

2024–25 Annual Report

MILESTONES & MOMENTS

Aligned with the University's priority of delivering an outstanding educational experience, the Searle Center's new strategic plan outlines a transformative vision for catalyzing signature programs and launching strategic initiatives to enhance teaching and learning so *all* students can thrive at Northwestern. Through cross-institutional partnerships, we continue to build a robust educational development infrastructure. Notably, the Searle Center played a critical role in the University's successful reaccreditation, shaping the institutional strategy to develop systematized, authentic, and sustainable assessment cycles in programs and schools, including writing section 4B of the assurance argument and creating the Assessment Gallery, which was praised by the Higher Learning Commission reviewers. We ended the year with a community celebration featuring the inaugural recipients of the Spirit of Searle Award.

COMMUNITY VOICES

516

participants

This year, we conducted our first annual Searle Survey, capturing insights from our community to shape future programs with 52 voices reflecting on a year of engagement.

39,616


website users

94%

**reported gains
in knowledge**

97.5%

**applied what
they learned**



The Searle Center offers fresh perspective on how to engage students with evidence-based programming that keeps up with the fast pace of modern pedagogical research. New and veteran faculty—and their students—would benefit from these programs."

—Faculty Member, Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communication

LEVELS OF IMPACT

By design, we are reaching four levels of impact with our signature programs and strategic initiatives.



We empower instructors with evidence-based resources and personalized thought partnership, which can make a meaningful difference at any career stage. We foster vibrant communities of practice, collaborate with university leaders to scale initiatives, and cultivate a culture of curiosity, reflection, and joy. Together, these efforts strengthen Northwestern's commitment to significant learning and continuous improvement.

OUR VISION

Co-creating a Northwestern where every student and educator experiences ***transformative teaching as a catalyst for lifelong learning.***


VISION IN ACTION

In our strategic planning process, we identified four strategic priorities and aligned our signature programs and initiatives, reimagining each educational developer's portfolio to maximize impact. Guided by our shared values of critical reflection, multi-vocal evidence, and collaboration, we engaged the community in conversations to refine our priorities—elevating student success and instructor vitality.

Given the challenges of the evolving political landscape and ongoing budget uncertainties in higher education, we have chosen to prioritize observation and formative feedback over a fixed five-year backwards design goal-setting process. Each year, we will use these insights alongside our program review cycle to determine next steps for each of our signature programs and strategic initiatives.

As we enact our five-year plan, we remain committed to annual reflection and public updates, ensuring our work evolves with the needs of our community. In this annual report, we are proud to share highlights of what we have achieved together.

01 Deepen reflective, evidence-driven, and innovative pedagogical practices.



I always gain confidence when learning new things in Searle programming—and I see this in my colleagues as well. The spirit of learning Searle fosters in its programming and the collegiality I always enjoy when meeting fellow participants are both PRICELESS for my development as a scholar and teacher.”

—2025 survey respondent

Evidence of Effective Teaching

With a commitment to providing faculty feedback that is less biased and more evidence-based, holistic, and actionable, the Searle Center supported the Reimagining CTEC committee's pilot with 13 instructors to revise CTEC instructions and questions. To further advance the Faculty Senate task force's call to “pluralize” evidence of effective teaching, we also engaged with nine schools to explore teaching evaluation practices. Workshops at Medill and the adoption of the McCormick Teaching Observation Protocol and Rubric represent promising models for scalable, equity-minded teaching evaluation across the University.

Foundational Pedagogy

Over 110 incoming TAs attended the Fall Academic Kickoff, designed around common challenges with workshops led by discipline-specific Kickoff Session Leaders. In Reflective & Effective Teaching, 55 participants created artifacts aligned with learning outcomes, 45 earned a certificate for completing all three quarters, and all participants engaged in educational development workshops and offerings, including those from the CIRTl Network. Program alumni reported that their Searle engagement meaningfully influenced their job market success.

Northwestern's University Practicum

Celebrating its fifth year, the Practicum launched a digital badge to demonstrate participants' investment in learning. Of the 250 participants registered for this year's practicum on Supporting Student Success, 43 completed the rigorous yet flexible requirements needed to earn the badge. To date, the University Practicum has engaged over 1,275 participants, reflecting the ongoing pedagogical development made possible by this institutional infrastructure.

Searle Fellows

The 26th year of the program welcomed 17 new Searle Fellows and their mentors to carry on the rich tradition of cultivating a community of learning and teaching leaders. We now publicly share fellows' projects to amplify their innovative pedagogical and scholarly work.

02

Bolster student success and instructor vitality.

New Faculty Transitions

Drawing on our success co-creating the New Faculty Welcome Program with the Office of the Provost, we extended programming for faculty new to Northwestern, hosting a full year of events to help them build community and sustain their vitality. These events, which will be continued annually, include a mixer, a virtual workshop, a watch party, and end-of-year lunch.



