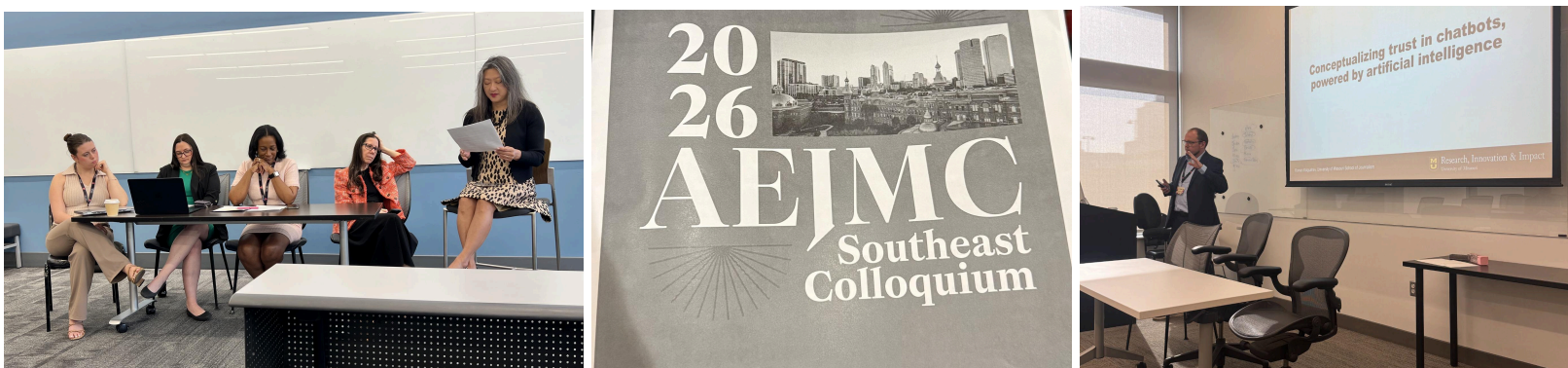


AEJMC Commission on Graduate Education Hidden Curriculum Newsletter

Mar. 30, 2026



#AEJMC26: Blooming Ideas, Big Easy Bound



Leadership Update

By Briana M. Trifiro, CSGE Chair, Northeastern University

Dear members,

Happy spring from CSGE!

Over the past several months, we have begun to build momentum through a series of virtual programming opportunities designed to foster connection and professional development across our CSGE community. These events have brought together graduate students, early-career scholars, and faculty mentors to discuss topics such as navigating the academic job market, developing robust research agendas, and building supportive scholarly networks. These conversations have worked to provide valuable spaces for mentorship, collaboration, and knowledge sharing across AEJMC. To watch these virtual recordings, please visit the [AEJMC YouTube Channel](#). These virtual sessions are part of CSGE's broader mission to support and amplify the voices of graduate students within the Association while also creating meaningful opportunities for engagement beyond the annual conference.

We are excited to continue expanding these initiatives throughout the year, creating additional opportunities for members to connect, share experiences, and support one another as scholars and educators.

Finally, we hope you will consider joining us this Summer in New Orleans for the AEJMC National Conference!

◆ **Call for Papers: 2026 AEJMC National Conference, August 5-8, 2026, New Orleans**

The Commission on Graduate Education (CSGE) invites graduate students to submit their work for inclusion in our programming at the 2026 AEJMC Annual Conference in New Orleans, LA. Planned sessions include the Graduate Research-in-Progress Roundtable, the Graduate Research Showcase, and the Graduate Teaching Showcase.

Questions regarding submissions for the Graduate Research-in-Progress Roundtable or the Graduate Research Showcase should be directed to the CSGE Research Chair, Deborah J. Danuser, at deborah.danuser@gmail.com.

Questions regarding the Graduate Teaching Showcase should be directed to the CSGE Teaching Chair, Matt Martin, at m.e.martin@usm.edu.

GRADUATE RESEARCH-IN-PROGRESS ROUNDTABLE: The CSGE invites graduate students to submit original research-in-progress proposals for inclusion in our Research-in-Progress Roundtable. This session provides up to 10 graduate student scholars with the opportunity to be matched with a senior scholar mentor who will offer valuable feedback and insights on students' emerging research.

Research-in-progress submissions may include developing ideas, pilot studies, ongoing data collection, or early analyses that demonstrate potential for scholarly contribution. We welcome research from all theoretical and methodological perspectives addressing any journalism and mass communication topic.

All submissions must follow AEJMC's uniform call for research-in-progress. Carefully review the instructions and ensure your submission is uploaded to the [AEJMC Annual Paper Competition Submission Portal](#) no later than 11:59 p.m. (Central Daylight Time) on April 1, 2026. Please check proposals thoroughly for any self-identifying information, including self-citations, to avoid rejection. As a reminder, a research-in-progress submission cannot be sent to more than one division, interest group, or commission.

