

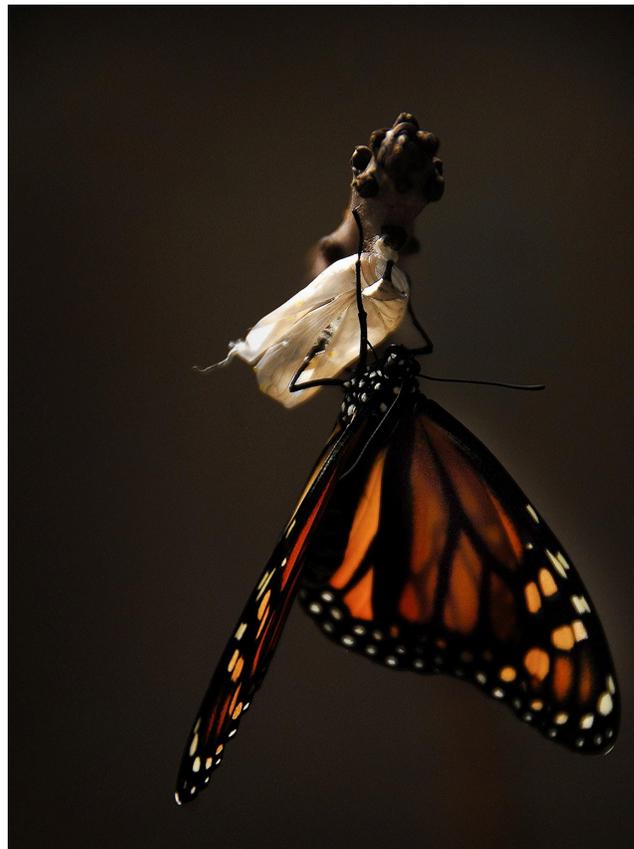


# **FCEA 64th Annual Conference**

**Hillsborough College, Ybor City Campus**

**February 20-21, 2026**

**“Transformation”**



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**WELCOME TO THE 64th ANNUAL MEETING  
OF THE FLORIDA COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION  
HELD AT HILLSBOROUGH COLLEGE YBOR CITY CAMPUS**

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**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Parking:** Parking on campus will be available. Parking passes will be distributed before and/or at the conference, so please be sure to display your parking tag in your vehicle.

**Conference Meeting Rooms:** Panels will be held in the HC Ybor Building (YBOR). Room numbers are listed in the schedule that follows.

**Presentation Length:** In general, speakers will have fifteen minutes (in panels with four speakers) or twenty minutes (in panels with three speakers) to deliver their material. Please try to leave about fifteen minutes for discussion at the end of each panel.

**Panel Moderators:** Moderators help speakers adhere to their time limits. If your session doesn't have a listed moderator, feel free to volunteer by emailing [fceaconference@gmail.com](mailto:fceaconference@gmail.com) with your interest. [You may also fill out a form here.](#)

**Etiquette:** Avoid distracting behavior. Also, please support our colleagues by giving them a positive and productive experience at the conference.

**Registration:** You must register for the conference in order to deliver a presentation and to be listed in the program posted on the archive portion of the website. The registration desk will be open at 8:00 am in YBOR 124 on Friday and Saturday. [Register quickly and easily online here if you haven't registered yet!](#)

**Conference Luncheon:** The conference luncheon will take place in YBOR 124 at 11:45am on Friday. Enjoy our very special guest speaker, Ann VanderMeer. The 2026 FCEA Distinguished Colleague Award and the 2026 Outstanding Graduate Student Writing Award will also be presented during the lunch.

**Security:** Ybor City is a very active and vibrant area, especially after dark. Accordingly, make sure that you ensure your personal safety.

**Hotel Accommodations:** As a small organization, we are unable to financially secure a block of rooms for conference attendees. However, we heartily recommend the [Hilton Garden Inn in Ybor](#)

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[City](#) since it is within walking distance from the conference location. There are other hotels in the area as well, including the [Hampton Inn and Suites Ybor City/Downtown](#), and [Hotel Haya](#).

**Ybor City:** Founded in 1886 by Vicente Martinez, Ybor City is one of Florida's oldest cities. Its founding is steeped in the trade of cigar making, welcoming an influx of immigrants from various backgrounds. Almost a century later, an inflow of artists who sought inexpensive studio space contributed significantly to the revival of Ybor City, followed by the development of the restaurants and nightlife that characterize this unique Florida place. The city's highlights include the Cigar Museum and Visitor Center or Ybor City Museum State Park. Conference attendees can also enjoy a café con leche, one of the most popular drinks in Ybor City, at several establishments. Fans of music may choose to visit at least a dozen venues, including the popular Ybor City Jazz House. Most prominently, the "Ybor Speaks" Immersive Sound Installation at Centennial Park celebrates the history of Ybor, enabling visitors to experience the sights and sounds of daily life in Ybor, including selections from books by many Tampa Bay authors.

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## PLENARY SPEAKER



### Ann VanderMeer

Ann VanderMeer is an award-winning editor & anthologist. She currently serves as an acquiring editor for Reactormag.com. She was the editor-in-chief for *Weird Tales*, during which time she won the Hugo Award. Along with multiple other nominations, she has won a World Fantasy Award, the Locus Award and a British Fantasy Award for *The Weird: A Compendium of Strange and Dark Stories*. Other projects have included *Best American Fantasy*, three Steampunk anthologies, and a humor book, *The Kosher Guide to Imaginary Animals*. Her latest anthologies include *The Time Traveler's Almanac*, *Sisters of the Revolution*, and *The Bestiary*, an anthology of original fiction and art, *AVATARS, INC*, *The Big Book of Science Fiction* and *The Big Book of Classic Fantasy* and *The Big Book of Modern Fantasy*.

### **The Magic of Other Languages: Reading Works in Translation Can Enlarge Your World and Expand your Thinking**

Ann's session, titled "The Magic of Other Languages: Reading Works in Translation Can Enlarge Your World and Expand your Thinking" (or "How Studying French Saved my Sanity on a Long Book Tour"), will include personal anecdotes along with information showing how beneficial reading works in translation can be for the students and well as the reading public

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in general. She will also share her personal experience working with translators and writers all over the world as she has had the opportunity to publish incredible works of fiction.



