



Issue # 10

**Awakening your learner spirit:
Embracing your faculty roles***The “growing your competence” edition**“To realize your potential, you must look beyond the end of yourself, realizing that where you end is most likely where you actually begin.”*

— Craig D. Lounsborough

As we transition out of winter, we begin to see the snow melt, making space for what is ready to bloom in the spring. Winter offers a quiet reminder of the importance of rest, reflection, and renewal. It is a season that encourages us to slow down and recalibrate.

The arrival of spring signals possibility. It invites us to reflect on what may need to be released in order to welcome growth and new beginnings.

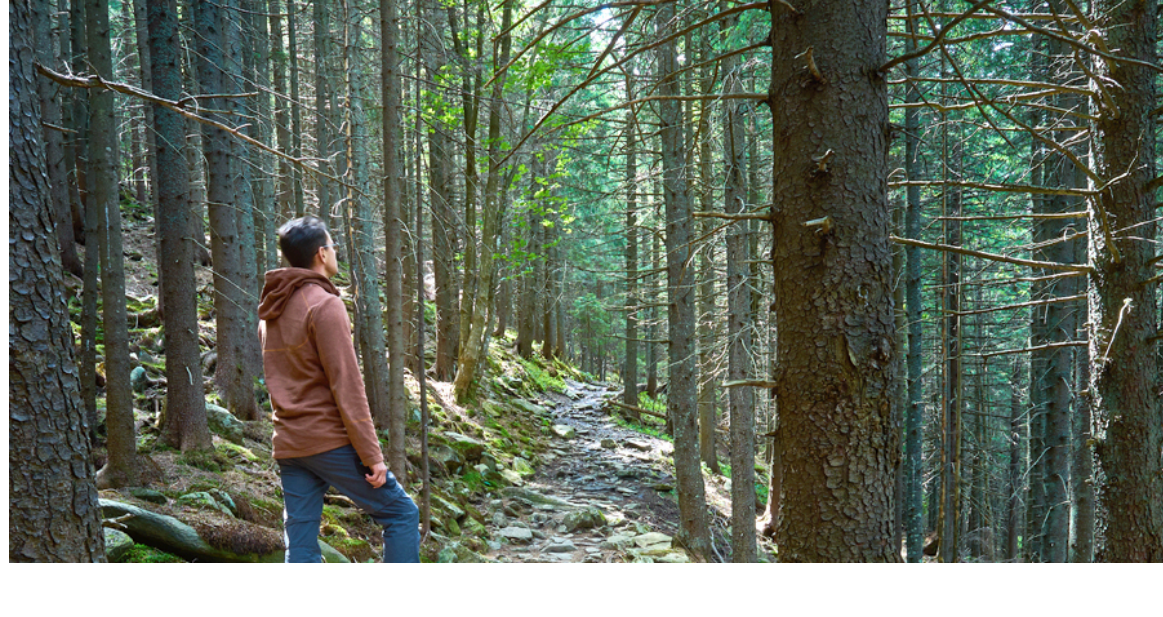
In this issue of *T&L Connects*, we will explore what embracing growth as faculty looks and feels like. We invite you to take on the role of curious learners – to be open to deepening your knowledge, strengthening your competency, and seeking out new experiences for growth.

Teaching for Equity, Social Justice, Indigenization and Changemaking

**Honouring the Learner Spirit:****Reflecting on Our Own Growth as Educators**

“What guides our learning (beyond family, community, and Elders) is spirit, our own learning spirits who travel with us and guide us along our earth walks, offering us guidance, inspiration, and quiet unrealized potential to be who they are. In [Indigenous] thought, the Spirit enters this earth walk with a purpose for being here and with specific gifts for fulfilling that purpose ... Our individual gifts for fulfilling our purpose are expressed in ourselves, in our growing talents, and in our emerging of shifting interests”

— Marie Battiste, Mi'kmaq scholar



In our work with students, we often strive to honour their learning spirits – nurturing their gifts, encouraging their growth, and creating opportunities for their potential to unfold. Yet, in the midst of our responsibilities and competing priorities, we may not pause to honour our own.

