ACHE 2025

# 2025

# Conference Proceedings

Prepared by:
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Date:
**October 2025**

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# 87th Annual ACHE Conference (2025)

## "Bridges to Empathy, Empowerment & Innovation"
### Hilton Milwaukee City Center - October 13 - 15, 2025

**ACHE 2025**

## Pre-Conference • Sunday, October 12

| Time | Session Title | Location |
|------|---------------|----------|
| 9:00 - 10:00 AM | ACHE Board of Directors Breakfast | MacArthur Room |
| 9:00 - 12:00 PM | ACHE Board of Directors Meeting | MacArthur Room |
| 12:00 - 1:00 PM | Lunch: ACHE Board of Directors and Conference Planning Committee | MacArthur Room |
| 1:00 - 2:00 P.M. | Conference Planning Committee Meeting | MacArthur Room |
| 1:00 – 5:00 PM | ACHE Registration Desk Open | Wright Foyer |
| 3:30–6 P.M. | Business Partners Set-Up | Wright Foyer |
| 5:30 P.M. | First and Second-Timers Meet-Up | 3rd St. Market Hall |

# 87th Annual ACHE Conference (2025)

"Bridges to Empathy, Empowerment & Innovation"
Hilton Milwaukee City Center - October 13 - 15, 2025

## Day 1 • Monday, October 13 • Feel the Love Day

| Time | Session Title | Location |
|---|---|---|
| 8:00 AM–5:00 PM | Conference Registration & Information Desk Open | Wright Foyer |
| 8:00 AM–5:00 PM | Business Partners Open | Wright Foyer |
| 8:00 - 9:00 AM | Breakfast (All Attendees) | Wright Ballroom |
| 8:00 - 9:00 AM | Breakfast (First and Second Timers) | MacArthur Room |
| 9:00 - 9:50 AM | Melissa Robinson Winemiller (Keynote #1) | Wright Ballroom |
| 9:50 - 10:15 AM | Break | |
| 10:15 - 11:00 AM | **Concurrent Sessions: Block 1 (45 min)** | |
| | **"Cultivated Student and Teacher Agency Empowers College and Career Pathways"** Presented by David Waldherr | Walker Room |
| | **"Empathy in the Classroom: Using the Johari Window to Foster Understanding and Collaboration Among Faculty and Nontraditional Students in Higher Education"** Presented by Janine N. Guerra, LLM, JD and Melissa Robinson-Winemiller, PhD | Mitchell Room |

# 87th Annual ACHE Conference (2025)
## "Bridges to Empathy, Empowerment & Innovation"
Day 1 • Monday, October 13 (cont.)

ACHE 2025

| Time | Session Title | Location |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | **Concurrent Sessions: Block 1 (cont.)** | |
| | **"Engage, Lead, Inspire – Achieve with ACHE & ELI!"** Presented by Dr. Rich Whitney | Miller Room |
| | **"An AI Professional Development Book Club: Helping Faculty to Prepare Students for the Future Workforce"** Presented by Jennifer Banas and Sandra Beyda-Lorie | Schlitz Room |
| 11:00 – 11:15 AM | Break | |
| 11:15 – 12:00 PM | **Concurrent Sessions: Block 2 (45 min)** | |
| | **"Enhancing Learner Success and Workforce Development with the Neuroinclusion Framework"** Presented by Niki Elliott, PhD and Sylvia Mac, Ph.D. | Mitchell Room |
| | **"Empowering Educators:  Leveraging AI for Course Design"** Presented by Cindy S. York | Walker Room |
| | **"Pedagogy, Practice, and Purpose: Preparing New Faculty for Teaching Excellence"** Presented by Dr. Chessica Cave and Dr. Ashley Stanley | Pabst Room |
| | **"Celebrating Ourselves: Beating Stress"** Presented by R. Scott Boots, MPA | Schlitz Room |

# 87th Annual ACHE Conference (2025)
## "Bridges to Empathy, Empowerment & Innovation"
Day 1 • Monday, October 13 (cont.)

ACHE 2025
MILWAUKEE, WI

| Time | Session Title | Location |
|---|---|---|
| **12:00 – 12:45 PM** | Lunch | Wright Ballroom |
| **12:45 TO 1:00 PM** | Business Partner Talk | Wright Ballroom |
| **1:00 TO 1:15 PM** | Break | Wright Ballroom |
| **1:15 TO 2:00 PM** | **Concurrent Sessions: Block 3 (45 min)** | |
| | **"Bridging Equity and Empowerment: How Multicultural Program Investment Advances Student Success in Continuing Higher Education"** Presented by Dr. J. Quinton Staples | Mitchell Room |
| | **"Neurodivergence, Trauma, & SLIFE: Concerns in Adult & Higher Education"** Presented by David A. Housel, Ed.D. | Miller Room |
| | **"Strategies for Creating, Developing & Leading Productive Remote Work Teams"** Presented by Dr. Wendy Johnson | Schlitz Room |
| **2:00 TO 2:15 PM** | Break | |

| Time | Session Title | Location |
|---|---|---|
| **2:15 TO 2:45 PM** | **Breakout Session + Roundtable (30 min)** | |
| | **"Publishing your work in JCHE and beyond"** Presented by Dr. Walter S. Pearson and Katherine Lyons | MacArthur Room |
| | **"Teaching Inclusive Teaching Strategies: A Game-Inspired Approach"** Presented by Dr. Michael Reese | Mitchell Room |
| | **"Student Faculty Interaction and the Non-Traditional Learner"** Presented by Dr. Pamela D Morris | Walker Room |
| | **"Cohort Based Communities of Learning - Revisited Post-Pandemic"** Presented by Elizabeth Crawford and David Rausch | Pabst Room |
| | **"Prediction of Student Success Through LMS Engagement in Asynchronous Online Courses"** Presented by Andy Browne, PhD | Miller Room |
| | **"What matters most? Adult Learner Choice in Noncredit Continuing Education"** Presented by Kiel Norris | Schlitz Room |
| **2:45 TO 3:00 PM** | Break | |
| **3:00 TO 3:45 PM** | Feel the Love! | Wright Ballroom |
| **5 TO 9 PM** | Welcome Reception | |

# 87th Annual ACHE Conference (2025)
"Bridges to Empathy, Empowerment & Innovation"
Hilton Milwaukee City Center - October 13 - 15, 2025

**ACHE 2025**

## Day 2 • Tuesday, October 14 • Color Pop Day

| Time | Session Title | Location |
|---|---|---|
| 8:00 AM-5:00 PM | Conference Registration & Information Desk Open | Wright Foyer |
| 8:00 AM-5:00 PM | Business Partners Open | Wright Foyer |
| 8:00 - 9:00 AM | Breakfast (All Attendees) | Wright Ballroom |
| 9:00 - 9:50 AM | Jessica Riddell (Keynote #2) | Wright Ballroom |
| 9:50 - 10:15 AM | Break | |
| 10:15 - 11:00 AM | **Concurrent Sessions: Block 4 (45 min)** | |
| | **"Bridging Innovation and Access: Reimagining Continuing Education through Technology and Empathy"** Presented by April Rainbolt and Brent Rangen | Mitchell Room |
| | **"Beyond the Badge: Industry-engaged Microcredentials for Bridging Generations in the Workforce and Advancing Socioeconomic Mobility"** Presented by Melynda Thorpe | Walker Room |
| | **"Building Bridges: Empowering New Faculty Through Mentorship"** Presented by Dr. Marie M Mallory and Hannah Regitz | Pabst Room |

# 87th Annual ACHE Conference (2025)
"Bridges to Empathy, Empowerment & Innovation"
Day 2 • Tuesday, October 14 (cont.)

**ACHE 2025**

| Time | Session Title | Location |
|---|---|---|
| **11:00 – 11:15 AM** | Break | |
| **11:15 – 12:35 PM** | Awards + Lunch | Wright Ballroom |
| **12:35 TO 1:00 PM** | ACHE Annual Business Meeting | Wright Ballroom |
| **1:15 – 2:00 PM** | **Concurrent Sessions: Block 5 (45 min)** | |
| | **"Empathy and Expectations: Success Stories and Second Chance Students"** Presented by Keri Lee Carter and John Lando Carter | Walker Room |
| | **"The Art of Tough Talks: A Leadership Playbook for Difficult Conversations"** Presented by Dr. Wendy Johnson | Pabst Room |
| | **"Feedback That Fuels Student Growth"** Presented by Dr. Chessica Cave | Miller Room |
| | **"Kentucky's Statewide Blueprint for Adult Student Success by Scaling Credit for Prior Learning"** Presented by Matt Bergman, Ph.D. | Mitchell Room |
| **2:00 TO 2:15 PM** | Break | Wright Ballroom |

# 87th Annual ACHE Conference (2025)
"Bridges to Empathy, Empowerment & Innovation"
Day 2 • Tuesday, October 14 (cont.)

ACHE 2025

| Time | Session Title | Location |
|---|---|---|
| 2:15 TO 3:00 PM | **Concurrent Sessions: Block 6 (45 min)** | |
| | **"Leading from Within: The Power of Self-Reflection"** <br> Presented by Dr. Wendy Johnson | Walker Room |
| | **"Reimagining Learning Systems: Open Source Innovation for Skills Forward Education"** <br> Presented by Jenna Makowski, Kathryn Green, and Lacey McCann | Pabst Room |
| | **"Connection as Compassion: Using Empathetic Case Management to Retain and Empower Workforce Students"** <br> Presented by Odile Dilone | Miller Room |
| | **"Promoting Culturally Responsive, Decolonized Instruction and Linguistic Justice in Adult & Higher Education"** <br> Presented by David A. Housel, Ed.D. | Schlitz Room |
| 3:00 TO 3:15 PM | Break | |

# 87th Annual ACHE Conference (2025)
## "Bridges to Empathy, Empowerment & Innovation"
### Day 2 • Tuesday, October 14 (cont.)

ACHE 2025

| Time | Session Title | Location |
|---|---|---|
| **3:15 TO 3:45 PM** | **Breakout Session + Roundtable - 30 min** | Wright Ballroom |
| | **"The Integration of Non-Credit Certificate Programs in For-Credit College Courses"** Presented by Elizabeth Crawford, David Rausch, and Christine Wolfe | MacArthur Room |
| | **"Beyond the Transcript: Empowering Adult Learners Through Co-Curricular Engagement"** Presented by Jennifer Gettings and Whitney McDowell-Robinson | Mitchell Room |
| | **"Tune In, Reach Out: Expanding the University Voice Through Podcasting"** Presented by Leslie Cordie, PHD, MBA, BSN | Walker Room |
| | **"More Than Academic: The Critical Role of Emotional Support in Online Adult Student Success"** Presented by Kijoung Na | Pabst Room |
| | **"Innovate to Empower: Guiding Adult Learners in the AI-Enhanced Classroom"** Presented by Dr. Mike Breakey | Miller Room |
| | **"Towards a Critical College Choice Model for Undocumented Students"** Presented by Diego Castro Gomez | Schlitz Room |
| **6:00 - 8:00 PM** | Lakefront Brewery Tour | |

# 87th Annual ACHE Conference (2025)
## "Bridges to Empathy, Empowerment & Innovation"
### Hilton Milwaukee City Center - October 13 - 15, 2025

## Day 3 • Wednesday, October 15 • Spirit & Swag Day

| Time | Session Title | Location |
|------|---------------|----------|
| 8:00 - 11:00 AM | Business Partners Open | Wright Foyer |
| 8:00 - 9:00 AM | Breakfast (All Attendees) | Wright Ballroom |
| 9:00 - 9:50 AM | Julie Shankle (Keynote #3) | Wright Ballroom |
| 9:50 - 10:00 AM | Break | |
| 10:00 - 10:45 AM | Roundtable Discussions | Wright Ballroom |
| 10:45 - 11:00AM | Break | |
| 11:00 - 11:45 AM | Passing of the Gavel & Closing Remarks | Wright Ballroom |
| 12:00 PM - 3 PM | ACHE Board of Directors Meeting + Working Lunch | MacArthur Room |

# "Kentucky's Statewide Blueprint for Adult Student Success by Scaling Credit for Prior Learning"

Matt Bergman, Ph.D. & Dallas Kratzer, Ph.D.
Kentucky's Council on Postsecondary Education

## Abstract

To meet the urgent need for accelerated adult degree completion, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) launched a comprehensive statewide Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Initiative designed to help institutions expand high-quality, consistent, and sustainable CPL practices. Leveraging the ADDIE instructional design model—Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation—Kentucky built a shared framework that aligned campus teams, strengthened collaboration across institutions, and guided colleges and universities through a structured process to recognize learning acquired outside the traditional classroom.

This proceedings paper provides a detailed overview of Kentucky's statewide approach, including the creation of institutional champions, readiness assessments, professional learning modules, campus-based implementation plans, and strategies to measure return on investment. It also distills the innovations, policy insights, and system-level lessons that emerged through implementation, offering a replicable framework for other states, systems, and institutions seeking to scale CPL as a tool for adult student success.

## Introduction: A Statewide Imperative for Adult Student Success

For more than a decade, Kentucky has faced the same challenge confronting states across the nation: too many adults with some college but no degree, too many barriers to re-entry, and too few pathways that recognize learning already gained through work, military service, or community experience. As Kentucky seeks to raise educational attainment and strengthen its workforce, supporting adult learners has become a statewide priority.

In response to these needs and building on Kentucky's historic leadership in adult education and transfer policy, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) launched a statewide Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Initiative to align institutional efforts, modernize CPL practice, and expand the recognition of learning occurring outside the traditional academic environment.

CPL has long been recognized as one of the strongest evidence-based strategies for

# "Kentucky's Statewide Blueprint for Adult Student Success by Scaling Credit for Prior Learning"

improving adult access, persistence, and completion. Studies by CAEL and WICHE have demonstrated that adult learners who earn CPL are more likely to finish a credential, complete in less time, and at lower cost. Yet, institutions often struggle to scale CPL efforts without statewide alignment, shared tools, or coordinated training.

Kentucky's initiative sought to address this challenge directly by building a statewide blueprint that institutions could use to analyze gaps, design solutions, develop tools, and implement consistent CPL processes. This work aligns with the mission of the Association for Continuing Higher Education (ACHE) by improving access, decreasing barriers, and promoting lifelong learning for adults.

## Foundational Framework: Applying ADDIE to Statewide CPL Implementation

One of the unique features of Kentucky's CPL Initiative is its adoption of the ADDIE instructional design framework, an approach well known to organizational learning professionals but uncommon in statewide policy work. ADDIE provided a structured, iterative, and collaborative model for guiding institutions through a complex implementation process.

### 1. Analysis

The analysis phase focused on understanding institutional readiness, capacity, policies, and campus culture. During this phase, institutions completed a detailed CPL Readiness Assessment, examining:

- Strategic alignment with institutional goals
- Current CPL policies and definitions
- Assessment pathways (portfolios, exams, industry credentials, military training)
- Faculty awareness and participation
- Student advising, communication, and website clarity
- Data collection practices and transcript notation
- Workforce partnerships and external credit-mapping agreements

CPE coupled these self-assessments with campus interviews, document reviews, and cross- institutional comparisons to identify statewide strengths, gaps, and opportunities.

### 2. Design

Using results from the analysis, CPE and campus teams collaboratively designed:

# "Kentucky's Statewide Blueprint for Adult Student Success by Scaling Credit for Prior Learning"

- A **statewide training structure** consisting of 10–16 modules delivered via monthly
- virtual meetings
- A CPL Champion role at each institution charged with leading campus coordination
- A blueprint for implementation plans, including policy revision timelines, faculty development, and communication strategies
- Shared definitions, language, and guiding principles based on CAEL's 10 Standards for CPL Campus teams designed projects based on local context ensuring that the statewide initiative empowered institutional innovation rather than prescribing a one-size-fits-all model.

## 3. Development

In the development phase, institutions created the resources necessary to launch or expand CPL practice. Examples include:

- Revised campus CPL policies
- Crosswalks for industry certifications and military training
- Updated catalog language and advising guides
- Faculty toolkits for evaluating portfolio evidence
- Communication plans for students, adult "comebackers," and regional employers
- Workflow maps outlining intake, assessment, and posting of credit

CPE simultaneously built statewide tools, such as:

- A CPL marketing and messaging guide for adult learner recruitment
- A data template for reporting CPL volume, type, and student outcomes
- Campus-agnostic resources on assessment integrity, quality assurance, and faculty engagement

## 4. Implementation

Institutions carried out their implementation plans over a multi-month period, supported by CPE's coaching, module-based trainings, and peer-learning opportunities. Key activities included:

- Launching or expanding CPL websites
- Training faculty assessors
- Building transcript consistency

# "Kentucky's Statewide Blueprint for Adult Student Success by Scaling Credit for Prior Learning"

- Updating student information systems to track CPL
- Establishing new agreements with employers, workforce boards, and community partners

The role of the CPL Champion was essential: champions facilitated campus meetings, ensured progress toward deliverables, and connected their institution to the statewide support team.

## 5. Evaluation

Evaluation occurred on two levels both campus and statewide.

At the campus level, institutions reported on:

- Policy changes completed
- Increases in CPL volume or assessment pathways
- Improvements in student communication
- Infrastructure enhancements (e.g., new forms, websites, workflows)
- Barriers identified and steps taken to address them

At the statewide level, CPE assessed:

- Implementation fidelity against the ADDIE model
- Readiness improvement across institutions
- Equity of access and impact for adult learners, veterans, and military-connected students
- Opportunities for sustaining and scaling the work beyond the pilot year

An additional focus of the evaluation phase was building a return on investment (ROI) model, enabling institutions to quantify the financial, academic, and workforce impacts of CPL expansion.

### Building a Statewide Coalition: Structures That Enabled Collaboration

Central to the success of the initiative was the intentional effort to build a shared statewide community of practice. Rather than approaching CPL as an isolated campus-level project, CPE fostered a collaborative ecosystem across universities, community colleges, and adult education partners.

# "Kentucky's Statewide Blueprint for Adult Student Success by Scaling Credit for Prior Learning"

## CPL Champions

Each institution designated a CPL Champion, typically a faculty leader, registrar, dean, or adult- learner success administrator, responsible for:

- Coordinating campus work teams
- Liaising with CPE
- Monitoring implementation progress
- Ensuring alignment across academic, advising, and student-facing units
- Promoting a culture that values adult and experiential learning

Champions quickly emerged as subject-matter experts and internal advocates, shaping the long- term sustainability of the initiative.

## Cross-Function Campus Teams

Teams included representation from:
- Academic affairs
- Faculty leadership
- Registrar and records
- Advising
- Student services
- Institutional research
- Continuing and workforce education

This cross-functional design ensured that CPL was not housed solely in one unit and instead became part of the institution's student-ready practices.

## Statewide Trainings and Peer Learning

Monthly synchronous workshops were paired with optional coaching sessions and asynchronous resources. These gatherings created a space for:
- Sharing promising practices
- Reviewing statewide trends
- Co-creating tools
- Troubleshooting barriers
- Highlighting faculty engagement strategies
- Addressing concerns around quality, integrity, and accreditation

# "Kentucky's Statewide Blueprint for Adult Student Success by Scaling Credit for Prior Learning"

Institutions benefitted from hearing about solutions tried by peer campuses, reducing duplication of effort and accelerating progress.

## Innovations and Key Takeaways

Through the initiative, several innovations and insights emerged that are relevant for continuing higher education practitioners nationwide.

### 1. A Structured Model Accelerates Adoption

The ADDIE framework provided clarity, sequencing, and a shared vocabulary. Institutions appreciated its flexibility—it accommodated campuses at very different stages while maintaining consistent expectations.