# 2026 Conference Schedule

HCC, Ybor City, Florida

**Friday, Feb. 20, 2026**

**8:00-9:00 a.m.**

Check-In, Continental Breakfast and Coffee, *YBOR 124*

**10:00-11:00 a.m.** Late Check-In, Complimentary Morning Refresher for Attendees, *YBOR 124*

**Session I: 9:00-10:15 a.m.**

**Panel: *Coaching College-Level Writing: The Tutor's Perspective*, YBOR 304**

**Moderator: Nicole Turner, Hillsborough College**

**Kyla Frisbie, Hillsborough College, *A Tutor's Perspective on Transformative Support for Today's English Students***

As rapid technological, cultural, and economic shifts are constantly influencing the academic landscape, English instructors face new and unprecedented challenges in supporting students whose literacy practices, motivations, and struggles are evolving day by day. This paper will offer a tutor's perspective on how English teachers can adapt to the changing needs of students in this complicated period shaped by generative AI, fluctuating academic confidence, and diverse educational backgrounds. In drawing from experience working directly with communications students on a daily basis, this paper will argue that significant transformation

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in English pedagogy does not only begin with curricular changes, but with informed attention to students' lived academic realities. The paper will explore strategies that us tutors see working, such as process-centered writing instruction, collaborative learning, and ethical engagement with AI, to suggest how English teachers can cultivate a learning environment that is both practical and equipped to meet contemporary student challenges. Overall, the paper will position our insights gained through tutoring as a bridge between institutional expectations and student transformation.

**Tristan Lafler, Hillsborough College, How Tutoring Creates Better Writers, Not Better Writing**

This presentation will discuss the process of writing tutoring, developed from the paper by Stephen North, *The Idea of a Writing Center*. I'll discuss what the process looks like and the importance of many ideas that the paper discusses that may seem unacademic to professors, but allowing a more open space to encourage discourse within a young community to captivate them with what writing is. Discourse allows open discussions and encourages improved communication skills for young writers and will be foundational skills for them throughout their lives, not only in their professional lives, but personal as well. Collaboration is a key part of the writing process, as thoughts are meant to be shared and expanded upon with others. Assisting in all parts of the process such as brainstorming, understanding audience and purpose, structuring their argument, and revising. Also explaining how the tutor being a peer can be beneficial and help not overwhelm a student that is struggling with the concepts.

**Daniel Cardwell, Hillsborough College, Coaching Extracurricular Writing: How Tutors Help Students Write Outside the Classroom**

This presentation explores how writing tutors and faculty coaches support students' development within extracurricular writing contexts such as moot court, debate, and writing competitions. These spaces transform traditional classroom learning into experiential, purpose-driven writing that emphasizes persuasion, collaboration, and public communication. Drawing from my experience coaching competition teams, I examine how mentorship and guided feedback extend the writing process beyond the academic essay, helping students apply rhetorical principles in tangible, real-world, and high-impact situations. Such coaching redefines the tutor's role as a facilitator of transformation, where students evolve from learners to active participants who use writing as a means of civic engagement, professionalism, and self-efficacy. Ultimately, this session highlights how extracurricular competitions bridge theory and practice, reaffirming the importance of writing instruction that occurs outside traditional classroom settings.

**Panel: *Transformative Practices in Rhetoric and Composition: From Environmental Literacy to AI Ethics*, YBOR 305**

**Moderator: Marc Roberts, Lake Sumter State College**

**Brianne Sardoni, Hillsborough College, English Studies in Metamorphosis: Cultivating Environmental Literacy and Rhetorical Agency through Food Insecurity Pedagogy**

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For too long, English Studies has contended with narratives of decline, often overlooking the dynamic ways the discipline is actively re-shaping itself to address pressing 21st-century challenges. This presentation argues that English Studies is not in decline, but in a profound state of metamorphosis, particularly evident in its embrace of the Environmental Humanities. Drawing on a concrete pedagogical case study – an ENC 1101 (First-Year Composition) course themed around food insecurity – this session will demonstrate how English Studies can cultivate essential critical literacies, rhetorical agency, and interdisciplinary thinking. We will explore how a scaffolded curriculum, moving from foundational ecological analysis to contemporary multimodal rhetoric and culminating in research-based argumentation, equips students to engage meaningfully with complex environmental and social justice issues. This approach positions English Studies as a vital and forward-looking field, essential for navigating an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

**Marc Roberts, Lake Sumter State College, Affirming Authenticity: Reviving Dialectical Journaling in the Age of AI**

College students are using generative AI with increasing frequency, often leaving them with little personal connection to the work they produce. To withstand this wildfire that is AI-influenced academic writing, students need opportunities to express themselves in personal, authentic ways, and we need to provide them training and feedback on how to do that effectively. Dialectical journaling empowers students to think for themselves and write on their own terms as they interact with course texts and ideas. Having implemented this reading and writing strategy for many years in freshman composition courses, I have never experienced a more relevant time for its use. This presentation will provide realistic perspectives and practical methods on how to leverage the use of dialectical journaling in college composition in order to help students develop a writing practice independent of the allure currently generated by LLM's.

**Abigail Graves, University of South Florida, Variation in R/C Values: How Disciplinary Identity is Shaped by Conflicting Axiologies**

This paper argues that a central initiative in Rhetoric & Composition should be working toward a discipline-wide consensus in its foundational axiologies, which is crucial in achieving a stronger disciplinary identity and improved status in the university. I argue that the variation in the values that serve as the basis for R/C scholarship, research, and pedagogy fragments the field, and ultimately disadvantages students. I ask: how do we locate the inconsistencies in axiologies in how we approach the theorization and implementation of pedagogies? How do axiological differences across the discipline affect our position and role in the university? Could identifying and addressing these differences be a key factor in improving working conditions and better serving students?

