

COED Faculty Highlights

May 2026

Awards & Honorifics

Dr. Cynthia A. Wiltshire was one of five researchers across the University awarded the 2026 Research & Innovation Rising Researcher Award (Arts, Humanities, & Education). The award recognizes a faculty member who has demonstrated early-career accomplishments and shows potential for future advancement and recognition in research, scholarship, and creative activities.



Dr. Alice Eunjung Lee, postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Education Research and Policy Studies, has been awarded the prestigious "2025-2026 American Education Research Association (AERA) Division J Dissertation of the Year Award." Dr. Lee's dissertation work is titled, "More Than Pedagogy: How Culturally Responsive STEM Courses Shape Minoritized Students' Experiences and Persistence in STEM," where she examines how culturally responsive pedagogical approaches implemented in introductory STEM courses shape the experiences, learning, and persistence of minoritized students in U.S. higher education.

Dr. Johana Rocha received UTEP's College of Education 2026 Excellence in Teaching Award.



Grants & Funding

Dr. Pei-Ling Hsu, Liru Hu, David Carrejo, Mez Perez, and Gillian Bausch were awarded a \$25,000 supplemental award from NSF titled "Empowering K-12 Artificial Intelligence Teams Through Collaborative Project-Based Learning."

Dr. Wei-Ling Sun was awarded a \$50,000 Spencer Foundation grant titled "Racing to Education Opportunity: Resolutions of K-12 Racial Harassment Complaints"

Dr. Josie Tinajero received a 4th year of funding (\$566,300) for Project LEAP UP (Learning, Encouraging And Planning to Uplift Performance) from the U.S. Department of Education. UTEP is partnering with 6 school districts: El Paso, Ysleta, Socorro, Canutillo, Clint, Fabens and with the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Association for Bilingual Education to increase the number of highly qualified ESL and Bilingual Education teachers working with ELs in West Texas schools. Project LEAP UP also has had an early childhood component and partnered with ESC Region 19 Head Start to provide professional development to educators and parents.

Dr. Jesus Cisneros was a Co-PI on an inter-college team that was awarded a \$1,163,387 Alfred P. Sloan Foundation grant, "Empowering the Next Generation of Highly Skilled STEM Professionals Through Access, Intentionality, and Effectiveness."

Dr. Pei-Ling Hsu was awarded the Presidential AI-Youth Challenge Competition DCL Supplemental Fund (National Science Foundation) for \$24,999, Co-PIs include **Dr. David Carrejo, Liru Hu, Mez Perez, and Gillian Bausch**. The project's main goal is to empower K-12 educators and students in the El Paso region to design and complete meaningful, community-centered AI projects for the Presidential AI Challenge using a project-based learning (PBL) framework. By integrating authentic problems, sustained inquiry, reflection, and public presentation, the project supports teams in developing AI literacy while strengthening educators' capacity to implement AI-integrated, student-centered instruction.



As Chair of Teacher Education in the College of Education at The University of Texas at El Paso, **Dr. Alyse C. Hachey**, collaborated with Claire Wladis and Katherine M. Conway on a six-year National Science Foundation-funded project examining how online course availability impacts STEM students' degree progress. Their findings showed that students who could not access their preferred course formats—especially asynchronous online courses—often experienced slower academic progress, took fewer credits, and faced increased stress and burnout while balancing work, caregiving, and health responsibilities. Through this work, they introduced the Holistic Capital Model to better understand how time and physical capacity affect student success and highlighted the importance of offering flexible course options and stronger student supports to improve STEM retention and degree completion.

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Dr. Pei-Ling Hsu (PI), alongside **Drs. Eunae Han, Alice Lee, and Abbas Abbasov**, was awarded a \$25,000 grant as part of the Pilot Grant Program, Research and Innovation, UTEP. The project, titled "Transforming Engineering Internship Experiences through Co-Mentoring Circles," assembles a new interdisciplinary team to examine and support engineering interns through collaborations with the Colleges of Education and Engineering, student organizations, and the Career Center. This project aims to design an intervention to establish structured, sustainable, and scalable "co-mentoring circles." These circles will link engineering interns across different settings, promoting reciprocal mentoring, shared reflection, constructive feedback, collaborative problem-solving, and enhanced learning experiences for student interns.