### 2. Readiness Assessments Matter

Kentucky's CPL Readiness Assessment served as a mirror for institutions. It revealed strengths (e.g., strong workforce partnerships) and systemic gaps (e.g., inconsistent transcript notation, uneven faculty awareness). Many campuses used the assessment as an internal planning tool beyond the scope of the initiative.

### 3. Quality Assurance Builds Faculty Trust

By grounding the work in CAEL's 10 Standards, and ensuring alignment with accreditor expectations, Kentucky reinforced a consistent message: CPL is not about lowering academic standards—it is about accurately evaluating learning regardless of where it occurs.

### 4. Communication Is a Game Changer

Early student website audits revealed that many institutions had buried, outdated, or unclear CPL information. Updating communication materials instantly improved access for adult learners and advisers alike.

### 5. Consistency + Flexibility = Sustainability

The statewide framework balanced statewide alignment with institutional autonomy. Kentucky created a common blueprint, not a prescriptive manual, and allowed each

# "Kentucky's Statewide Blueprint for Adult Student Success by Scaling Credit for Prior Learning"

institution to adapt within its own mission, learner population, and governance structures.

## 6. Data Infrastructure Requires Patience

Institutions struggled with tracking CPL types consistently, posting CPL to transcripts in uniform ways, and linking CPL records with degree audit systems. Recognizing this, CPE began developing guidance for data standards, transcript notation, and ROI modeling.

## 7. Scaling CPL Supports Workforce and Talent Pipeline Needs

Through new crosswalks with industries such as manufacturing, IT, healthcare, and logistics, institutions increased accessibility for working adults and employer-sponsored learners.

## Participant Engagement and Real-World Application

During the conference session, participants engaged with a series of applied exercises, discussions, and case examples illustrating how higher education systems can replicate Kentucky's model.

## Key Engagement Moments

- **Institutional Self-Assessment Activity:** Attendees used an abbreviated version of Kentucky's readiness assessment to evaluate strengths and gaps on their own campuses.
- **Peer Dialogue**: Table groups discussed challenges such as faculty workload, assessment integrity, military credit evaluation, and crosswalk development.
- **Scenario-Based Problem Solving**: Participants reviewed real Kentucky cases—including the development of employer partnerships or building CPL websites—and explored how these could translate to their own contexts.
- **ROI Exploration**: The audience examined early models for calculating institutional ROI, including credit-hour impact, enrollment growth, and time-to-degree measures.

Through these discussions, participants emphasized the value of structured statewide collaboration, transparent communication, and cross-campus consistency.

# "Kentucky's Statewide Blueprint for Adult Student Success by Scaling Credit for Prior Learning"

**Relevance to Continuing Higher Education and the ACHE Mission**

Kentucky's CPL Initiative directly advances ACHE's mission to serve adult learners by:

- Expanding access to accelerated pathways
- Reducing time and cost to completion
- Recognizing learning acquired through work, military service, and community engagement
- Strengthening partnerships between higher education and employers
- Enhancing institutional responsiveness to adult student needs
- Promoting lifelong learning as a driver of career mobility and economic opportunity

Continuing higher education plays a pivotal role in recognizing diverse forms of learning, and Kentucky's model offers a framework for systems wishing to modernize their policies and practices in alignment with adult learner success and workforce development.

**Broader Policy and Research Context**

Kentucky's work builds on national literature and policy developments, including:

- CAEL's Ten Standards for Assessing Learning (2015): A foundational quality assurance model for CPL.
- WICHE/CAEL "The PLA Boost" (2020): Evidence demonstrating higher completion rates for adults earning CPL.
- Lumina Foundation's Talent, Innovation, and Equity Framework: Emphasizing credential attainment for adults and working learners.
- ACE Military Guide: Recognized as a standardized resource for evaluating military training.
- Statewide policy trends: Including expanded military articulation agreements, employer partnerships, and adult-learner-ready institutional frameworks.

Kentucky's innovation lies not simply in adopting these frameworks but in orchestrating a coordinated, statewide implementation model that bridges academic, workforce, and policy sectors.

# "Kentucky's Statewide Blueprint for Adult Student Success by Scaling Credit for Prior Learning"

## Lessons for States, Systems, and Multi-Campus Collaborations

Other states seeking to replicate Kentucky's blueprint can benefit from several strategic considerations:

1. Start with readiness, not assumptions. Campuses vary widely in CPL experience; assessment provides clarity.
2. Designate a campus champion early. Sustainable CPL practice requires ownership and leadership.
3. Sequence work using a structured model. ADDIE is scalable, flexible, and familiar to adult-learning professionals.
4. Invest in communication tools. Students and advisers need clear, accessible CPL information.
5. Build a statewide professional learning community. Peer dialogue accelerates innovation and diffuses best practices.
6. Align with employer and military needs. External partners value consistency and transparency.
7. Plan for long-term data and ROI infrastructure. Without data, CPL expansion cannot be measured or improved.
8. Celebrate early wins. Recognizing immediate gains—policy revisions, website upgrades, or one new crosswalk—keeps momentum high.

These lessons offer a powerful roadmap for states or systems that want to pursue CPL expansion as part of a broader adult success agenda.

## Conclusion and Future Directions

Kentucky's statewide Credit for Prior Learning Initiative demonstrates what is possible when institutions commit to a shared vision for adult learner success, supported by a structured framework, cross-campus collaboration, and statewide leadership. By grounding the work in the ADDIE model, institutions moved from isolated efforts to a statewide system that values prior learning, increases transparency, and builds pathways aligned with high-demand careers.

As Kentucky continues to refine CPL data practices, strengthen employer partnerships, and expand military-connected learner pathways, the next stage of work will focus on:

# "Kentucky's Statewide Blueprint for Adult Student Success by Scaling Credit for Prior Learning"

- Scaling consistent CPL transcript notation
- Enhancing faculty development for portfolio assessment
- Implementing statewide ROI dashboards
- Strengthening alignment between CPL and workforce credentials
- Deepening cross-sector partnerships across education, military, and industry

The Kentucky CPL Initiative offers a replicable, practical, and transformative model for other regions seeking to build adult-learner-ready systems. It demonstrates that when institutions come together with shared purpose, guided by a research-informed framework, the impact on adult learners—and on the communities they serve—can be profound.

# "Innovate to Empower: Guiding Adult Learners in the AI-Enhanced Classroom"

Dr. Michael Breakey, University of Tennessee Chattanooga

## Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has shifted rapidly from technical curiosity to a defining feature of modern life, shaping communication, work, and learning across sectors. For contemporary learners, many balancing careers, families, and academic commitments, generative AI presents both opportunity and challenge. Continuing higher education is particularly well-positioned to guide students through this transition with clarity and purpose.

This narrative builds on a presentation first delivered at the Association for Continuing Higher Education (ACHE) South conference in February 2025 and refined for the ACHE Summer Webinar Series. Across these iterations, the focus has remained constant: to offer a balanced, research-informed, and practice-oriented framework for integrating AI in ways that support ACHE's mission of access, innovation, and lifelong learning.

## I. AI in Our Culture: Public Concern and Student Adoption

Public understanding of AI is marked by uncertainty. While 56% of AI experts anticipate positive societal impact, only 17% of the public agrees, and half of U.S. adults express more concern than excitement—a notable increase from 2021 (Pew Research Center, 2025). Adult learners often echo these fears, wondering whether AI will diminish creativity or undermine academic integrity.

Yet student behavior points in the opposite direction. Eighty-six percent of students report using AI in their studies, and over half use it weekly (Digital Education Council, 2025). This gap between cultural apprehension and practical use underscores the need for clear institutional guidance. In continuing higher education, where students often face time constraints and competing responsibilities, AI can support clarity, organization, and confidence. Educators, however, must help learners critically evaluate AI output and integrate course concepts in ways that maintain authenticity and rigor.

# "Innovate to Empower: Guiding Adult Learners in the AI-Enhanced Classroom"

## II. Applied Leadership Policy Development: A Balanced Model for Responsible Use

UTC's Applied Leadership (LEAP) program developed an AI policy emphasizing balance, transparency, and professional relevance. The policy acknowledges AI as a permanent part of the modern workplace, permitting its use for brainstorming, organization, and editing while insisting that students, not AI, produce original thinking and course-based synthesis. Students must cite AI appropriately and use it sparingly, particularly in assignments grounded in personal reflection or leadership practice.

The policy also warns students about false-positive results from AI detectors. One case involved an honors-level student whose only tool was Grammarly; multiple detectors still flagged her work as "100% AI." Such incidents illustrate why conversation-based academic integrity remains essential.

## III. The Current Landscape: Faculty Experience and the Limits of Detection

Faculty increasingly see writing influenced by AI, often through mechanical tone or stylistic uniformity. However, a significant issue is the unreliability of detection systems. As shown in the session, detectors can misclassify even polished human writing, and students can circumvent detection with paraphrasing tools or deliberate imperfections.

LEAP's approach emphasizes dialogue. When faculty suspect AI misuse, they ask students directly. Adult learners generally respond honestly, and when AI use exceeds expectations, students are asked to revise the work. This method maintains trust while reinforcing expectations for responsible use.

## IV. AI Spoofing: Why Pedagogy Matters More Than Policing

A demonstration in the session highlighted AI spoofing tools that are increasingly accessible. Programs such as Undetectable.ai or StealthWriter can disguise AI-produced text, and simple prompt adjustments can mimic human inconsistency. These realities make heavy reliance on AI detectors ineffective.

A more sustainable solution is pedagogical rather than technological. Assignments designed to emphasize personal voice, contextual reasoning, and real-world leadership application naturally limit inappropriate AI use. When tasks require lived experience, reflective insight, or integration of course- specific concepts, AI can support refinement but cannot replace the authentic student work.

# "Innovate to Empower: Guiding Adult Learners in the AI-Enhanced Classroom"

### V. Undergraduate Classroom Applications: Transparent and Reflective Use

A sample three-step reflective writing assignment in LEAP courses illustrates balanced AI integration. Students first write an original 500-word leadership narrative without AI. Then, they seek AI feedback on clarity or structure and revise accordingly. Finally, they reflect on the suggestions they accepted or rejected and what they learned from the process. Students submit the original essay, the AI dialogue, and the final revision. This structure promotes transparency and metacognition while preparing adult learners for professional environments where reviewing and refining AI output is increasingly common.

### VI. Graduate Applications: AI-Generated Cases and Ethical Reasoning

Graduate students use AI to generate an ethical dilemma relevant to their profession, then analyze it using two ethical frameworks and a decision-making model. They conclude with a reflection on the accuracy and usefulness of the AI-generated scenario. This assignment strengthens ethical reasoning and professional judgment while teaching students to evaluate AI critically; an essential leadership competency in an AI-influenced workplace.

### VII. Limiting Overuse Through Personalization and Authentic Engagement

Assignments grounded in personal experience inherently reduce AI overuse. Learning Application Presentations, leadership assessments, and reflective analyses require students to connect theory with their own leadership behaviors. When personal stories intertwine with course citations, the result is work that AI cannot authentically generate.

### VIII. Faculty Integration: Modeling Ethical AI Use

Faculty also use AI for constructive purposes such as refining rubrics, generating examples, designing assignments, or creating AI-resistant assessments. These activities model ethical, transparent AI engagement and demonstrate to adult learners how AI can enhance productivity without replacing intellectual effort.

### IX. Barriers and Environmental Concerns

AI adoption also brings challenges. Digital literacy varies widely among adult learners, and concerns about the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Health

# "Innovate to Empower: Guiding Adult Learners in the AI-Enhanced Classroom"

Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) make many hesitant to share information with AI tools. Access to reliable internet and modern devices also differs significantly among nontraditional students.

In response to privacy and data-security concerns, many institutions are experimenting with firewalled or institution-hosted AI platforms, such as the University of Tennessee's UTVerse. These systems keep data within the university ecosystem rather than sending it to external servers, reducing risk under FERPA, HIPAA, and GDPR. However, early implementations often have limited functionality compared to commercial tools, and faculty report that adoption and utility can lag behind expectations. Firewalled systems show promise, but they also highlight the ongoing tension between innovation, privacy, and practical usability in higher education.

Environmental concerns further complicate the picture. Data centers near major hubs have experienced electricity cost increases of up to 267% (Bloomberg, 2025), and U.S. data centers consumed over 4% of national electricity in 2023, with projections rising as high as 12% by 2028 (Guidi, Zhao, & Patel, 2024). AI queries require vastly more energy than standard searches (Chen, 2025). These pressures require institutions to balance technological innovation with sustainability commitments.

## X. Participant Discussion and Demonstration
The session concluded with discussion, questions and answers, and a live prompt demonstration. The live example involving a photo of a malfunctioning Ameristar AC unit showed how a well-framed prompt (with a photo) can yield detailed, technically accurate output. The point was not the content but the insight. AI is most effective when users craft clear, intentional prompts. This helps adult learners see AI as a responsive tool rather than a mysterious engine.

# "Innovate to Empower: Guiding Adult Learners in the AI-Enhanced Classroom"

## XI. Implications for ACHE and Continuing Higher Education

The practices outlined here align closely with ACHE's mission. Teaching students to use AI responsibly prepares them for modern workplaces that increasingly expect such fluency. Assignments grounded in lived experience preserve academic integrity, while balanced policies foster trust and ethical reasoning. In this way, AI becomes not a threat but an opportunity to strengthen learning, enhance access, and advance innovation within continuing higher education.

## Conclusion

AI will continue reshaping higher education. The most effective response is neither avoidance nor uncritical adoption, but thoughtful integration. Educators must model transparent use, and students must learn to verify, question, and contextualize AI output. AI can support learning but cannot replace the insight gained from lived experience and personal reflection.

Through balanced policy, innovative assessment design, and reflective pedagogy, continuing higher education can ensure AI becomes a catalyst for empowerment, strengthening both educational practice and the aspirations of adult learners.

# "Innovate to Empower: Guiding Adult Learners in the AI-Enhanced Classroom"

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# "Navigating Disruption with Values-Based Leadership"

## Julie Shankle, University of Central Florida

### Introduction

Disruption is a constant in our lives and work, especially in the realm of continuing higher education. As leaders and educators, our ability to navigate change—whether anticipated or unexpected—directly impacts our institutions and the adult learners we serve. My keynote at ACHE 2025, "Navigating Disruption with Values-Based Leadership," explored how grounding ourselves and our teams in core values enables resilience, adaptability, and authentic leadership in times of upheaval. This narrative expands on the session, weaving together personal stories, practical models, participant reflections, and connections to the ACHE mission.

### The Nature of Disruption

Drawing on Bruce Feiler's concept of "lifequakes," we recognize that major disruptions— personal or professional—occur regularly, with about half being involuntary. These events, whether positive or negative, create stress and demand adaptation. In higher education, disruptions may take the form of technological shifts, policy changes, evolving learner needs, or global crises. For adult learners, such disruptions are often compounded by competing responsibilities: work, family, and community.

### Relevance to Continuing Higher Education

The contemporary adult learner is not a new phenomenon. My father's journey as a "first gen" college student in the 1970s—balancing work, family, and studies—mirrors the experiences of today's learners. His story, and those of countless others, highlight the importance of lifelong learning and trusted sources of information. As educators, understanding our learners' contexts and motivations ("their why") is essential for designing programs and support systems that truly meet their needs.

### Values-Based Leadership: Models and Innovations

### Discovering and Centering Values

Values-based leadership begins with self-awareness. In the session, participants engaged in activities to identify their "why" and core values, using tools like the compass rose and "message in a bottle." These exercises revealed that values—such as integrity, respect, curiosity, empathy, creativity, responsibility, resilience, and

# "Navigating Disruption with Values-Based Leadership"

equanimity—are foundational, yet often unexamined. Leaders must periodically reflect on whether their actions and resource allocations align with these values, using indicators like peak moments and irritation triggers.

### Anchors and Support Systems

Resilience in disruption is supported by personal and professional "anchors": physical wellbeing, hobbies, civic engagement, family, faith, and networks. The concept of a "personal board of directors"—trusted advisors who provide honest feedback and support—was discussed as a strategy for maintaining equilibrium. For many, the ACHE network itself serves as a vital anchor, offering mentorship and community through professional challenges.

### Navigating Change: The Sailing Metaphor

Progress in the face of disruption is rarely linear. Borrowing from sailing, the technique of "tacking" illustrates how leaders must adapt, persist, and sometimes change course to reach their goals. The integration of new technologies—such as AI—was compared to the hydrofoils on America's Cup vessels, enabling teams to "fly" above obstacles. Partnerships, both internal and external, are crucial for success.

### Leveraging Team Strengths

Authentic leadership creates psychological safety, empowering teams to bring their strengths to bear on challenges. The session introduced "strength rotation leadership," encouraging leaders to audit past successes and allow team members best suited to a challenge to take the lead. This approach fosters trust, collaboration, and innovation, turning disruption into opportunity.

### The Power of Mantras and Mottos

Personal and team mottos—such as "Find a way" (Diana Nyad), "Work the problem" (Gene Kranz), and "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!" (David Glasgow Farragut)—serve as guiding principles in turbulent times. These mantras reinforce unity and focus, helping teams stay on course amid uncertainty.

### Reflections on Participant Engagement

The session was highly interactive, with participants sharing their "why," identifying values, and discussing anchors and mottos. Notable discussions centered on the challenges of aligning personal and institutional values, the role of psychological

# "Navigating Disruption with Values-Based Leadership"

safety in team performance, and strategies for supporting adult learners through disruption. Real-world implications emerged as attendees reflected on their own experiences with change and resilience.

## Supporting the ACHE Mission

Values-based leadership directly supports the ACHE mission to support those who work to serve adult learners and promote lifelong learning. By fostering environments where learners and educators can articulate their "why," align actions with values, and leverage diverse strengths, we create pathways for success that extend beyond the classroom. Our legacy, as higher education professionals, lives in every learner we support and every relationship we build.

## Conclusion

Navigating disruption with values-based leadership is not a one-time event, but an ongoing practice. By centering ourselves and our teams in core values, building resilient support systems, and embracing innovation, we can weather storms and seize opportunities. In continuing higher education, this approach ensures that adult learners are not only prepared for change, but empowered to thrive. Our relationships, our legacy, and our commitment to lifelong learning endure beyond any disruption.

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*Note: This summary was drafted with the aid of AI tools, based on the original keynote script.*

# "Bridging Innovation and Empathy: Digital Transformation for Continuing Education"

## April Rainbolt, RJP Systems

### Relevance to Continuing Higher Education

The session Bridging Innovation and Empathy: Digital Transformation for Continuing Education addressed a critical and timely challenge facing continuing and adult education units across higher education: how institutions can respond strategically—and humanely—to rapidly shifting demographics, learner expectations, and technological possibilities. As the "demographic cliff" accelerates and traditional student pipelines contract, continuing education divisions are increasingly positioned at the forefront of institutional sustainability, access, and workforce alignment. At the same time, more than 40 million adults in the United States have some college credit but no credential, representing both a profound opportunity and a moral imperative for higher education to redesign systems that better serve adult learners . This session argued that digital transformation in continuing education must move beyond efficiency-driven technology adoption toward an empathy-centered model that places adult learners' lived experiences, constraints, and motivations at the core of digital strategy. By integrating innovation with empathy, institutions can expand access, increase enrollment and completion, and reinforce their public mission to support lifelong learning.

### Conceptual Framework: Three Pillars of Digital Empowerment

The session introduced a practical framework built on three interconnected pillars of digital empowerment: (1) dynamic, student-centered websites; (2) integrated CRM systems for personalized outreach at scale; and (3) AI-driven marketing and support that enhances—rather than replaces—human connection.