What might it look like to honour your own inner learner spirit? What would you need to release, protect, or make space for in order to reignite your own growth?

[The Pulling Together Guide](#) reminds us that learning, from Indigenous perspectives, is:

- Lifelong
- Place-based
- Relational
- Experiential
- Communal
- Purposeful

These principles resonate deeply with the direction many Western educational models are now striving towards. In order to become more socially-just educators, it is important to recognize the systemic barriers that suppress the learners' spirit within and outside of our classrooms.

When viewed through the lens of the learners' spirit that needs to be nurtured, professional growth is not simply about skill acquisition – it is aligned with purpose.

As faculty, we are invited to reflect on the gifts we bring, the interests that are emerging within, and the ever-evolving purpose that carries us forward.

Teaching & Life Hacks

**The “Micro-Declutter” Playlist Hack**

As we consider “spring cleaning,” we found this thoughtful micro-decluttering hack. Pick one song (3–4 minutes). During that song, do any small tidy task: empty the dishwasher, declutter a countertop or drawer, switch over laundry, toss expired food.

Impact:

Short playlists make tasks feel contained—and you trick your brain into starting. And you have the benefit of knowing it'll end soon!

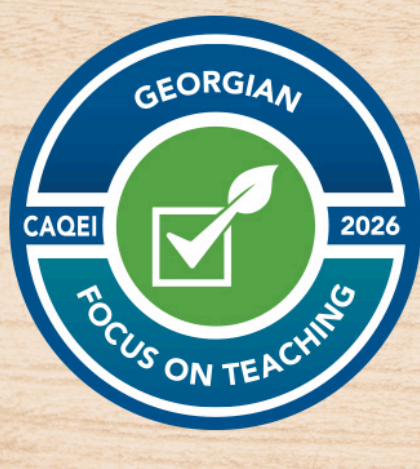
To help us prioritize well-being, why not schedule it!

One tool we've found is the [Action for Happiness Calendar](#). Visit the free website and engage with practices that help you each day. The bonus, you can automatically add it to your calendar for every day of the month, every month of the year. See the "Mindful March" calendar here:



Upcoming Event

**Focus on Teaching Conference 2026**



THE DOING CONFERENCE

Learn. Build. Feel. Do.

The Focus on Teaching Conference (FOTC) is back this year with a theme that inspires meaningful engagement and tangible impact.

FOTC 2026: The Doing Conference

"Learn it. Build it. Apply it."

- **Wednesday, April 29, 2026**
- 9:30AM – 2:30PM
- In-person – ABSC Space, Barrie Campus

- **Thursday, April 30, 2026**
- 3:00PM – 7:00PM
- Online Synchronous – MS Teams

This 2-day conference blends practical learning with meaningful conversation, designed for immediate impact on our educational spaces.

What to expect:

- Hands-on learning you can implement right away
- Engaging sessions that address current teaching challenges and emerging innovations
- Lightning talks and awards celebrating excellence and creativity
- Opportunities to connect and collaborate with peers...both in person and online

Teaching Excellence Awards 2026

We have many excellent educators deserving of celebration, and we are asking for your help in honouring their contributions to our teaching and learning community. [Click here to learn more.](#)

See the *Teaching & Learning Weekly* newsletter for more information and Call for Proposals.

[Register for FOTC 2026](#)

Faculty Competency Framework Updates

Growing Teaching Excellence: Innovative Georgian Faculty Micro-certificate

This April we will celebrate the second cohort of peers who have prioritized their teaching and learning by engaging with the numerous roles that make up faculty practice. Please stay tuned for their stories. And in the meantime, we would love to share the words of our first recipients of the award:



[Meet the first recipients of the Innovative Georgian Faculty Micro-Certificate \(YouTube video\)](#)

Want to learn more about how you can engage and grow your practice?

