critical Thinking: What Does It Mean for Your Discipline?
  - Including Student Voices in Assessment
- ### Workshops & Consultations (cont.)

  - You COULD Assign a Research Paper, but ...
  - Alumni Mentors Await. Connect Them with Your Students
  - Creating Interdisciplinary Opportunities for Students
  - If You Build It, Will They Come? How to Promote Your Class
  - Using Canvas to Build Relationships with Students
  - Desirable Difficulties - Challenging Students to Move Outside Their Comfort Zone
  - Teaching All Students: Innovations and Approaches to Disability and Neurodivergence Inclusion

# Assessment of Student Learning

## Assessment programs assist departments and faculty

The CTE assessment team expanded its services providing feedback to a wider range of academic programs.

One new initiative involved a collaboration between the CTE and Academic Affairs to provide in-person feedback sessions about degree-level assessment with academic departments. Moving beyond simple written feedback, these workshops dug deeper into individual departments' assessment work and also allowed them to compare notes with colleagues in other disciplines.

Additionally, CTE expanded its assessment coverage to include undergraduate-level certificate programs. This resulted in a significant increase in the number of programs reviewed, with approximately 240 undergraduate and 270 graduate programs assessed in total.

To acknowledge the significant work faculty have undertaken on degree-level assessment, the CTE Assessment Team redesigned our annual **Student Learning Symposium** from the ground up, re-imagining it as a celebration of thanks. The centerpiece of the event was a hands-on role-playing activity that "gamified" the assessment process.

Participants made strategic decisions and weighed the costs and benefits of various approaches, gaining a deeper understanding of the intricacies of assessment design.

Through **Ideas to Action**, the CTE assessment team worked directly with five departments, (Applied English, the KU Honors program, First Year English, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and the Geography department) to improve outcomes through data collection and focus groups.



Participants engage in a unique problem-solving game at the Student Learning Symposium hosted by CTE and designed by the CTE assessment team. [See a video recap of the SLS.](#)

## Assessment Highlights

**107**  
Registrants in the Student Learning Symposium

**510**  
Degree and certificate programs assessed at the Lawrence and Edwards campuses

**26**  
Surveys consisting of 1,537 current students and 629 alumni

**18**  
Focus groups covering 90 students

## Scaling Assessment Podcast

The Scaling Student Assessment Podcast series was designed to address the challenges of assessing large classes at KU.

Consisting of **seven episodes**, the podcast interviewed instructors who shared their strategies for scaling exams, quizzes, mid-semester feedback, student voice, AI in assessment, alternate grading, and student projects.

The series was featured in the CTE monthly newsletter, reaching an average of **1900 recipients**. Listeners could access the podcast episodes and accompanying resources on a dedicated page on the CTE website.

The podcast series has generated a total listen time of **22 hours**.

Listen to the podcast series by clicking the QR code.



# Using fairy tales to transform student learning

## Faculty participating in CTE's programs had many success stories, here we highlight one example

**GERM 145**, a course taught by Associate Professor Andrea Meyertholen in the Department of Slavic, German, and Eurasian Studies, proved to be a transformative experience for students. Through the CTE Course Design Institute, Meyertholen developed a unique approach to exploring fairy tales and their societal implications.

The course, which enrolled over 90 students, focused on analyzing classic Grimms' fairy tales and their Disney adaptations. Students were encouraged to critically examine these stories through a modern lens, questioning the portrayal of gender, sexuality, and disability. Meyertholen facilitated a dynamic and inclusive learning environment, promoting discussion and critical thinking.

Meyertholen's participation in the CTE Course Design Institute was instrumental in shaping the success of GERM 145. CDI provided her with valuable strategies for designing an engaging and effective course even in larger setting. Through the course, students not only gained a deeper, more modern understanding of fairy tales but also developed essential skills allowing them to express their ideas creatively. [Hear Meyertholen explain how CDI helped her create GERM 145](#)



Photo by Mike Welchans / CTE

Andrea Meyertholen, holds a student project during the final class period of GERM 145. Through CDI, Meyertholen developed a unique approach to exploring fairy tales and their societal implications. Students created artwork illustrating fairy tales through a modern lens.

# Teaching Scholarship Collaborative Attendance Study

## The Teaching Scholarship Collaborative conducted a comprehensive study to understand and address the declining student attendance rates prevalent across many institutions

**Key findings from the study revealed three primary factors influencing student attendance:**

**Engagement and Social Connection:** Students are more likely to attend classes when they feel connected to their peers and actively participate in classroom activities.

**Grading and Accountability:** The presence of graded in-class assignments or assessments can significantly impact attendance rates, as students perceive them as a means to enhance their learning and improve their grades.

**In-Class Learning Benefits:** Students are more likely to attend classes when they believe that the in-class activities and experiences offer valuable learning opportunities, such as critical discussions, collaborative projects, or hands-on applications of theoretical concepts.

