13th Annual

AMCOA Conference

Real Talk: Assessing Learning in the Age of AI

Statewide Conference on Assessment in Higher Education
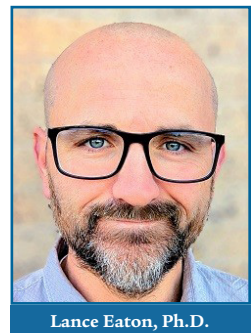
Friday, April 25, 2025
8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

DoubleTree Boston Westborough,
5400 Computer Drive,
Westborough, MA 01581

MASSACHUSETTS
Department of
Higher Education

Morning Agenda

		Location
8:30 a.m.	**Registration and Continental Breakfast**	Ballroom Foyer, 1st Floor
9:30 a.m.	**Greetings & Welcoming Remarks** *Robert J. Awkward, Ph.D., Assistant Commissioner for Academic Effectiveness* *Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs & Student Success* *Massachusetts Department of Higher Education*	Baldwin/ Chandler, 1st Floor

9:45 a.m.	**Plenary Session**	Baldwin/ Chandler, 1st Floor

Morning Plenary Session: Dr. Lance Eaton, Senior Associate Director of AI in Teaching & Learning, Northeastern University, Boston, MA

Ctrl+Alt+Assess: Rebooting Learning for the GenAI Era

Lance Eaton, Ph.D., Senior Associate Director of AI in Teaching & Learning, Northeastern University

Generative AI didn't ask for permission to enter our classrooms—or our assessment plans—but it's here, reshaping what students produce and how educators evaluate learning. For assessment professionals, this isn't just a challenge. It's a defining opportunity. This keynote asks What happens when the tools we use to measure learning can now generate the artifacts we measure? How do we rethink integrity, authenticity, and alignment in an era where the written word is no longer sacrosanct? And perhaps more importantly, what new possibilities emerge when assessment professionals become leaders—not just responders—in this shift? We'll explore how AI can enhance assessment practice—streamlining processes, surfacing insights, and prompting new models of evidence—and how it can elevate assessment culture, amplifying the voices of assessment professionals in academic decision-making. Come ready to question assumptions, explore new roles, and rethink what it means to "know what students know" in the GenAI era.

Lance Eaton, Ph.D.

10:45 a.m.	**Transition Time**	

11:00 a.m.	**Morning Breakout Sessions A	Academic Assessment**	

Session A. Embedding Institutional Learning Outcomes Beyond the Classroom

Craig Pepin, Ph.D., Professor, David F. Finney Chair for the Future of Professional Education & formerly Assistant Dean for Assessment, Champlain College, Burlington, VT

Edgewood, 1st Floor

With funding from the Davis Educational Foundation, Champlain College has embarked on a three year program to embed the College Competencies (institutional learning outcomes) across co- and extracurricular elements of the student experience. This session will present a variety of initiatives that other institutions can consider to both raise student awareness of ILOs, and foster a wider sense in students that learning takes place outside the classroom and is an ongoing process that extends beyond their college careers.