These pillars were intentionally framed not as standalone technologies but as components of a cohesive digital ecosystem designed to reduce friction, clarify value, and strengthen trust with adult learners. The framework recognizes that adult learners often juggle work, caregiving responsibilities, financial constraints, and prior educational trauma, making clarity, flexibility, and responsiveness essential rather than optional.

### Key Findings and Models Shared

#### 1. The Website as the Front Door for Adult Learners
A central takeaway emphasized that for many adult learners—particularly those returning to education after years away—the institutional website serves as the

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# "Bridging Innovation and Empathy: Digital Transformation for Continuing Education"

first and sometimes only point of engagement. The session highlighted common sources of digital friction, including jargon-heavy language, fragmented information architecture, and lengthy inquiry or application forms that create unnecessary barriers and increase abandonment rates.

Participants were introduced to a student-centered website checklist that prioritizes mobile-first design, plain-language messaging, streamlined forms, prominent ROI indicators, accessibility compliance (WCAG 2.1), and clearly differentiated pathways for diverse learner personas such as career changers, degree completers, and first-generation students. Before-and-after examples demonstrated how minor language and structural changes—such as deferring transcript requirements until later in the enrollment process—can significantly improve engagement and reduce cognitive load for adult learners.

## 2. Personalized Outreach Through Integrated CRM Systems

The second pillar focused on the strategic use of CRM systems to deliver personalized, timely, and relevant communication at scale. Rather than viewing CRMs as static databases, the session reframed them as tools for cultivating data-driven empathy—enabling institutions to better understand learner behavior, preferences, and decision points throughout the enrollment journey.

Key practices discussed included segmented communication strategies, behavioral triggers based on website engagement, and automated follow-ups that retain a human tone. The session also addressed common implementation pitfalls, such as siloed systems, insufficient staff training, and the tendency to collect data without actionable insight. Emphasis was placed on aligning CRM adoption with organizational culture, ensuring staff understand both the technical and relational dimensions of personalized outreach.

## 3. AI That Enhances Human Connection

The third pillar explored the responsible use of artificial intelligence to support adult learners while preserving—and strengthening—human connection. Rather than positioning AI as a replacement for staff, the session presented AI as a force multiplier that can handle routine inquiries, improve response times, and surface insights that allow staff to focus on high-value, relationship-driven interactions .

# "Bridging Innovation and Empathy: Digital Transformation for Continuing Education"

Use cases included intelligent chatbots for after-hours support, predictive analytics to identify enrollment readiness or attrition risk, and dynamic content personalization across websites and email campaigns. Importantly, participants were encouraged to adopt AI incrementally, starting with clearly defined problems and measurable ROI, while ensuring data quality, transparency, and staff training remain priorities.

## Participant Engagement and Interactive Discussion

The session incorporated structured reflection and peer discussion, inviting participants to identify their institution's most significant digital friction points, assess which of the three pillars would yield the greatest immediate impact, and articulate one actionable change they could implement within 30 days . This interactive component generated robust dialogue across institutional types, revealing shared challenges related to form complexity, fragmented communication systems, and limited staff capacity.

Participants frequently noted that the framework resonated because it balanced aspirational vision with practical, scalable steps—particularly valuable for institutions with constrained budgets or staffing. The discussion reinforced the idea that digital transformation is not a one-time initiative but an ongoing, iterative process that benefits from continuous learner feedback.

## Real-World Implications and Case Examples

The session presented illustrative case examples demonstrating how institutions of varying sizes have successfully applied the three-pillar framework over time. One mid-size public university that implemented all three pillars over an 18-month period achieved a 42% increase in inquiries, a 28% improvement in conversion rates, and a 35% reduction in staff time spent on routine inquiries. A smaller private college, working incrementally due to limited resources, doubled continuing education enrollment over two years by focusing first on website simplification, followed by CRM integration and basic AI support .

These examples underscored the importance of sequencing, institutional readiness, and sustained leadership commitment, while reinforcing that meaningful impact is achievable without large-scale, immediate overhauls.

# "Bridging Innovation and Empathy: Digital Transformation for Continuing Education"

## Alignment with the ACHE Mission

At its core, Bridging Innovation and Empathy aligns strongly with ACHE's mission to serve adult learners and promote lifelong learning. By advocating for digital systems that acknowledge adult learners' complexity and dignity, the session reinforced continuing education's role as both an access point and an equity engine within higher education. The emphasis on empathy-driven design, inclusive communication, and continuous improvement reflects ACHE's longstanding commitment to learner-centered practice, workforce relevance, and community engagement.

## Scholarly and Policy Context

The session's themes align with broader literature on adult learning theory, learner experience design, and enrollment management, particularly research emphasizing the importance of relevance, autonomy, and support in adult education. The discussion also reflected policy and workforce trends emphasizing re-skilling, credential completion, and the need for institutions to adapt rapidly to changing labor market demands. While not positioned as a theoretical treatise, the framework presented offers a practical bridge between scholarship and implementation.

## Future Directions

Bridging Innovation and Empathy challenged participants to reconsider not only which technologies they deploy, but why and how they deploy them. The session concluded with a call to action for institutions to begin with empathy, pursue quick wins that reduce friction, and commit to long-term digital transformation grounded in learner experience. As continuing education divisions continue to lead institutional adaptation in an era of demographic and economic change, empathy-informed innovation offers a sustainable path forward—one that honors adult learners' realities while expanding opportunity and impact.

## Examples of Research, Models, and Resources Used in the Presentation (with Links)

### 1. Adult Learning Theory & Relevance

**Concept**: Adult learners are motivated by relevance, autonomy, and immediate applicability.

# "Bridging Innovation and Empathy: Digital Transformation for Continuing Education"

**Reference / Source:**
- Malcolm Knowles — *Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy)*
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andragogy
- Adult Learning Principles (University of Oklahoma)
https://www.ou.edu/content/cee/adult-learning/principles-of-adult-learning

## 2. Learner Experience Design (LX)

**Concept**: Apply UX principles to education to minimize friction and enhance clarity.

**Reference / Source:**
- Nielsen Norman Group — *UX for Education and Student Experience*
https://www.nngroup.com/topic/education-ui-ux/
- EDUCAUSE — *Student UX / Learner Experience Research*
https://library.educause.edu/topics/teaching-and-learning/student-ux-and-teaching

## 3. Enrollment Management Models

**Concept**: Strategic enrollment management that integrates marketing, technology, and student pathways.

**Reference / Source**:
- Noel-Levitz / RNL — *Strategic Enrollment Management Resources*
https://www.ruffalonl.com/strategic-enrollment-management/
- AACRAO — *Enrollment Management Frameworks & Best Practices*
https://www.aacrao.org/resources/strategic-enrollment-management

## 4. Digital Transformation in Higher Ed

**Concept**: Integrating CRM, analytics, and digital infrastructure to support adult learners.

**Reference / Source**:
- EDUCAUSE — *Top 10 IT Issues: Digital Transformation*
https://www.educause.edu/research-and-publications/books/top-10-it-issues
- Gartner Education Research — *Digital Strategy in Higher Education*
https://www.gartner.com/en/education

# "Bridging Innovation and Empathy: Digital Transformation for Continuing Education"

### 5. CRM Personalization & Learner Engagement

**Concept**: Use CRM segmentation and automation to personalize outreach for adult learners.

**Reference / Source**:
- Salesforce.org Education Cloud (CRM for Higher Ed)
https://www.salesforce.org/solutions/education-cloud/
- Hobsons / EAB — CRM Solutions for Enrollment
https://eab.com/solutions/student-success/crm/

### 6. AI for Student Support

**Concept**: Responsible use of AI to enhance learner support and scale services without replacing human care.
Reference / Source:
- EDUCAUSE Review — *AI and Student Success*
https://er.educause.edu/articles/2021/9/how-ai-is-transforming-student-success
- IBM Watson Education — *AI-Powered Student Support Tools*
https://www.ibm.com/watson-education

### 7. Policy & Workforce Trends: Reskilling and Credential Completion

**Concept**: Adult learners returning for career advancement and credential completion align with workforce development strategies.

**Reference / Source**:
- National Skills Coalition — Adult Learner and Reskilling Trends
https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resource/publications/
- Lumina Foundation — Goal 2025: Increasing Postsecondary Attainment
https://www.luminafoundation.org/goal-2025/
- Georgetown University Center on Education & the Workforce
https://cew.georgetown.edu/

### 8. Learning Continuum Models
**Concept**: Stackable credentials and flexible pathways support lifelong learning.

**Reference / Source**:
- American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) — Stackable Credentials
https://www.aascu.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=8485

# "Bridging Innovation and Empathy: Digital Transformation for Continuing Education"

- Credential Engine — *Credential Transparency for Learner Pathways* https://credentialengine.org/

## How These Examples Were Used in the Presentation

- **Adult Learning Theory**

Used to frame how continuing education units should think about motivation, prior experience, and self-direction. The work of Knowles anchors the learner-centered emphasis.

- **Learner Experience Design**

Applied as a principle for redesigning websites and forms to reduce cognitive friction for adult learners, especially those returning after long absences.

- **Enrollment Management Frameworks**

Demonstrated how CRM systems and integrated outreach support coherent messaging across inquiry, application, and conversion.

- **Digital Transformation Research**

Framed the session's central thesis: digital transformation is not just technology—it's learner experience, policy alignment, and service innovation.

- **CRM Personalization**

Linked to real-world case examples of CRM practices that track behavior and trigger personalized follow-ups.

- **AI in Education**

Referenced as a complementary tool to human services, improving response times and access while retaining human empathy.

- **Policy & Workforce Trends**

Connected the session to broader societal needs: re-skilling adults, closing skills gaps, and aligning credentials with employer demand.

- **Stackable Credentials**

Seen as a practical strategy to improve access and lifelong learning pathways—especially relevant to adult learners seeking career mobility.

# "Tune In, Reach Out: Podcasting as Social Scholarship and Innovation in Continuing Higher Education"

Dr. Leslie A. Cordie, Auburn University

## The Relevance of Podcasting to Continuing Higher Education

The field of adult and continuing higher education can be defined by its responsiveness to the dynamic needs of the adult learner. This population is characterized by competing professional and personal demands, a desire for immediate applicability, and a reliance on flexible learning modalities (Barua & Lockee, 2024). In this context, podcasting has emerged as an innovative and strategic tool for both academic outreach and pedagogical delivery, moving beyond a mere trend to become an essential component of the continuing higher education (CHE) digital infrastructure.

The topic of podcasting, encapsulated by the phrase "Tune In Reach Out," addresses the imperative for universities to expand their voice beyond traditional classrooms and journals, connecting expertise directly with public audiences and non-traditional students. Podcasting, as a low-cost, mobile-friendly medium, aligns perfectly with the core principles of adult learning (Andragogy), specifically addressing the need for convenience, flexibility, and accessibility to support working professionals and those balancing multiple responsibilities (Livingston & Cummings-Clay, 2023). Podcasting allows learning to happen "on-demand" during commuting, exercising, or completing chores, effectively transforming downtime into instructional time, a model known as Just in Time Learning (JIT) (Barton et al., 2025).

Podcasting as a vehicle for learning is not simply an administrative matter of content delivery; it is a fundamental shift in how CHE institutions fulfill their public mission. Podcasting serves as a platform for social scholarship by breaking down complex research and academic discourse into digestible, engaging content, thereby increasing the public impact of university scholarship and research (Singer, 2019).

## The "Why" and "What" of Academic Podcasting

The recommended approach to academic podcasting is structured around distinct models that address varied institutional and learning needs, drawing from several frameworks, focusing on both learning and strategy.

## Pedagogical Innovation: Supporting Formal and Non-Formal Learning

The primary finding supporting podcasting's use is its capacity to generate both formal and non-formal learning among adults (Shamburg et al., 2023). In formal

# "Tune In, Reach Out: Podcasting as Social Scholarship and Innovation in Continuing Higher Education"

settings, podcastsfunction effectively as substitutional, supplementary, or creative tools. They can provide additional, on-demand content that encourages independent learning, diving deeper into lecture topics or providing summaries to reinforce classroom learning.

The most significant pedagogical innovation, however, is the use of student-created podcasts. This model shifts the learner from content consumer to content producer, fostering the development of critical thinking, research, scriptwriting, and collaboration skills, which are crucial for today's job market (Nicola, 2022).

## Outreach and Institutional Strategy: The "Reach Out" Imperative

From an institutional perspective, the "Why" of podcasting is intrinsically linked to Outreach,
Extension, and Lifelong Learning. Key strategies include:

- Authentic Recruitment: Podcasts provide an authentic voice, value proposition, and insight into institutional expertise, strengthening connections with prospective students and alumni (Leandro et al., 2022).
- Global Collaboration: The podcast medium facilitates sharing knowledge and expertise across geographical boundaries, supporting wider collaboration and benchmarking, which is vital in an era of international knowledge exchange (Coley, 2025).
- The Content Model ("The What"): Effective content models include Series of Concepts (teaching a structured skill set), Interviews (bringing in real-world professional experts), and Current Events (providing timely, academic-backed commentary on social or policy issues) (Gunderson & Cumming, 2022).

## Reflections on Engagement and Real-World Implications

During podcasting sessions and subsequent discussions, a notable reflection point often revolves around the challenge of building community in a virtual space. While podcast listening can be a solitary activity, the medium fosters parasocial relationships with the host and, crucially, creates virtual communities through associated discussion platforms and social media (Wendland, 2024). The real-world implication for CHE is that the podcast can serve as the anchor for a virtual community, which requires proactive engagement strategies, such a  integrating social media and providing opportunities for members to interact with each other and the content creators (Gunderson & Cumming, 2022).

# "Tune In, Reach Out: Podcasting as Social Scholarship and Innovation in Continuing Higher Education"

Furthermore, the discussion around the "how" of production, specifically the necessity of careful planning and strategies regarding branding, length, scripting, equipment, and hosting (RSS Feeds). These items highlight a significant real-world implication for CHE administrators. They must view podcast production not as an amateur activity but as a strategic digital communication policy (Malone et al., 2022). Investing in simple, high-quality equipment and providing basic training on software (like Audacity®) is necessary to ensure the content meets professional standards while maintaining the accessibility and portability that adult learners require (Morris & Patterson, 2015).

## Supporting the CHE Mission and Institutional Strategy

The decision to leverage podcasting directly supports the CHE mission to serve adult learners and promote lifelong learning by prioritizing learner autonomy and access (Benavot et al., 2022; Leedahl, 2020). Adult learners are motivated to seek education that moves them forward professionally, and the convenience and accessibility of podcasts directly cater to this motivation. By making academic knowledge available outside of paywalls and rigid schedules, CHE institutions actively promote the lifelong learning agenda, demonstrating that learning is a continuous, integrated part of life, not just an event.

This academic and professional work serves as an exemplary institutional strategy for future digital outreach (Bennett et al., 2024; Malone et al., 2022). Institutional strategies, such as the engagement with professional associations and communities of practice, are models of how digital media can underpin and disseminate international collaboration. Podcasting is an ideal tool for global networks, providing a shared, synchronous platform for disseminating policy developments and scholarly findings across continents without requiring physical travel (Singer, 2019).

The research literature reinforces the value proposition, noting that podcast listening among adults leads to meaningful changes in perspectives and behaviors (e.g.; Shamburg et al., 2023). Policy must therefore recognize the unique ability of podcasts to capture and cultivate self-directed, informal learning, ensuring that digital literacy training for both educators and learners includes the critical appraisal skills necessary to evaluate this influential medium. By "Tuning In" to the needs of the modern, mobile adult learner, universities can "Reach Out" with the authentic, flexible educational content required to secure the future of lifelong learning.

# "Tune In, Reach Out: Podcasting as Social Scholarship and Innovation in Continuing Higher Education"

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# Kentucky's Statewide Blueprint for Adult Student Success by Scaling Credit for Prior Learning

# Contents

CPE
Higher Education Matters

In Kentucky, there are nearly

# 1.4 Million *adults without*
## *a postsecondary credential*

Priority adults in Kentucky's workforce are 25 - 64 year olds

**66%**                                    **33%**

| 928,000 | 464,000 |
|---|---|
| Have never enrolled in college | Have some college credits, but no credential or degree |

# Why Postsecondary Education Matters

## Closing Gaps in Workforce

## More Adults with a Livable Wage

**63%** of KY jobs will require postsecondary education by 2031

**55%** of KY adults hold a postsecondary degree or credential

**30%** of KY households have incomes less than $35K

**$40K** more in earnings for households headed by at least one college graduate

KY is in the top 10 for states with high job vacancy rates

## Percentage Living in Poverty

**34%** Less than high school graduate

**18%** High school graduate

**12%** Some college or associate degree

**5%** Bachelor's degree or higher
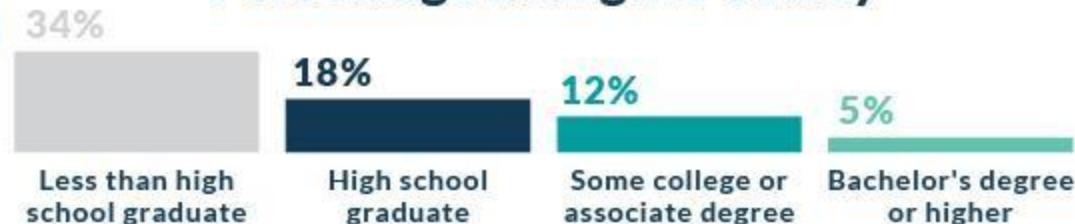
# What's Stopping Adults From Enrolling In College

**Family Obligations**

**Financial Challenges**

**Work Commitments**

**Academic Readiness**
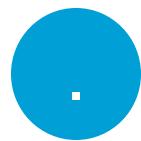
# Background

*2022-2030 Strategic Agenda*: <u>promote credit for prior learning and accelerated programs to make our institutions friendlier for working-age adults, an underserved market that is critical to creating a more competitive workforce and reaching our 60x30 goal.</u>
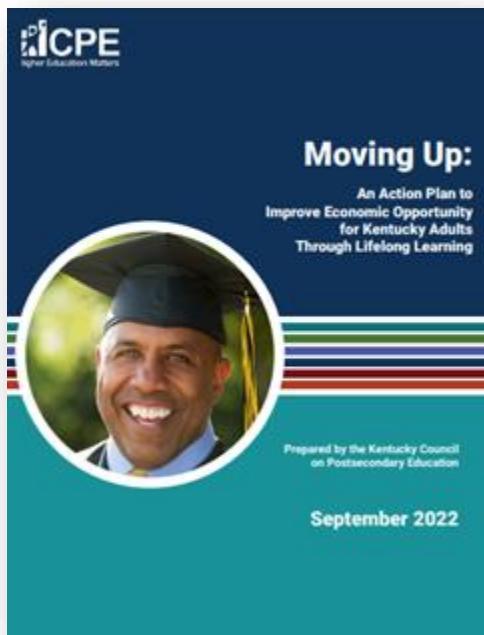




*Moving Up: An Action Plan to Improve Economic Opportunity for Kentucky Adults Through Lifelong Learning*: <u>Convene enrollment administrators, adult learner champions, and other relevant stakeholders to share effective practices and information about credit for prior learning (CPL) and determine a scope of work for its expansion.</u>

**cael** | WICHE

# THE PLA **BOOST**

### Results from a 72-Institution Study of
### Prior Learning Assessment and Adult Student Outcomes

For more than 50 years, colleges and universities have used a range of different methods to award college credit for learning that takes place outside of the classroom—particularly learning from work, life, and military experiences. These methods—often called *prior learning assessment (PLA)* or credit for prior learning (CPL)—value the learning that many students bring with them to college. CAEL and WICHE recently partnered with 72 postsecondary institutions to explore the benefits of PLA for adult learners. Data on more than 230,000 adult students showed that having PLA credits is associated with better student outcomes like higher credential completion, cost savings, and time savings. Further, PLA boosted completion rates for adult students of color, low income adult students, and adult students across the academic performance spectrum. The evidence showed that PLA has strong potential to be a tool for closing equity gaps in postsecondary achievement, provided it is made more accessible to students who could benefit the most.