GRADUATE RESEARCH SHOWCASE: All divisions, interest groups, and commissions are invited to select two of their top graduate student research papers to be featured in the CSGE Research Showcase poster session. The selected papers must be authored by graduate students and must not be presented as part of other conference programming (i.e., outside of their award-winning papers). Graduate Research Showcase by May 20, 2026. All research papers presented in this showcase are considered accepted by both the DIG and the CSGE, and authors may indicate this dual acceptance on their CVs.

To be considered for the CSGE Graduate Research Showcase, authors should follow the instructions in AEJMC’s uniform paper call as well as the division, interest group, or commission’s student paper call. It is important to note that faculty members cannot co-author papers submitted to the Commission on Graduate Education.

Good Luck!

From the Showcase to the Classroom: Teaching Innovations Ahead

By Matthew E. Martin, Teaching Chair. University of Southern Mississippi

The Commission on Graduate Education’s (CSGE) Graduate Teaching Showcase amplifies graduate student teaching and pedagogy with a live demonstration and poster session at AEJMC’s national conference. The showcase highlights innovative and effective teaching practices led by graduate students to inspire and encourage instructors at all levels.

The unique, engaging, and inspiring class activities and lesson plans developed by graduate students illustrate adapting techniques in pedagogy and instruction, exemplifying that there is no “one size fits all” approach to learning. We strongly encourage students on the job market to submit proposals, as this is an excellent opportunity to practice potential teaching presentations.

For the requirements of your 400-word proposal due May 1 - check out the [call for proposals](#).

If you have questions or would like to discuss your ideas before submitting, please reach out.

PREPPING FOR THE FALL – TEACHING INNOVATIONS WEBINAR SERIES

Now halfway through the spring semester, it’s never too early to plan for fall. This series of virtual webinars will help ease the burden by presenting new ways to approach the challenges of the modern, ever-expanding classroom.

Engaging the BIG Room: Lessons from the large lecture hall: Large lecture classes present a unique instructional landscape that requires a delicate balance of content rigor and meaningful engagement while managing the dynamics of diverse learners at scale. For many graduate students and early-career instructors, it's not an environment they are often adequately trained for. This webinar explores practical strategies, evidence-based approaches, and innovative tools that can help transform large-enrollment classes into environments where students are not just listening, but truly learning and connecting.

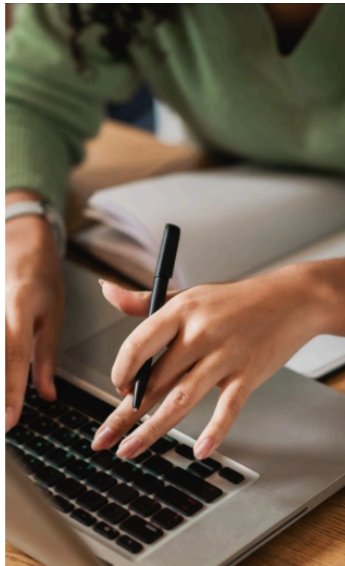
Unpacking Ungrading: We'll illuminate the growing trend of ungraded classrooms with sessions on what ungrading is and how it actually works in college classrooms.

Score No More: Ungrading, an Introduction: Discover the foundations of the ungrading movement: What is it? Why does it matter? And how can it reshape the student experience in communication classrooms? This introductory session breaks down key concepts, common misconceptions, and the pedagogical motivations behind moving away from traditional grading systems.

Ungrading – Theories and Strategies: Go deeper with the research, frameworks, and practical methods that support ungrading. We'll explore communication-specific applications, feedback models, contract grading, labor-based assessment, and approaches for maintaining academic rigor while centering student ownership of learning.

Not Going Back: Voices from Ungraded Classrooms: Hear directly from instructors who have implemented ungrading in university-level communication courses. This session highlights successes, challenges, student reactions, and lessons learned by offering honest insights into what it looks like to make ungrading work in real classrooms.

If you're interested in participating in these webinars as either a panelist or participant, please fill out this [form](#) to join the panel or receive an email when webinar dates are released.



More Than Just an Advisor:

Working With Mentors, Coaches, and Editors

Thursday, March 5
9:30AM–11AM EST

By Deborah J. Danuser, Research Chair. University of Pittsburgh

If you've ever felt like you were supposed to have academia figured out already, you're not alone, and you're not wrong to seek help. On March 5, 2026, CSGE hosted the webinar *More Than Just an Advisor: Working with Mentors, Coaches, and Editors*, which brought together four academic writing professionals to challenge some deeply

held assumptions about how scholarly work gets done and shared why working with people besides your advisor and mentors can be helpful.

Dr. Jenn McClearn, academic writing coach and author of the *Publish Not Perish* newsletter, opened by reframing what struggle in academia actually means. Lack of clear expectations, she argued, is routinely mistaken for a personal failing — when in reality, academia has never been as solo an endeavor as it pretends. The goal of outside support, she emphasized, is not dependency but building sustainable, individualized practices.