Map of Session Locations

GROUND FLOOR

PATIO

WELLINGTON

YORK

POOL

FITNESS CENTER

NUGGET

TO YORK & EMPIRE

REST ROOM | REST ROOM

BALLROOM ENTRANCE

BALLROOM FOYER

HOTEL LOBBY ➡

VIKING | AUTUMN | BALDWIN | CHANDLER | EDGEWOOD

KENDALL

CAPTAIN'S ROOM

JONATHAN
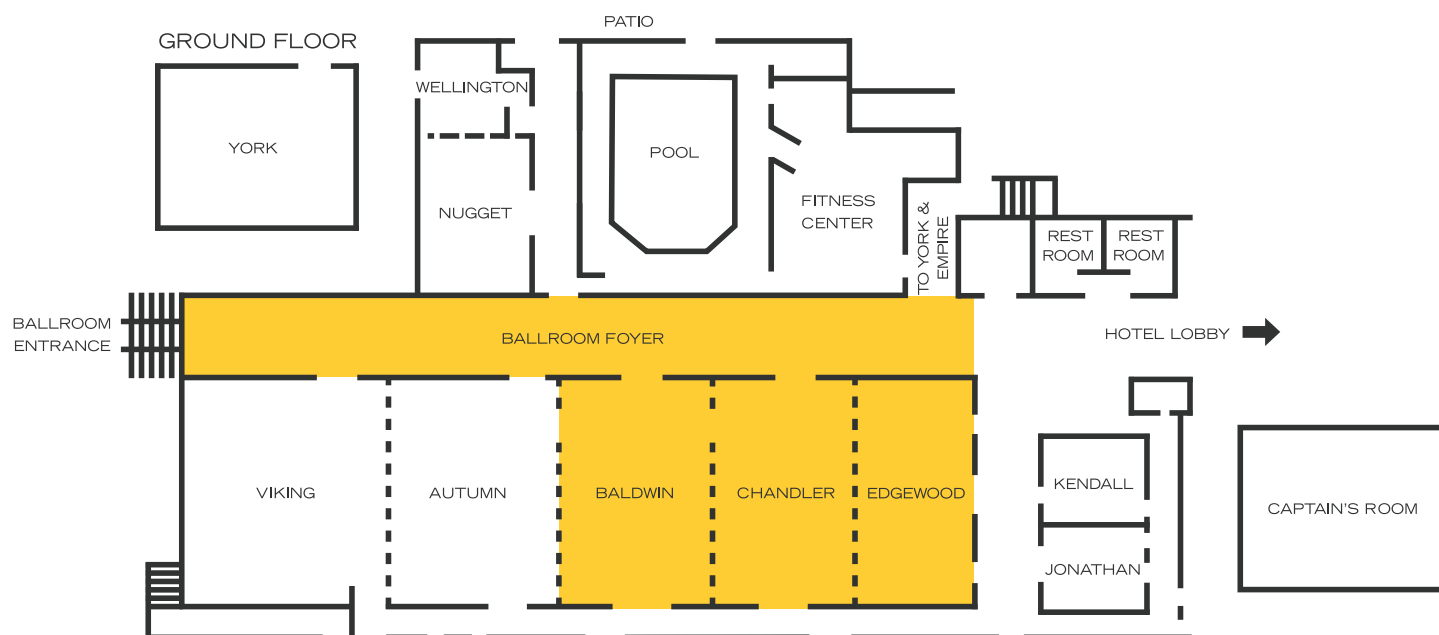
Morning Breakout Sessions B | AI & Assessment

Session B. Walter: Transforming Assessment with Gen AI Integration - Insights from a Groundbreaking Comparative Study

Chandler, 1st Floor

David M. DiSabito, Jr., MBA, Professional Educator of Business Analytics and Information Management; Sanjeev Jha, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Business Analytics and Information Management; Manshika Chakravarthy Nalla, Supeeth Reddy Mamilla, and Sri Vasava Reddy Banda, all Teaching Fellows & Graduate Research Assistanta, Western New England University

This presentation introduces Walter, a cutting-edge Gen AI integrated Assessment Web App designed to act as a second reader for Assurance of Learning and to support accreditation processes. We will explore how Walter streamlines the assessment process by analyzing learning goals, objectives, student evidence, and evaluation rubrics, potentially transforming institutional assessment practices. With its ability to evaluate 100 five-page papers in just one minute while maintaining FERPA-compliant privacy standards, Walter represents a significant leap forward in assessment technology. By removing the drudgery of manually reading hundreds of pages, Walter provides reliable assessment scoring while freeing educators to focus on tasks that are more impactful. We will present findings from a groundbreaking case study comparing human and AI scoring using identical rubrics across student assignments, human instructors, and AI evaluation.