## PLA boosted credential completion

Adult students credential completion rates:

**49%** with PLA  **27%** without PLA

Using propensity score matching to control for other factors, PLA boosted adult student completion rates by:

**17%** All PLA methods

**30%** PLA methods excluding credit rec's for military

*Yet PLA used by only about 1 in 10 adult students*

**11%** Adult students earned college credit for their prior learning through PLA
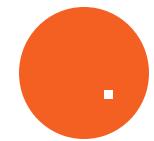
# 4 Reasons Your Institution Should Offer CPL/PLA

1. Empirically proven to increase graduation rate and pace to graduation
2. Students are more engaged and and ready for academics after the portfolio process
3. Students with access to CPL/PLA take 17.6 more credits
4. CPL/PLA will not take away from faculty course offerings
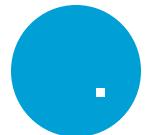
# Best Practices for CPL/PLA



1. Establish Clear Policies and Guidelines
2. Train Faculty and Staff
3. Promote Awareness and Access
4. Create Supportive Assessment Options
5. Facilitate Portfolio Development
6. Implement an Inclusive Evaluation Process
7. Leverage Technology
8. Regularly Review and Improve Practices
9. Highlight Success Stories
10. Foster a Supportive Campus Culture

Implementing these best practices can help create a robust CPL framework that not only supports adult learners in achieving their educational goals but also enhances enrollment and retention rates at colleges and universities. Engaging faculty, staff, and administrators in this initiative is crucial for cultivating an environment conducive to lifelong learning and academic success.
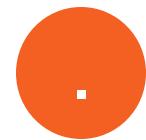
# Opportunity for KY Institutions

- On-site and Virtual technical assistance focused on improving the recognition of credit for prior learning (CPL) that is relevant to degree completion.

- Robust and comprehensive assessment of CPL policies and practices to facilitate continuous improvement throughout the CPL ecosystem.

- Identification of points of convergence and synergy as well as points of divergence and possible discord.

- Valid effectiveness of CPL programming to engage adult learners to return and persist to graduation.



CPE
Higher Education Matters
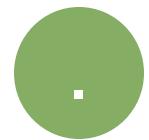
# Timeline

- November 2024 – Call for Interest

- December 2024 – Institutions selected and notified

- January 2025 – Introductory meeting with leadership and initiative POC

- February/March 2025 – CPL Assessment and Onsite visits

- April/May/June 2025 - Training and potential process improvement activities on campus

- July 2025 – Reports/Webinar/Toolkits

- August 2025 Cohort 2 begins on same cycle
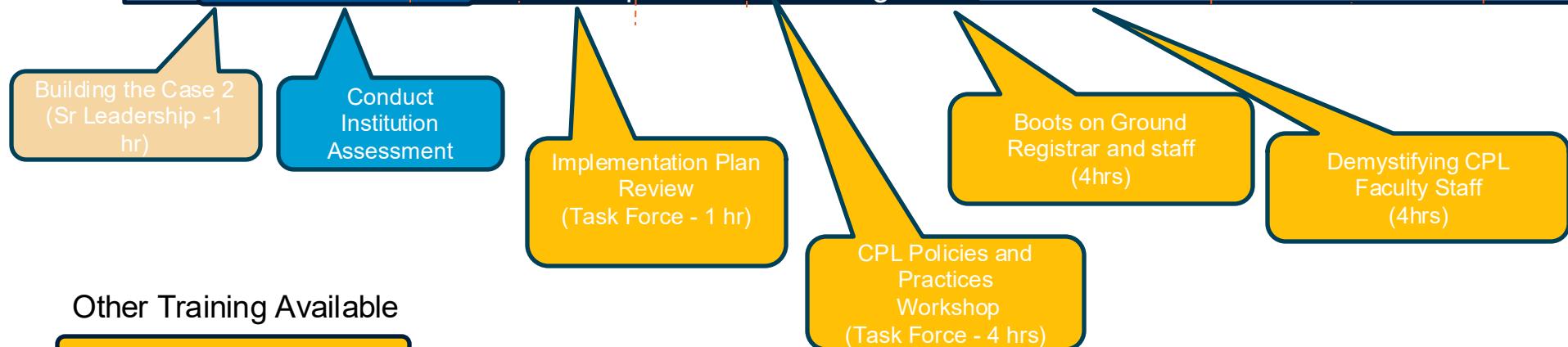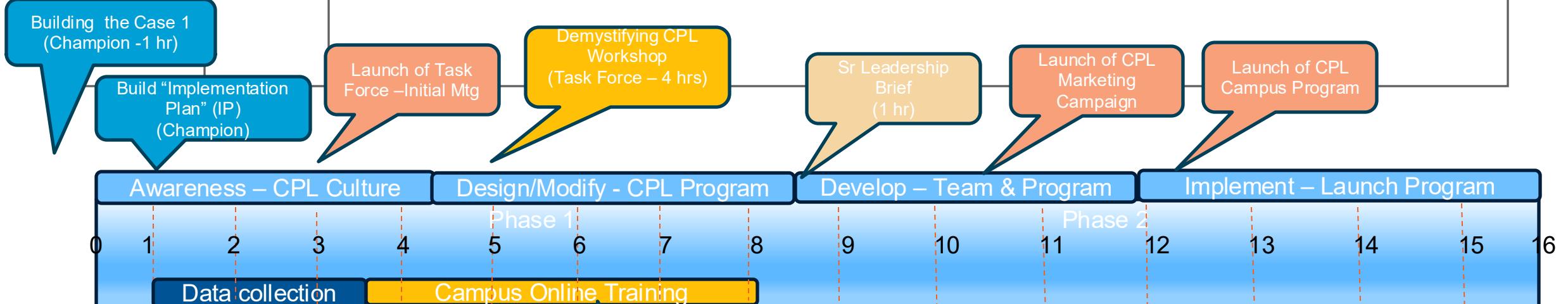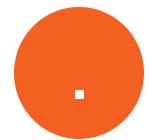
# Process and Actions

Onsite & Virtual Technical Asst.

- Six-month cycle to assess CPL programming

- Assess campus culture regarding CPL recognition and utilization

- Training for faculty and staff on CPL practices

- Team meetings to review and revise policies and practices

- Report summarizing findings and outlining next steps and recommendations
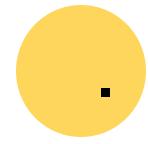
# The Blueprint Model



Guided by the ADDIE framework:

- **Analysis:** Institutional readiness assessment, data review, stakeholder mapping

- **Design:** Statewide CPL blueprint, crosswalks, communication, shared vision.

- **Development:** Policy alignment, portfolio rubric standardization, training modules'

- **Implementation:** Campus rollout, training, integration, support, scalability, fidelity.

- **Evaluation:** Metrics, student impact data, continuous improvement
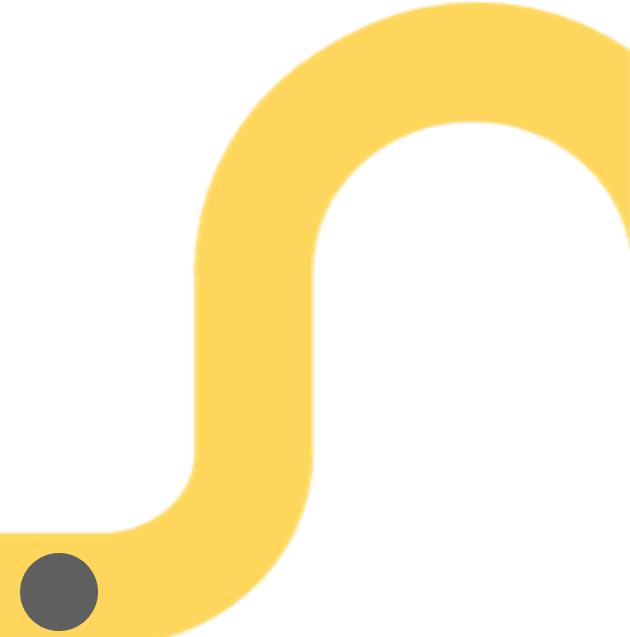
# CPL Framework

CPE is using a 3-Phase approach

- Phase 1: Institutional preparation

- Phase 2: Launch of CPL programming

- Phase 3: Evaluation and ROI

Credit for Prior Learning Framework
created by Dr. Dallas F. Kratzer - copyrighted 2022
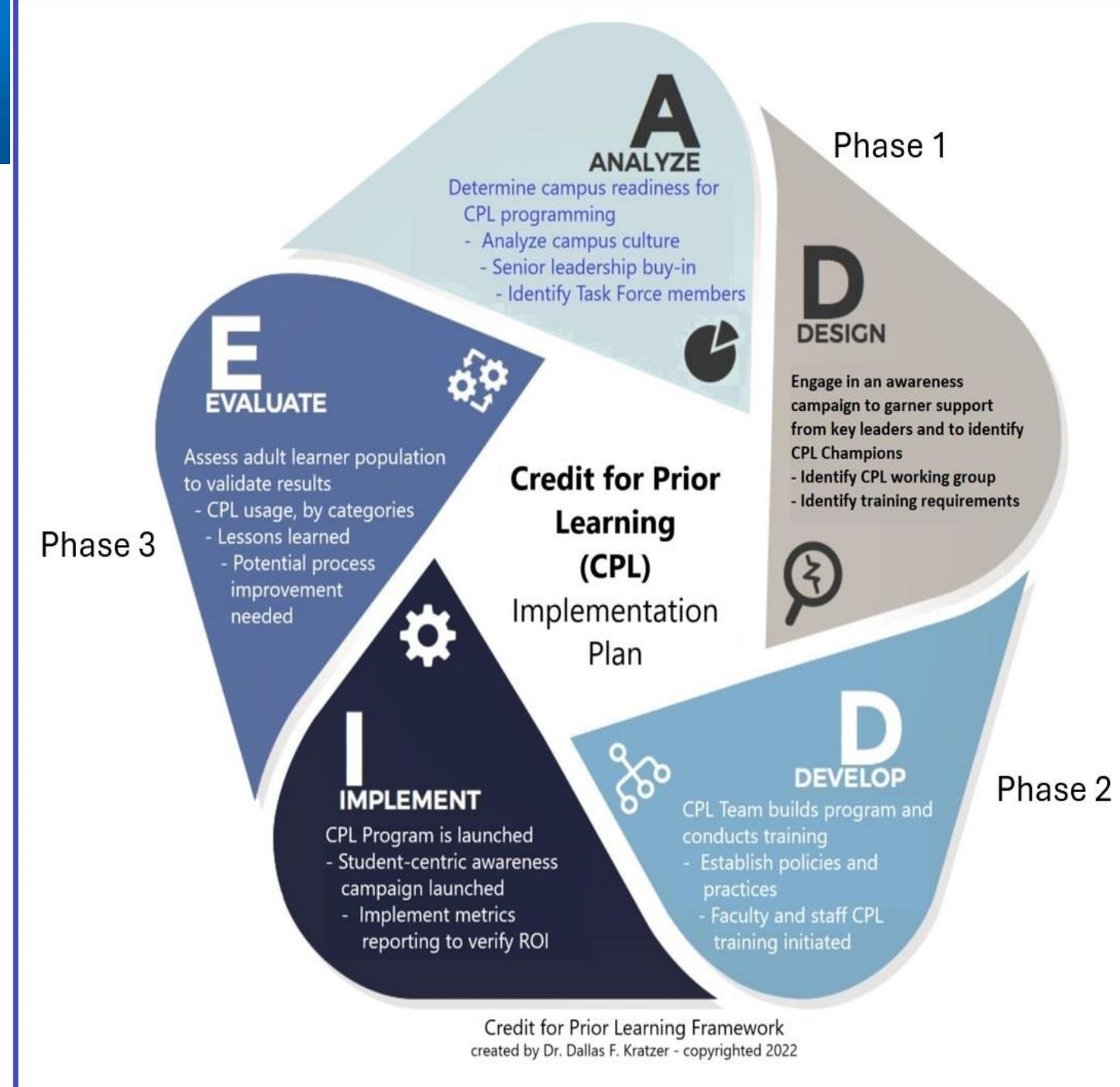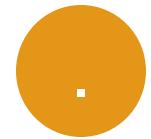
# Capacity Building Through Champions

- Leadership engagement on CPL initiative
- Commitment to establish a CPL Task Force/Working Group
- Bi-monthly team meetings
- Participation in CPL professional development content
- Faculty and staff availability for focus group discussions

# Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Coordinator's Concept Model

Provost or Student Services Staff

**Activities**
- Works with industry on crosswalks for students
- Work with apprenticeships coordinator

**Workforce Engaged**

**Program Management**

**Campus CPL Coordinator**

**Responsibilities**
- Overall program management
- Campus CPL SME
- Policy and practices of CPL
- Data collection
- Student support services
- Manages cross-functional teams on credit issues

**Staff and Faculty**

**Student-Centric**

**Activities**
- Work with potential students on CPL recommendations
- Student engagement activities
- Marketing initiatives
- Benefits liaison across campus

**Activities**
- Works with the curriculum committees
- Coordinates CPL assessment and review process
- Conducts CPL professional development events

# The Power of Collaboration

- Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE)

- Center for Academic Innovation (CAI)

- Institutional CPL Champions (16 campuses)

- Faculty Assessors, Registrars, and Advisors

- Industry & Workforce Partners
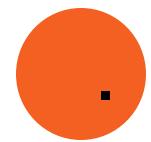
# Capacity Building Through Champions

- Each campus designated a *CPL Champion* team.

- Eleven learning modules (ADDIE-aligned) supported by CPE & CAI.

- Outcomes: Action Plans, Implementation Maps, and Institutional Reports.
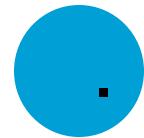
# Evidence of Impact

Early wins across Kentucky:
- 100% of campuses created or revised CPL policies and handbooks.

- Engaged with 10 KY institutions.

- Pilot pathways expanded for military-connected and working adults.

- Student stories demonstrating cost/time reduction and persistence.
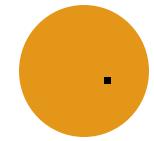
# From Credit to Confidence

- "CPL doesn't just award credit—it restores confidence."

- Adult learners report greater belonging, motivation, and persistence.

- Institutions gain credibility and engagement with local employers.
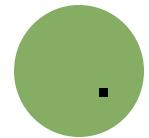
# Continuous Improvement

- Data dashboards and outcome tracking (time to degree, credits earned, completion).

- Regular cross-institutional learning exchanges.

- Annual CPL Statewide Summit.

- Future focus: embedding CPL in advising, onboarding, and AI tools.
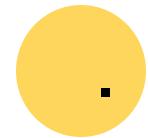
# The National Connection

- Aligns with national priorities: CAEL, Lumina, AAC&U, WICHE.

- Kentucky positioned as a model for *scalable, equitable CPL adoption*.

- Invitation to collaborate through CAI and CPE.
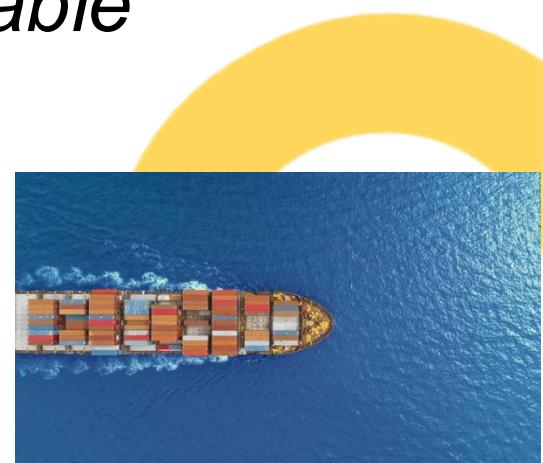
# Contacts



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Questions

# Innovate to Empower: Guiding Adult Learners in the AI–Enhanced Classroom
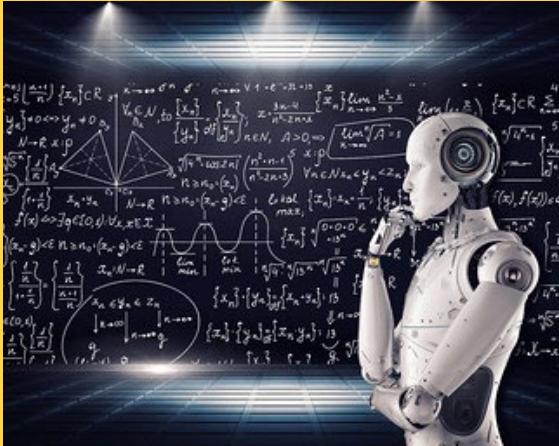
Dr. Mike Breakey

University of Tennessee Chattanooga—Associate Professor of Practice
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# Agenda

- Ladies and Gentlemen, introducing AI
- AI in Our Culture
- Policy Development
- The (Current) Landscape
- Practical Applications and Integration
  - AI Prompts
  - Classroom Usage
  - Faculty Usage
- Your thoughts, what works?
- Barriers and Environmental Impact
- For Further Reading and References

# Fun Example Prompt

Prompt: *Make an imaginary photo of a student deviously cheating using AI.*

ChatGPT (2025, Jun 18 version). https://chat.openai.com/chat
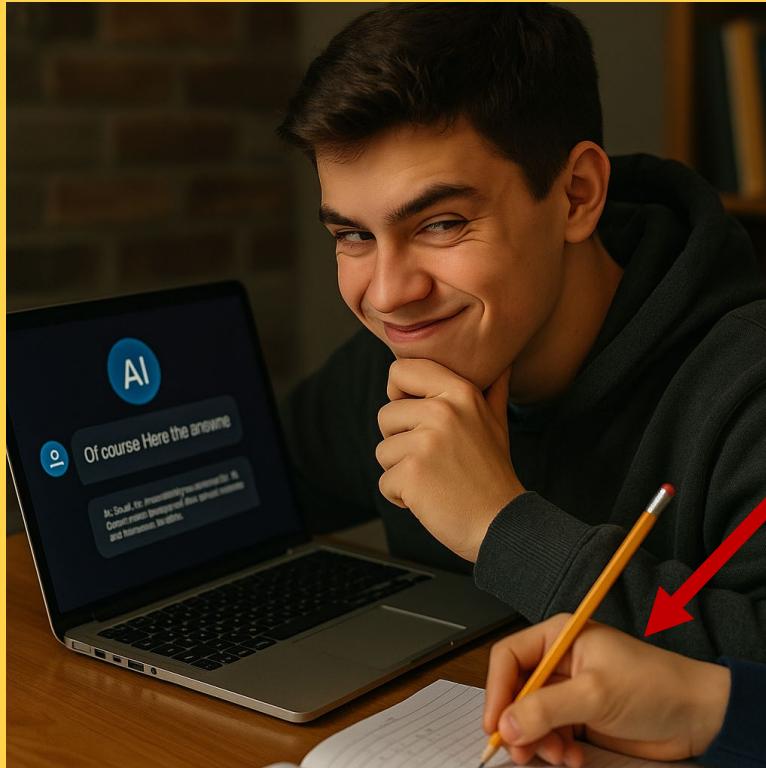
Dude, what's up with your third hand?