With the underlying claim that axiological variation inhibits disciplinary growth, I argue that greater alignment in values would materially benefit R/C and help answer long-standing questions. I investigate the major knowledge-producing roles of the discipline and how they approach pedagogy based on their respective, often varying, axiological bases and discuss the implications of axiological variation in teaching, research, and scholarship on

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disciplinary identity, and in how this manifests into material realities that affect working conditions and student opportunities.

## **Session 2: 10:30-11:45 a.m.**

### **Panel: *Pedagogies in Transformation: AI, Linguistic Diversity, and Human-Centered Learning*, YBOR 304**

**Moderator: Bre Sardoni, Hillsborough College**

#### **Sharon Diaz, University of West Florida, Faculty of English: Culturally Responsive theory and Latino Language Learning**

This presentation explores the integration of culturally responsive pedagogical theory within English faculty practices to support Latino students' language learning success. The study examines how English educators can leverage culturally responsive teaching frameworks to create more inclusive and effective learning environments that honor Latino students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The research investigates practical implementation strategies that move beyond deficit-based approaches, instead positioning students' home languages and cultural experiences as valuable assets in the English learning process. Key focus areas include incorporating culturally relevant materials, developing affirming classroom environments, and recognizing the linguistic wealth that Latino students bring to their education.

Through analysis of current English faculty practices, this presentation identifies both opportunities and barriers in adopting culturally responsive approaches. The discussion provides concrete recommendations for educators seeking to enhance their pedagogical strategies, ultimately promoting more equitable outcomes in English language learning for Latino students while fostering academic achievement and cultural affirmation.

#### **Andrew Magrath, Hillsborough College, *Incapable of Darlings: Bullshit, Anti-Writing, and Chatbots***

In the early 2000s, philosopher Harry Frankfurt formalized the concept of bullshit, defining the term as speech produced without concern for the truth of the utterance. Later, rhetoricians Eubanks and Schaeffer married Frankfurt's notion of bullshit with that of Jasper Neel's anti-writing—a subversion of academic writing that appears to be a thoughtful exploration of a topic but was created insincerely without an attempt to wrestle with the topic and the self. With the outputs of chatbots increasingly being labelled as bullshit (definitionally) and a push to employ A.I. “responsibly” in the classroom, it is worth revisiting bullshit, anti-writing, and A.I. I will argue that all chatbot outputs are both bullshit and anti-writing. I will further argue for a very narrow rule of thumb for possible “chatbots but responsibly” use cases.

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## **Camilla Alvarez, Indian River State College, Putting the Human Back into Humanities: How to Transform Teaching in the GAI Age**

Resistance to Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) is a natural, even instinctual, reaction for educators. We focus on teaching the skills that GAI seemingly generates for students with the click of a key. Assessing that output as the summative work in a course feels inherently wrong—even morally wrong—akin to cheating or lying. However, the reality of GAI is much more complex, nuanced, and highly transformative for education. GAI necessitates a reformation of Bloom's Taxonomy, where creation functions as the highest-level skill in Bloom's learning hierarchy, but when that happens with the click of a button, how can educators use creation as the basis for higher-level summative evaluation? The simple answer is that we can't. GAI supports the "hard skills" but tends to diminish the "soft skills." Developing what are often considered "soft skills," such as connecting, inspiring, evaluating, communicating, collaborating, problem-solving, and so on, is even more important now in the GAI Age. Education needs to develop these skills while supporting and training students in utilizing GAI tools. Refocusing on soft skills requires a transformation in our teaching, as well as in the construction and evaluation of assignments. These are the very skills that develop through humanities courses.

## **Jeremiah Milford, Morgan State University, Learning About Language from a Diagnostic Examination**

Knowledge of language structure and use has been a central feature of communication, including English language instruction. One method used to assess knowledge of language is the neurological exam administered to patients suspected of having cognitive deficits. This test is administered to measure such language skills as naming, repetition, comprehension of sentences, and general mental status information. As students of language, there are elements of language study that we can incorporate into a class of language instruction from diagnostic tests. Specifically, elements of brain structure and function are salient features of such inquiry. For example, object naming is a complex process that involves perceptual and functional features. In this presentation, I cite a few examples of language tests to show how this process is an interdisciplinary study of language.

## **Panel: *Transforming Students through Literary Arts Publication*, YBOR 305**

**Moderator: Stephanie Lance, Hillsborough College**

**Lori Cornelius and Emily Vallier (Faculty Advisors), Natalie Dula, Samuel Hill, Eric Krizec, Aiden Barbour, Enrique Davila, Gaven Whidden, and Yana Kovalchuk, Florida Gulf Coast University**

At FGCU, we have published Mangrove Review, our arts and literary journal, for over two decades. The editors, authors, and artists all have been transformed by giving them the agency to produce a successful publication. As we have grown, students from all

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disciplines have found themselves rooted by this endeavor. Many students find their identities forged in classes that tickle their creativity. Providing a vibrant home to welcome and encourage this leads to transforming the students' experience beyond the classroom or residence hall.

This panel will include faculty advisors and student editors to share how being part of Mangrove Review has been transformative.

## **11:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.**

### **Luncheon, Plenary Speaker, Awards, YBOR 124**

#### **Plenary Speaker**

#### **Ann VanderMeer, *The Magic of Other Languages: Reading works in Translation Can Enlarge Your World and Expand your Thinking***

"The Magic of Other Languages: Reading works in Translation Can Enlarge Your World and Expand your Thinking" (or "How Studying French Saved my Sanity on a Long Book Tour"), will include personal anecdotes along with information showing how beneficial reading works in translation can be for the students and well as the reading public in general. She will also share her personal experience working with translators and writers all over the world as she has had the opportunity to publish incredible works of fiction.