Morning Breakout Sessions C | Civic Learning Assessment

Session C. 250 Years of Civic Learning and Engagement: The Purpose & Impact Across Massachusetts Higher Education in 2025

Baldwin,
1st Floor

John Reiff, Ph.D., Director of Civic Learning and Engagement, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education; Rebecca Townsend, Ph.D., Associate Director of Assessment, Holyoke Community College; Judy Colson, M.Ed., Psychology Professor, Quinsigamond Community College; Gaelan Lee Benway, Ph.D., Dean for Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Professional Development, Quinsigamond Community College; Stephanie King, M.A., Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives, ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge at Civic Nation; and Amanda Wittman, Ph.D., Director of the Binienda Center for Civic Engagement, Worcester State University

As the Commonwealth of Massachusetts–and the United States of America–celebrates the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, we find ourselves at a turning point. What can civic learning and engagement mean in our institutions today? How can we draw from and build upon existing work; work we have already done in Massachusetts public higher education? This session will focus on the history and context that surrounds the practices of assessing student civic learning in 2025.

Participants will:

· Review terminology: democracy, civic learning, and civic engagement.

· Explore relevant policy and history: Comparing what's stated in Massachusetts state-based policy and what is stated in their institution's policies.

· Appraise the status of civic learning outcomes on their campuses.

This session considers our Commonwealth of Massachusetts's commitment to "preparing citizens" on its 10th anniversary as a shared goal (and the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution). What does it mean to prepare citizens now, in a time of cultural and political strain? And how do we lead at our institutions as we seek to maintain teaching and learning rigor and assessment integrity in 2025?

12:00 p.m.	**Transition Time**	
12:15 p.m.	**Lunch**	Baldwin/ Chandler, 1st Floor

1:00 p.m. AI Assessment Working Group Update

Baldwin/
Chandler,
1st Floor

Ruth Slotnick, Ph.D. Director of Assessment, Bridgewater State University, AI Assessment Working Group Leader

A working group of cross-segment assessment professionals including: Dr. Robert Awkward, Mass. Department of Higher Education; Dr. Gaelan Benway, Quinsigamond Community College; Joanna Boeing, Bridgewater State University; Dr. Junelyn Pangan Peeples, Mass. College of Art & Design; Gabriel Rodriguez, University of Massachusetts Amherst; Peter Shea, M.Ed., Middlesex Community College; and Dr. Ruth Slotnick, Bridgewater State University have been working this semester to develop a guidebook for our assessment community on how best to employ AI in our assessment practices. This is an opportunity to provide an update to the community on our work to-date and our timeline for completion.

1:15 p.m.	**Transition Time**

1:30 p.m. **Afternoon Breakout Session A | Academic Assessment**

Session A. Integrating Co-curricular Assessment Frameworks

Danielle Licitra, Ph.D., Director of Institutional Assessment, Academic Innovation, & Professional Development, Bristol Community College

Chandler, 1st Floor

What promising practices exist to capture skills learned outside the classroom? The nuts and bolts will be briefly mentioned, but the majority of the conversation will introduce frameworks used by Student Affairs (primarily the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education - CAS) in establishing a culture of continuous improvement. A framework is highly recommended so that assessment can be standardized, formalized, institutionalized and aligned with strategic initiatives.

Being able to demonstrate how a program (e.g., Orientation, Mental Wellness programs, Pro-Active Advising, Housing, Student Conduct, International Education programs, Student Leadership opportunities, and DEI initiatives) contributes to retention and persistence, building a sense of belonging, cultivating thriving environments, and dismantles racial inequities, makes the conversation for resource allocation much more compelling and, by default, addresses NECHE standards.

Afternoon Breakout Session B | AI & Assessment

Session B. Navigating AI in Assessment: From Awareness to Action

Peter Shea, Assistant Dean of AI Integration, Middlesex Community College; Ruth Slotnick, Ph.D., Director of Assessment, Bridgewater State University; and Devan Walton, Assistant Professor of Computer Science, Northern Essex Community College