# AI in Our Culture

- Originally presented at ACHE South February 2025 and again in an ACHE Summer 2025 Webinar in July so an evolution of focus and of AI use

- Points of reference
  - 56% of AI experts expect AI's impact to be positive, compared to 17% of the public (Pew Research Center, 2025).
  - 50% of U.S. adults are more concerned than excited about AI—vs 37% in 2021 (Pew Research Center, 2025).
  - 86% of students report using AI in their studies, with 54% doing so at least weekly (Digital Education Council, 2025).

# AI in Our Culture

- AI Prompt #1: *On average, over the past month, what do you estimate the balance of articles published on AI lean--pro or con?*
- AI Prompt #2: *Can you build a PowerPoint table for the Average Estimate data?*

| Sentiment Category | Approx. Share of Articles | Typical Framing in Coverage  OpenAI, 2025 |
|---|---|---|
| **Positive / Optimistic** | **40 – 45 %** | Highlights innovation, productivity gains, and creative uses of AI in business, science, and education. Often includes new product launches and research breakthroughs. |
| **Negative / Critical** | **35 – 40 %** | Focuses on bias, misinformation, job loss, surveillance, ethics, and regulation. Frequently uses cautionary or risk-oriented headlines. |
| **Neutral / Balanced** | **15 – 25 %** | Reports developments factually or blends both opportunity and risk; includes expert panels or mixed-tone analyses. |

~~Is your institution currently using AI?~~

Show of Hands

1. Is your department or program currently using AI?

2. Are you using AI?

3. Do you think your students are using AI?

# The Road to a New Policy

- [UTC Guidance](UTC Guidance)
- Undergraduate (LEAP) Guiding principles
  - Balance benefits and independent thinking
  - Use AI for brainstorming, editing, organization/outlines, problem-solving, and refining.
  - Cite AI appropriately and use AI sparingly
  - Do not prohibit use as it will be a valuable skill in the workplace too
- Final product should emphasize course materials, reflections, and real-life examples
  - Note: Tools like Grammarly improve grammar and flow, but at last check, accepting Grammarly edits may flag documents as 100% AI.

# The *Current* Landscape (Usage)

## AI Tools in Higher Education – At a Glance

| Tool | Strengths | Common Use Cases |
|------|-----------|------------------|
| ChatGPT (GPT-5o) | Fast reasoning, multimodal (text, image, audio), conversational | Writing assistance, tutoring, brainstorming, class support |
| Claude (Anthropic) | Long memory (up to 200k tokens), strong reasoning, safer output design | Research-heavy fields, legal/ethical topics |
| Gemini (Google) | Integration with Google tools, live web access, strong in search and code | Classroom productivity, coding, content creation |

ChatGPT (2025, Oct 4 version)

*Note: Most tools now offer free and premium versions; capabilities vary by access level.*

# The *Current* Landscape

- How often do we see comprehensive AI use?
  - Infrequent, but noticeable when used
- Flags
  - Late submission—the pressure is on
  - Reads like it was machine-written (you know your students)
  - LOTS of dashes: Here is—an—example
  - AI detectors online
- Example: Issue Analysis in the Practice of Applied Leadership course
  - Late, lots of em dashes, and very robotic sounding
  - Three detectors all came back 100% (Zero GPT, Quillbot, Scribbr)

- ***NOTE: Assignments focusing on personal examples, reflections, and learning application help minimize AI use***

# The Current Landscape--Now what?



(Quillbot AI Detector, 2025)

# The *Current* Landscape–Now What?

- First, from experience, detection tools are not particularly accurate
- Talk to the student (example)
  - Student was a senior, dean's list student, and an RA on campus
  - During our talk, she mentioned she used Grammarly to make a final proof—flagged it at 100%
- A warning shot across the bow, again with a conversation (example)
  - Student X, I just asked straight up — "this reads mechanically, did you use AI"
  - Answer-yes. OK, thanks for being honest, now rewrite it (with a small penalty)
- From UTC AI Policy: "It's important to acknowledge the uneven reliability of these tools. Despite their advanced technology, AI content detectors often produce false positives or fail to detect actual AI-generated content."

# General AI Prompts

1. Be Clear and Specific. Vague prompts lead to vague answers. The more context, the better the output. Think Google search or electronic library use

2. Define Format and Tone. Tell AI how you want the response (bullets, essay, table, etc.)

3. Iterate and Refine. The first output is often a draft. Tweak your prompt based on what you get back—add clarity, constraints, or follow-up prompts. *Think of prompt-writing like a conversation, not a one-shot command*

**Example**: "That's helpful. Now make it more concise and add a metaphor about Imposter Syndrome."

4. Provide a Role. Assigning AI a role helps guide the response's framing and focus

**Example**: "As a legal analyst, explain this ruling to a general audience."

# Classroom Usage (Undergraduate)

Step One: Write a 500-word reflective essay based on a leadership experience from life, work, or community. This can be a situation where you were in a leadership position, or one where you were the follower but witnessed the leadership process. *Note, no AI use at this stage.*

Step Two: Paste your original essay into ChatGPT (or Claude, etc.) and ask for:
    Suggestions to improve clarity, depth, organization, or tone
    Alternative perspectives or added examples
    Identification of overused phrases or vague statements

Step Three: Revise and expand the original essay into a final reflection describing
    Which AI suggestions they used or rejected—and why
    How their understanding of leadership changed (or didn't)
    Any insights gained from using AI in the writing process

Submit the original essay (Appendix A), the AI dialogue—both prompts and responses (Appendix B), and the final product—the revised reflective essay with APA citations and references, to include AI

# Classroom Usage (Graduate)

**AI-Generated Ethical Dilemma: Case Analysis from Your Professional Practice**

Using AI (e.g., ChatGPT), generate an ethical dilemma tailored to your field. You will then analyze this AI-generated case using ethical perspectives and decision-making frameworks from the course.

Part 1: Craft an AI prompt that produces a realistic ethical dilemma in your field.

Part 2: Ethical Analysis (Approx. 800–1,000 words). Analyze and critique the AI generated dilemma using two ethical perspectives and one decision-making framework

Part 3: Reflection on accuracy and relevance of AI (Approx. 300–400 words)

Appendices: Appendix A: AI-generated case; Appendix B: Your full AI prompt and any notable follow-up prompts

# Limiting Student Usage

- Again, use of personal examples helps limit AI overuse.
- Reflective exercises that typically start with an instrument (e. g. Northouse Intro to Leadership survey 1. 3).
- Based on the results
  - Reflect on the perceived accuracy of the result
  - Explain why you believe you came out highest on $X$ and lowest on $Y$.
  - Using personal examples, expand on those result. "I believe I came out highest on Relationship Emphasis because I have worked in HR for years and deal with people daily."
  - Now, weave in support from the text. As noted by Northouse (2025), those with an emphasis on relationships tend to focus on building strong interpersonal connections, trust, and mutual respect between leaders and team members.
- By blending personal insight with real-life context and academic synthesis, this helps limit AI use. AI may assist as a tool, but it cannot replace the student's voice without losing authenticity and coherence.

# Faculty Usage

I prompted ChatGPT (I have a subscription to 5.0): *Summarize my AI usage over the last two months.*

- Assignment and Rubric Development. You've designed or refined undergraduate and graduate-level assignments that:
  - Integrate ethical theories (e.g., utilitarianism, Rawls, Aristotle's phronesis)
  - Encourage critical thinking and responsible AI use

- You've asked for concise summaries, quotes, and examples from the following, often used in teaching materials or to generate discussion questions.
  - Northouse's Introduction to Leadership
  - Johnson's Organizational Ethics
  - Lipman-Blumen's Toxic Leadership

- AI-Resistant Assignments. You've focused on developing assignments and reflection prompts that are:
  - Difficult for AI to do well
  - Centered on lived experience, personalized reasoning, and course-based synthesis

# Barriers and Environmental Impact

- Lack of Understanding and Digital Literacy
  - Limited awareness of how AI functions and how to write effective prompts often results in inconsistent use. This knowledge gap can cause underuse, misuse, or even an overreliance on AI tools.

- Data Privacy and Security Concerns
  - AI requires large datasets, raising fears about personal data misuse, surveillance, and legal compliance
  - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), all of which govern privacy, consent, and responsible data handling in educational and professional contexts.
  - UT Verse now operational
    - Full disclosure, limited utility thus far

- Equity and Access Gaps
  - AI tools require reliable internet access, modern devices, and digital fluency
  - Resources not equally distributed across socioeconomic, regional, or institutional lines.

# Barriers and Environmental Impact

High Energy Consumption—training and running large language models (like GPT-5) requires massive computational power, leading to significant electricity use

- "Electricity now costs as much as 267% more for a single month than it did five years ago in areas located near significant data centers" (Bloomberg News, 2025, para. 5).
- U.S. data centers accounted for more than 4 % of total U.S. electricity consumption in 2023 (Guidi et al., 2024).
- Chen (2025) notes that "each request through an AI server requires 7–9 watt-hours… 23–30 times the energy of a normal [Google] search" (p. 22).
- Data centers used about 4.4 % of U.S. electricity in 2022 and may reach 6.7 – 12 % by 2028 (Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory as cited in Stanford Report, 2025)

Electronic Waste (E-waste)

- The hardware infrastructure behind AI—servers, GPUs, and cooling systems—becomes obsolete quickly, contributing to growing e-waste and toxic materials in landfills.

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- Prompts from the audience?

- Examples of what you have used?

- Your refinement process

- Rate the quality of response

- One from outside the classroom—Ameristar AC unit question

  - Prompt was a picture of the unit with the following: *Provide a parts list and common issues with this ac unit*

  - Answer: 12 pages of parts info and common issues

- One limitation of AI is OUR ability to provide a quality prompt.

  - Practice and think creatively!

# For Further Reading <span>(Bold = I have done/read)</span>

1. **AI for Everyone** – Andrew Ng (Coursera)
Not a bad (a bit technical for me) introduction to AI—for educators without a technical background.

2. **Innovative Teaching with ChatGPT**. – Dr. Jules White (Vanderbilt/Coursera)
Provides practical strategies for integrating ChatGPT into course design, instruction, and student engagement.

3. **Prompt Engineering for ChatGPT** – Dr. Jules White (Vanderbilt/Coursera)
How to craft effective prompts, leverage LLMs in education, and unlock AI's power for engagement

4. **Agentic AI and AI Agents: A Primer for Leaders** – Dr. Jules White (Vanderbilt/Coursera)
Introduces leaders to autonomous AI agents that plan, reason, and act. Highlights uses, risks, and integration strategies.

5. **Plainify AI: Simple for a Novice, Useful for a Pro**
Chan, C. (2024). *Plainify AI: Simple for a novice, useful for a pro.* Plainify Press)

6. AI and Education: The Future of Teaching and Learning (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2023)
Offers a research-based, policy-focused framework for how AI should be approached in American classrooms.

# One Final Note

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- "Chat GPT can make mistakes. Check important Info."

- Verify all facts and sources independently
  - AI tools can generate convincing but false information, including fabricated statistics or quotes—always cross-check against trusted sources (e.g., academic databases, official websites).
- Watch for "hallucinated" citations
  - AI can invent books, articles, or authors that don't exist
  - Mimics real citations—double-check all references before including them in work
  - We had a graduate student prompt AI on a possible decision-making model, and it made one up!

- Final Prompt: *Does AI try to please the user?*
  - Yes, AI is optimized to please—but only within the bounds of its training and alignment goals. It's a simulation of helpfulness, not a conscious desire to be liked.

# Questions?

*Prompt:* *Make an imaginary photo of a group of educators falling asleep as Dr. Breakey speaks at a conference* (Open AI, 2025).



mike-breakey@utc.edu



NOT Contact Information—
AI Generated QR Code
AKA—Rick Rolled

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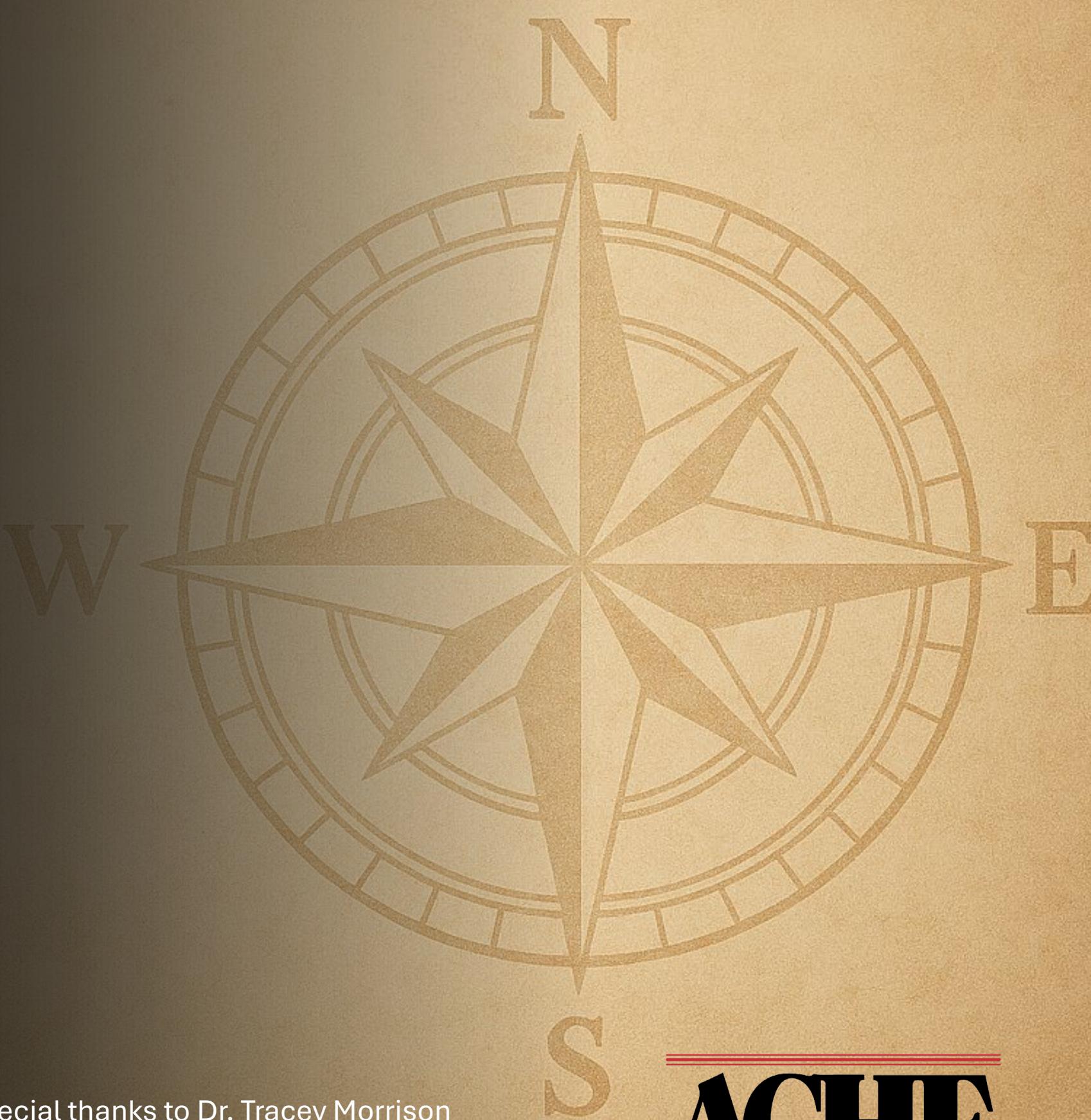
# The only constant is change

- Lifequakes: we experience life disruptions every 12 – 18 months or so, one in 10 a major life event, about half of these are involuntary (Bruce Feiler)

- Disruptions can be positive or negative, but stress is stress!

- If you haven't experienced a disruption lately, you're overdue.
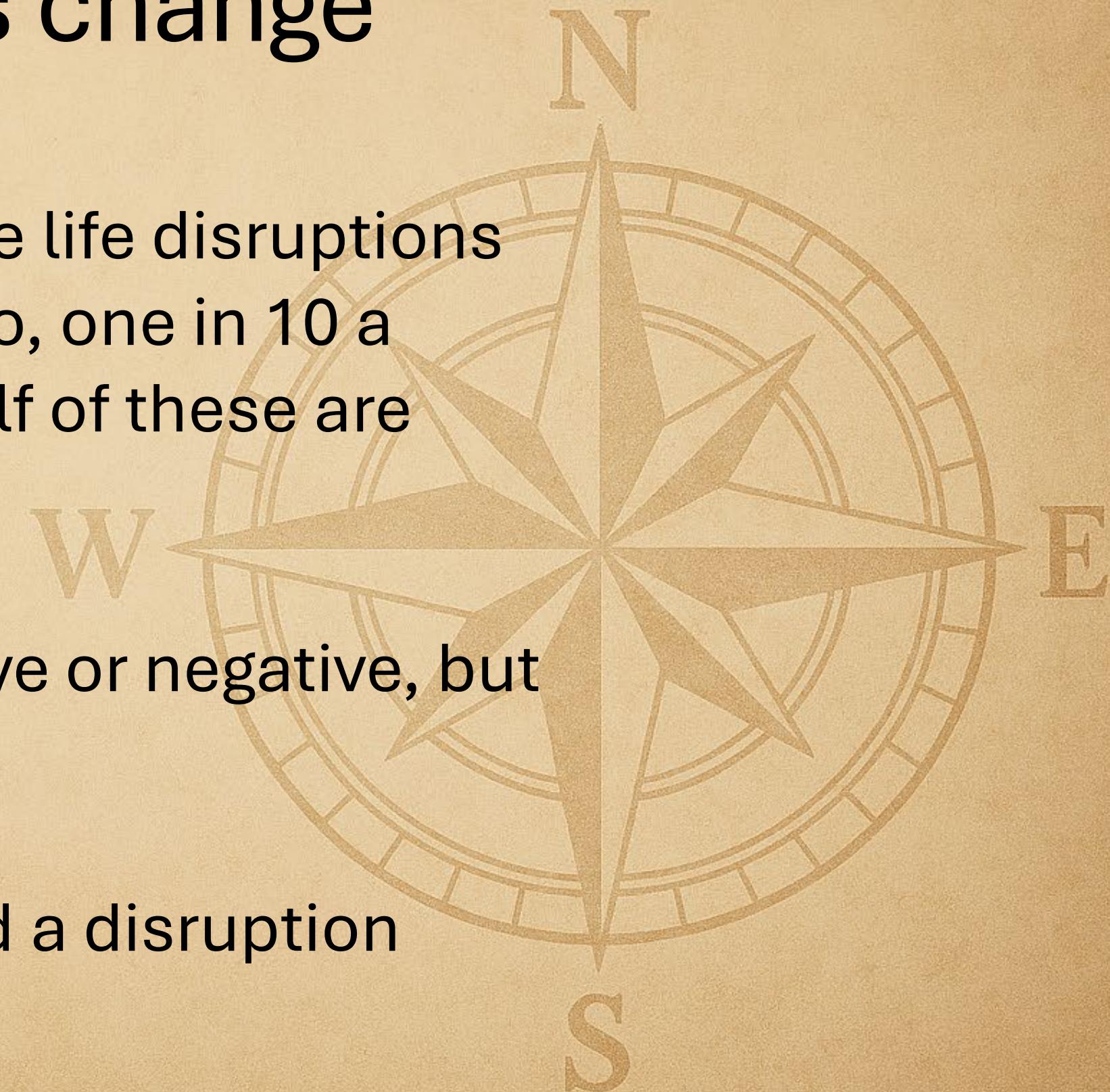
# Navigate Disruption with Values-Based Leadership - 2025
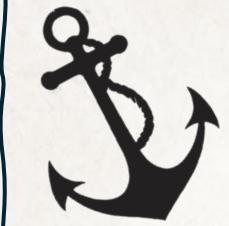
My First Adult Learner
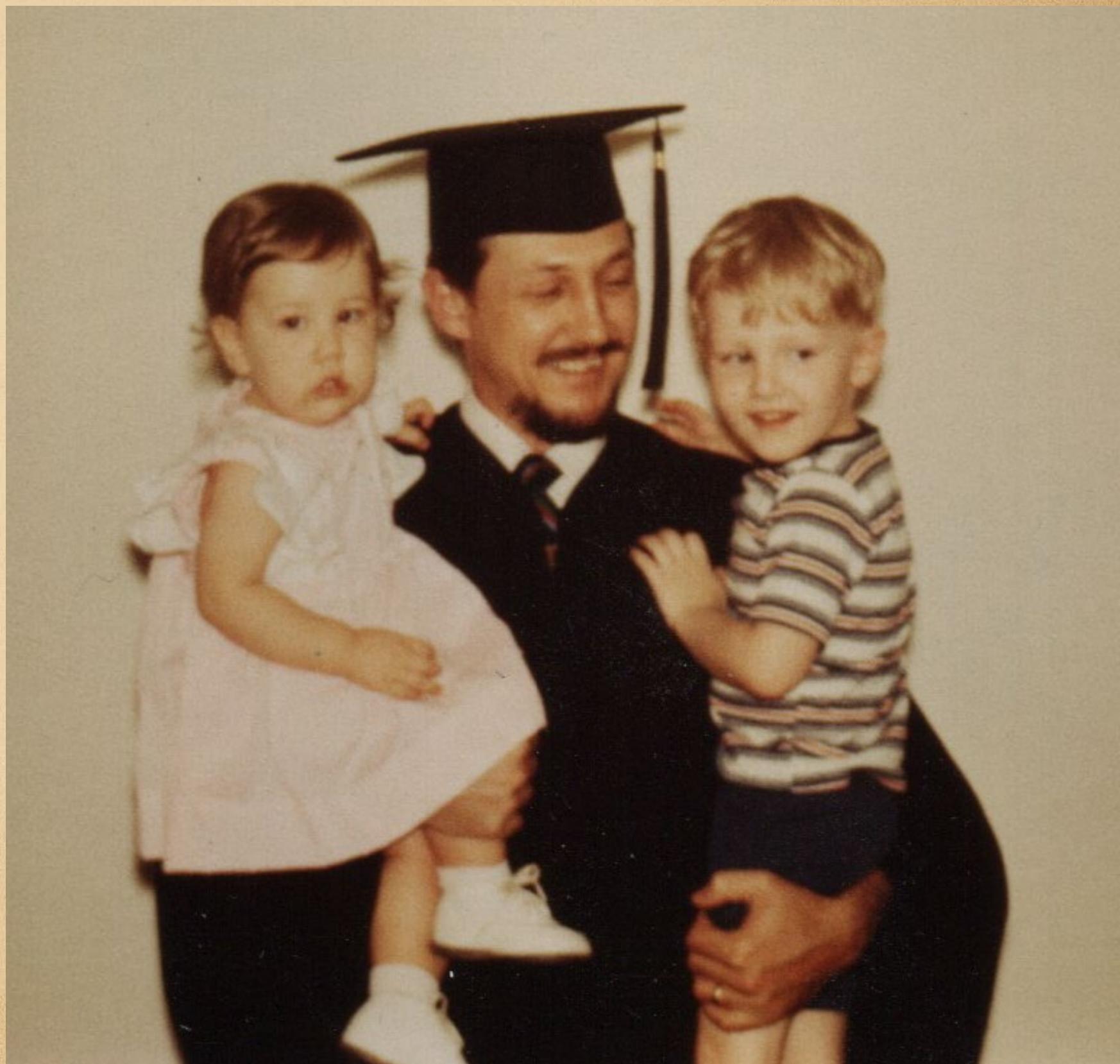
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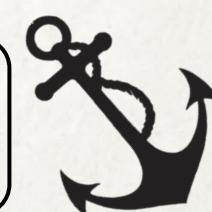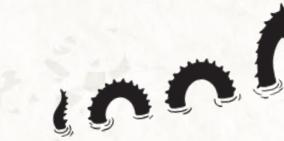
# Values