**Recommendations for instructors to improve student attendance and engagement:**

**Foster a Sense of Community:** Create a welcoming and inclusive

classroom environment where students feel connected to their peers and supported by their instructors.

**Encourage Active Participation:** Design engaging and interactive activities that promote student involvement and participation.

**Leverage Graded Assessments:** Strategically incorporate graded in-class assignments or assessments to motivate students and reinforce the importance of attendance.

**Highlight the Benefits of In-Class Learning:** Clearly communicate the value of in-class experiences and how they contribute to student learning and development.

**Address Student Concerns:** Be responsive to students' needs and concerns, and provide support and resources to help them succeed.

To read the full study article on our website click the QR code.



# The Power of cte.ku.edu

The Center for Teaching Excellence website displayed steady traffic, with consistent views and active users throughout AY 23-24 .

### Overall Website Performance:

80,441

Total Page Views of cte.ku.edu in AY 22-23

35,759

Active Users of cte.ku.edu in AY 22-23

2.25

Views Per Active User

1m 18s

Average Engagement Time

These numbers indicate a stable audience and engagement with the site's content. The relatively high number of active users suggests that a significant portion of visitors are returning to the site, demonstrating a loyal user base. This is a positive sign for the website's overall health and effectiveness in meeting the needs of its target audience.

### AI Web Resources lead the year in views

Our AI web resources have played a significant role in driving traffic to our website and shaping the top 10 most visited pages. The popularity of topics such as “Careful Use of AI Detectors” and “Ethical Use of AI in Writing Assignments” highlights the increasing interest in responsible and effective AI integration in education.

The AI resources were created and published in January of 2023. A special section of the CTE website was devoted to displaying these resources. In July 2023, a special edition of the CTE newsletter was issued to announce the new collection of resources along with social media coverage leading to wider exposure to the world.

The prominence of pages in our web results for the academic year like “Adapting Classes to the Artificial Intelligence Era” and “Prompting AI Chatbots” suggests that our website is serving as a valuable resource for educators around the world who are looking to stay updated on emerging trends and technologies in the field of AI.

### Top 10 Web Page Views

01	Careful use of AI detectors	Views	Active Users
		12,207	10,141
02	CTE Homepage	Views	Active Users
		5,734	2,991
03	Ethical use of AI in writing assignments	Views	Active Users
		5,095	3,649
04	Adapting classes to the artificial intelligence era	Views	Active Users
		3,617	2,518
05	Benchmarks for Teaching Effectiveness	Views	Active Users
		3,295	2,022
06	GTA Programs	Views	Active Users
		2,420	1,237
07	Prompting AI Chatbots	Views	Active Users
		2,408	1,848
08	Addressing bias in AI	Views	Active Users
		2,298	1,563
09	Maintaining academic integrity in the AI era	Views	Active Users
		1,786	1,144
10	Syllabus preparation and language	Views	Active Users
		1,781	1,028

# Teaching Excellence: Training the Next Generation of Faculty



Photo by Mike Welchhans / CTE

CTE's Kaila Colyott, teaching innovation program coordinator, assists a new GTA find their workshop schedule during the new GTA orientation in Wescoe Hall.

## CTE support for Graduate Teaching Assistants in AY 22-23 offered support and guidance for a valued teaching resource at KU

CTE led orientation and professional development for new and returning graduate teaching assistants in AY 22-23.

CTE welcomed 449 new Graduate Teaching Assistants to campus during the New GTA orientation. Held in a hybrid format, the event began with a virtual welcome and overview. New GTAs then gathered at Wescoe Hall to foster community among peers and explore valuable teaching and campus resources, preparing them for their roles as instructors at KU.

During the fall semester, CTE sponsored workshops that focused on the needs of a graduate teaching assistant.

One highlight from the professional development offered to new GTAs was a reflection series consisting of six sessions covering theses topics:

- Reflect on Your Identity - Navigating Your Positionality in the Classroom
- Reflect on Your Students' Learning - Making Small Changes with Big Impact
- Reflect on Your Teaching - Gathering and Responding to Student Feedback
- Reflect on Your Inclusive Practices - Fostering Equity in the Classroom and
- Reflect on Your Teaching - Gathering Evidence of Student Learning for Your Career Development

449

Graduate students took part in the CTE new GTA orientation

5

Graduate teaching workshops tailored to GTA needs in and out of the classroom

68

Graduate teaching assistants who attended GTA-focused workshops in Fall 23

## GTA Professional Development Delivered in AY 23-24

- New GTA Orientation
- Artificial Intelligence & Teaching Workshop
- Storytelling as a Pedagogical Approach Workshop
- Facilitating Difficult (and Necessary) Dialogue in the Classroom Workshop
- GTA Reflection Series - Six Session Workshop
- International Teaching Assistant Learning Community- Three Sessions



## Center for Teaching Excellence

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