Baldwin, 1st Floor

Join this highly interactive 60-minute working session designed to move beyond discussion and into action. Building on the introduction of Generative AI to assessment professionals in 2023, the hands-on experimentation session in 2024, and the February 2025 AMCOA presentation by Ruth Slotnick and Joanna Boeing on GenAI's role in qualitative assessment, this session focuses on practical application, professional goal setting, and peer learning in a no-judgment, safe space. The session will begin with a brief reflection on AI's early impact in assessment, revisiting the initial excitement and experimentation with tools like David DiSabitos' Walter tool, and Western New England's field testing in business education. From there, we will take a lean look at AI's current role in assessment, addressing both progress and challenges, including institutional resistance, faculty adoption, and the evolving role of AI in analyzing qualitative data. The majority of the session will be hands-on, where participants will reflect individually on their own institutional context, engage in turn-and-talk discussions with peers, and collaborate on case-based exercises to develop practical AI strategies. Peter will highlight how instructional designers and assessment professionals can work together to help faculty move forward. Devan will demonstrate how AI reduces faculty workload friction to create openings for assessment conversations. Ruth will connect AI use to assessment documentation, accreditation, and program review. Participants will leave with a personally developed AI strategy and professional goals for implementation. This session also invites individuals and teams to step forward to share their experiences at future AMCOA meetings—whether presenting with us or leading their own use case discussions.

Session C. **Putting Vision into Practice for the Next 250 Years of Democracy: Tools for Engaging and Assessing Civic Learning Outcomes**

Edgewood, 1st Floor

John Reiff, Ph.D., Director of Civic Learning and Engagement, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education; Rebecca Townsend, Ph.D., Associate Director of Assessment, Holyoke Community College; Judy Colson, M.Ed., Psychology Professor, Quinsigamond Community College; Gaelan Lee Benway, Ph.D., Dean for Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Professional Development, Quinsigamond Community College; Stephanie King, M.A., Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives, ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge at Civic Nation; and Amanda Wittman, Ph.D., Director of the Binienda Center for Civic Engagement, Worcester State University

All students in Massachusetts public higher education institutions are expected to have civic learning as a learning outcome. We will discuss what systems currently exist to generate this learning and how we can assess it. In this session, presenters will share resources for institutional- and course-level assessment strategies for democracy-related outcomes, and civic learning and design tools for creating assignments. Participants will be invited to contribute to a resource list for teaching and assessing civic learning and engagement.

2:30 p.m.	**Transition Time**	
2:45 p.m.	**Closing Remarks**	Baldwin/ Chandler, 1st Floor
	Robert J. Awkward, Ph.D., Assistant Commissioner for Academic Effectiveness	
	John Reiff, Ph.D., Director of Civic Learning & Engagement	
	Massachusetts Department of Higher Education	
3:00 p.m.	**Program Ends**	

Presenter Bios

Sri Vastava Reddy Banda attends Western New England University as a graduate student.

Gaelan Lee Benway, Ph.D., is Dean for Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Professional Development at Quinsigamond Community College. She joined the faculty in 2005 after earning a Ph.D. in Sociology from Brown University, where her dissertation focused on work-family balance negotiations among Dominican immigrants to Providence, RI. Her career has included stints as a contingent faculty member, in publishing and non-profit media, and far too much office temping and table-waiting. Throughlines in Gaelan's career include learning about learning, tilting at silos, and the relentless pursuit of equitable outcomes.

Judy Colson, M.Ed., is a dedicated Professor of Psychology at Quinsigamond Community College (QCC). Her nearly twenty years of teaching experience includes part-time roles at Massasoit Community College, Anna Maria College, and Becker College before she joined QCC full-time. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Judy serves as the Civic Learning Navigator at Quinsigamond Community College and is a certified assessment practitioner, having completed her training with Weave Academy. Recently, Judy collaborated with a team of faculty and staff at QCC to assess student learning outcomes for the Civic Learning and Engagement general education outcome.

David M. DiSabito, Jr., MBA, is a Professional Educator of Business Analytics and Information Management at Western New England University (WNE), where he serves as the AI Liaison to the College of Business and chairs its AI Working Group. His extensive involvement in Assurance of Learning teams and AACSB accreditation efforts underscores his commitment to advancing assessment practices within higher education. In collaboration with inter-disciplinary research teams, David has explored the integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) into academic assessment. Their findings, published in *New Directions for Teaching and Learning,* highlight the potential of human-AI partnerships to enhance assessment methodologies. These teams have also shared their insights at various assessment conferences, engaging with professionals across diverse disciplines.