#### **FCEA Presents: 2026 Distinguished Colleague Award, 2026 Outstanding Graduate Student Writing Award**

Catering by **Metz Culinary Management at Hillsborough Community College**

## **Session 3: 1:15-2:30 p.m.**

### **Panel: *AI've Got Rhythm: Choreographing Passion in Pedagogy*, YBOR 304**

**Moderator: Elizabeth Terranova, Lake-Sumter College**

#### **Kristine Tullo, Angel Taylor, Kim Jackson, Linda Rowland, Florida Gulf Coast University**

This session explores how creative assignments, such as role play with generative AI, reflective assignments, and choices, act as transformative forces that strengthen students' relationships with academic writing and critical reading. In these projects, students experiment with ethics, voice, perspective, and rhetorical choice, discovering how critical thinking with AI as a tool generates new ways of thinking and seeing. The result is preparation for advanced

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coursework and real-world contexts, where synthesis, research depth, and analysis are required, and where storytelling, adaptability, and collaboration are essential. Just as Epstein calls for a “choreographic” approach across disciplines, this panel highlights how creative pedagogy transforms English studies into a space that cultivates agility, resilience, and innovation. Participants will leave with strategies for weaving transformative creative practices and generative AI as a tool, into their classrooms, strategies that embrace generative AI tools while sustaining rigor, transferable skills, and professional readiness.

**Panel: *Navigating Change: Instructor Identity, AI Collaboration, and Access in Writing Pedagogy*, YBOR 305**

**Moderator: Theresa Scott, Hillsborough College**

**Kelci Barton, University of South Florida, Transforming the Approach to Accessibility Practices in Technical and Professional Communication**

The field of technical and professional communication (TPC) has a notable history with accessibility and especially in the last 5-10 years, accessibility practices have been prioritized in both TPC’s pedagogical curriculums and industry practices. However, many TPC scholars have been critical of the field’s approaches thus far to accessibility, including addressing poor implementation of accessibility practices and the slow development of attention to issues of disability. Recent scholarship has consistently called for a paradigm shift toward more intentionally inclusive accessibility practices. In this presentation, I will propose a new approach to TPC’s accessibility practices by extending Ale

**Valerie Kasper, Saint Leo University, Choreographing Thought: Transformative AI Partnerships in the Writing Classroom**

In *The Transformative Humanities*, Mikhail Epstein imagines a “choreographic” turn in human understanding where thinkers move from passive observers to active shapers of knowledge. The emergence of GenAI compels writing instructors to take on this same role and choreograph, rather than resist, a new intellectual dance between human and machine intelligence.

This presentation explores how composition can become a site of transformation through collaborative, reflective engagement with AI. Drawing from Ethan Mollick’s *Co-Intelligence*, it repositions generative AI as a co-thinker that amplifies metacognitive awareness rather than automates production. In a first-year writing course, students used AI tools to support revision justifications, rhetorical analyses, and peer feedback. Their reflections reveal writing as a living, adaptive practice in which human judgment and machine feedback intersect to create new forms of intellectual knowledge.

By framing AI as a choreographic partner in thinking, this presentation demonstrates how writing can transform technological disruption into transformation.

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**Diana Fernandez, Barry University, Pedagogical (R)Evolution: Integrating Digital Tools into the Writing Classroom**

While distance learning has existed since the mid-19th century, the rapid expansion of online education in the late 20th century marked a significant shift in instructional delivery. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this shift, exposing limitations in our pedagogical frameworks and digital preparedness. Although many anticipated a return to traditional classroom settings, the release of ChatGPT in spring 2023 signaled a lasting transformation in the educational landscape. As generative AI and other digital tools continue to evolve, educators face new opportunities—and challenges—in reimagining their teaching practices. This paper explores the pedagogical benefits of integrating digital tools into the writing classroom, drawing on firsthand experiences to illustrate how such technologies can enhance student engagement, foster critical thinking, and support diverse learning modalities.

**Ian John, University of South Florida, Not Quite Student, Not Quite Instructor  
Reexamining Instructor Positionality within the Multimodal Composition Classroom**

In an educational setting where graduate student and new instructors are increasingly asked to teach courses that have digital or multimodal components, the positionality and instructor position of those instructors will only grow more important. With the above in mind, this proposed conference paper examines my experiences with teaching a multimodal composition course as an instructor, as an instructor who'd never taught a multimodal composition course as an instructor, as an instructor who'd never taught a multimodal composition course before. As part of a larger dissertation study, this paper would discuss instructor positionality in a hybrid multimodal course, examining how instructors can construct their identities and positionalities in order to aid in instructional outcomes.

**Session 4: 2:45-4:00 p.m.**

**Panel: *Navigating Transformation: Reading Instruction, AI Ethics, and Post-Pandemic Student Realities*, YBOR 304**

**Moderator: Theresa Scott, Hillsborough College**

**Sahel Ebrahimi, Beacon College, "It's Just Reading": Changing Students' Minds About Academic Texts**

Students face challenges with assigned reading in college-level composition courses. General assumptions among them seem to be that such reading is time-consuming or outside of their zones of values and interests. Students' reluctance to read assigned material may stem from an unpredictability of the time it will take to complete readings or perhaps a hesitation about engaging with unknown material. Regardless of the cause, it is essential that we help students realize academic reading is not an inaccessible, isolated act looming outside of the sphere of their everyday lives. My presentation introduces a practical, authentic in-class activity instructors can implement on Day 1 and use as a guiding concept throughout a course. The activity encourages students to recognize ways of reading as natural acts that empower them to claim ownership of the reading process, including academic reading. The key to the activity

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relies on students creating their own definitions of reading culminating after a series of steps involved in the activity.

**Robin Rogers, State College of Florida (Manatee-Sarasota), Working With and Around AI in the Classroom**

AI is changing everything, not the least of which is how teachers and students integrate its use in the classroom. Between March and April 2023, when ChatGPT4 was first released, I had 26 verified cases of students using AI to write their research essays. Such blatant academic dishonesty put me off AI for any aspect of my courses; it was strictly prohibited. In the following months, however, I realized not only did I not want to be the AI-police but also that not all the fault lay solely with my students. I needed to transform how I teach writing and literature. This presentation shares some of the strategies I've adopted for first-year composition and literature courses to address how to use AI ethically and practically, while also preparing students for their future professions.