- Visit [Georgian Faculty Competency Framework - Georgian College](#)
- Access more details in our Pressbook [Georgian College Innovative Faculty Competency Framework – Simple Book Publishing.](#)

Team Updates

Faculty Developers Team

Reflections and Renewal: A Seasonal Activity to Fuel Your Learning Journey



Winter is often a time of reflection which, in turn, can fuel renewal. The FD team thought we'd share a reflective activity + active learning routine, co-created with CoPilot, for yourself or your students. It relies on winter as a metaphor for re-engaging curiosity and building competence.

1. Ice Layer (Identify What Feels Frozen) – 2 minutes

Ask learners to jot down:

- What part of this topic or skill still feels cold, stuck, or dormant for you?

This normalizes uncertainty and activates metacognition.

2. First Thaw (Spark Your Learner Spirit) – 3 minutes

Invite learners to choose one small “warming action” they can take right now:

Ask a clarifying question

- Connect the topic to a personal interest
- Make a prediction
- Try a micro-task

This re-awakens curiosity and primes intrinsic motivation.

3. Meltwater Flow (Grow Your Competence) – 5 to 6 minutes

Pair up or form trios. Each person shares:

- Here's my stuck point, and
- Here's my warming action.

Peers respond with a “**flow assist**”:

- A connection
- A resource
- A strategy
- A quick example

This exercise shifts learning from individual struggle to social sense-making.

4. Spring Preview (Anchor the Growth) – 1 minute

Everyone writes:

- What's one skill or insight that feels just a bit more alive now?

This reinforces competence through visible progress.

Why this activity works

Metacognition: Naming stuck points reduces cognitive load.

Motivation: Small “warming actions” boost autonomy and self-efficacy.

Social learning: Flow assists mirror Vygotsky's “zone of proximal development.”

Competence building: Learners see micro-growth immediately—key for sustained engagement.

As you consider your own growth and development, we invite you to ponder where you are on your journey. Are there places where you seem frozen and some invigoration would benefit? We are always happy to connect, reflect, and grow together!

Blackboard Team

You Don't Have to Reinvent Your Course to Grow as a Faculty Member



Growth doesn't require a full course overhaul. In fact, the most meaningful improvements often come from small, intentional adjustments.

Ultra has recently released several updates that allow you to make incremental changes to your course design, content, and assessments.

Course Design

The ability to stack content blocks vertically has unlocked new levels of content

design ([Stack Blocks Vertically in Columns \(4000.8\)](#)).

🗨 Discussions

The option to define a second participation requirement in discussion boards has added new transparency and control around student expectations and engagement ([Second Participation Requirement and Due Date in Discussions - Ultra 4000.10 \(Mar 2026\)](#)).

✔ Assessment

An ongoing series of updates to assessment questions provides a better experience for students as they demonstrate their knowledge ([Multiple Choice Question Enhancements - Ultra 4000.6 \(January 2026\)](#), [Fill-in-the-Blank Question Format Update - Ultra 3902.1 \(October 2025\)](#)).

But continuous growth doesn't mean constant reinvention.

The FreshForward series is your go-to resource to stay up-to-date with Blackboard Ultra updates and provide you with microdoses of professional development. Consider which of the above areas you want to freshen up.

This semester, consider choosing just one area to strengthen. One feature to explore. One point of friction to reduce. Even one positive change is progress!

🧐 Did you know...?

To continue to develop your course design as Blackboard evolves, be sure to visit and subscribe to our FreshForward channel. We review release notes each month and unpack what we believe will be most impactful for faculty and students at Georgian College. You can find all of our videos here: [freshforward - YouTube](#).

Instructional Designers Team

🌟 Awakening Your Learner Spirit: Curiosity, Small Experiments & Reflection



Teaching is a craft that evolves. One of the best ways to **grow your competence** as an educator is to treat your own teaching like a learning process — starting with **curiosity**, moving into **small experiments**, then taking time to **reflect on what you learn**.

