

CREATIVITY CORE CURRICULUM

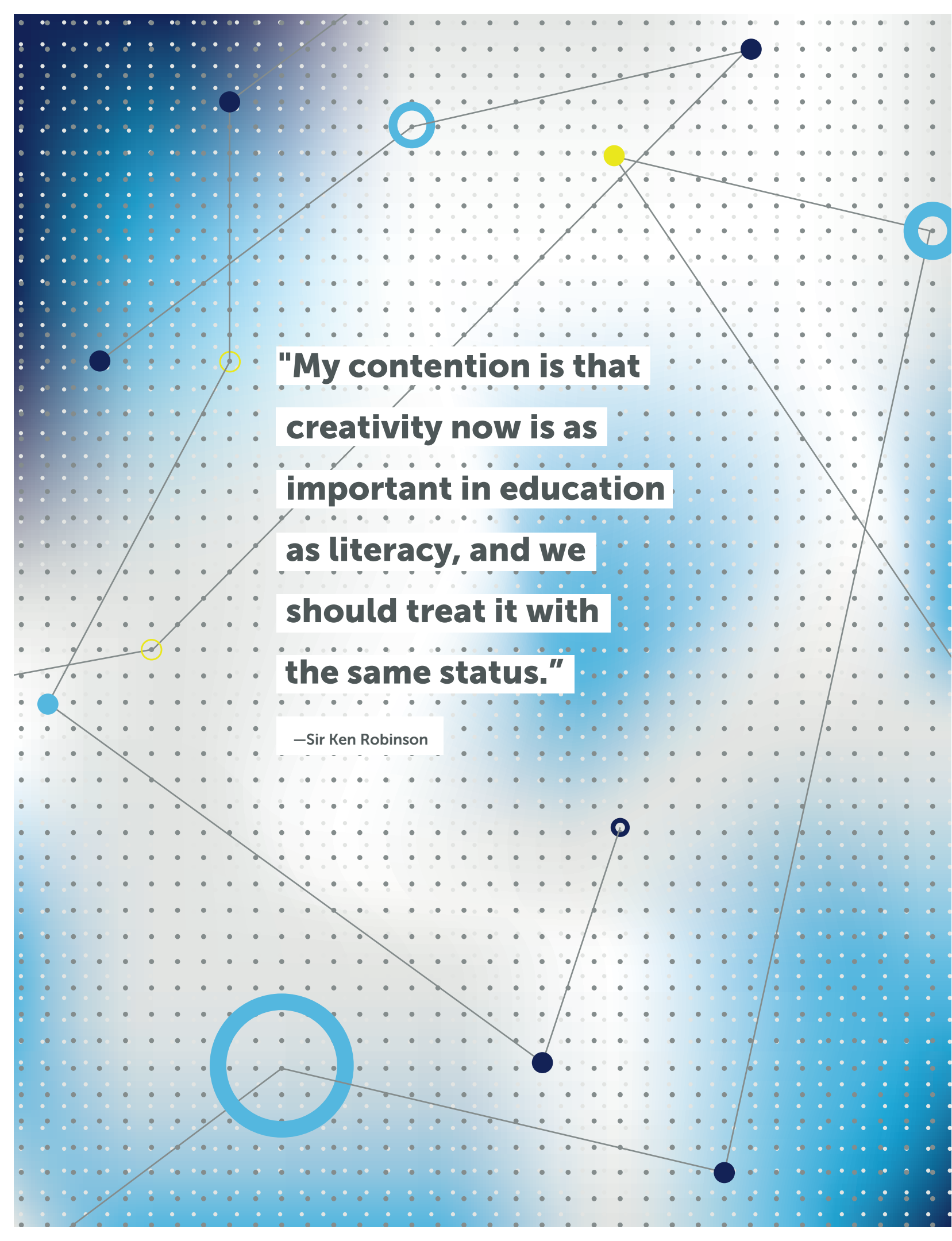
Annual Summary // 2025–2026



Thomas Jefferson
University

HOME OF SIDNEY KIMMEL MEDICAL COLLEGE



An abstract geometric design featuring a grid of small dots in various shades of blue and grey. Several larger dots in blue, yellow, and light blue are connected by thin grey lines, forming a network of triangles and polygons. A quote is centered within this design.

**"My contention is that
creativity now is as
important in education
as literacy, and we
should treat it with
the same status."**

—Sir Ken Robinson

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Cover: In the Creative Making Workshop *Creating a Rube Goldberg Machine*, instructor Catalin Florea, a research scientist at Lockheed Martin Space, leads students in exploring entertaining mechanisms for accomplishing simple tasks in a team environment.

Why Focus on Creativity?

● THE MISSION of Jefferson's Creativity Core Curriculum is to cultivate a confident and flexible student mindset through learning opportunities that explore individual and collaborative creative aptitude and equip students to yield novel and valuable results.

The future belongs to people who can imagine what doesn't yet exist, connect ideas across disciplines, and turn insight into meaningful action.

Since its launch in 2020, Thomas Jefferson University's Creativity Core Curriculum has reimagined the role of creativity in higher education. In a world shaped by artificial intelligence, rapid technological change, and increasingly complex global challenges, creativity is an essential human capability. At Jefferson, we believe creativity is fundamental to every discipline and every profession. Whether advancing healthcare, designing sustainable communities, leading organizations, or crafting compelling communication, the ability to ask bold questions, embrace ambiguity, and generate original solutions is critical to meaningful progress.

The Creativity Core Curriculum encourages students to develop these skills through experiences that foster curiosity, creative confidence, collaboration, and resilience. Rather than preparing students for a single path, it equips them to navigate continual change, discover new opportunities, and make a lasting impact. By cultivating creative capacity alongside disciplinary expertise, Jefferson empowers graduates to lead with imagination, adapt with confidence, and shape a future that is more desirable and human-centered.



The Fabric Workshop and Museum has been teaching artists the screenprinting process for over 40 years. Students explore monoprinting and blockprinting techniques to create a series of original prints in the Creative Making Workshop: *Print Mash-Up with the Fabric Workshop & Museum.*



In the Creative Making Workshop, *Drum it Out!*, students experience musical improvisation as a tool to build self-confidence, trust, and communication skills.



Students learn about the fascinating history of fragrance and the mechanisms of the sense of smell before creating a custom scent in the Creative Making Workshop: *Experimenting with Scents: Creating a Fragrance.*

Creativity Core Curriculum Components

1

CREATIVE MAKING WORKSHOPS:

These workshops offer students discreet experiences that provide the opportunity, materials, guidance and time to experiment in a risk-free environment in absence of expectations and deadlines and in a context outside their discipline. Undergraduate students at our East Falls campus complete two individual workshops while pursuing their degree. Each workshop is 3–5 hours in length. The Creativity Core Curriculum delivered a total of 124 workshops on a wide diversity of topics across fall '24 and spring '25.