**Deborah Coxwell Teague, Flagler College, Deborah Coxwell Teague, A Slow Post-Covid Transformation for Some but Not All of Our Students**

In an individual presentation to be combined with others on related topics, this speaker will acknowledge and explore not only the Pandemic's undeniable negative effects on college students since COVID-19 reared its nasty head—increased fear, stress, decreased happiness, severe mood disorders, and the list goes on and on—but will also explore the positive changes some of our students are reporting and that we are beginning to see them exhibiting in our college classrooms. The presentation will include information from a variety of scholarly sources as well as information from first-year college students' reflective essays composed during Fall Semester 2025 on their own Pandemic recovery (or lack thereof) over the past five years.

**Panel: Transforming American Literature: Race, Reinvention, and Narrative Possibility, YBOR 305**

**Moderator: Angela Eward-Mangione, Hillsborough College**

**Jeneen Surrency, Florida A & M University, The Evolution of Black Empowerment: Kendrick Lamar's Contributions to the Modern Interpretation of the Black Arts Movement**

In the realm of American music and activism, few voices resonate with the same power as Kendrick Lamar's. More than just a traditional rapper, Lamar embodies a contemporary storyteller whose lyrics explore the complexities of race, identity, and resistance in today's society. His music encapsulates themes from the Black Arts Movement (BAM), which emerged in response to racism and social injustice during the 1960s and 1970s. Lamar carries this mission forward within hip-hop. His lyrics and cultural influence revive the core tenets of the Black Arts Movement, such as combating racism, fostering racial pride, and promoting self-sufficiency and empowerment. By translating these ideas into the modern context of hip-hop, his work champions Black empowerment and creates a dialogue linking past civil

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rights movements to contemporary social justice efforts, establishing him as a crucial voice in the struggle for racial equality.

**Kristine Walsworth, Lake-Sumter State College, Failed Transformations: Lessons from Kate Chopin's Short Fiction**

Every self-help book on the shelf today has a section about how taking risks and embracing failure is the key to personal success. Edison found 200 ways not to make a lightbulb; Jordan did not make his JV basketball team. But what if the risk involves taking on significant societal issues? What if the consequence for failure is fatal? What lessons do we learn then?

In two of her famous stories - "Desiree's Baby" and "The Story of an Hour" – Kate Chopin creates protagonists whose transformations seem to be nearly complete, only to crush them under societal pressures. Yet, somehow, readers are not daunted by the failures; we still embrace the hope that people, especially women, can become new versions of themselves.

Join me for a deep dive into the literary and social mechanisms of mid-1890s America to discuss the impact of failed transformations on our perspective of the world.

**Fatima Sajjad, University of South Florida, Reimagining Lovecraft in Victor LaValle's The Ballad of Black Tom**

In his 2016 novel "The Ballad of Black Tom", Victor LaValle reimagines H.P. Lovecraft's story "The Horror at Red Hook" from the point of view of Tommy Tester, a black man. In this panel, I discuss adaptation and intertextuality through the lens of intersectionality and class theory, and how horror can be an effective medium for reimagination.

**Panel: Exploring Ways Personal Passion Transforms our Academic, Private, and Creative Lives, YBOR 303**

**Moderator: Rachel Rinehart, Eastern Florida State College**

**Rachel Rinehart, Eastern Florida State College, Exploring Ways Personal Passion Transforms our Academic, Private, and Creative Lives**

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Transformation takes energy, time, and a plan. Unfortunately, as academics, our creative and personal growth is often overshadowed by the pressures and demands of an ever-changing academic environment.

In this session, we will reflect on the various ways personal passion can be a vehicle for larger transformations, explore the concept of transformation, reflect upon those that you have already experienced, and develop a plan for achieving transformations for which you still desire.

**Dorothy McCalla, Eastern Florida State College, Disrupting the Lecture: Digital Humanities as Transformational Pedagogy**

Historically, the humanities classroom has relied on a lecture-based model, often positioning the professor as the “sage on the stage” and students as passive recipients. Rarely did this model even incorporate the Socratic method. Digital Humanities (DH) challenges these traditional paradigms by offering new ways of knowing and doing scholarship.

In this presentation, I explore how DH can transform composition—the cornerstone of assessment, in many humanities courses—into a dynamic, student-centered practice. Core themes include:

- Transformational Pedagogy: Shifting from passive lectures to active creation.
- Student Engagement and Agency: Empowering students to become researchers, curators, and designers, not just essay writers.
- Collaborative and Public Scholarship: Using digital platforms to publish student work and foster community.
- Critical Digital Literacy: Encouraging students to analyze digital archives and tools.
- Decentering the Canon: Amplifying marginalized voices and histories through DH projects.

By integrating DH into composition, we invite students to engage more deeply with the humanities, not just as learners but as creators and contributors—actively participating in their own academic and personal transformation.

**Holly Bentley, Eastern Florida State College, Stacks to Seeds to Leaves: Libraries, Poetry, and Metamorphosis**

As a librarian and poet, I am daily reminded that libraries are not static repositories of knowledge but living, transformative ecosystems. Mikhail Epstein’s call for a “choreographic approach” to scholarship resonates with the work of libraries, where we choreograph not only the arrangement of books and databases but also the experiences of students encountering writing as a force of change. Transformation in this sense is not only theoretical but also practical: it appears in how students use the library as a space for creative exploration and metamorphosis.

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During National Poetry Month and other times of literary exploration on campus, the library engages in programming to invite students into writing without the barriers of grades, assignments, or formal workshops, showing how small interventions can ripple into profound transformations. Most of our focus is on passive programming in order to give students an accessible, low-stakes invitation to take part in a literary transformation. The writing is communal, playful, and deeply human, particularly at a time when students are still navigating what it means to write and create in an era of AI-generated text.

- The POEtree: A library display where students compose haiku or short poems on leaves, then pin them to a communal tree, creating a living archive of student voices.
- Spine Poetry: Encouraging students to stack books and photograph the titles as found poems, then display these visual poems around the library or on social media.
- The Ephemeral Poem Wall: Using whiteboards, students can write lines of poetry or respond to a prompt; the wall is periodically erased, reminding us of writing's fragility and renewal.
- Pocket Poems: A small basket or wall of cards where students can take (or contribute) a short poem – transforming chance encounters into moments of literary connection.
- Zine Stations: Passive zine-making tables where students fold, cut, and collage words and images into small booklets they can leave behind or take with them.
- Haiku workshop: Students were invited to stop in and learn about how writing three lines can capture a moment and transform their writing.