Publications & Conferences

Drs. Rocha, Dosal-Terminel, and Carrola attended the Texas Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (TACES) conference in Georgetown, TX, in March, where they were joined by Master's students who presented alongside them. Their participation highlights a strong commitment to mentorship and the professional development of emerging counselors through active engagement in scholarly and professional conferences.



The Hispanic-Serving Research Council has a new publication: **Frausto Hernandez, I., Convertino, C., Cisneros, J., Dura, L.** (2026). Centering student voices: Expanding on servingness indicators at a frontier Hispanic-serving Institution (HSI) *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*.

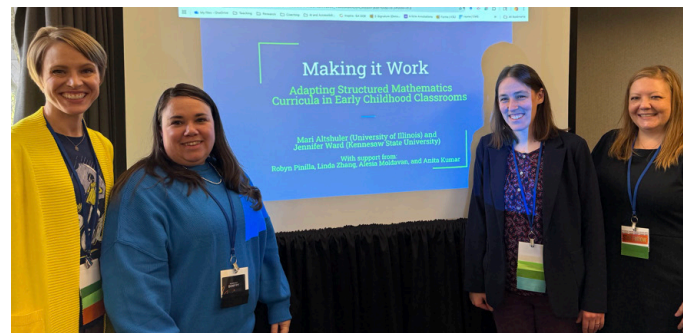
Dr. Christina Convertino presented at AERA 2026 on behalf of the Hispanic-serving Research Council. The title of the presentation was "Servingness as an embodied ethos at a frontier Hispanic-serving institution," with co-authors **Dura, L., Cisneros, J., & Frausto Hernandez, I.**

Dr. Bill Robertson, Professor of STEM Education, and **Juan Pablo Santana**, a doctoral student in the Teaching, Learning and Culture PhD program, published an article entitled "Advanced STEM Education through Action Science Enhanced with Artificial Intelligence" in the *American Journal of Creative Education*, Volume 9, Number 1, pp. 45-60. This article explores the integration of Action Science - an experiential STEM approach using extreme sports - with artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance teaching and learning. Action Science employs activities such as skateboarding and BMX, along with multimedia resources, to engage students in real-world applications of STEM concepts through a constructivist framework.

Dr. Penelope Espinoza is pleased to share that she has a chapter in a volume published in March 2026. The chapter is a testimonio on advancing equity for women at an HSI, co-authored with **Dr. Ivonne Santiago** in Civil Engineering. Citation: **Espinoza, P. & Santiago, I.** (2026). Alborotapueblos/Disrupting villages and making good trouble to advance equity for women and Latinas in academia. In **McMahon, M. R., Mora, M. T., & Qubbaj, A. R.** (Eds.), *Advancing Latinas in STEM Academic Careers*. Emerald Group Publishing.

Dr. Johana Rocha is the lead author of the open-access publication, "Creating and Facilitating Sustainable International Collaborations with Mental Health Professionals," published in the *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling*. The article highlights a sustainable partnership between faculty in the United States and Mexico, demonstrating how cross-border collaboration can advance the professionalization of counseling and address global mental health challenges. It also offers key insights, challenges, and practical recommendations for building impactful international mental health initiatives. Co-authors include **Drs. Carrola and Han** (UTEP) and **Drs. Castro-Valles, Gonzalez, Ramos, and Mr. Alejandro Anguiano** (UACJ), whose collective expertise and collaboration made this work possible.

In February, 2026, **Dr. Robyn Pinilla** presented in three sessions at the 30th Annual Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators conference in Portland, OR. The sessions were entitled: Professionally Developing Ourselves: Exploring the Diverse Pathways into Early Childhood Mathematics Teacher Education; Supporting Early Childhood Teachers in Enacting Developmentally Appropriate (Mathematics) Practices; and Making It Work: Adapting Structured Mathematics Curricula in Early Childhood Classrooms. These sessions all emerged from the Early Childhood MTE Community Circle that **Dr. Pinilla** leads, bringing together MTEs from across the US focused on early childhood teaching and learning.