Numbers for 2025–26

128

Creative Making Workshops

50

Creativity Intensive Course Sections

23

Philosophies of the Good Life Sections

1,765

Students Served

2

CREATIVITY INTENSIVE COURSES:

Every undergraduate major on the East Falls campus requires a course that includes creativity content and skills development within a disciplinary context.

3

PHILOSOPHIES OF THE GOOD LIFE:

This course exists within the Hallmarks Core. All Jefferson students take a common senior-year course that marks the completion of their liberal arts education. By reading, discussing and writing about the works of key thinkers from across centuries and around the world, they explore how transformative ideas about living a meaningful life can be applied far from their original contexts to guide them as ethical professionals, engaged citizens and inspired individuals.

NEW CREATIVE MAKING WORKSHOPS

Every year, the Creativity Core Curriculum staff work to bring fresh Creative Making Workshop opportunities to our students. Here are the new additions for the 2025–26 academic year:

- More Than Skin Deep: The Chemistry and Creativity of Cosmetics
- Who We Are: Immigration in the U.S.
- A Creative Nutrition Guide for Menstrual Health
- Fencing Fundamentals: Where Precision Meets Play
- The Power of Self-Hypnosis
- A Guide to Eating for Well-Being in College
- Gyotaku: A Traditional Japanese Process Bridging Art with Marine Science
- Futurecurrent – Shifting Climate Timelines in the Year 2180

PARTNERSHIPS

The Creative Making Workshops are conducted by instructors who possess expertise in diverse fields. In addition to Jefferson affiliated instructors, the workshop program engages attorneys, physicians, educators, business owners, artists, designers, musicians, performers, and other creatives. Our instructor pool includes talent from around the world. This year, we collaborated with the following cultural institutions, organizations, and businesses:

- Animal ACTivists of Philly
- Anna B Wellness
- The Clay Studio
- The Dhody Institute
- Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site
- Electric Cheetah Tattoos
- The Fabric Workshop & Museum
- Historic RittenhouseTown
- Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center (HAMEC)
- Holus Mediterranea
- James Turrell's "Skyspace"
- Philadelphia Beekeepers Guild
- Philadelphia Jazz Tap Ensemble
- Philadelphia School of Circus Arts
- The Random Tea Room
- Shofuso Japanese House
- StudioTEKA Design, LLC
- Urasenke Tea School
- Wild Hand



In the Creative Making Workshop, *Fencing Fundamentals: Where Precision Meets Play*, students discover why fencing is known as “physical chess” as they explore this elegant and adrenaline-filled sport.

5 YEARS OF ASSESSMENT DATA

To prepare our students for today’s rapidly changing world, institutions of higher education need to offer expanded learning experiences beyond those of the majors, to help prime students for the broad and shifting needs of the workforce. The mission of the Creativity Core Curriculum is designed to do just that: to cultivate a confident and flexible student mindset through learning opportunities that explore individual and collaborative creative aptitude and equip students to yield novel and valuable results.

These learning opportunities are aligned across the undergraduate curriculum at three points;

- a Creativity Intensive (CI) course within each student’s major
- a Creative Making Workshop experience
- the Philosophies of the Good Life Hallmarks Capstone

Collection of both direct and indirect assessments across these points illustrates how Jefferson students have been meeting the outcomes and overall goal of the Creativity Core Curriculum.

We began assessing the Creativity Intensive courses in fall 2022 mainly through a survey that offers self-reporting growth through a Likert scale accompanied by open-ended questions, which assess student understanding of the outcomes. **Table A** shows aggregate results over the past 4 years (N=458). The results are overwhelmingly positive, though it should be noted that many faculty do not “assign a grade” to the survey and therefor participation is limited in some courses. Participation numbers have grown over the 4 years, from 62 in ‘22-’23 to 119 in ‘25-’26, but are still primarily from DECF 102, PSYC 322 and EXCX 330 of the aligned courses.

In fall 2023 an additional question was added regarding whether the workshop facilitated a new interest or hobby. Close to 33% (32.94) of students answered yes to this question. **This shows a significant positive interest in advancing creative aptitude and curiosity.**

Additionally, direct assessments are being tested in DECF102 through alignments with the course outcomes. This can lead to additional direct assessments through the HelioCampus assessment management platform across other courses, potentially easing the process and expanding direct assessment opportunities across the CI designated courses.

TABLE A: CREATIVITY INTENSIVE COURSE AGGREGATE RESULTS (FL ‘22–SP ‘26)

OBJECTIVE	% “very much so” and “moderately so” aggregate	% Clear Understanding	% Developing Understanding
Objective 2: Create value by producing novel output relevant to professional and real-world endeavors. (6.3% missing)	85.8% (47.4% very much so)	74.3%	13.8%
Objective 3: Devise effective strategies for individual and/or collaborative creative production. (7.9% missing)	83.6 (46.3% very much so)	73.1%	12.7%
Objective 4: Engage empathetic and critical thinking skills when framing opportunities and solving problems. (7.9% missing)	84.5% (45.6% very much so)	77.7%	12.5%
The workshop facilitated creative thinking. (additional open-ended question)	n/a	62.9%	13.5%

Assessment of the Philosophies of the Good Life Hallmarks Capstone (PHIL 499) aligned learning outcome is the most recent, beginning in AY 24-25. This learning outcome: *Formulate new insights through unexpected connections across disciplines, perspectives and contexts*, is aligned with the Hallmarks outcome: *Apply cross-cultural knowledge appropriately when considering real-world problems* and is assessed through direct assessment using student work throughout the course. The results are slightly below the target level of 3.0 at 2.69. The Hallmarks program is revisiting how the outcome, *Apply cross-cultural knowledge appropriately when considering real-world problems* will be assessed as reviewers showed divergence in how they scored some PHIL 499 artifacts, suggesting some inconsistency in how the outcome maps to the course. A potential solution to this for the Creativity Core Curriculum could be to align our outcome directly to appropriate assessments via HelioCampus, once the software is being more readily used.



Our most significant assessment is in our Creative Making Workshops and assesses the outcomes: 1) *Embrace complexity and risk with a flexible and open mindset* and 2) *Activate creative aptitude through personal reflection and examination of biases about creativity.*

This assessment has been ongoing since 2021 and is done primarily through pre and post workshop surveys developed by Richard W. Hass, PhD, based on research he and his co-authors call “BACS” or “beliefs about creativity scales.” These surveys look at fixed verses growth mindsets and are the culmination of scales developed by Dweck (for intelligence) and Karwowski (for creativity). According to Dr. Hass, “Multiple studies have shown that the scales measure two separate, but correlated constructs. The first is fixed creative mindset—the belief that creativity is not amenable to learning or practice, and you either ‘have it or you don’t.’ Growth creative mindset is the belief that creativity can be cultivated. Though some people might have more or less to begin with, growth mindset describes beliefs that one can always get better with practice.” (Hass, et al., 2016, 2018, 2021)

The Creativity Core Curriculum has been looking at this data for the past 5 years and has measured a consistent increase in growth mindset as well as a decrease in fixed mindset, annually. For the six questions that align with the outcome: *Embrace complexity and risk with a flexible and open mindset that reflect growth mindset* (**Table B**), we have seen an average increase of 7.2% in students “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” between the pre and post surveys. For the statement, “I feel that I am good at coming up with novel ideas”, we saw an average increase of 10.5% agree/strongly agree between the pre and post surveys, with the highest increase being 15.2% in AY21-22 and 12% increase this past academic year. When looking at the number of students, the average increase per year was 110 students in the shift toward agree or strongly agree for the same question. Complementary to that, we have seen a decrease in the number of students that disagreed with these statements, potentially moving toward more mid-level (somewhat agree/disagree or neither) or higher levels of agreement. For the same statement, “I feel that I am good at coming up with

novel ideas”, the number of students that disagreed or strongly disagreed with this fell by almost 4% (3.9%), with an average of 53 students per year shifting towards some greater form of agreement.

For the same outcome, we also have a series of 4 questions that align with fixed mindset (**Table C**). For these, we saw an average of 3.5% increase in disagreement between pre and post surveys over the past 5 years. For the

statement, “You are either creative or you are not. Even trying hard, you cannot change much.” there was an average increase in disagreement of 4.2% between pre and post surveys, with the greatest being 6.4 % this past year. Post survey data also showed that roughly 50% or more of Jefferson students disagreed with this statement after completing a Creative Making Corkshop.

The second outcome aligned with the Creative Making Workshops is: *Activate creative aptitude through personal reflection and examination of biases about creativity.* This has been assessed through a series of 5 questions since AY 21-22, the 5th question having been added in the spring of 2023 (**Table D**). These questions look at an understanding and appreciation of creative aptitude and somewhat lean toward growth mindset, as well. Here we saw an average increase of 4.5% between pre and post surveys for students that agree or strongly agree. For the statement, “I can always increase my level of creativity through practice.” We saw an average increase of

7.1%, with close to 70% (69.6%) of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement in post workshop surveys. For the statement, “Creativity can be enhanced when diverse thoughts, perspectives and/or experiences are represented” we saw an average 5.85% increase in students that agree/strongly agree, with an almost 9% (8.9%) increase in strongly agree, reinforcing students respect for the transdisciplinary nature of these workshops. Table D shows a breakdown of the questions with aggregated data, as specified, for each year, and the overall aggregated percent over the past 5 years.



Dr. Jeffrey Ashley, Professor of Chemistry, simultaneously invites students to explore fish anatomy and the historical print-making process of gyotaku, used by Japanese anglers to record fish landings.

TABLE B: GROWTH MINDSET DATA

All figures shown as a combined percentage of “agree” and “strongly agree” responses.

Total pre-survey responses = 6,165. Total post-survey responses = 5,562.

OBJECTIVE	FL'21–SP'22		Δ	FL'22–SP'23		Δ	FL'23–SP'24		Δ		FL'24–SP'25		Δ	FL'25–SP'26		Δ	Δ average (all 5 years)
	PRE	POST		PRE	POST		PRE	POST			PRE	POST		PRE	POST		
I feel that I am good at coming up with novel ideas.	34.5%	49.7%	+15.2%	40.6%	40.9%	+0.3%	34.3%	46.7%	+12.4%		36%	48.5%	+12.5%	32.1%	45.8%	+13.7%	+10.8%
I have a knack for further developing the ideas of others.	43.8%	56.3%	+12.5%	38.4%	46.5%	+8.1%	43.8%	54.4%	+10.6%		44%	52.8%	+8.8%	45.7%	53.4%	+7.7%	+9.5%
I have confidence in my ability to solve problems creatively.	56%	67.1%	+11.1%	53.2%	58.3%	+5.1%	55%	63.5%	+8.5%		57.1%	63.2%	+6.1%	55.4%	62.1%	+6.7%	+7.5%
Being creative gives me an extra edge in my classes.	58.5%	70.6%	+12.1%	55.1%	60.4%	+5.3%	57.1%	68.4%	+11.3%		58.7%	65.9%	+7.2%	57.9%	66.6%	+8.7%	+8.9%
Being creative will help me excel at my future job.	72.9%	77.7%	+4.8%	66.5%	68.5%	+2.0%	70.9%	74.7%	+3.8%		72.2%	74.8%	+2.6%	69.2%	70.8%	+1.6%	+3.0%
Being creative will help me be successful in school.	72.8%	77.2%	+4.4%	64.4%	66.9%	+2.5%	68.9%	73.5%	+4.6%		72%	74.2%	+2.2%	72.6%	73.6%	+1.0%	+2.9%
AVERAGE OVERALL DIFFERENCE FOR GROWTH MINDSET SECTION			+10.0%			+3.9%			+8.5%				+6.6%			+6.6%	+7.1%
TOTAL NUMBER SURVEYED	1,090	923		1,062	960		1,232	1,164			1,269	1,110		1,512	1,405		

TABLE C: FIXED MINDSET DATA

All figures shown as a combined percentage of “disagree” and “strongly disagree” responses.

Total pre-survey responses = 6,165. Total post-survey responses = 5,562.

OBJECTIVE	FL'21–SP'22		Δ	FL'22–SP'23		Δ	FL'23–SP'24		Δ		FL'24–SP'25		Δ	FL'25–SP'26		Δ	Δ average (all 5 years)
	PRE	POST		PRE	POST		PRE	POST			PRE	POST		PRE	POST		
Some people are creative, others are not, and no practice can change it..	45.3%	51.5%	+6.2%	49.1%	51.5%	+2.4%	46.2%	52.6%	+6.4%		50.1%	51.9%	+1.8%	47.7%	49.3%	+1.6%	+3.7%
You are either creative or you are not. Even trying hard you cannot change much..	46.1%	52.1%	+6.0%	48.1%	52.4%	+4.3%	47.2%	50.4%	+3.2%		51.9%	53.2%	+1.3%	43.1%	49.5%	+6.4%	+4.2%
Creativity can be developed, but one is or is not a truly creative person..	15%	21.5%	+6.5%	16.4%	19.9%	+3.5%	14.8%	18%	+3.2%		15.9%	18.8%	+2.9%	12.8%	15.9%	+3.1%	+3.8%
A truly creative talent is innate and constant throughout one’s entire life.	15.2%	17%	+1.8%	15.3%	18.2%	+2.9%	14.8%	18.5%	+3.7%		16.2%	16.6%	+0.4%	14.9%	17.3%	+2.4%	+2.2%
AVERAGE OVERALL DIFFERENCE FOR FIXED MINDSET SECTION			+5.1%			+3.3%			+4.1%				+1.6%			+3.4%	+3.5%
TOTAL NUMBER SURVEYED	1,090	923		1,062	960		1,232	1,164			1,269	1,110		1,512	1,405		

Note that this figure is now displaying the total change in “disagree” + “strongly disagree,” and it is a desired outcome for this figure to increase when measuring change in fixed mindset.