- No wrong answers!
- What are your core values?
  - Are you sure?
    - Check your calendar & budget
    - Peak moments
    - Irritation indicator – violated values

- What you value vs. what you think you should value
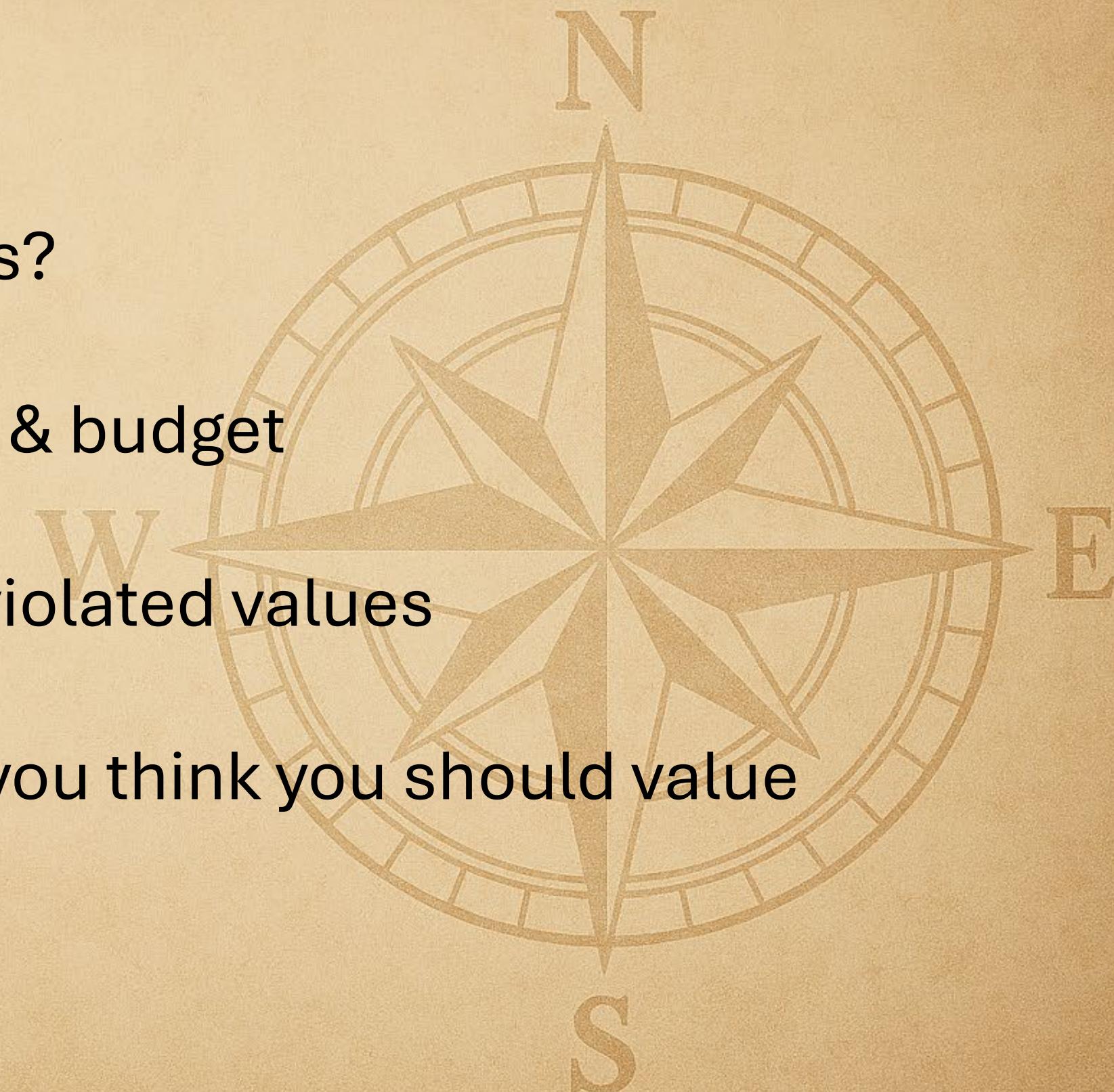
# Activity

# Navigate Disruption with Values-Based Leadership - 2025

ACHE
ASSOCIATION FOR CONTINUING HIGHER EDUCATION, INC.

Integrity

Empathy

Curiosity

Creativity

Responsibility

Resilience

Equanimity

Respect
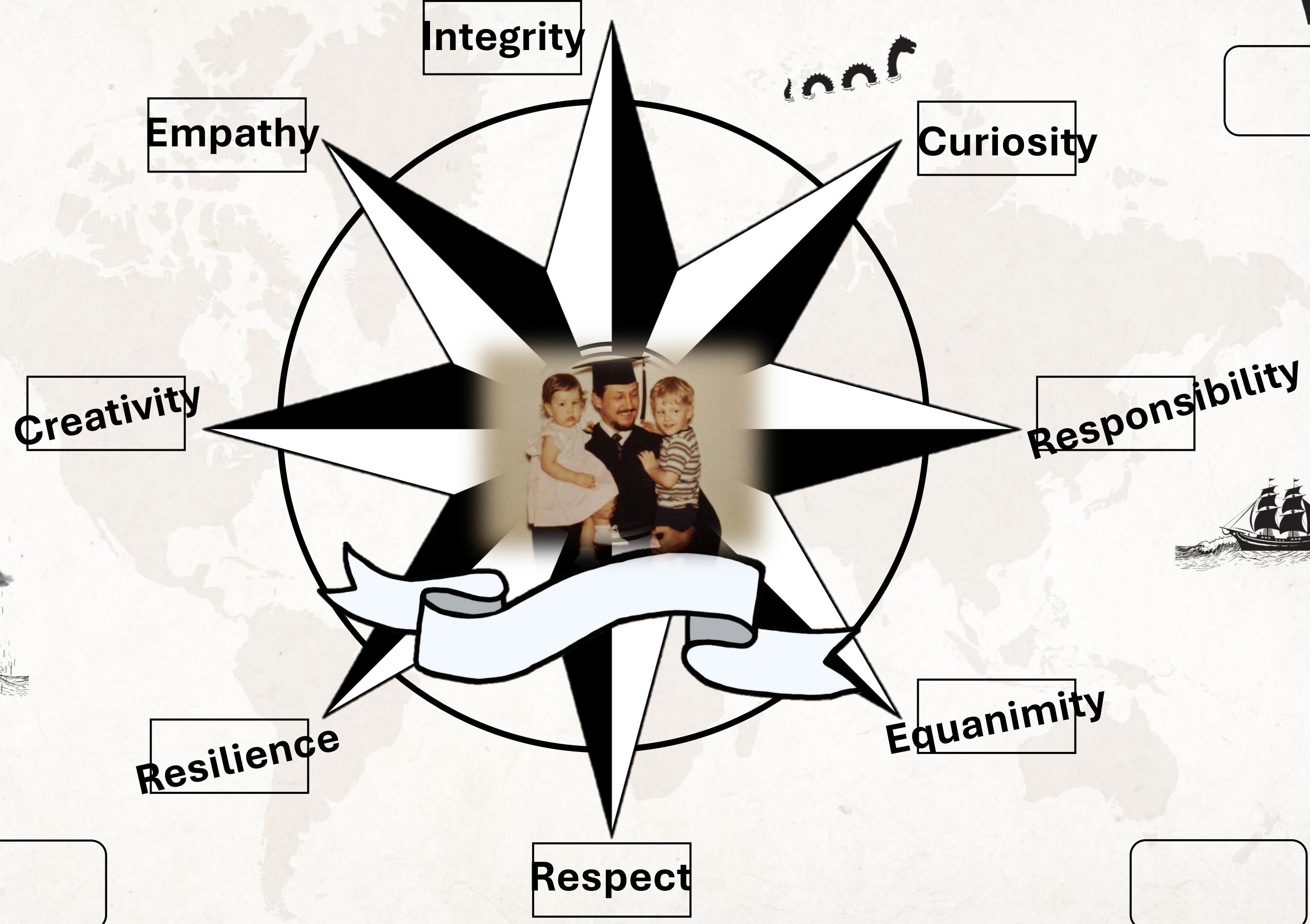
# Anchors

- Physical activity – personal wellbeing
- Hobbies, civic orgs – who are you away from work?
- Family, Faith, and Friends
- Networks
  - Personal board of directors
  - ACHE!
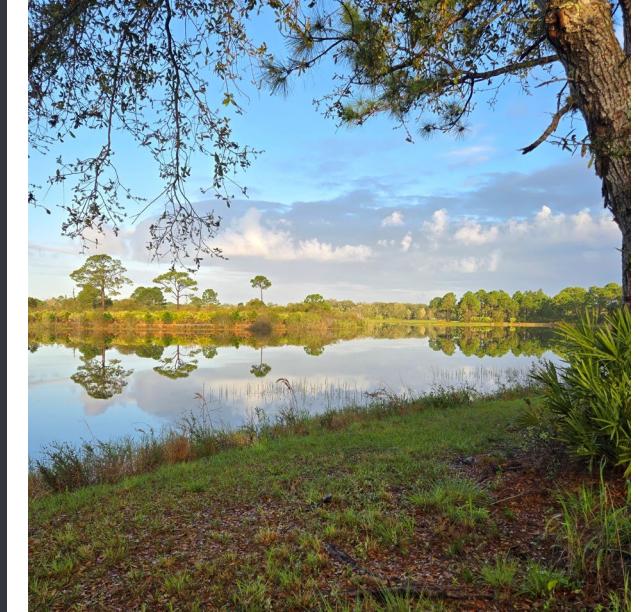
# Navigate Disruption with Values-Based Leadership - 2025

Personal board of directors
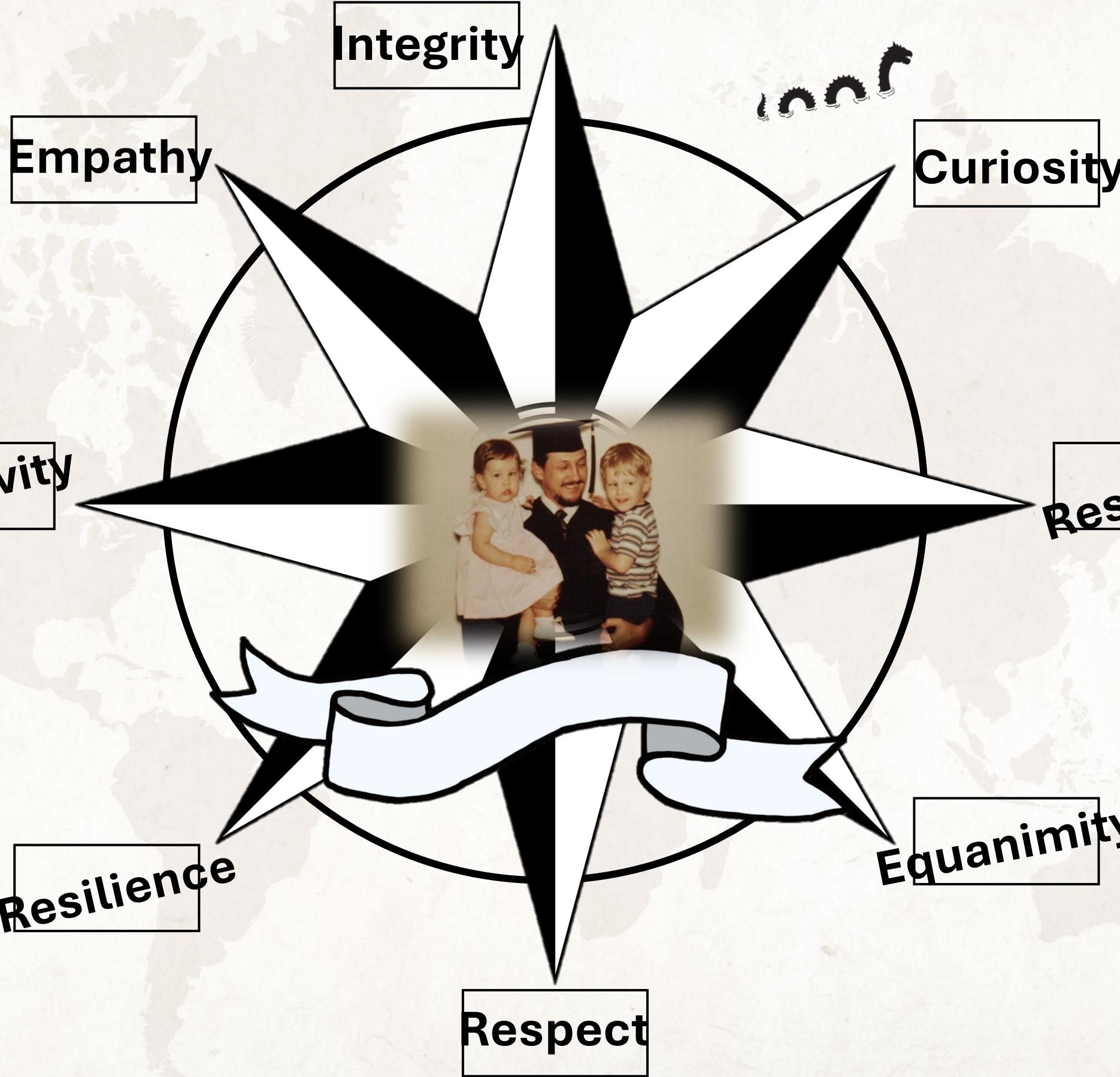
Swimming

Integrity

Empathy

Curiosity

Creativity

Responsibility

Resilience

Equanimity

Respect

Learning

ACHE
ASSOCIATION FOR CONTINUING HIGHER EDUCATION, INC.

- Forward motion – tacking
  - Progress usually isn't linear
  - Persistence and adaptation matter more than speed
  - Old systems, new technology

# Storms and Monsters
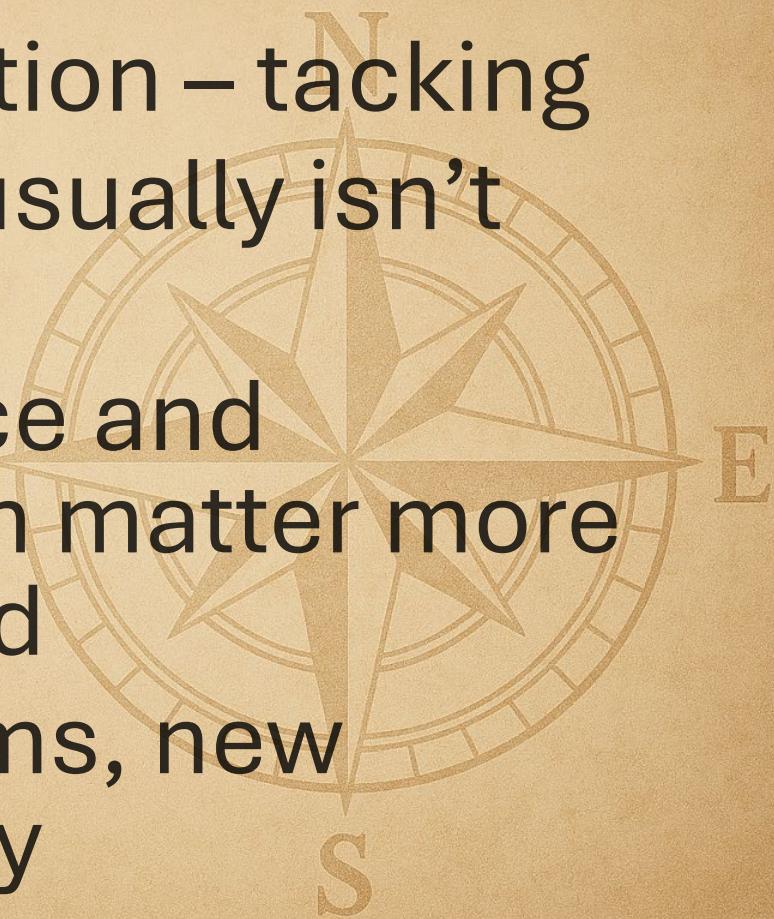
# Surviving storms, Avoiding Monsters

Leveraging your team's strengths, and why you never whistle in a theatre

whale photos credit: Lynn Reynolds

# Leveraging Team Strengths

- When you lead with your values, your authenticity creates psychological safety to allow your team to bring their strengths to the challenge

    - Past success audit
        - What did we do well in our last major challenge?