Veronica Womack, Associate Director of High-Impact Teaching and lead of the Principles' recent update, was awarded the **2025 Debra A. Blade Trailblazer Award** by Northwestern's Black Professionals Network. The honor recognizes individuals who have "paved the way for others, showing fortitude and dedication in their professional and personal lives."

Northwestern Principles of Inclusive Teaching

The Northwestern Principles of Inclusive Teaching were enhanced with the latest scholarship on supporting student success and safeguarding instructor vitality. These principles serve as the basis for the newly created inclusive teaching card deck which will be used during pedagogical workshops to generate thoughtful conversations around current and planned teaching practices. Hosted on Searle's website, the Principles now appear on the [*first Google results page*](#) for the search term "inclusive teaching."



After using inclusive pedagogy practices like developing classroom guidelines with students, students felt like they were seen more and had more autonomy. This increased autonomy resulted in increased participation and curiosity in the class."

—2025 survey respondent


STEM Teaching Excellence

Pedagogical Innovations in STEM elevates pedagogy as a scholarly pursuit and a community-building practice. Joined by 35 colleagues, Dr. Stephanie Knezz (Chemistry) illustrated how identity and storytelling empower marginalized students, and Dr. Chamille Lescott (Biomedical Engineering) showed how metacognitive skills across class size enhance students' ability to apply knowledge effectively.

03 Stimulate assessment to drive substantive course & curricular change.

Assessment and Accreditation

The Searle Center engaged all 12 schools and three co-curricular units in drafting the assessment of student learning section of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) assurance argument for the 10-year re-affirmation visit, demonstrating institutional progress and broad representation in advancing program assessment.



My colleagues at the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching... aim to provide resources on research-based and sustainable practices for high-quality teaching and assessment of student learning to Northwestern instructors at any stage of their career.”


—Mearah Quinn-Brauner, Assistant Provost, Strategy & Policy

Assessment Gallery

The Assessment Gallery showcased the excellent and iterative work that programs do to advance a student-centered, equitable, authentic, responsive, lifelong, and empathetic assessment cycle. The Assessment and Accreditation Council members used the 41 program submissions to the Assessment Gallery as a tool to review, synthesize and write school-level summaries, which were incorporated in the HLC assurance argument as evidence of student learning.

Course Design Institute

We launched the Course Design Institute (CDI), a collaboration with NUIT's Teaching and Learning Technologies, offering both in person and online cohorts. We also created CDIAI, an alternative version that guided instructors in using generative ai as a course-creation partner. Across the three CDI cohorts, we immersed over 70 instructors in integrated course design and iterative assessment of student learning.



Applying the skills I learned in the Course Design Institute gave me tools for a smoother redesign of my syllabi that has and will continue to positively impact my students.”

—2025 Survey Respondent

04

Expand the Center's reach and visibility.

Customized Workshops

We were invited by departments and programs from five Northwestern schools and the Office of the Provost to develop 14 customized workshops on a range of topics including Assessment, Generative AI, the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching, and Teaching during Turbulent Times, which we also broadly offered as a special Election Edition to meet widespread interest leading up to the 2024 presidential election.

Distinguished Fellows

Featuring a panel of Searle Center Distinguished Fellows, “Celebrating Pedagogical Innovation: Insights from Award-Winning Educators” was one of the top five highest-rated sessions at [TEACHx](#).



Distinguished Fellows enrich the University's culture of learning & teaching with their unique perspectives and inspiring approaches.”


—Jennifer Keys, Senior Director of the Searle Center

Innovate and Disseminate

We actively engage in scholarly inquiry that contributes to the field of educational development through invited talks, conference presentations, and [scholarly publications](#), which amplifies our impact and raises the profile of the Searle Center.

Open Educational Resources

Our high-quality digital materials equip instructors with readily accessible, evidence-driven teaching strategies. New and updated resources included Learning & Teaching Guides on “Supporting Neurodivergent Student Success” and “In Brief: Transparent Communication of Course Expectations for Student Success.”



Searle educational developer **Eun Sandoval-Lee** was awarded the prestigious **2025 Shujaa Award** from the Women's Center for her work on “Gender Expansive Guidelines for the University Classroom” Guide.

AGILITY & RESPONSIVENESS

In the face of ongoing change, we remain committed to listening, learning, and adapting with care. Each year, we will use what we observe to guide our next steps, ensuring our signature programs and strategic initiatives stay responsive and relevant. With curiosity and resilience, we will be here to partner with instructors, programs/departments, schools, units, and academic leaders as they navigate complexity with thoughtfulness and purpose.