TABLE D: CREATIVE APTITUDE DATA

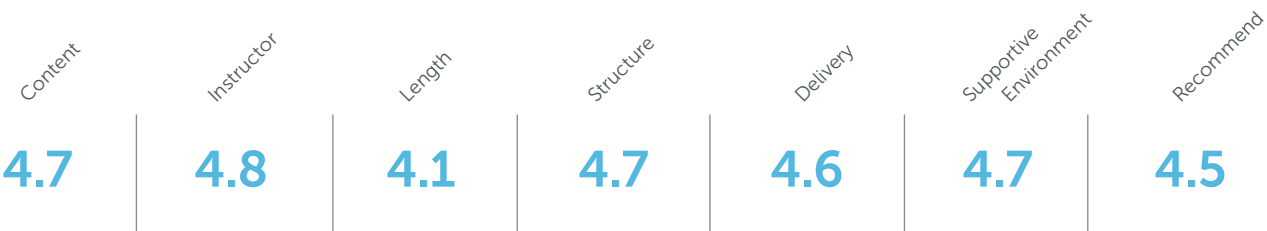
All figures shown as a combined percentage of “agree” and “strongly agree” responses.

Total pre-survey responses = 6,165. Total post-survey responses = 5,562.

OBJECTIVE	FL'21–SP'22		Δ	FL'22–SP'23		Δ	FL'23–SP'24		Δ		FL'24–SP'25		Δ	FL'25–SP'26		Δ	Δ average (all 5 years)
	PRE	POST		PRE	POST		PRE	POST			PRE	POST		PRE	POST		
Effort and hard work are more important than talent when creating something new.	48.3%	51.5%	+3.2%	46.4%	44.7%	-1.7%	46.8%	51.6%	+4.8%		47.3%	52.3%	+5.0%	47.4%	49.2%	+1.8%	+2.6%
Perseverance and trying hard are the best ways to develop and expand one’s creative capabilities.	61.7%	69.6%	+7.9%	59.9%	63.5%	+3.6%	62.3%	67%	+4.7%		64.6%	69.1%	+4.5%	64.8%	67.9%	+3.1%	+4.8%
I can always increase my level of creativity through practice.	61.4%	70.5%	+9.1%	59.7%	62.9%	+3.2%	61.8%	70.9%	+9.1%		64.9%	73.4%	+8.5%	64.9%	70.5%	+5.6%	+7.1%
Everyone can create something great at some point if he or she is given appropriate conditions.	71.3%	72.9%	+1.6%	68.7%	69.0%	+0.3%	72.2%	75.1%	+2.9%		72.3%	75.7%	+3.4%	72.2%	73.7%	+1.5%	+1.9%
Creativity can be enhanced when diverse thoughts, perspectives and/or experiences are represented.	n/a	n/a	n/a	83%	86.7%	+3.7%	84.1%	90.2%	+6.1%		80.3%	86.1%	+5.8%	77.8%	83.6%	+5.8%	+5.4%
AVERAGE OVERALL DIFFERENCE FOR CREATIVE APTITUDE SECTION			+5.5%			+1.8%			+5.5%				+5.4%			+3.6%	
TOTAL NUMBER SURVEYED	1,090	923		1,062	960		1,232	1,164			1,269	1,110					

STUDENT SATISFACTION DATA FOR SPRING '26

Average figures shown. Scale of 1-5 (1=Extremely Dissatisfied/Unlikely, 2=Somewhat Dissatisfied/Unlikely, 3=Neither Satisfied/Likely nor Dissatisfied/Unlikely, 4=Somewhat Satisfied/Likely, 5=Extremely Satisfied/Likely)



Additionally, the Creativity Core Curriculum reviews student satisfaction data about the Creative Making Workshop component of the curriculum. From the first semester’s offering in Fall ‘20, these scores have been and remain very high. Above are representative scores for the most recent semester, Spring ‘26. Students provide feedback about the quality of the workshop’s content, instruction, length, structure of content, mode of delivery (virtual or in-person), and the degree to which the workshop provides a supportive environment for self-expression and exploration. Students also note the likelihood that they would recommend this workshop to a peer.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

Jefferson is dedicated to fostering an environment in which everyone feels a true sense of belonging. The Creativity Core Curriculum is structured to support a culture where all individuals are respected. At least 20% of all Creative Making Workshops focus on subject matter that highlights the value of unique perspectives in the following ways:

- Represent interests and views of non-dominant cultures and people and/or
- Directly encourage thinking and behaviors that support the valuation of diversity, equity, and inclusion

DEI DESIGNATED CREATIVE MAKING WORKSHOPS

- Local Holocaust Survivors and their Artifacts
 - The Mane Talk: A Walkthrough on Black/African American Hair
 - Signs of Humanity: Lessons from Three Decades of Buying Homeless Signs
 - Introduction to Feng Shui: History, Principles and Practice
 - Building on the Promise of Hope
 - Street Activism: Know Your Rights and Avoid Arrest
 - Rediscovering the Almost Lost Folk Art of Papercutting
 - The Story of the Blues
 - Beyond Male and Female
 - (Un)natural Bodies
- Bringing Your Perspective to Protest
 - Revolutionary Voices
 - Both/And Thinking: A Key to Solving Today’s Social Dilemmas
 - When Witnessing Microaggressions: How Not to be a Bystander but be an Ally
 - Eastern State Penitentiary and Prisons Today
 - The Spirit World of Matcha
 - K-Drama and Kaleidoscopic Writing
 - Who We Are: Immigration in the U.S.
 - Gyotaku: A Traditional Japanese Process Bridging Art with Marine Science
 - Futurecurrent–Shifting Climate Timelines in Year 2180



The Spirit World of Matcha is a Creative Making Workshop that immerses students in the history and ceremony of matcha. Buddhist monks from the Chan sect combine matcha, used for its caffeine, with meditation. This workshop is taught by representatives of the Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia and the Urasenka Tea School.

RESEARCH AND ACHIEVEMENTS

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS

Creativity in Health Accelerator: Representatives from the Creativity Core Curriculum steering committee, Professors Jason Crook and Maribeth Kradel-Weitzel, delivered a day-long intensive experience to members of the Sidney Kimmel Medical College Department of Medicine with partnership from Dr. Gregory Kane. Participants explored how to analyze and prioritize healthcare opportunities while activating personal and collaborative creativity in a healthcare context. Part of the experience involved engagement with faculty in graphic and visual communication design, industrial design, and textile design to explore exciting creative opportunities at the intersection of design and health.



Emerson College Workshops: Emerson College invited Prof. Maribeth Kradel-Weitzel to deliver multiple workshops on the topic of creativity to help launch their Creativity@Emerson initiative. Kradel-Weitzel provided two interactive student-focused workshops titled “The Creativity Question” that explored the importance of framing and awareness to assumptions and bias in creative work. She also provided a faculty lecture addressing the implementation of a creativity-focused curriculum in higher education.



Industrial Design Professor Eric Schneider shares a multi-year collaboration with Easterseals of Southeastern Pennsylvania that involves the creation of customized assistive technology. This interdisciplinary initiative pairs design students with physical and occupational therapy students.

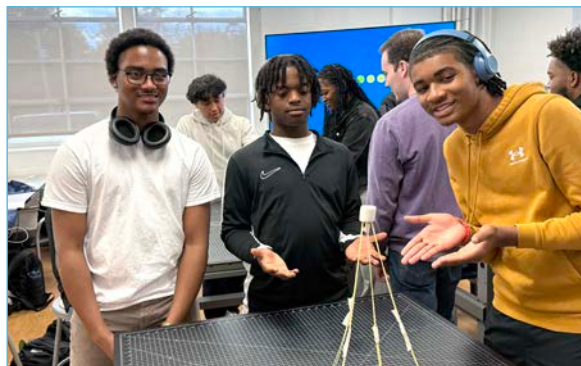


Director of the Creativity Core Curriculum, Professor Maribeth Kradel-Weitzel delivers an interactive workshop to Emerson College students. Here, she shares information about creativity within the context of AI and emerging technologies.

● **Cristo Rey High School Workshops:** Over the course of the academic year, the entire junior-level class of the Philadelphia charter school Cristo Rey visited the Jefferson East Falls campus as part of their Grad@Grad program. Prof. Maribeth Kradel-Weitzel engaged the students in interactive exploration of their own understanding of creativity and its relevance to their lives. She then employed a series of activities that support the development of individual creative confidence.



Cristo Rey students experiment with a playful rapid prototyping exercise within the context of a team challenge.



● **Society for the Neuroscience of Creativity**
Mainstage Presentation
 DiDonato, S., Kradel-Weitzel, M., & Saladeen, K. (2026, June). *Creating Connection: Co-Creating Trauma-Informed Neuroarts with Youth*. Invited presentation at the Society for the Neuroscience of Creativity Annual Conference: Liberty to Create, Philadelphia, PA.

Society for the Neuroscience of Creativity
Poster Presentation
 Kradel-Weitzel, M. (2026, June). *The Creativity Question*. Poster presentation at the Society for the Neuroscience of Creativity Annual Conference: Liberty to Create, Philadelphia, PA.



ARTICLES

Centrone, W., DiDonato, S., Kradel-Weitzel, M. & Werkmeister Rozas, L. (2026). "Using Design Principles and Aesthetic Intelligence to Foster Deeper Meaning for Children in Residential Homes: A Case Study of Mascot Co-Creation in Perú." *Journal of Design, Business & Society* (under review)

Kradel-Weitzel, M. (2026, March 10). "Creativity is not a Department: Rethinking Language and Leadership." Public Servants. <https://www.publicservants.com/in-service/creativity-is-not-a-department> (Invited essay).

Balkiewicz, S., & Ashley, J. T. F. (2025). "Incorporating the Pedagogy of Play through Gyotaku in an Undergraduate Oceanography Course." *Current: The Journal of Marine Education*, 40(3), 51–61. <https://doi.org/10.5334/cjme.133>

Kradel-Weitzel, M & Scott, D. (2025). "Utilizing Assessment Results to Demonstrate the Case for Creativity-Focused Education." *Assessment Update*, 37(5), 6–14. <https://doi.org/10.1002/au.30603>

RESEARCH AND GRANTS

Renée Fleming Neuroarts Investigator Awards (2025)—Creating Connection: A Neuroarts Approach to Youth Healing and Expression: (PI: Dr. Stephen DiDonato and artist Raheem "King Saladeen" Johnson, Co-I: Megan Gannon and Maribeth Kradel-Weitzel in collaboration with students and faculty at The Grayson School)

This grant explored the question: The aim of this innovative project is to understand how youth engagement in a trauma-informed collective arts project can support self-awareness, connection, and empowerment. The work focused on enhancing the neuroarts field through the development of a trauma-informed collective arts project that was co-created with youth and inclusive of their perspectives on how collective arts can support youth social and emotional well-being.

Jefferson Seed Grant with MATER (2026)—From Recovery to Resilience: A Participatory Nutrition Education Model for Mothers and Children Affected by Substance Abuse: (PI: Prof. Maribeth Kradel-Weitzel, Co-I: Dr. Kim McLaughlin)

This grant will employ a multi-modal designed activity and research study for the purpose of studying the efficacy of a unique model for nutritional education in a residential care facility for mothers and children affected by substance abuse.



Creativity Intensive Course Spotlight: Finding and Shaping Opportunities (DECF 102) with College of Business Professor Chae Mi Lim



For me, the course is really about helping students realize that creativity isn't just about having great ideas—it's about learning a process for finding opportunities and shaping them into solutions that are meaningful, practical, and valuable.

What is your Creativity Intensive course about?

The course is called Finding and Shaping Opportunity (DECF 102), and it's an interdisciplinary course that brings together students from business, design, and engineering. At its core, it's about helping students see opportunities where others see everyday problems. Rather than looking for a single "right" answer,

they learn to observe, ask questions, generate ideas, and explore different possibilities. For me, the course is really about helping students realize that creativity isn't just about having great ideas—it's about learning a process for finding opportunities and shaping them into solutions that are meaningful, practical, and valuable.

How do you personally define creativity?

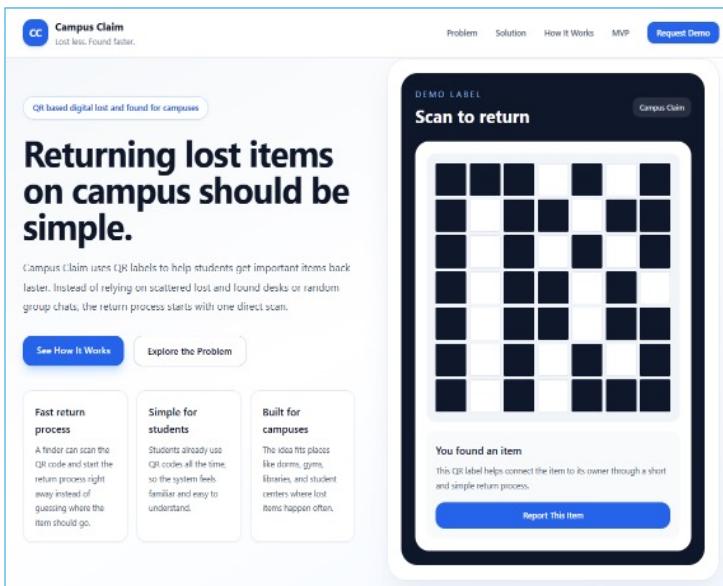
Over the years, I've come to think of creativity as the ability to notice opportunities that others might overlook and connect ideas in meaningful ways. For me, it's less about sudden inspiration and more about curiosity, observation, experimentation, and continuous refinement. I don't think creativity requires artistic talent or extraordinary imagination. Instead, it grows through asking thoughtful questions, trying different approaches, learning from failure, and improving ideas over time. That's why I believe creativity is a skill that anyone can develop with practice and the right environment.

How have you evolved your course because of its inclusion as a Creativity Intensive course?

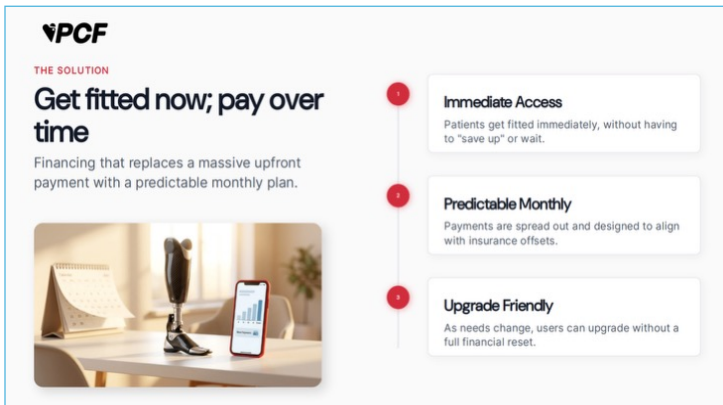
As I've continued to teach the course, I've become much more intentional about slowing down the creative process. I noticed that students often jump from identifying an opportunity to proposing the first solution that comes to mind. Those ideas may seem creative at first, but they're often based on familiar assumptions or overlook important real-world constraints.

I've redesigned parts of the course to create more space for observation, exploration, and iteration before students commit to a solution. Instead of relying only on their own perspective, they learn to consider opportunities through the eyes of customers, organizations, partners, suppliers, investors, and other stakeholders. They also explore multiple possible directions rather than pursuing the first promising idea. That shift often changes not only the solution but how they frame the opportunity itself.

I've also incorporated AI to help students bring their ideas to life through visualizations and prototypes that many could not otherwise create because of limited design or technical experience. I emphasize that AI supports execution, while students remain responsible for the creative thinking and decision making behind their ideas. One of the most rewarding parts of teaching the course is seeing students realize that creativity isn't simply about generating unusual ideas—it's about developing thoughtful solutions that are both original and capable of creating real value.



Campus Claim demonstrates how students transformed an everyday campus problem into a user-centered digital solution. DECF 102 student team members: Corey Abod, Helen Caba, George Siozos, Michelle Steele



PCF demonstrates how students reframed a healthcare challenge into a practical financing solution that improves access to prosthetic devices. DECF 102 student team members: Darnell Abdula, Jet Breckenridge, Christopher Kennedy



Mon-E-Go demonstrates how students transformed a common source of anxiety into an engaging mobile experience that helps first-time tax filers learn and complete the filing process. DECF 102 student team members: Alex Bates, Michael Cancelliere, Christopher Cervino, Gavin Dunlop

What new takeaways do you think students in your course are getting that relate to creativity?

I hope students leave the course with a much broader understanding of creativity. Many begin the semester thinking creativity is about coming up with the most original or unconventional idea. By the end, they realize that creativity starts with curiosity, asking better questions, and looking at opportunities from perspectives they may never have considered before.

They also discover that the most creative solution isn't always the most complicated or unexpected one. Often, it's the one that thoughtfully balances originality with real-world needs and constraints. Just as importantly, I hope they become more confident navigating uncertainty and refining ideas over time instead of searching for the "perfect" solution.

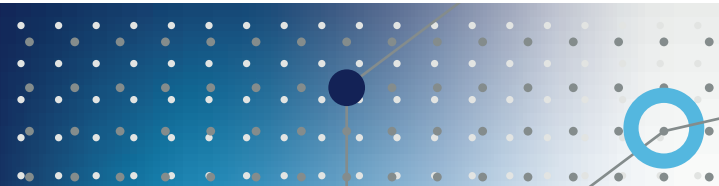
I also think the interdisciplinary nature of the course plays an important role. Working with classmates from business, design, and engineering exposes students to different ways

of thinking and often challenges assumptions they didn't even realize they had. Those conversations frequently lead to stronger, more creative solutions than they would have developed on their own.

In what ways is creativity important in other aspects of your work?

Creativity extends well beyond this course and shapes many aspects of my work. One area is curriculum development, where I'm continually rethinking courses, assignments, and learning experiences to better prepare students for a rapidly changing technological and professional landscape. I enjoy exploring new ways to help students develop creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills through authentic, hands-on learning experiences.

Creativity also plays an important role in my research, where asking new questions and connecting ideas across different fields often leads to the most meaningful insights. One of my current research projects explores how generative AI influences creativity and creative self-efficacy. Studying these questions has encouraged me to think more deeply about how creativity develops and how educators can design learning environments that help students cultivate it. Whether I'm teaching, developing curriculum, or conducting research, creativity continually challenges me to look beyond familiar approaches and keep improving what I do.



Creative Making Workshop
Spotlight: Local Holocaust
Survivors and their Artifacts
with Lise Marlowe,
Education Director of the
Holocaust Awareness Museum
and Education Center



Students understand that they are the last generation to meet a survivor. For many of the students in the class, this is the first time they've ever met a Holocaust survivor.

What is the focus of your professional work?

I am a retired 6th grade teacher from Cheltenham School District and currently the Education Director of the Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center in Elkins Park. We are America's first Holocaust museum. Our mission is to bring Holocaust survivors to schools to speak. Last year, our museum reached over 20,000 students and adults with in person and virtual programming. My great grandmother, Victoria Madsen, who was from Denmark, was part of the Danish Resistance Movement and rescued Jews in

the Holocaust. She hid Jews in her fishing boat and took them to safety from Denmark to Sweden. The Danish people saved 98% of the Jewish population in 3 weeks time. She was also the Editor of a major resistance newspaper called *Land og Folk*. Sadly, some of my family who were from Russia were murdered in the Holocaust.

What is your Creative Making Workshop about?

In the creative workshop, called "Local Holocaust survivors and their artifacts," students learn about local Philadelphia Holocaust survivor stories and the artifacts that we have on display in our museum that connect to their stories. Students are given background information on survivors that our museum works with and then have a virtual visit in the classroom with a survivor who shares their story. Students also ask questions to the survivor to enrich the experience. Students understand that they are the last generation to meet a survivor. For many of the students in the class, this is the first time they've ever met a Holocaust survivor.

What do your students learn about creativity from taking your workshop?

The creativity challenge is for students to think of ways to continue sharing the stories of survivors when they are gone. How will educators continue to use the stories in a creative way to keep the interest for future generations? What types of technology will be needed to preserve these important stories? What do they think will work for their generation and future generations to keep Holocaust education in the spotlight and continue to create empathy for the victims?