Dr. B.C. Bui published an article, "Striving for College Success: The Persistence of Students Who Work Off-Campus," which examines the persistence of college students in the United States who balance off-campus employment while pursuing their education. He explores the unique challenges these students face, including the demands of off-campus work and limited experience managing both academic and work responsibilities. Additionally, he provides recommendations and strategies that institutions can implement to better support student persistence, retention, and overall academic success. Reference: **Bui, B.C.** Striving for college success: The persistence of students who work off-campus. *Innovative Higher Education*, 50, 1945-1968 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-025-09834-9>

Publications & Conferences (cont.)

Dr. Eduardo Arellano co-presented four times with alumni, students, and colleagues of other colleges and universities at the 51st Annual State Conference of the Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education. The four presentations focused on support and nurturing resiliency in college students and communities to align with the conference theme of "Building Resilient Communities for Education Advancement". The conference was held in Lubbock, Texas from March 4 through March 6.



Faculty from the UTEP Site Coordinator Team presented two research projects at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) Annual Meeting, the nation's leading conference on educator preparation, research, and policy. **Cynthia Acosta**, in collaboration with **Marco Delgado and Jessica Pussman**, presented on High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). Their research examined how standards-aligned, research-informed curricula support instructional coherence and expand access to grade-level learning for diverse students. A second research team, which included **Dr. Katrina Duarte-Meng, Dr. Erika Mein**, and TLC Ph.D. student **Jennifer Herrera-Lozano**, presented research findings on paraprofessional-to-teacher pathways, highlighting accessible, community-based models that expand entry into the profession while addressing teacher shortages. This research aligns with AACTE's priorities around strengthening local pipelines and diversifying the educator workforce. Together, these presentations underscore faculty leadership in advancing research-informed, equity-centered approaches to educator preparation and contributing to national dialogue on the future of teaching.

Dr. Wei-Ling Sun published three articles in 2026:

Sun, W.-L., Chavez, P. F., Arzola, R., Favela, V., Huizar, A., & Robles, O. (2026). Twice exceptional, thrice ignored? Behavioral and academic support for GT emergent bilinguals with disabilities. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554589261420522>,

Sun, W.-L., Matamoros, S., & Flores, B. S. (2026). Punishing distress, policing belonging: A case of colonial logics of the school-to-prison nexus. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554589261420497>

Sun, W. L., & Gooden, M. A. (2026). Why ask why? Decoding race-based decision dynamics in high school disciplinary practices. *Urban Education*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420859261417333>

Dr. Tessa L. Arsenault presented at three major conferences this spring, including the Pacific Coast Research Conference, Council for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo, and National Science Teaching Association Conference. Her presentations focused on supporting secondary students' writing in science and mathematics, mathematics-writing assessments, bilingual learners with and without mathematics disabilities, evidence-based word-problem interventions, and connecting research to classroom practice for students experiencing math difficulty.

Dr. Daniel Dosal-Terminel published "A Call to the Profession: An IPA Study of Bilingual Counselors' Experiences With Spanish Counseling and Bilingual Supervision" in the *Journal of Counseling and Development*, the flagship journal for the field of Counseling.

Invited Presentations

Dr. Josefina Tinajero was invited to be the Keynote Speaker at the 8th Annual Dual Language Symposium—A Symphony of Languages/Una Sinfonía de idiomas. She presented "A World-Class Education for Academic Success and Global Marketability for ELs/EBs through Dual Language Programs." Presented by WCEPS—Wisconsin Center for Education Products & Services. Roosevelt University. Feb 27, 2026.



Dr. Josefina Tinajero was invited as one of 5 speakers to participate in the AERA Bilingual Education Research (BER) SIG Chair's Invited Session. U.S.-based and international scholars engaged in critical dialogue on the evolving directions of bi-/multilingual education research in our increasingly interconnected world societies. Title of Session: Shaping Local-to-Global Futures: Expanding the Boundaries of bi-/multilingual Education Research. This session, which took place on April 11 in Los Angeles, highlighted innovative research and dialogue aimed at expanding the field's boundaries and impact locally and globally.

Highlights from the Field

Dr. Erin Doran has been elected President of the Council for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC).