

Thursday, August 28, 2025

Plenary I

Roundtable Discussions

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Legacy Ballroom

Table 1 9:00 a.m. - **Qualitative Insights: Enhancing Performance Metrics Through Participant-Centered Evaluation**

Dr. Adrienne Duke-Marks - Faculty, Department of Human and Family Sciences, College of Human Sciences

Angela Mintah - Graduate student, Department of Human and Family Sciences, College of Human Sciences

Sandra Anti Eyiah - Graduate student, Department of Human and Family Sciences, College of Human Sciences

Brianna Goodwin - Graduate student, College of Human Sciences

Nana Adjoa Konadu Attiah - Graduate student, College of Human Sciences

Federal agencies increasingly rely on external vendors to assess program effectiveness using quantitative performance measures. Traditional performance measurement frameworks prioritize objective, standardized metrics, while neglecting the qualitative dimensions that offer deeper context. Although quantitative data provides essential information, it fails to fully capture participants' lived experiences with federally funded programs, particularly in areas like sexual health education. Without integrating participant voices, national evaluations risk overlooking key insights that could enhance program design, delivery and community engagement.

We propose that a blended evaluation model will strengthen the validity of program assessments, driving more informed decision-making and impactful improvements in federal programs. During our presentation, we will discuss how participatory approaches utilizing qualitative feedback are overlooked before, during and after the data collection process, subsequently limiting meaningful insights that could radically change our approach.

Table 2 9:00 a.m. - **Elevating Practice: Engaging Educators in the National Board Process**

Dr. Laura Crowe - **Faculty, East Alabama Regional Inservice Center, Department of Curriculum and Teaching, College of Education**

The East Alabama Regional Inservice Center (EARIC) has developed a dynamic, sustainable model to support educators through the rigorous journey of achieving National Board Certification

(NBC). This presentation will explore how EARIC strategically engages teachers in Region 9 of Alabama through a multi-tiered support system that includes cohort-based mentoring, targeted professional learning communities, and partnerships with National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) who serve as candidate support providers. By offering structured guidance aligned to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, EARIC empowers educators to reflect deeply on their practice, improve instructional effectiveness, and ultimately earn certification.

Attendees will learn how EARIC's model emphasizes accessibility by providing support at multiple entry points, including awareness sessions, pre-candidacy workshops and ongoing one-on-one coaching. The center also fosters collaboration with school districts to identify and recruit candidates, leveraging NBCTs as mentors to cultivate a culture of excellence and professional growth.

Data will be shared demonstrating the model's impact on increasing the number of NBCTs in Region 9, along with success stories that highlight how certification transforms teaching and learning. The presentation will conclude with insights on sustaining growth, including developing district-level NBC networks and integrating certification into teacher leadership pipelines. Participants will leave with replicable strategies to strengthen NBC efforts in any future local cohorts.

Table 3 9:00 a.m. - **Oral Health Isn't Cosmetic: Building Strategic Access and Engagement into a Southern Disparities Study**

Dr. Zachary Schulz - Faculty, Department of History, College of Liberal Arts

Oral health is often treated as secondary—or even cosmetic—within U.S. healthcare systems. Yet it profoundly shapes overall health, access to care, and community wellbeing. This roundtable presents a community-engaged project in its early stages, developed in collaboration with the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), to address oral health disparities in Alabama through a mixed-methods study targeting both parents and children. The research was recently approved by IRB and is launching in summer 2025.

We will focus on the strategic design of the study, which integrates narrative and survey-based data collection to capture both quantitative prevalence and qualitative experience of oral disease and care access. Particular attention is given to how the project frames community engagement, designs inclusive outreach strategies (including print and digital access tools), and foregrounds voices often excluded from traditional public health surveillance.

This roundtable will invite discussion on developing engaged research before data collection begins, including ethical considerations, institutional barriers and effective collaboration with state health agencies. It will also explore how outreach methods can be calibrated to address both visibility and stigma in marginalized rural and urban communities. Participants will be encouraged to share their own experiences designing community-engaged health research—especially projects where institutional support or recognition may be limited, such as in non-tenure-track or cross-disciplinary roles.

By sharing the foundational planning of this work-in-progress, the session aims to demystify early-stage outreach scholarship and highlight how “access” begins not with results, but with relationships, design and intent. This project ultimately asks how oral health, often overlooked, can become a catalytic site for strategic, collaborative engagement in the South.

Table 4 9:00 a.m. - **Empowering Education through Data Science: A Collaborative Initiative by CDSI and PEER**

Dr. Elvan Ceyhan - Faculty, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, College of Sciences and Mathematics

Dr. Nedret Billor - Faculty, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, College of Sciences and Mathematics

Dr. Melinda Lanius - Faculty, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, College of Sciences and Mathematics

This presentation highlights the collaborative outreach efforts of the Center for Data Science Innovation (CDSI) and the COSAM Discipline-Based Education Research (DBER) cluster at Auburn University. United under the 2025 Symposium's theme of "Catalytic Engagement through Strategic Access, Opportunity & Collaboration," this session will explore how these two groups have sponsored initiatives, such as hosting a Professional development for Emerging Education Researchers (PEER) Institute in Summer 2025, and are working together to expand access to data science education, build interdisciplinary professional development pathways, and foster community and industry partnerships.