By placing poetry in the heart of the library, we remind students that transformation is not confined to the syllabus. It happens in the margins, in the stacks, in a quiet corner, and in the serendipitous act of writing a poem on a paper leaf. Libraries thus become not only keepers of knowledge but choreographers of creativity – curating opportunities for students to transform themselves through language.

### **Elaine Fowler, Eastern Florida State College, Transformation in Classic Literature: Applications in the Classroom**

This session will explore character transformation in classic literature, with an emphasis on Gothic tales. In gothic literature, character transformations often involve characters shifting from a normal state to a monstrous or corrupted one, either physically or psychologically, to create fear and explore the dark side of human nature. This can manifest as a hero turning into a villain, a character being consumed by the past, or a person becoming a monster, as seen in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. These changes can be driven by external forces like curses or internal ones like a character's descent into madness.

#### Types of transformation

- Physical transformation: A character's body is altered, sometimes supernaturally, leading to horror.

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- Psychological transformation: A character's mind or personality changes, often as they descend into madness, lose touch with reality, or are consumed by obsession and trauma. This can be more disturbing than physical changes, creating a sense of psychological dread for the reader.
  - Metaphorical and symbolic transformation: Characters may transform into symbols of their inner turmoil. For instance, a character might become a "monster" not through a physical change, but through becoming consumed by past grievances or evil deeds.
  - Character role transformation: The traditional Gothic archetypes can transform. The villain is not always a tyrant, and the damsel in distress may become a more complex figure. This reflects the evolving social and cultural anxieties that the genre addresses.

#### Purpose of transformation

- To evoke fear and horror: Transforming something normal into something unnatural or monstrous is a powerful way to generate fear.
- To explore the dual nature of humanity: Transformations, especially psychological ones, can reveal the hidden, darker side of a character, blurring the line between human and monster, good and evil.
- To reflect societal anxieties: The specific nature of transformations in Gothic literature has evolved over time to reflect contemporary fears. Early Gothic works focused on supernatural threats, while later ones explored scientific hubris and psychological anxieties.
- To drive the plot: A transformation can be the central event of a story, pushing the plot forward and leading to tragic outcomes or a climactic confrontation.

**4:30-7:30 pm: Mixer, [The Bricks](#), 1327 East 7th Avenue, Ybor City**  
**Hosted by Jeff Grieneisen, Professor, Author, FCEA Board Member**

Kick off your evening with us at **The Bricks in Ybor City** for a 4:30 p.m. mixer just steps from the conference. With its artistic flair, inventive cocktails, and relaxed vibe, it's an ideal setting for conversation, connection, and maybe even a little literary sharing. Come mingle, laugh, reconnect, make new friends, or read a piece of your work—whatever your style, this social has something for you. A casual open mic session will start at 5 p.m.

## **Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026**

**8:00-9:00 a.m.**

**Coffee and Continental Breakfast, Registration, YBOR 124**

**Session 1: 9:00-10:15 a.m.**

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**Panel: Transformations in Rhetoric and Composition – Policy and Engagement,  
YBOR 304**

**Moderator: Elizabeth Terranova, Lake-Sumter College**

**Kelly Davis, Courtney Green, Michele "Misha" Rudden, Elizabeth Terranova,  
Lake-Sumter State College**

The pervasiveness of student use of AI has been staggering. Academic departments need to work collectively to develop best practices for dealing with both its adverse effects and prospects. We propose that individual experimentation, coupled with a collaborative spirit, is at the core of innovation in this increasingly absorbing space. The results of our efforts in the areas of department and course policy development, AI-related course design features (involving rubrics, disclosure statements, and citations), and overall student engagement appear promising. Together these elements contribute to a growing dialogue among our team members and in our interactions with students that offer a growing understanding of the reality of AI in our academic lives. We recognize the need for ongoing conversation as challenges persist and opportunities unfold.

For their part of this panel, Courtney Green and Kelly Davis explore the translation of institutional AI policy into practical classroom applications at Lake-Sumter State College. As a member of the college's AI Taskforce, Green contributed to the development of LSSC's three "AI Use Statements," which establish a framework for ethical, transparent, and pedagogically responsible use of AI across disciplines. Recognizing the need for greater instructional clarity, Green and Davis collaborated to design student-facing Canvas resource pages that outline permissible AI tools, limitations on use, and proper citation practices. These resources, now available through Canvas Commons for faculty adaptation, exemplify how institutional policy can be operationalized at the course level to promote academic integrity and digital literacy. This presentation highlights how collaborative faculty initiatives can extend the impact of policy development and foster sustained engagement with emerging technologies across the curriculum.

**Panel: *Art, Memory, and the Transformation of Community Spaces*, YBOR 305**

**Moderator: Rachel Rinehart, Eastern Florida State College**

**Karyn Ott, Eastern Florida State College, Transformation: The Eau Gallie Arts District's  
2017 Anti-Gravity Mural Project**

In 1969, Eau Gallie, Florida was absorbed by the neighboring city of Melbourne. In the decades since then, it has struggled to remain vital and to protect its unique identity. In 2010, the Eau Gallie Arts District (EGAD) formed to promote the old downtown as a unique place of arts, culture, and commerce. EGAD is part of the Florida Main Street program.

In 2015, California muralist David Lew (aka "Shark Toof") was invited to paint a mural of a Great White shark on a three-story semi-derelict building. The incredible community response to this mural was the catalyst for the EGAD's 2017 Anti-Gravity Project. EGAD invited local, national, and international muralists to submit proposals. The dream was to create an outdoor museum that would transform the district and help draw more visitors to the area. The project resulted in 20 murals.

**Bryce Patton, College of Central Florida, Vernon [Memories of Light]**

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"Vernon [Memories of Light]" is a creative submission built out of found 8mm video footage. The silent short film was constructed using the personal archive of home videos recorded by a man in Knoxville, Tennessee from 1960 through 1980. Through the film, we see the first hand account of Vernon's life and transformations that occurred both in his personal family and in the city around him.