Marlowe with her former sixth grade student and current Jefferson student, Reilly Krysztoforski.



An image from Marlow’s presentation which encourages students to select an artifact as the inspiration for methods of storytelling that will keep the history of the Holocaust alive.



Artifacts on display at the Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center (HAMEC) in Elkins Park, PA.



Artifacts on display at the Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center (HAMEC) in Elkins Park, PA.

What has been a personal highlight for you relative to teaching a Creative Making Workshop?

A highlight for me was when a former 6th grade student that I taught, who is a current Jefferson University student, took my workshop. I thought he was saying “hello” when he walked into the classroom, but stated that he was taking the workshop because he saw that I was the teacher and wanted to learn more about the Holocaust from his 6th grade experience. When I start the workshop, I ask each student if they had Holocaust education in their High School and what was their interest in taking the class. So many students state that they want to enrich what they learned when they were younger or want to know the truth about this history. The highlight they state at the end of the workshop is that they are so grateful to have had the opportunity to hear a survivor story and engage with them directly.



Marlow’s Danish great-grandmother, pictured above, saved Jews in the Holocaust. The little boy on right is Marlow’s grandfather, later a member of the Danish Navy, who fought against the Nazis.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Creativity Core Curriculum works with a unique theme every year. For the 2025–26 Academic Year, that theme was “Creativity for Utopian Futures.”

2025–’26 Theme Description: *Now is the time to dream ambitiously and collaborate to imagine futures worth striving for. Human creativity is key to envisioning just, sustainable, and inspiring possibilities for the benefit of generations to come. This year’s theme, “Creativity for Utopian Futures” examines how transformative thinking can spark new approaches to global challenges that impact us all.*



Faculty Panel Discussion: Creativity for Utopian Futures (October 22, 2025)

Jefferson faculty from diverse fields, including professors from Marketing & Management, Biology, Visual Communication Design and Architecture, shared how their work shapes bold visions for a better future, followed by an interactive discussion and Q&A. Participants included:

- **Dr. Yang Yang, PhD:** assistant professor, architecture
- **Prof. Beth Shirrell, MFA:** associate professor and program director, graphic design and visual communication
- **Dr. Jeffrey Klemens, PhD:** associate professor, biology
- **Dr. Thomas Schrand, PhD:** associate dean for general education
- **Prof. Jason Crook, MBA:** assistant teaching professor, marketing and management

Keynote Presentation and Workshop—Vanessa Keith, Principal at Studioteka Design, LLC (March 25, 2026)

In her presentation, Future Shock: Climate, Cities & the Power of Imagination, renowned architect and urban designer, Vanessa Keith explores the questions, “What will the world look like in the next century? Is climate optimism even possible?” Keith’s presentation offered a resounding “yes” to these questions and showed how imagination and innovation can reinvent our collective future for the better. Her keynote sparked curiosity and invited the audience to imagine bold solutions to our biggest global challenges and to become the innovators who build them.



Keith also offered an intimate workshop to a small group of fortunate Jefferson students as part of the Creativity Core Curriculum’s Creative Making Workshop offerings. Her workshop, titled *Futurecurrent—Shifting Climate Timelines in Year 2180*, invited students to step into the world of Year 2180 where human ingenuity, grit and perseverance have taken on the climate crisis and (almost!) won. By engaging with a virtual reality environment inspired by Keith’s book, *2100-A Dystopian Utopia: The City After Climate Change*, students experimented with visual storytelling to express their ideas of empowerment for a positive climate future.

● **Fourth Annual Creativity Fair (April 17, 2026)**

In celebration of the United Nations World Creativity & Innovation Day, Jefferson’s Creativity Core Curriculum hosted its fourth annual Creativity Fair, open to the entire Jefferson community. Interactive stations featured a variety of physical and mental challenges connected to the theme of Creativity for Utopian Futures. Stations included a collaborative mural-making activity focused on creating a vision for an ideal neighborhood, a data visualization experience that asked students reflective questions about their version of utopia, a writing activity that invited students to create vision letters for their future selves, and more!



In this photo, students are writing letters to themselves to be opened 5, 10 or 15 years in the future. The letters provide an opportunity to reflect on future goals and aspirations related to things like happiness, success, prosperity, skills, mental health, relationships with people, family life, etc.



Led by the PA Fibershed student club, students participated in a fabric upcycling activity and gave a new life to materials that previously had another purpose.



Everyone has a unique vision of what a perfect utopia would look like. At the “Votes for Utopia” station, students lined up to respond to thought-provoking “yes or no” questions about the role of creativity in their personal vision of utopia.

Questions and responses included:

- *Would unlimited resources make people more creative?*
(yes=52, no=34)
- *Does your dream utopia include artificial intelligence?*
(yes=17, no=65)
- *Would people lose creative drive in a utopian society?*
(yes=39, no=40)
- *In your version of utopia, do you work?*
(yes=59, no=20)
- *Would guaranteed basic needs (housing, food, income) increase creative risk-taking?*
(yes=72, no=8)

After voting, students were invited to express gratitude for their current situation by noting something that is already part of their life that they would keep in their utopian vision. Many students noted a desire to retain cherished relationships with family and friends.

Creativity exists in all disciplines! We asked students at the 2026 Creativity Fair to name a professor who most helped them grow their creative skills. They mentioned:

- Radika Baskar** (College of Architecture, Design & Engineering)
Eric Bellin (College of Architecture, Design & Engineering)
Anne Bower (College of Life Sciences)
Jenna Cain (College of Architecture, Design & Engineering)
Catherine Carter (College of Life Sciences)
Paul Coleman (College of Health Professions)
Tony Croasdale (College of Architecture, Design & Engineering)
Ivano D’Angella (College of Architecture, Design & Engineering)
Peng Du (College of Architecture, Design & Engineering)
Clay Gruber (College of Architecture, Design & Engineering)
Julian Harris (College of Life Sciences)
David Harrop (College of Architecture, Design & Engineering)
Andrew Hart (College of Architecture, Design & Engineering)
Dustin Hill (College of Humanities & Sciences)
Anne Meejung Kim (College of Humanities & Sciences)
Jeff Klemens (College of Life Sciences)
Maribeth Kradel-Weitzel (College of Architecture, Design & Engineering)
Ryan Long (College of Humanities & Sciences)
Yao Lu (College of Architecture, Design & Engineering)
Kathryn Mickle (College of Life Sciences)
John Milligan (College of Life Sciences)
Marilisa Navarro (College of Humanities & Sciences)
David O’Brien (College of Humanities & Sciences)
Grace Ong Yan (College of Architecture, Design & Engineering)
Jenna Rieder (College of Humanities & Sciences)
Lauren Ruelens (College of Humanities & Sciences)
Dana Scott (College of Fashion and Textiles)
Marlena Washington (College of Life Sciences)
Marcia Weiss (College of Fashion & Textiles)



Illustration: R. Black

Creative Making Workshop Spotlight: *The Art of Magic* with Renowned Magician Paul Draper

One of his teaching hallmarks is applying an analytical, anthropological lens to demonstrate how human belief, perception, and storytelling intersect.