CDSI, co-directed by Drs. Billor and Ceyhan, contributes by providing a research and collaboration hub that connects students, faculty and stakeholders through data-driven capstone projects, outreach workshops and workforce development activities. The DBER cluster, led by Drs. McNeal, Burkholder, Ballen, and Lanius, complement this work by mentoring disciplinary faculty and/or students as they transition into education-focused research. The PEER model emphasizes access to methodological training and community-building around discipline-based education research (DBER), with upcoming programming framed around data science themes.

This roundtable will highlight our 2024-2025 activities and engage participants in a discussion of best practices for joint outreach programming, university-industry alignment, and cross-disciplinary faculty development. We invite colleagues across STEM, education and the social sciences to collaborate in building a more interdisciplinary and strategically engaged data science ecosystem at Auburn, in Alabama, and beyond.

Table 5 9:00 a.m. - **Tiger Check - A Community Health Based Initiative Focused on Keeping Alabama Children Healthy**

Erin Thornton - Faculty, College of Nursing

Marilyn Davis - Faculty, Tuskegee University School of Nursing

Dr. Barbara Wilder - Faculty, College of Nursing

Tiger Check, a community-based outreach initiative, focused on impacting the health of school aged-children in rural communities amongst the eastern region of Alabama, began in 2008. This program originated at Auburn University's College of Nursing, where undergraduate baccalaureate nursing students, in partnership with the Macon County school system, began visiting schools to perform health-based assessments on children from ages 4-18. This initiative has grown over the last 17 years into other rural counties in eastern Alabama to include Bullock and Tallapoosa County. This initiative allows nursing students to practice their pediatric assessment skills while also collaborating with a neighboring nursing program at Tuskegee University. These two nursing programs have come together to meet the needs of their communities as well as enhance exposure and experience for nursing students caring for pediatric clients in the community setting.

Over the last three years this collaborative effort has impacted approximately 10,000 children in various eastern Alabama school systems. Nursing students from both nursing programs perform various assessments including physical, vision and hearing screenings to include height and weight measurements. Nursing students perform these assessments and health screenings in a joint effort at each public school. These nursing students come from all different socioeconomic backgrounds and being able to share and impact one another has become an important part of this collaboration. Although the primary focus of this initiative is to positively impact the health of children in rural Alabama, this experience also increases nursing student exposure to children of various ages. Seemingly, having interactions between nursing students and school age children positively impacts nursing students' confidence in pediatric assessments, performing age-appropriate skills on children, and putting knowledge to practice. Overall, the impact is monumental for nursing students as well as the health impact on school-aged children in rural eastern Alabama.

Table 1 10:00 a.m. - **Sectional Pasts: Using Design Drawings as Tools for Knowledge Exchange in Historic Environments**

Sarah Coleman - Faculty, Landscape Architecture Program, College of Architecture, Design & Construction

Isaac Cohen - Faculty, Landscape Architecture Program, College of Architecture, Design & Construction

Measured drawings are essential tools through which design disciplines research, plan and communicate about buildings, infrastructures and landscapes. In historic environments, these drawings are often used by institutions to record the "significant" features of a site. Their purpose is typically to restore these features to a previous condition or to preserve them for future generations.

This project proposes an expanded role for measured drawings. Using the architectural convention of the sectional drawing, it seeks to document historic and ongoing changes in heritage environments. It invites community members and stakeholders to bear witness to transformations that are not typically captured by institutional surveys. These include changes that fall outside the scope of official heritage narratives.

This method produces suites of drawings in order to chart a single site across multiple moments over extended periods of time. These drawings incorporate contributions that go beyond professional surveys and measured data to include oral histories, memories and projections from stakeholder communities. As such, final drawings emerge from a dialogue—an exchange between archival research, institutional methods of measurement, inherited knowledge and lived experience.

The result is a new type of site documentation—one that affords a broader picture of how historic sites have been and are presently conceived, demonstrating their function as living environments which actively shape place and community identities, continually generative of new meanings and relevance.

This presentation will focus on a case study of this method at the Florence Indian Mound in Florence, Alabama. It will document our process of producing and using these drawings as tools of exchange. We will reflect on how they can serve as platforms for conversation, demonstrate more equitable practices of knowledge production, and prepare the ground for new visions of the sites which they depict.

Table 2 10:00 a.m. - **Flexibility is Not a Favor: It's Inclusive Teaching**

Dr. Lisa Moyer - Faculty, Department of Human Development Family Science, College of Human Sciences

Betsy Gilbertson - Staff, Auburn Online

As universities broaden their outreach and engagement missions, classrooms must adapt to support an increasingly diverse student body. Many students bring unique community responsibilities, work commitments and lived experiences that differ from traditional academic norms. Beyond the traditionally "excused" absences such as student illness, family emergencies or a death in the family, many students face other life challenges, including romantic relationship break-ups, mental health issues, pet emergencies and illnesses (some long-term, like IBS) that do not require a doctor's visit. These students often struggle to obtain documentation to "prove" their need for an excused absence. Additionally, students may be reluctant to share personal experiences of crisis or trauma with instructors, especially when confidentiality is uncertain. This creates barriers to students successfully completing courses and earning degrees.