I will include a link to the current draft of the film below:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M\\_49BgAsd90](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_49BgAsd90)

## **Session 2: 10:30-11:45 a.m.**

### **Panel: Reimagining Engagement: Transformative Approaches to Classroom Interaction, YBOR 304**

**Moderator: Angela Eward-Mangione, Hillsborough College**

**Bubba Henson, State College of Florida, The Second Teacher in the Room, Subtitled The Power of Oral Story in Education**

As a writer and lifelong lover of literature, I know the power of storytelling in creating emotional impact and exciting the imagination. As a teacher, I use storytelling as a tool to acquire and reacquire attention, and if I'm careful and conscious about it, to support the lesson at hand. Oftentimes, when we slow it down and I tell a story in English Composition I and II in Room 104, it almost feels as if there's a second teacher in the room. A good story can reach through the fog of an early morning class time and the distractions of screens, and it can erase the boredom of a lengthy lecture.

**Victoria Cobb, State College of Florida (Bradenton), Beyond the Polished Post: Adapting Literature Discussions for a Curated Culture**

Digital platforms have created a sort of "culture of curation" where every message can be refined and polished before it is officially posted or sent. Because of this, students are accustomed to having time to formulate ideas, which can hinder the traditional back-and-forth style that many instructors use in a conversation-based course. Collaborative learning strategies can take the anxious silence and transform the classroom into a safe space to share ideas. I will explain one particularly effective method of collaborative work that involves separating the students into smaller groups and ends with the groups presenting their ideas to the classroom. The smaller group settings lead to more unique perspectives and some remarkably innovative essays. There is the added bonus of students finding friends among their classmates, too.

### **Panel: Reframing American Literature: Protest, Environment, and Transformative Vision, YBOR 305**

**Moderator: Stephanie Lance, Hillsborough College**

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**Simone Schomberg, University of South Florida, How Native Son Was Born: Wright's Strategy for Resisting Sentimentality and Recasting the Protest Novel**

This paper examines Richard Wright's rhetorical shift between *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938) and *Native Son* (1940) to analyze how the American protest novel is reconstructed to confront white sentimentality in an America reduced to tears by the oppression they maintained. Drawing on Wright's author's note "How 'Bigger' Was Born," and contemporary responses by James Baldwin and others, I argue that Wright reconstructs the form of the protest novel to confront rather than console a cultural and historical moment too easily appeased by the Black experience. The symbol of Bigger is informed by the Black experience—unapologetic to the fear that depictions of anger and resentment risk reinforcing the prejudice they resist. Through comparing the elemental construction of *Uncle Tom's Children* with *Native Son*, this study explores Wright's "strategy" for achieving the reaction he explained in "How 'Bigger' was Born": to draft a novel that refuses pity and demands realization.

**Abdulrahman Alshahrani, University of South Florida, How Native Son Was Born: Wright's Strategy for Resisting Sentimentality and Recasting the Protest Novel**

This paper examines Richard Wright's rhetorical shift between *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938) and *Native Son* (1940) to analyze how the American protest novel is reconstructed to confront white sentimentality in an America reduced to tears by the oppression they maintained. Drawing on Wright's author's note "How 'Bigger' Was Born," and contemporary responses by James Baldwin and others, I argue that Wright reconstructs the form of the protest novel to confront rather than console a cultural and historical moment too easily appeased by the Black experience. The symbol of Bigger is informed by the Black experience—unapologetic to the fear that depictions of anger and resentment risk reinforcing the prejudice they resist. Through comparing the elemental construction of *Uncle Tom's Children* with *Native Son*, this study explores Wright's "strategy" for achieving the reaction he explained in "How 'Bigger' was Born": to draft a novel that refuses pity and demands realization.

**Jeff Grieneisen, State College of Florida (Sarasota-Manatee), Ecocriticism and Geocriticism: Natural Approaches to Ezra Pound's Canto XCIII**

While teaching literary theory is increasingly challenging in Florida, theoretical lenses provide the frameworks through which we focus on emergent meanings within literary works. Ecocriticism and geocriticism are two contemporary theories that allow us to read both old and new literature with an interest in the environmental conditions and details as they influence or define the works' central ideas. My paper will utilize geocriticism to focus on Ezra Pound's Canto XCIII with special attention to the way Pound structures his poetry as natural elements light his way to paradise. My interest here is in exploring these natural features as they work symbolically and metaphorically against the synthetic, machine imagery of this book of the Cant(Section: Rock Drill) to embody a position that nature will act as the guide to truth and beauty.

**11:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**

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## Lunch

Attendees are welcome to have lunch on their own or attend Ybor City's [79th Fiesta Day 2026](#). Ybor Chamber's Fiesta Day is a family-friendly "street festival" celebration that commemorates the Cuban, Italian, Spanish, Jewish, and German immigrants who settled in Ybor City in the late 1800's as the cigar factories thrived. The event originally started as a "verbena," or day of rest, for the cigar workers who settled in Ybor City's "Cigar City Capital of the World" from Spain, Cuba, Germany, and Italy. The festival offers exquisite ethnic food and entertainment.

## Session 3: 1:15-2:30 p.m.

**Panel: "Defying Expectations": Basic Transitional Skills in the Comp Classroom, YBOR 305**

**Moderator: Angela Eward-Mangione, Hillsborough College**

There has long been a perceived divide between the working world and the academic world; however, we can prepare our students for the workplace without sacrificing a comprehensive education or the expertise of our own disciplines.

This panel of general education instructors will discuss various projects that engage and demystify the real-world experience for our students and demonstrate how we have historically struck a balance between the academic and working worlds.

