

## FACULTY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

*Lindenwood University*

## LEARNING ACADEMY

**FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: JOE BAUMANN**

The faculty spotlight for March is Joe Baumann, Assistant Professor of Writing and Department Head of the MFA in Writing program. Joe teaches creative writing courses, primarily focused on writing short stories, but he also teaches courses on novel writing, fantasy, and ecofuturism. Joe began teaching in 2007 as a graduate assistant and taught at a community college for ten years before he joined Lindenwood in 2024.

One of Joe's favorite aspects of teaching in the MFA program is its focus on the workshop model, which has students share and critique drafts of projects. Joe explains, "I really love reading student work and helping guide them toward the next stage of their various projects, whether that's a second, still-rough draft, another chapter, or a polished piece ready to submit to a journal or press." Joe notes that the Perusall tool helps this workshop format function efficiently, allowing students to annotate documents in a shared digital environment, which helps to replicate the feel of an in-person workshop discussion in asynchronous courses.

When asked about what advice he would give to faculty who are new to teaching, Joe advises that it's ok to feel uncertain: "No class can be perfect every single day...Having plans is good, but sometimes deviating from them or even simply winging it can produce great results. I think we put so much pressure on ourselves sometimes that it is important that we remind ourselves that we aren't (usually) going to ruin someone's life if a lesson or idea doesn't work out perfectly."

Many thanks to Joe for his dedication to his students and thoughtful leadership of the MFA in Writing program!

**March 2026 Development Opportunities:**

- RISE Mindsets: Motivation, featuring Mitch Nasser, Mary Silverglate and Suzanne Stoelting: March 17 from 2:30-3:30 pm in LARC 09 or online.
- Brown Bag: Retirement Planning: March 20 from 12:00-1:00 pm in LARC 09 or online.
- Mid-semester Support Strategies: March 26 from 2:30-3:30 pm online.
- Level Up Your Canvas Course with AI & Access Codes: March 27 from 1-2 pm in LARC 09.

Register for these sessions in [Workday Learning!](#)

**Additional Opportunities:**

- Proposals for the [LLA Advising & Mentorship Fellowship](#) are due Friday, March 6 at 5 pm.
- RISE Award nominations are due Friday, March 13 at 5 pm: [RISE & AI Award](#) and [RISE Innovator Award](#)

## One Small Change: Offering Students Choice

As we approach the middle of the semester, it's a good time to think about meaningful tweaks and adjustments we can make to culminating assignments for our courses. While major assessments in your courses are already set, there is still room to enhance student experience and engagement by offering students choice. Adding options for completing major assignments increases student engagement and is a core principle of Universal Design for Learning.

There are many ways that you can give students some measure of choice in your course. Small ways to offer choice are to let students choose topics or choose between a few pre-determined options for demonstrating content mastery. These approaches are probably still possible changes to make to end-of-semester assignments at this stage in the semester! Offering even limited options can boost student motivation and interest in their work. More involved ways of offering choice include letting students choose the format for their assessment, such as allowing students to write a research paper, make a presentation, or record a podcast on a course-related topic. You may even let students come up with their own idea of how they will present their achievement of course learning objectives.

It's important to calibrate choice with your particular course and student population. Upper-level students in courses for their major may feel more comfortable with a great deal of freedom in choosing how to complete an assessment, while lower-level students, or those in general education courses, may feel overwhelmed and directionless if given very open-ended assignments.

For more tips and suggestions for implementing choice, see "[Implementing Student Choice](#)" by Amanda Gonzales of University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

### *The AI Corner*

#### **Let's Play a Game!**

Adding games and gamification elements to a course is a great way to boost student engagement, and games can also serve as highly effective methods for retrieval practice and review. There are several AI-powered tools available to help you easily create games and introduce gamification elements to your course.

[Eduaide](#) is a tool that offers a variety of teaching tools, including multiple options for review games, like Jeopardy-style reviews, virtual escape room experiences, and narrative-based "quest" games. There's even an option to create a review game in the style of Battleship!

[Classpoint](#) is primarily an interactive slideshow tool, but it includes the ability to add gamified elements, like achieving different levels and showing leaderboards, which can be a fun way to encourage students to put effort into lessons and reviews.

Lastly, this [Connections-style game creator](#) is a quick and easy tool that can be used to create fun reviews that promote critical thinking and recall.

