

Title: “Bridging Motivation and Metacognition: Strategies for Supporting Self-Regulated Learning”

Speaker: Cristina Zepeda, Vanderbilt University

Abstract

At any given moment, students must juggle multiple goals and demands. Managing all of that well depends on whether students can accurately judge gaps in their knowledge – what they know, which strategies will help, and how their learning is going – and whether they're motivated and resourced to close them. Helping them learn to effectively regulate their learning involves supporting both metacognition and motivational regulation. These skills work as a system, each amplifying the other, and they work best when both are present. Drawing on self-regulated learning research, this session explores how motivational regulation and metacognition work together to shape student engagement with challenge. I will offer classroom-ready strategies, some that foreground metacognition while also building motivational regulation, and others that foreground motivational regulation while also building metacognitive skill. Together, they help students engage more willingly, and more effectively, with their own learning.

Bio

Dr. Cristina Zepeda is an Assistant Professor of Psychology and Human Development at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, where she directs the Advancing Learning Lab. Her research bridges cognitive and educational psychology to understand what it takes to help students use effective learning strategies and engage with challenge rather than avoid it, spanning calibration, motivational regulation, and the classroom conditions that shape how they interact. She is the recipient of the 2025 Wilbert J. McKeachie Early Career Award for Motivation in Education Research and currently co-leads three federally funded grants from the Institute of Education Sciences and the National Science Foundation examining how instructional supports can strengthen metacognition, motivation, and learning in STEM classrooms. Beyond the lab, she translates this research to broader audiences through teaching workshops on how to "study smarter, not harder," blog posts on strategic learning, and mentoring the next generation of students and researchers. This work is personal to her too: her own experience as a student, learning that effort alone isn't always the answer, continues to shape how she approaches it.