**Lori Cornelius, James Josue, Kyra Cardillo, Emily Vallier, Sarah Kelly Kornienko, Florida Gulf Coast University**

**Panel: *The Politics of Literary Transformation: Publishing, Protest, and the Battle for Cultural Narratives*, YBOR 304**

**Moderator: Ben Fried, University of South Florida**

**Rodger Tornai, State College of Florida, *Battle for the Bard: Shakespeare, Literary Populism, and the Far-Right Quest for Cultural Influence***

Recent scholarship exploring the intersection of canon literatures and extreme right ideological frameworks reveals how Shakespeare has previously served to legitimize various right-wing worldviews in the 20th century. Although Shakespeare has been historically adapted to the needs of totalitarian leaders, the means of adaptation, influence and dissemination in the 21st century have transformed to adapt to the current technological and cultural moment. I hope to understand how various white nationalist, theocratic, and neo-traditionalist figures and organizations continue this tradition of brown-shirting Shakespeare specifically in popular culture, education, and social media influencing. Understanding how literary populists and

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extreme cultural influences may be employing Shakespeare to legitimize their own extreme views can provide a new understanding of the weaponizing of literature among modern fascists and its role in the struggle for cultural influence.

**Andrea Figueroa-Irizarry, University of South Florida, *Lapagería: Flash Fiction and the Unreal as Hispanic/Latinx Protest***

Magical realism was a genre born from Latin American literature as a means of blending the fantastic into reality as an element of folklore, culture, and comfort. In this genre, reality imposes upon the fantasy. On the other hand, the genre of intrusive fantasy is best associated with horror, where elements of the unreal invades reality as a threatening or opposing force. This, then, brings up the question: who decides if the unreal is the threat or the comfort?

In my flash fiction piece, "Lapagería," I explore the acceptance and intrusion of the unreal through topics of climate, politics, and diaspora. Set in Ybor City, plants native to Hispanic/Latinx countries sprout spontaneously down Seventh Avenue, sparking excitement from locals and destructive suspicion from local government bodies. This presentation will include a brief discussion of magical realism and intrusive fantasy before concluding with a reading of my creative work.

**Kristy Van Amerongen, Lake Sumter State College, *Books Behaving Badly: Why Banned Books Belong in College Classrooms***

State and local laws aimed at restricting access to certain texts have sparked a heated debate over intellectual freedom and the role of education in fostering critical thinking. This paper will explore the importance of using banned books in the college classroom despite growing censorship efforts. The study of banned literature in higher education offers a vital space for transformation, reshaping the English curriculum to prioritize diversity, inclusivity, and critical engagement. When educators engage with texts deemed controversial or objectionable, they not only challenge censorship, but also empower students to grapple with complex social, cultural, and historical issues. In response to these censorship trends, English departments are reimagining pedagogy by moving beyond traditional canons to embrace a broader, more complex view of literature. This presentation will examine how these changes are reshaping teaching practices, encouraging academic resilience, and defending intellectual freedom in today's political climate.

**Ben Fried, University of South Florida, *The Silent Editor: Sonny Mehta, Picador, and the Transformation of British Publishing***

Sonny Mehta was the most significant South Asian figure to shape British publishing in the twentieth century. He arrived in Britain as a student, remade the country's reading habits as a young publisher, and then left in middle age for New York. His influence on the London literary scene was profound, though his editorial style was understated and its archival traces are few. This paper will explore how Mehta took the Picador imprint to generation-defining heights, presiding over a golden cohort of writers, among them Julian Barnes, Angela Carter, Michael Ondaatje, and Salman Rushdie. He published young British authors; he brought American works across the Atlantic; he drew in wider geographies. By tracing Mehta's impact, I will argue that he exemplifies and illuminates a wider trend: the arrival in London of migrant editors, immigrants from the wider Anglophone world who transformed the capital's literary institutions—and horizons.

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**2:30-3:00 p.m.**

**Complimentary Afternoon Refresher (light snacks) for Attendees, YBOR 303**

**3:00-4:00 p.m.**

**FCEA General Board Meeting, YBOR 124**

General meeting for board members and conference attendees. All are invited to attend. Open board elections will take place during the meeting.

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## EXPLORE YBOR CITY

At FCEA, we choose our host cities using a variety of criteria, from their place in literary or cultural history to their geographical location to local eats and attractions they offer our members. Because we know that conferences are more than sessions and papers and coffee, we encourage conference attendees to visit local attractions, events, and venues. Take a look at the options below.

## THIS WEEK IN AND NEAR YBOR CITY

Needless to say, the hottest ticket in Ybor is FCEA 2025, and it certainly *won't* be a bore! There are other cool things happening in and around Ybor City while FCEA is in town as well.

- [Ybor City Saturday Market](#). Centennial Park, 9am-3pm. Check out this weekly vendor market in the heart of Ybor City. Find locally produced items that are unique to the Tampa Bay Area.
- [79th Fiesta Day 2026](#): Ybor Chamber's Fiesta Day is a family-friendly "street festival" celebration that commemorates the Cuban, Italian, Spanish, Jewish and German immigrants that settled in Ybor City in the late 1800's as the cigar factories thrived. The event originally started as a "verbena," or day of rest, for the cigar workers who settled in Ybor City's "Cigar City Capital of the World" from Spain, Cuba, Germany and Italy. The festival offers exquisite ethnic food and entertainment.

## DINING IN YBOR CITY

A variety of restaurants are within walking distance of the conference space. Please visit the [Ybor Chamber's Restaurant Page](#) to explore options. Most of the restaurants are on the main drag of Ybor City—7th Avenue. The closest restaurants to our conference space are listed below.

- [SpookEasy Lounge](#), (Haunted) 1909 N 15th Street, 11am-1am
- [Cafe Quiquiriqui at Hotel Haya](#), 1412 East 7th Avenue, (Casual) 7am-4pm
- [Flor Fina at Hotel Haya](#), 1412 East 7th Avenue (Upscale) 11am-3pm
- [Bernini Restaurant](#), 1702 East 7th Avenue (Reservations Suggested), 11:30am-10pm
- [Acropolis](#), 1833 East 7th Avenue, 11am-12am

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## **FCEA Board of Directors, 2025-2026**

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We also offer our special thanks to Larissa Baia and her staff, especially Cecilia Pham, at HCC-Ybor City.

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*SAFE TRAVELS HOME!*

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

65th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Feb. 19-20, 2027