    - Strength rotation leadership
        - Lead with strengths rather than hierarchy – turn disruption into opportunity
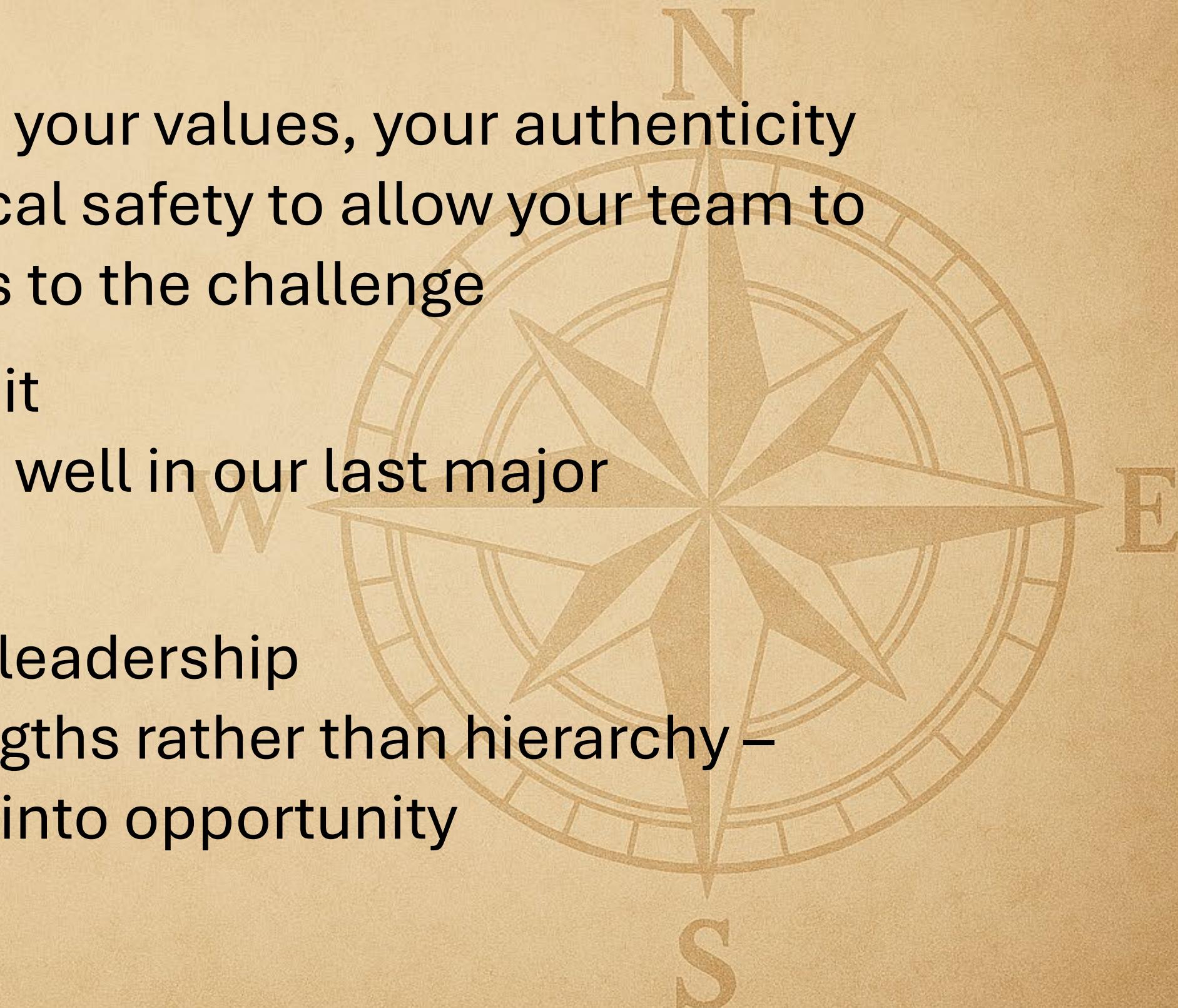
# Your Motto

- Mantra – situation specific
- Team unity
- Keeps you on course

A Few Examples
- Find a way – Diana Nyad
- Work the problem – Gene Kranz
- Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead! – David Glasgow Farragut

# Navigate Disruption with Values-Based Leadership - 2025

ACHE
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The Board

Swimming

Integrity

Empathy

Curiosity

Creativity

Responsibility

Work the problem

Equanimity

Resilience

Respect

Learning

ACHE
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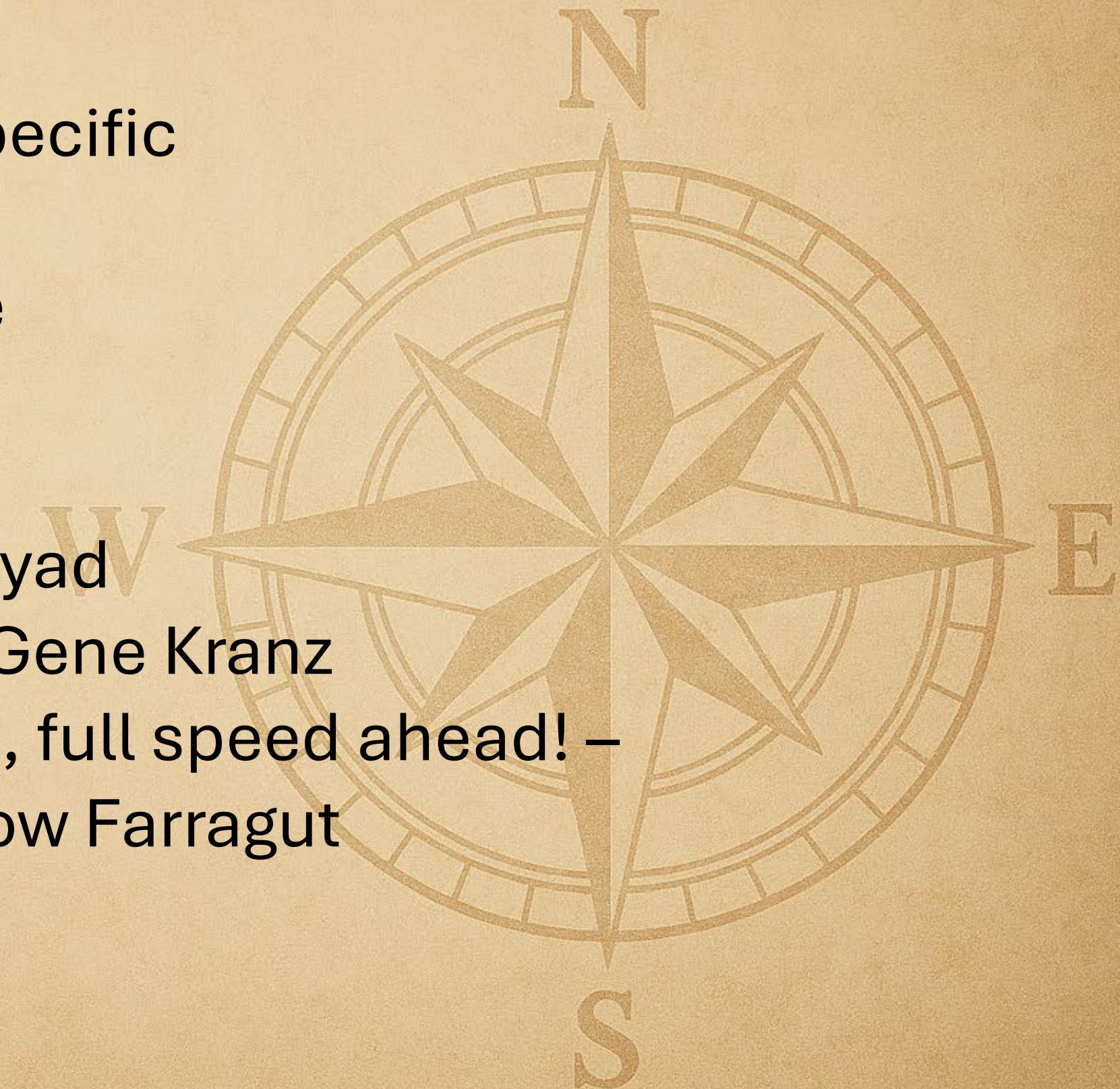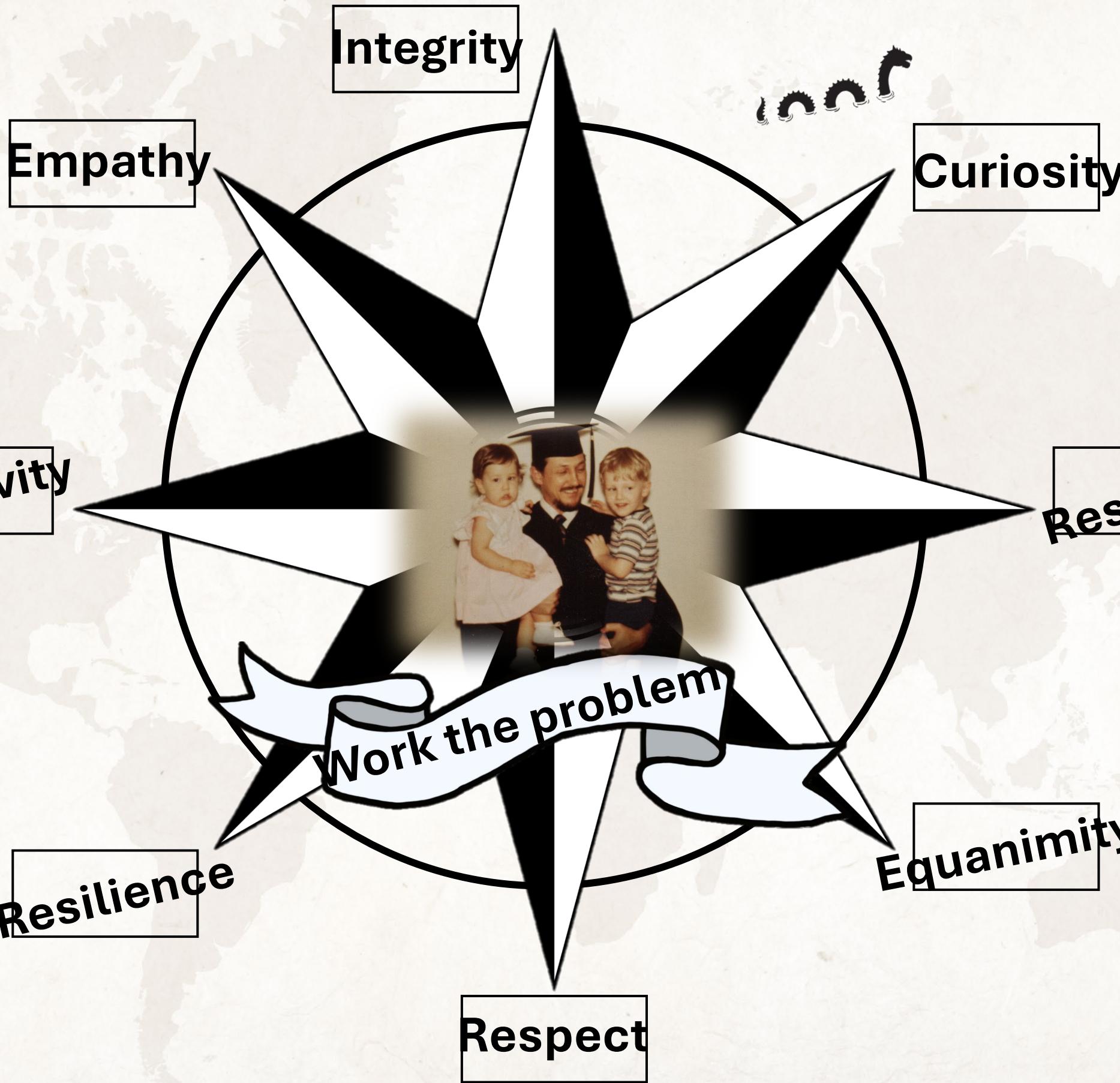
# Real Talk

- You can do everything right and still "fail"
- Failure is part of learning
- Success lies in how you respond
- Failure is a chance to revise your strategy

- The Good News
  - When we start again, it's not "from scratch"
  - Our legacy lives in every learner
  - Our relationships outlast any disruption
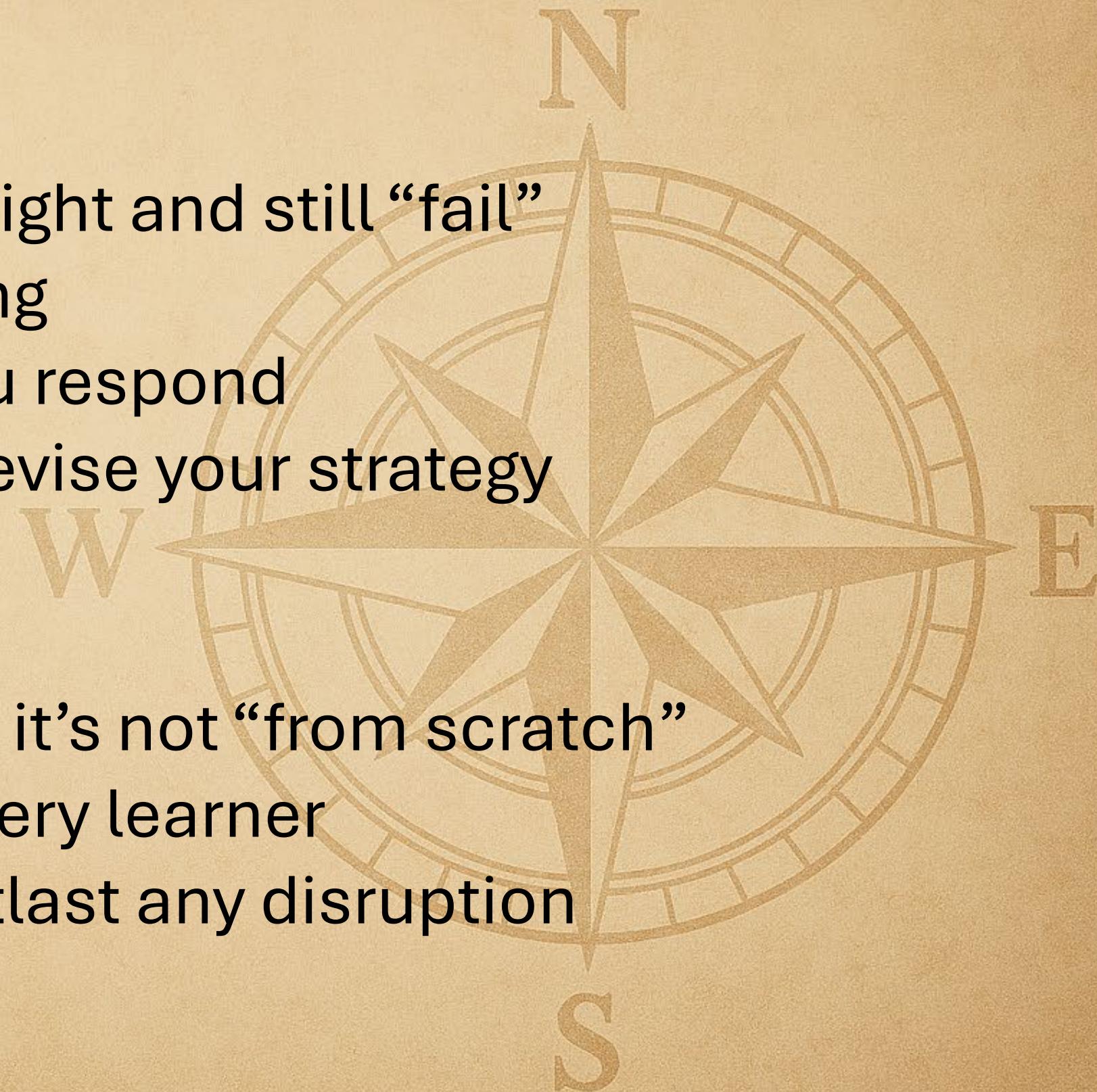
# Stay in touch!

See you in Savannah, Norfolk, and connecting virtually through the year!

**ACHE 2026**

*Norfolk, Virginia*

Hilton Norfolk the Main
October 12-14

For more information, visit www.acheinc.org

# The Challenge We Face

📈 **Traditional student pipelines are shrinking**

  — the "demographic cliff" is here

🎓 **Over 40 million adults**
have some college credit but no credential

🕐 Adult learners are
**juggling work, family, and other barriers**

💻 Higher ed's
    with diverse learners
**digital ecosystem creates an empathy gap**

# Our Focus: 3 Pillars of Digital Empowerment

## Dynamic, Student-Centered Websites

Remove friction, welcome diverse learners, simplify digital journeys

## Integrated CRM Systems

Personalize engagement at scale, nurture relationships, track journeys

## AI-Driven Marketing

Right message, right learner, right time with human connection
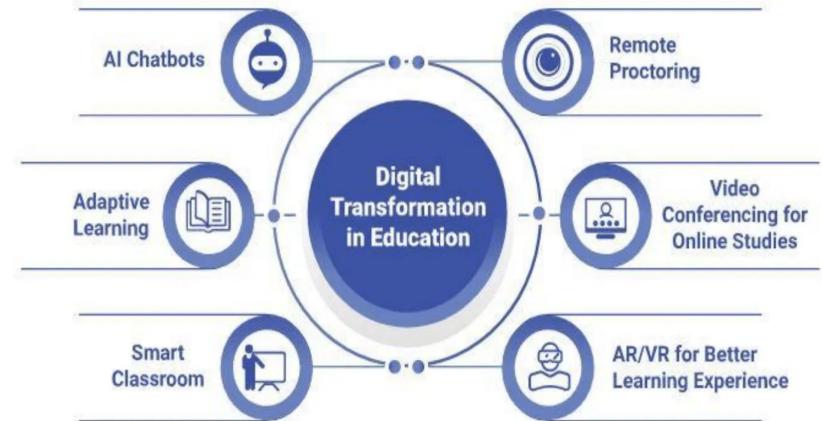
**Goal:**
Building digital experiences that expand access, boost enrollment, and meet learners where they are

# The Enrollment Landscape is Shifting

Higher education is at a **crossroads** with the demographic cliff

Projected **steep decline** in traditional college-aged students around 2025

Days of relying on endless stream of 18-year-olds are **fading**

## Opportunity in the Challenge

Over 40 million adults with some college credit but no degree represent the **future of higher ed growth**

These learners are not being fully served by current digital systems and processes



**Projected Enrollment Trends (Indexed to 2015)**

Enrollment Index (2015 = 100)

Traditional Students (18-22)    Adult Learners (25+)
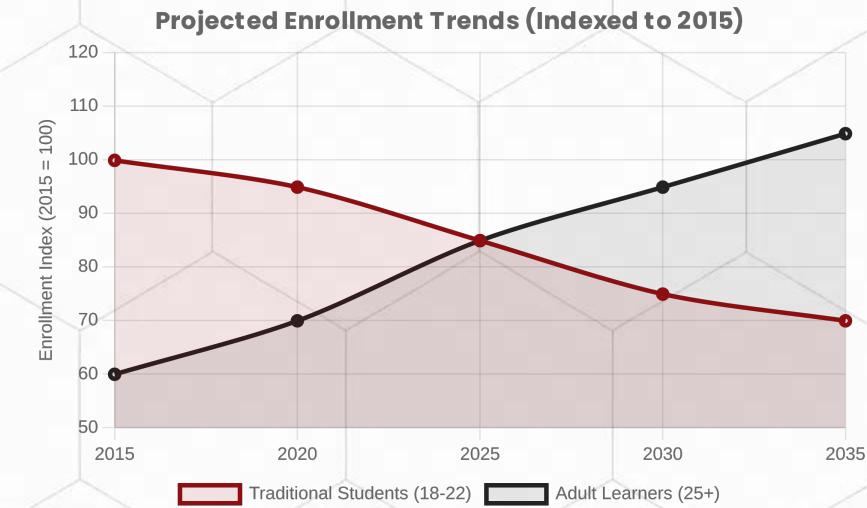
# Who Are Today's Learners?