Curiosity asks: What might I try next? What questions do I have about how this learning experience unfolds for students? These questions open space for exploration rather than perfection.

Once curiosity is sparked, the next step is **experimentation** — not big redesigns, but intentional micro-changes that help you learn something new. Maybe it's a quick reflective prompt in your next class, a different way of grouping students, or a new approach to feedback. When you test a small idea, you're learning by doing.

Reflection then turns experience into insight. Take a moment to notice what worked, what surprised you, and what you might adjust next. This intentional pause strengthens your competence and informs your next experiment.

You don't have to do this alone.

- Georgian's [Centre for Teaching and Learning \(CTL\) Home](#) has resources, workshops, and contact information to support curiosity and reflective practice.
- Explore practical topics like assessment, UDL, and online teaching in the [Teaching and Learning Resources](#) or join [self-paced professional development modules](#) to build new skills at your own pace.

By approaching your teaching with curiosity, experimenting in small ways, and reflecting thoughtfully on results, you're not just improving your courses — you're awakening your learner spirit and growing your competence as an educator.

Multimedia

🎥 Simple Tips to Improve Your Lecture Videos (Lighting, Audio, Framing)



Clear, well-produced lecture videos help students stay focused and understand course content more easily. The good news: you don't need a professional studio. A few small adjustments to lighting, audio, and framing can make a big difference.

💡 Lighting

Good lighting helps students clearly see your expressions and gestures.

Tips:

- Face a window or light source rather than sitting with a bright window behind you.
- Use a desk lamp or ring light if the room is dim.
- Aim for even light on your face to avoid strong shadows.

🎧 Audio

Clear audio is often more important than perfect video quality.

Tips:

- Use a USB, headset, or lapel microphone if possible.
- Record in a quiet room and close doors or windows.
- Keep the microphone close to you for clearer sound.

🖼 Framing

Simple framing makes your video look more professional.

Tips:

- Place the camera at eye level.
- Frame from mid-chest to head.
- Keep the background simple and uncluttered.

✅ **Quick takeaway:** Face the light, use a microphone when possible, and position your camera at eye level. These small changes can make lecture videos clearer, more engaging, and easier for students to watch.

🌱 Connection Opportunities

Watch for the *Teaching and Learning Weekly* email every Monday morning for a listing of all current offerings or view the [Workshop Calendar](#) for immediate details.

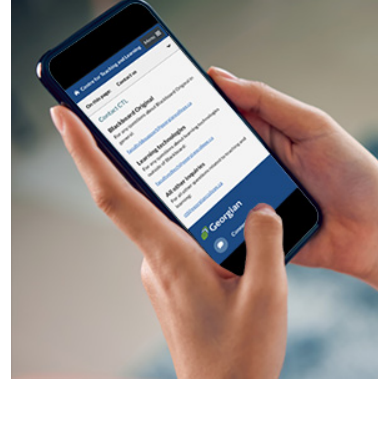
And check out our asynchronous learning modules in [CTL Central for Faculty](#) (Blackboard Ultra Organization).



🚀 Get Involved

Interested in sharing ideas for *Teaching and Learning Connections*? We'd love to hear your thoughts.

Please email facultydevelopment@georgiancollege.ca



Contact Us

Guess what. There are four ways to connect with us:

Blackboard Ultra

For general questions about Blackboard Ultra: facultybbsupport@georgiancollege.ca

Faculty Development

For questions for our faculty development team: facultydevelopment@georgiancollege.ca

Instructional Design

For questions for our instructional design team: instructional.designers@georgiancollege.ca

Learning Technologies

For questions about learning technologies outside of Blackboard: facultyedtech@georgiancollege.ca

All other inquiries

For all other questions related to teaching and learning: ctl@georgiancollege.ca

Or visit us on our [website](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [X \(Twitter\)](#).

Connect with us!



GeorgianCollege.ca/CTL

CTL@georgiancollege.ca

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