By framing flexible deadlines not as leniency but as intentional access-building engagement practices, this session underscores the pivotal role of classroom policies in establishing a foundation for student success. These policies empower students to manage their time effectively and efficiently. Providing flexible deadlines for all students aligns with the core

principle of Universal Design for Learning, which advocates for equitable access to education. This approach fosters inclusivity and facilitates personalized learning experiences, thereby strengthening the instructor-student relationship and cultivating a more supportive and inclusive learning environment.

The proposed presentation will explore the implementation of flexible deadline policies as a strategic approach to promoting equitable access, academic resilience and student engagement.

Table 3 10:00 a.m. - **Jumpstarting Micro-Entrepreneurship: Catalytic Community Engagement**

Joshua Sahib - Faculty, Lowder Center for Family Business and Entrepreneurship, Raymond J. Harbert College of Business

Engaged scholarship can be a powerful catalyst for local economic empowerment. This session examines Jumpstart, a six-week entrepreneurial bootcamp offered by Auburn's Lowder Center, which equips micro-entrepreneurs with side hustles or early-stage ideas with foundational skills to launch or refine a small business. Each weekly session is led by a faculty member and covers key modules from Notre Dame's UPBI framework: strategic business planning, accounting fundamentals, marketing basics and much more. Periodically, guest subject-matter experts—including local service providers and small-business professionals—drop in to offer targeted guidance and answer participant questions. By embedding university-led programming directly into community venues, Jumpstart creates strategic access to practical tools, promotes collaboration among participants and experts, and fosters opportunity for hands-on learning. Preliminary data suggest that participants gain confidence, refine their business models, and strengthen local networks. The Jumpstart program has been offered for a few summers and is hosted in partnership with local organizations such as the Opelika Chamber of Commerce. The hope is to develop new partnerships and continue to offer the program, over time leading to the creation or growth of over 100 micro-enterprises in East Alabama. Attendees will learn more about the program, how the curriculum has been adapted to our local community, strategies for building partnerships, hear some success stories, and see metrics used to evaluate impact.

Table 4 10:00 a.m. - **Collaborative Curriculum Development: A Case Study**

Dr. Sara Wolf - Faculty, Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology, College of Education

Lily Wells - Community Member

In most educational environments, (public, private or homeschool) curriculum is typically designed by local authorities or commercial vendors, then delivered by teachers or parents. Students, the primary recipients of instruction, are rarely involved in the broader design and development of the curriculum. While many teachers provide limited opportunities for student input such as choosing project topics, selecting presentation formats, or picking elective courses, these choices occur within a predetermined structure. True collaboration in curriculum design

from the ground up is uncommon. In an unusual and innovative case, a professor with expertise in literature and information literacy partnered with a ninth-grade student to co-design and co-deliver an English Language Arts curriculum for the 2024–25 academic year. The collaboration was initiated at the request of the student’s parents and approached with mutual openness and curiosity about its long-term potential. The project yielded several key insights. First, authentic collaboration greatly increased student engagement. Second, flexibility proved critical in navigating the evolving needs of both collaborators. Third, involving students in assessment and evaluation processes encouraged a deeper commitment to growth and improvement. Despite these benefits, the partnership also encountered significant challenges. Administrative barriers and time management issues emerged as notable obstacles that required careful navigation. Nonetheless, the experience demonstrated the value and complexity of including students in meaningful curriculum design.

Table 5 10:00 a.m. - **A Collaborative Model for Nursing Education: Auburn's Nurse Apprenticeship Program**

Hadley Stewart - Staff, College of Nursing

Abby Bell - Staff, College of Nursing

Hope Carroll - Staff, College of Nursing

The Alabama Department of Labor currently shows over 4,006 open RN positions in the state. The nursing shortage in our state, and also the country, continues to be significant. In 2022, the Auburn University College of Nursing, in partnership with East Alabama Health, the Alabama Board of Nursing, and the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship, began a collaboration in an effort to address this shortage by allowing employers to recruit, train and retain skilled nurses. This program is called the Nurse Apprenticeship Program. The first cohort of 7 students began in August 2022, and to date we have graduated 18 nurses from this program. The program works by hiring students as employees of our partner facility, East Alabama Health, after their first semester of nursing school. Once accepted, the students are able to earn a progressive wage while completing their clinical hours for nursing school and gaining valuable one-on-one experience in the clinical setting. We have found that students who participate in the program excel where they may have previously struggled, have greater confidence in the clinical setting, and get more skills practice opportunities than their peers in the traditional program. We have also seen that students who complete this program have a 94% pass rate on their first attempt at the NCLEX. For East Alabama Health, they are gaining trained nurses who have spent 17 months working in their facility, learning their charting system, protocols and procedures; who have already been assimilated into the hospital’s culture; and who have built relationships with incumbent staff.