Dr. Lisa Munro, academic publishing consultant, pulled no punches: graduate school is simply not designed to teach you how to write or publish. That gap has real professional costs — stalled promotions, missed tenure, lost grant funding. Munro framed learning to write and publish as an act of equity, particularly for scholars who lack access to elite networks or well-connected mentors.

Dr. Katy Peplin, founder of the Thrive PhD community, focused on the power of widening your mentorship network. Drawing on her experience as a first-generation grad student, she introduced the concept of a "mentor wheel" — intentionally building a diverse network of people who can support different aspects of your academic and personal life, rather than relying solely on one advisor.

Dr. Bailey Lang, book coach and editor with a PhD in Rhetoric and Writing Studies, rounded out the panel by addressing the practical value of outside support: reduced impostor

syndrome, greater confidence when submitting work, accountability without evaluative power, and context-sensitive coaching when writing practices stop working.

The webinar also featured a pre-recorded message from **Dr. Jo Line**, Program Director at Oberlin College and a first-time book author, who spoke to the value of hiring coaches and editors who truly understand your vision — and encouraged scholars to allow themselves the time to write something they're genuinely proud of.

[Watch the full webinar on YouTube.](#) For more information or to access resources shared during the session, contact Deborah Danuser at deborah.danuser@gmail.com.



Mental Health in Academia: Making Self-Care Sustainable for Professors and Graduate Students

By Abby Cole, University of Texas, Dallas

CSGE hosted a webinar that offered a supportive space for professors and graduate students to reflect and take actionable steps to address mental health challenges. On March 2, Jodi McFarland Friedman (University of Maryland) moderated a diverse panel with Valerie Belair (University of Minnesota), Patrick Johnson (Marquette University), Jocelyn McKinnon-Crowley (PhD Candidate at Syracuse University), and Jessica Shaw (Temple University).

Take 60 minutes for yourself today to [watch this webinar](#) and get insights on:

- Time management tips and hacks
- Suggestions for balancing mental health with academic success
- Reflections on the professor versus graduate student experience
- Coping with imposter syndrome
- How to handle publication pressures and rejections
- Warning signs when stress is becoming overwhelming
- Actionable items for listeners

Whether you are feeling pretty balanced right now, or completely overwhelmed, you're sure to find a helpful solution such as:

- Creating strict daily boundaries
- Utilizing writing groups
- Ways to advocate for, and make use of, institutional resources
- Cultivating a community of support

aejmc
CSGE

you're invited: get involved with the

Commission on Graduate Education

VOLUNTEER ON COMMITTEES
Make your CV look even better!

RUB SHOULDERS AT CONFERENCES
Make contacts who become collaborators

LOG INTO VIRTUAL PROGRAMS
Boost your savvy and gain inspo

USE CONFERENCE AMENITIES
"Shop" the Traveling Closet, eat/hang in our grad lounge

WANT TO KNOW MORE? EMAIL B.TRIFIRO@NORTHEASTERN.EDU

CSGE GRADUATE TEACHING SHOWCASE - 2026

The Commission on Graduate Education's (CSGE) Graduate Teaching Showcase amplifies graduate student teaching and pedagogy with a live demonstration and poster session at AEJMC's national conference. The showcase highlights innovative and effective teaching practices led by graduate students to inspire and encourage instructors at all levels.

The unique, engaging, and inspiring class activities and lesson plans developed by graduate students illustrate adapting techniques in pedagogy and instruction, exemplifying that there is no "one size fits all" approach to learning.

Now in its third year, all accepted showcase applicants are expected to attend the 2026 AEJMC conference in New Orleans to share their proposed activity or lesson plan as a poster session during the CSGE Research Showcase.

A select number of submissions will be invited to present a 7.5-minute live interactive teaching demonstration in the Graduate Teaching Showcase. These participants will demonstrate their specific activity or lesson plan in action with a focus on audience engagement. The live presentations should reflect a classroom-like environment and create opportunities for audience involvement. Each presentation will also include time for Q&A.

We strongly encourage students on the job market to submit proposals, as this is an excellent opportunity to practice potential teaching presentations.

The proposal (400 words max) should:

- Demonstrate the present relevance to teaching and learning in higher education
- Identify clear learning outcomes and objectives
- Appeal to an interdisciplinary audience (including news writing, content production, digital journalism, media literacy, research methods, media ethics/law, artificial intelligence, strategic communication, big data, computational methods, and more)

Proposals will be reviewed through an anonymized peer-review process and evaluated using the following criteria:

- Clarity of the proposal, including key takeaways and audience interaction components
- Relevant topic that would appeal to instructors of all experience levels
- Practical methods and techniques that others can use and apply
- Evidence of successful outcomes or lessons learned

Submit your proposal directly to CSGE teaching chair Matthew E. Martin, APR (m.e.martin@usm.edu) as a Word or PDF document by May 1, 2026, at 11:59 PM CT. Authors will be notified of their status via email by June 1.

If you have questions or would like to discuss your ideas before submitting, please reach out.