Every semester since Fall 2022, anthropologist, mentalist, and award-winning magician Paul Draper has conducted his Creative Making Workshop titled “The Art of Magic: Uncovering the World of Surprise, Astonishment, and Wonder”. This multi-dimensional workshop consists of three components: a short history of magic; the social, cultural, and ethical aspects of magic; and the practice of magic—the most experiential portion—in which Draper teaches students various magic tricks and illusions (using numbers, cards, coins, and rings), which they then discuss and demystify together. His workshop has consistently garnered high praise by students, who describe its instructor in glowing terms: “engaging”, “charismatic”, “entertaining”,

“energetic”, and “highly passionate about his subject”.

The success of his workshop is surely rooted in Draper’s professional career, which bridges the worlds of academic anthropology and professional performance. He’s a seasoned lecturer, and his audiences range from Fortune 500 companies to universities (including, in March 2026, Computer Science and Technology students at the University of Cambridge). He also leads hospital team-building geared towards elevating patient care.

In addition to being a former house magician at Las Vegas’s Venetian Hotel and Casino, Draper has appeared in over a dozen TV shows

and documentaries, including for the History Channel, and his private gigs include a performance for Hollywood director J.J. Abrams and guests. Amongst his recent scholarly honors are election into the leadership of the London-based Magic Circle (one of the oldest magical societies in the world), and publication of a co-authored article for the journal *Anthropology of Consciousness* (November 2025), which examines deception techniques used by tricksters in the realm of disinformation and magical entertainment.

Draper’s interdisciplinary approach to magic and mentalism blends cultural insight with theatrical skill, and one of his teaching hallmarks is applying an analytical, anthropological lens

to demonstrate how human belief, perception, and storytelling intersect. Rather than simply entertaining audiences with mysterious effects, he frames his performances within broader discussions, and in doing so, turns a traditional magic show into an opportunity for intellectual engagement as well as entertainment.

In many ways, Draper’s methodology represents a convergence of science and art: anthropology provides the tools to analyze human belief and culture, while magic and mentalism provide a dramatic way to actively illustrate those ideas. Through his performances, lectures, scholarship, and Creative Making Workshop, Paul Draper demonstrates that illusion can do more than amaze — it can also



reveal important truths about how people think, believe, and interpret the world.

Draper describes his workshop in this way: I begin by asking students about their majors and areas of study so that I can connect the material to their interests. For example, for students studying architecture, fashion, nursing, or pre-med, we discuss how those disciplines intersect with magic through areas such as stage design, costume, illusion engineering, psychology, and performance. I also explore the historical relationship between magic and medicine, which includes discussions of shamanism and traditional healers, “sucking doctors,”

early medical-magical practices, references to magic found in ancient texts such as the Upanishads, the Bible, the Westcar Papyrus, and writings from temple magicians in Egypt and Rome. Throughout this section I mix in demonstrations and invite students to think critically about what they are seeing and to attempt to discover methods themselves.

We also examine the ethics of magic and the experience of learning a secret. Students reflect on what it means to know how something works versus experiencing wonder, and we briefly discuss the responsibilities that come with learning magical methods.

From there, the conversation expands into broader cultural and ethical questions surrounding magic as an art form. We discuss topics such as the historical use of animals in magic and the ethical treatment of animals in entertainment. Rather than leading students toward a particular answer, I invite them to explore their own views, since their generation will shape the future of the art.

We also consider questions of privilege and access in magic, including who historically has been allowed to participate and how the internet is helping democratize the craft. Through a series of video examples, we explore cross-cultural influence

in performance, such as Orientalism in magic, as well as surprising figures in the history of the art. For example, the first magician to headline on the Las Vegas Strip was a woman, and the first American-born professional magician was the Black son of an enslaved man, after whom a city is now named.

These examples help frame conversations about cultural relativism, cultural appreciation, cultural appropriation, imperialism, and globalization. My role is less to lecture and more to facilitate discussion. I try to create a “guide on the side” environment rather than a “sage on the stage,” encouraging students to reflect on how these issues should be understood both historically and moving forward.

The final portion of the workshop is the hands-on component. Students learn several practical magical effects they can perform themselves, along with resources for continuing to study the art. This section reinforces the earlier discussions by allowing them to experience the process of learning and performing magic first-hand.



What are students saying about this workshop?

“I liked that magic was connected to working in a hospital or a healthcare setting, which corresponded to many of the majors in the meeting.”

“He was a very entertaining and enjoyable lecturer, I learned a lot more on not just the subject matter but overall. My understanding and appreciation of magic has grown and I appreciate efforts of celebrating magic, creativity, culture and diversity.”

“I really liked how he was able to explain to us how magic was used throughout history and how certain aspects of magic are still used throughout many professions and throughout the world. I also really loved how he showed us the tricks; it was very entertaining!”

“Paul is great. He knows his stuff and is very impressive. It was really cool that he is a magician and an anthropologist. We got the fun and the academic.”

“I enjoyed that we learned both modern and historical magic, along with getting to practice our own tricks. The instructor’s personal experiences made it feel more relatable.”

“He not only performed cool tricks but taught us valuable lessons and history about magic that I was unfamiliar with. Overall, I had a great time and think Paul is a great teacher and magician!”

“I really enjoyed how engaging and interactive the workshop was. The demonstrations made the concepts easy to understand, and I especially appreciated learning about techniques like misdirection and audience engagement, which made the session feel unique and memorable.”

Looking Ahead...

The '26–27 theme is:
Creativity and Play!

At the heart of invention lies a willingness to imagine and play. Play invites us to take risks, explore uncertainty, and approach the world with wonder. It can relieve stress, strengthen human connection, and create space for unexpected discovery. The '26–27 theme, "Creativity and Play," considers how play fuels discovery and helps individuals and communities thrive.

Creativity Core Curriculum Staff

Director: Maribeth Kradel-Weitzel

Creative Making Workshops Coordinator: Michael Brody

Creativity Intensive Course Coordinator: Jenna Rieder

Assessment Coordinator: Dana Scott

Administrative Assistant: Yoo-Hyun Oak

Creativity Core Curriculum Steering Committee

Michael Brody

Catherine Carter

Jason Crook

Susan Frosten

Carol Hermann

Barbara Kimmelman

Maribeth Kradel-Weitzel (chair)

Yoo-Hyun Oak (administrative)

Jenna Rieder

Dana Scott

Meriel Tulante

Megan Voeller

design and illustration: Maribeth Kradel-Weitzel

jefferson.edu/creativity

instagram: [jefferson_creativity](#)

email: creativity@jefferson.edu

**"There is no doubt that
creativity is the most
important human
resource of all. Without
creativity, there would
be no progress, and we
would be forever repeating
the same patterns."**

—Edward De Bono



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