Lance Eaton, Ph.D., is the Senior Associate Director of AI in Teaching and Learning at Northeastern University. His work engages with the possibility of utilizing digital tools for expanding teaching and learning communities while considering the various deep issues and questions that educational technologies open up for students, faculty, and higher education as a whole. He has given talks, written about, and presented at conferences on artificial intelligence generative tools in education, academic piracy, open access, OER, open pedagogy, hybrid flexible learning, and digital service-learning. His musings, reflections, and ramblings on AI and Education can be found on his blog: https://aiedusimplified.substack.com/

Sanjeev Jha, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Business Analytics and Information Management in the College of Business at Western New England University (WNE). He serves as the AACSB Coordinator for the College of Business. Sanjeev coordinates the College of Business' assessment endeavors for accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). He also chairs the ad hoc Assurance of Learning Innovation Committee in the College of Business. After earning his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Chicago, Sanjeev started his teaching career as an assistant professor of decision sciences at the University of New Hampshire. Later he also taught at Valparaiso University prior to coming to WNE in Fall 2023. He teaches data analytics and related courses at WNE, and his research interests are in the areas of pedagogy and healthcare analytics. He can be reached at sanjeev.jha@wne.edu.

Stephanie King, M.A., is the Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives for the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge at Civic Nation. She previously held the role of director for civic engagement and knowledge community initiatives at NASPA where she directed the NASPA LEAD Initiative and co-managed/co-created the Voter Friendly Campus program. King has worked in higher education since 2009 in the areas of student activities, orientation, residence life, and civic learning and democratic engagement. She earned her MA in psychology at Chatham University and her BS in biology from Walsh University. She has contributed to a few publications including Effective Strategies for Supporting Student Civic Engagement (May 2018), Higher Education's Role in Enacting a Thriving Democracy: Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change (June 2018), Power to the Polls (2022), and Leaning into Politics: Higher Education and the Democracy We Need (2024). King also serves as an Election Clerk for the Town of Dedham in Massachusetts.

Danielle Licitra, Ph.D., is the Director of Institutional Assessment, Academic Innovation and Professional Development at Bristol Community College. After receiving her Master of Education in Counseling from Boston University, Danielle worked in Student Affairs at Simmons College, The University of New Hampshire, and Massachusetts College of Art and Design in student support services. She received her Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from UMass Boston in 2015.

Soon after receiving her doctorate, Danielle began teaching at Salem State University in the Graduate School of Education's Master of Higher Education program. In her current role, she develops, recommends, and facilitates the execution of a comprehensive institutional assessment program to support Bristol's mission and strategic initiatives to ensure continuous improvement.

Danielle has served students within the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System for 22 years and plans to continue working with both Student and Academic Affairs to build comprehensive and inclusive assessment initiatives centered on an evidence-based decision-making framework.

Supreeth Reddy Mamilla is a Teaching Fellow and Graduate Research Assistant at Western New England University.

Manshika Chakravarthy Nalla is a Graduate Student at Western New England University (WNEU), where she serves as an IT Specialist in the Office of Information Technology, overseeing invoice management and billing operations. She is also a Teaching Fellow in the College of Business, where she supports business analytics courses and student learning, and a Graduate Research Assistant for Walter, focusing on AI-driven assessment research and time series analysis of AI-generated feedback.

Previously, she was a Research Assistant at the WNEU FinTech Incubator, contributing to research on financial technology innovations, which led her to earn the Fintech Fellowship. Beyond academia, Manshika is the Founder of EZReceipts, a FinTech startup that simplifies receipt management for individuals and small businesses. Her work integrates AI, FinTech, and data analytics to enhance financial organization and optimization. With experience spanning business analytics, FinTech, AI, and

Craig Pepin, Ph.D., is the David F. Finney Professor for the Future of Professional Education, Lead Faculty in the Degree Design Lab, and Project Lead of the Embedding College Competencies grant at Champlain College. He is also a board member and the immediate past president of the New England Educational Assessment Network. He earned a Ph.D. in European History from Duke University, with a special interest in the History of Higher Education. Teaching interdisciplinary inquiry-driven courses at Champlain led him to the importance of integrative learning in developing students who can think broadly and synthetically, and in particular, to the intersection between integrative thinking and assessment. Most recently, his research and praxis has focused on competency-based education in a general education context.