**Working Professionals**

Balancing school with jobs or family care responsibilities

**First-Generation Students**

Navigating higher education without a family roadmap

**Career Changers**

Seeking new skills and credentials for career advancement

**Underserved Communities**

Facing systemic barriers to educational access

These learners bring different priorities and expectations. Continuing Ed divisions must understand and address their unique needs.

# What Adult Learners Need

## Flexibility

Complex lives require flexible schedules, not rigid course structures or 9-to-5 support services. Flexibility is a prerequisite, not a perk.

## Clear ROI on Education

Adults need to see value. They ask: "Will this credential advance my career? Will it fit my life? Is it worth the time and cost?" Must communicate clearly in plain language.

## Simplified Digital Journeys

Websites, applications, and communication systems can't feel like bureaucratic mazes. Complexity breeds drop-off. Need intuitive, streamlined, mobile-friendly experiences.

## Human Connection

Even in a digital-first world, learners crave authentic connection. They want to feel seen, supported, and valued — not like just another data point in a CRM system.

# Your Website is the Front Door

## Dynamic, Student-Centered Websites

For many adult learners, especially those returning after years away, your website is their first and often only impression before deciding to engage

# Removing Digital Friction

## Intuitive, Comprehensive Portals

Create one-stop hubs for adult learners with clear program options, FAQs, prior learning credit info, and financial aid resources — all in one accessible place.

## Simplified, Mobile-First Forms

Shortening inquiry or application forms — collecting only essential info up front — dramatically reduces drop-off. How many clicks does it take to request info on your site?

## Personalized Content Delivery

Modern CMS tools can dynamically adjust content based on visitor behavior, showing relevant programs and testimonials from similar learners.
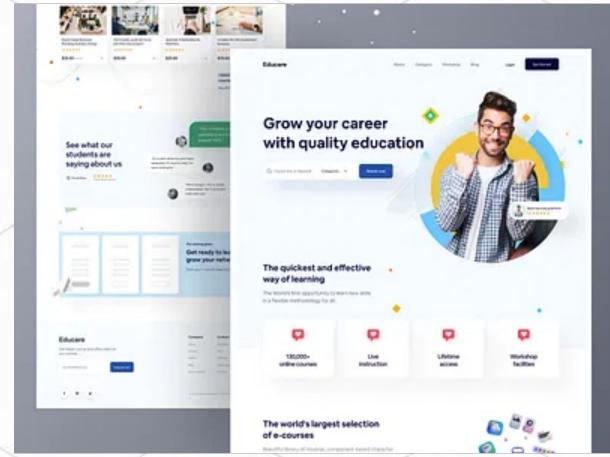
# Student-Centered Website Checklist

Mobile-responsive design that works seamlessly on all devices

Clear, jargon-free language that speaks directly to adult learners

Streamlined forms with minimal required fields

Prominent display of program ROI, career outcomes, and time commitment

Accessible design that meets WCAG 2.1 standards

Clear pathways for different learner personas (career changers, degree completers, etc.)

Simplified navigation with intuitive information architecture

Prominent calls-to-action that reduce decision fatigue

Real stories and testimonials from similar adult learners

Multiple support options clearly displayed (chat, phone, email)

## Before/After Example

**Before:**

"Submit your application materials via our online portal. Transcripts must be official and sent directly from the issuing institution."

**After:**

"Ready to apply? Start here with just your name and email. We'll help you gather transcripts later."

# Smart Automation Strategies

✉ **Automated, Personalized Follow-Ups**

Set up email sequences that feel personal. Instead of generic "Thanks for your interest," try "Hi Sarah, I noticed you're interested in our project management certificate."

📈 **Behavioral Triggers**

Track website behavior and respond accordingly. If someone downloads a program brochure but doesn't apply within a week, trigger a personalized email with testimonials.

👥 **Segmented Communication**

Group prospects by demographics, interests, or stage in enrollment funnel. A 45-year-old career changer needs different messaging than a 25-year-old.



CRM With Artificial Intelligence

🇬🇧 +44-808 234 2017  🇺🇸 +1-800 673 0918  🇮🇳 +91-750 300 1494  🌐 crm-masters.com

**The Power of Data-Driven Empathy**
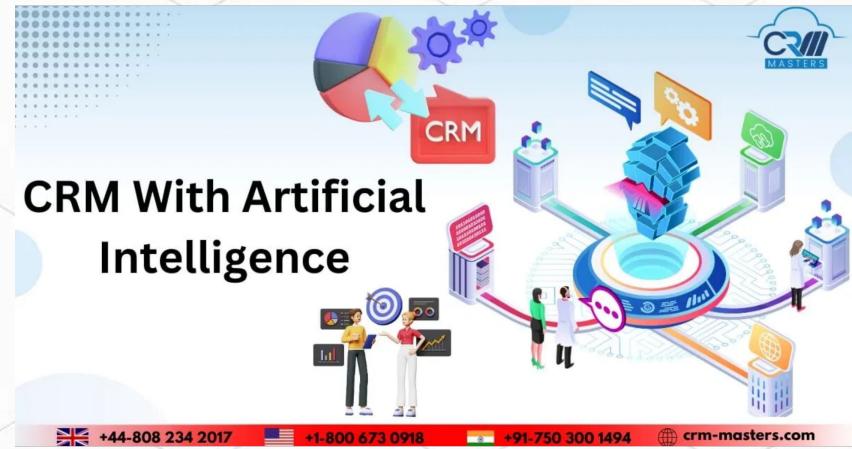
# CRM Success Factors

## ⚙ Setup & Integration

Ensure CRM integrates with existing systems (SIS, LMS, website forms) for seamless data flow and unified learner profiles.

**Common Pitfall:**

Siloed systems that create duplicate records and inconsistent learner experiences

## 👥 Staff Training & Adoption

Invest in comprehensive training and create clear processes for staff to ensure consistent usage and data quality.

**Common Pitfall:**

Underestimating the cultural shift required for successful CRM implementation

## ☰ Measurement & Optimization

Track key metrics like inquiry-to-application conversion rates, email engagement, and enrollment yield to continuously improve.

**Common Pitfall:**

Collecting data without actionable insights or regular review processes

## 💬 Content & Communication

Develop a content library of personalized, targeted messages that address specific learner needs and pain points.

**Common Pitfall:**

Generic, one-size-fits-all messaging that fails to connect with diverse learners
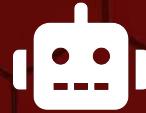
# AI That Enhances Human Connection

## AI-Driven Personalization & Support

AI isn't about replacing human interaction — it's about making those interactions more meaningful and timely

# AI in Action

**Intelligent Chatbots**

24/7 support for common questions, program guidance, and application assistance. Modern AI chatbots can handle complex queries and know when to escalate to human staff.

**Predictive Analytics**

Identify which prospects are most likely to enroll, which current students might need intervention, and optimize marketing spend based on conversion patterns.

**Content Personalization**

Dynamically adjust website content, email messaging, and program recommendations based on user behavior, interests, and demographics.



GlueUp

**The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Digital Transformation**
for Member-Based Organizations

**Key Principle:**
AI should support human staff, not replace them. Use automation to handle routine tasks so your team can focus on meaningful interactions that build relationships.

# Getting Started with AI

**1** **Start Small, Solve Real Problems**

Begin with a specific challenge (e.g., after-hours support, application abandonment) rather than implementing AI broadly.

**2** **Evaluate ROI Potential**

Calculate time savings, increased conversion rates, or improved student satisfaction to justify investment.

**3** **Prepare Your Data**

AI is only as good as your data. Clean up your CRM, standardize processes, and identify key data points to track.

**4** **Train Your Team**

Ensure staff understand how AI tools work, their limitations, and how to collaborate effectively with them.

## Entry-Level AI Tools

💬 Chatbot platforms        ✉ Email personalization

📅 Scheduling assistants     📈 Predictive analytics

## Success Metrics to Track

Response time improvement

Inquiry-to-application conversion

Staff time saved on routine tasks

Learner satisfaction scores

# Building an Empathy-Driven Culture

♥ **Technology Serves People, Not Vice Versa**

Digital tools should make the human experience better, not replace it. Every technology decision should start with: "How does this help our learners and staff?"

👥 **Include Diverse Voices**

Involve adult learners in your digital transformation. Conduct user testing with actual students from diverse backgrounds and life circumstances.

🔁 **Continuous Improvement**

Digital transformation isn't a one-time project. Create feedback loops to regularly gather input from learners and staff about what's working and what isn't.

*"The most successful digital transformations in higher education are those that enhance human connection rather than replace it."*

**— Dr. Maya Chen, Digital Learning Expert**

**Blending Automation with Human Touch**

🤖 Automate routine processes and information delivery

👤 Reserve human interaction for high-value touchpoints

🤝 Create seamless transitions between digital and human support

# Empathy + Innovation = Real Impact

## Success Story: Mid-Size Public University

Implemented all three pillars over 18 months:

Redesigned CE website with mobile-first approach

Integrated CRM with behavioral triggers

Added AI chatbot for 24/7 support

### Results:

42% increase in inquiries, 28% higher conversion rate, and 35% reduction in staff time spent on routine questions.

### Measuring What Matters

Look beyond enrollment numbers to satisfaction, retention, and completion rates. Digital transformation should improve the entire learner journey.

### Transformation Takes Time

Start with quick wins, but commit to long-term change. The most successful institutions view digital empathy as an ongoing commitment.

**Impact of Digital Transformation (Indexed to Baseline)**

Y-axis: Index (Baseline = 100), 0 to 180

Categories: Inquiry Rate, Conversion Rate, Completion Rate, Staff Efficiency

Legend: Before Digital Transformation, After Digital Transformation
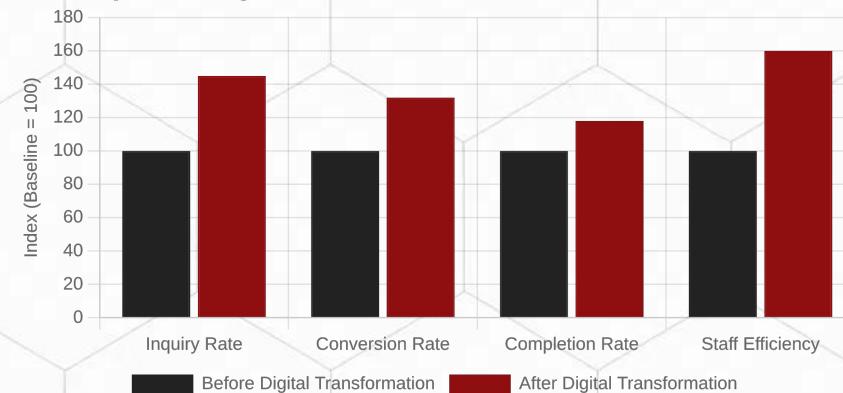
## Small Private College Case Study

With limited resources, focused on one pillar at a time:

Started with website redesign and simplified forms

Added basic CRM functionality six months later

Introduced chatbot for after-hours support

### Results:

Doubled CE enrollment over two years while maintaining same staffing levels.

17

# RJP's 4-Step Implementation Framework

## STEP 1
### Audit Digital Presence

Evaluate your current website, CRM, and digital communication from the perspective of adult learners. Identify friction points and gaps in the digital journey.

## STEP 2
### Map Priorities & Gaps

Create a prioritized roadmap based on impact vs. effort. Focus on quick wins that can show immediate results while planning for longer-term transformations.

## STEP 3
### Implement Tools & Training

Select and implement appropriate technologies. Ensure staff are trained not just on how to use tools, but on the empathy-driven philosophy behind them.

## STEP 4
### Measure & Refine

Establish clear metrics for success. Continuously gather feedback from learners and staff. Make iterative improvements based on data and user experience.

### Starting Points for Any Institution Size

- ✓ Website mobile usability test
- ✓ Form abandonment analysis
- ✓ Email communication audit
- ✓ Student journey mapping
- ✓ Staff time allocation study
- ✓ Chatbot needs assessment

18

# Interactive Discussion: Your Next Step

*Let's take a moment to reflect on your institution's digital transformation journey*

## Question 1

**What is your biggest digital friction point for adult learners?**

*Think about your website, application process, or communication systems. Where do prospective students get stuck or drop off?*

## Question 2

**Which of the three pillars would have the most immediate impact at your institution?**

*Consider your current infrastructure, staff capabilities, and learner needs. Where would you start?*

## Question 3

**What is one actionable idea you'll take back to your team?**

*Think about a specific change you could implement within the next 30 days that would improve the digital experience.*

## Question 4

**What resources or support would you need to implement these changes?**

*Consider budget, expertise, technology, and institutional buy-in. What would help you move forward?*

## Share Your Insights

Turn to a neighbor and discuss one of these questions for the next 3 minutes

# Thank You

Let's bridge innovation and empathy together

✉️
april.rainbolt@rjpsystems.com

🌐
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📞
(423) 647-1310

**Special Offer for ACHE Attendees**

Receive a complimentary mini-audit of your digital presence. We'll evaluate your website, application process, and digital communication from the perspective of adult learners.

Email us with subject line "ACHE 2025" to schedule your free consultation.

# Tune In Reach Out:

## Expanding the University Voice Through Podcasting

Leslie Cordie, PhD, MBA, BSN
Associate Professor
Fulbright Scholar
Auburn University
https://aub.ie/LeslieCordie

# Overview

- The Why – Podcasts for Learning

- The What – Types of Topics

- The How – Planning and Strategies

- Examples to Share

- Next Steps and Resources

# What is a Podcast?

- Audio recordings similar to radio shows that can be listened to

- Usually delivered in episodes

- "Subscribe" and received notifications of the latest version

# Podcasts for Learning – The WHY

- Audience Characteristics
- Just in Time Learning
- Social Media Connections
- Global Collaboration

TELLOP

# Outreach, Extension, Lifelong Learning

- Recruitment through voices, values and expertise

- Strengthen Alumni connections

- Platform for sharing research

- Public audience

- Authentic message in comparison to Marketing

# Topics for Podcast – The WHAT



**Series of Concepts**

**Interviews**

**Current Events**

# Multiple Examples



AUBURN ONLINE
TIGER BYTES
AU AUBURN
Office of the Provost
Biggio Center

TRANSITIONS FROM PEDAGOGY TO ANDRAGOGY: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

TRANSITIONS
LIFELONG LEARNING
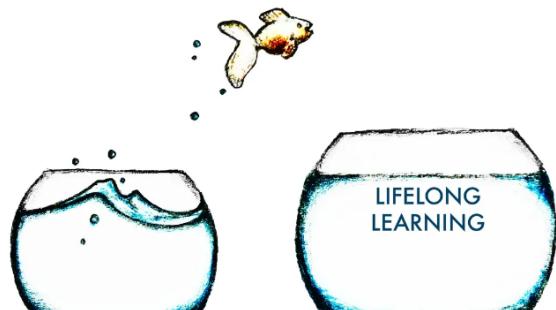
HOW VERY HUMAN SCIENCES
AU AUBURN
HUMAN SCIENCES
"How Very Human – Sciences" podcast.

CONVERSATIONS FROM THE FRONT PORCH

Conversations from the Front Porch
Lifelong Learning Lessons Podcast Series

EVERYTHING AUBURN

# Planning and Strategies – The HOW

- Name
- Brand
- Length
- Scheduling
- Script
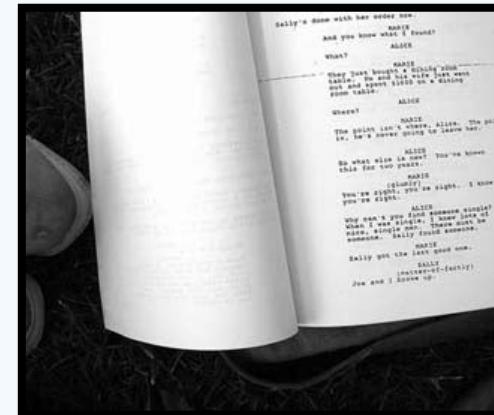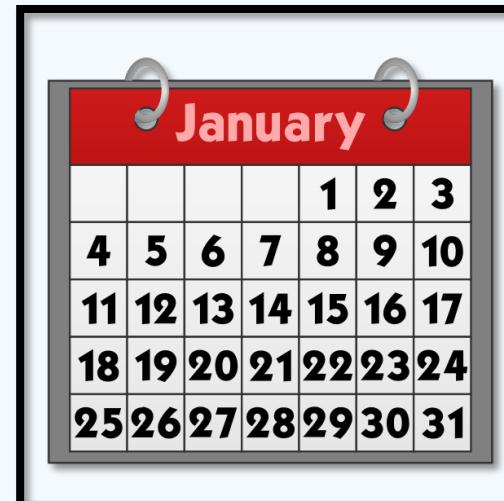
# Planning and Strategies – The HOW

- Location *where

- Equipment

- Software

- Editing

- RSS Feeds

- Hosting

# Hosting and Platforms

- Apple iTunes

- Spotify

- Buzzsprout

- Web Sites

- Others

# Examples in Adult Learning

- SCOC Consulting

- dotEDU – American Council of Education

- re: Learning – Chronicle of Higher Ed

- Illumination – Modern Campus / EvoLLLution

- TOPcast – UCF

- Mine, of course!

# Next Steps - TIPS



- Keep focused during the session
- Watch for copyright issues!
- Music and theme
- Promote the podcast
- Have FUN!

# Thank you!
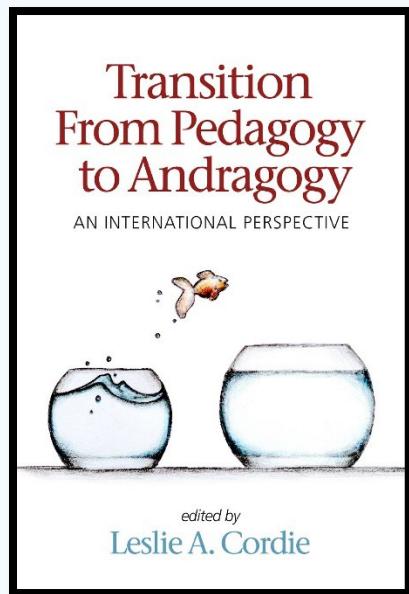
**Contact:**  Leslie Cordie – Auburn University
Email lesliecordie@auburn.edu
LinkedIn lesliecordie
ePortfolio https://aub.ie/LeslieCordie

Transition
From Pedagogy
to Andragogy

AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

*edited by*
Leslie A. Cordie

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