John Reiff, Ph.D., has been Director of Civic Learning and Engagement for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education since 2015. He works with the state's 15 community colleges and nine state universities to help them make civic learning an "expected outcome" for their undergraduates. His work with civic engagement and service-learning in higher education began in 1980—first as a college teacher, then as director of service-learning/civic engagement offices at a small private college in Tennessee and then at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He has written extensively on civic/community engagement, including serving as co-editor of "Anti-Racist Community Engagement: Principles and Practices," published in 2023 by Campus Compact.

Peter Shea, M.Ed., is Assistant Dean of AI Integration at Middlesex Community College in Massachusetts. He started delivering presentations in 2019 on the future impact of artificial intelligence in education. Before the COVID pandemic, he pioneered the use at AI at his college while serving as director of professional development. Additionally, he co-edited "Transforming Digital Learning and Assessment: A Guide to Available and Emerging Practices and Building Institutional Consensus" (2021) with Peggy Maki.

Ruth Slotnick, Ph.D., is Director of Assessment at Bridgewater State University (BSU), and has been working at BSU for over a decade. Ruth co-authored the Assessment Portrait in 2014 and again in 2024 with Mark Nicholas, providing national insights into the evolving role of assessment professionals. She is leading the Generative AI Survey for Assessment Professionals, a biannual study examining the adoption, application, and implications of AI in higher education assessment practices. She also serves as a co-leader of the GenAI in Assessment Community of Practice at the Assessment Institute in Indianapolis, which will launch in October, supporting professional development and AI adoption in assessment. Additionally, she leads the AMCOA AI in Assessment Working Group, an initiative of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education focused on developing AI guidelines and best practices for assessment professionals across the state. Ruth holds a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from the University of South Florida and an M.Ed. in Art Education from Pennsylvania State University.

Rebecca M. Townsend, Ph.D., provides leadership in planning, curriculum, and assessment as the Associate Director of Assessment at Holyoke Community College. Her role on the American Association of Colleges & Universities and Campus Compact Democracy Inventory Design Team brought together her expertise in teaching and assessment and civic engagement. She is a former communication professor, tenured at University of Hartford and Manchester Community College (MCC). President Obama's White House honored her for work at MCC on public engagement with a "Champion of Change" award. Her teaching and research spans local (town meeting deliberation), regional (public engagement in transportation planning), and global (teaching and research in Poland for several years, with a new book on presidential rhetoric in Central and Eastern Europe). She has an active civic life as a local elected official, and was a rail and transit advocacy group founder, regional planning commissioner and president of the Massachusetts Moderators Association.

Amanda Wittman, Ph.D., is the Director of the Binienda Center for Civic Engagement at Worcester State University and a Lecturer in the Department of Global and Integrative Studies at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Previously, she served as the Associate Director for Research and Evaluation at the Einhorn Center for Community Engagement at Cornell University. She shares her expertise in community-based research and education evaluation as an external evaluator for NSF and NEH, and in her consultancy work with Grant Street Consultants. Her expertise is in qualitative evaluation, Ripple Effects mapping, and educational evaluation.

Devan Walton is an Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Northern Essex Community College. He focuses on generative AI tool development and aims to democratize access to advanced AI technologies. His work primarily revolves around lowering the barriers to utilizing AI and unraveling its potential affordances within academic settings and the modern workplace. Devan recently published "Culturally Responsive Computing: An Introduction to Computer Science, Security, and Technology" (updated 12/2024) through ROTEL. His current research involves providing frontier AI model access to students for free.

Notes

Special Thanks to:

Dr. Richard Riccardi, Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs & Student Success

Dr. Lane Glenn, President, Nothern Essex Community College
and Assessment Advisory Council Chair

Assessment Advisory Council

AMCOA Team

And the Presidents, Chancellors, Vice Presidents, and Chief Academic Officers
of the Massachusetts Public Higher Education System