

As Mardi Gras 2025 got into full swing, we found ourselves in New Orleans for the 2025 NOSS Conference "Jazzing Up Student Success". The city itself seemed to be alive, vibrating according to the omnipresent rhythms of New Orleans culture. The energy was already alive, and I could feel it the moment my plane touched down at Louis Armstrong International Airport. Cold and dry was the air, a big change from the sunny weather we all had left behind. We were walking into another world of color, music, and a contagious celebratory spirit. Focused on "Jazzing Up Student Success," the conference aimed to explore creative and innovative ways to increase student engagement and achievement. Really fitting for this event to happen in New Orleans, the city of jazz, where music is seen as a bridge between cultures, an expression of your individuality, and is a way to bring people together. For a lot of us, the city itself would show in the acts of learning and success that crossed all PowerPoints or panel discussions.

The conference sessions offer strategies for helping our students succeed, and we had the opportunity to enjoy great New Orleans food together, take a bus tour of the city, and see a pre-Mardi Gras parade.

-Stephanie Lewis Thompson, PhD, Assistant Chair, Humanities & Social Sciences

Attendees included faculty and staff from across the country all focused on finding new ways to engage students and boost their success. Many Purdue Global faculty and staff took the stage to share some cutting-edge strategies and tools for student success, with a particular focus on flexibility, adaptability, and creating an inclusive learning environment. It was a conference that was expected to stimulate creativity, just like the city itself.

There were many inspiring conference sessions that provided entirely new angles from which to view creative, flexible, and inclusive strategies to connect with students. It was said by the speakers that, just as jazz musicians riff off each other's melodies, educators must be tuned into the needs of their students and adapt quickly. The inaugural NOSS Learning and Leadership Academy (NLLA) cohort was also charged with sharing insight on how to tackle real-world challenges in higher education, together with actionable solutions that we all could take back to our institutions. With this was an indelible commitment to improved student success, a genuine testimony of leadership, collaboration, and constant growth.

The leaders of the Noss Learning and Leadership Academy carefully constructed a program that encompassed networking, research, and important discussions centered around relevant issues in higher education. It was a great experience.

- Nikki Williams, MA, MS, Academic Assistant Chair, Science Department, School of Multidisciplinary and Professional Studies

It wasn't just the many conference sessions that took the spotlight; the real treat was in Curtis Hill's keynote: an award-winning educator, he bears a bold vision and transformative ideas about what the future holds in education. The room had an aura of high expectations. As we all got ready to participate in the keynote, one thing was apparent-this was going to change the game. The lights dimmed; Hill stepped to the center stage amid applause. With his lively presence and passion for education, he held the room captive. It wasn't long before one could see that there was an intent to challenge the status quo, to ask how we could completely rethink how we are going to provide support for students in their journey toward success. His message echoed the very essence on which our time in New Orleans would revolve-creativity, collaboration, and thinking bigger than we ever have before.

#NOSS2025 trended across social media, becoming a virtual celebration of the insights, connections, and inspiration that attendees took away from the conference. From early morning keynote speeches to impromptu discussions between faculty and staff, everyone was eager to share their favorite takeaways and highlight the innovative ideas that would shape the future of education. Whether it was Curtis Hill's bold vision for the future of education or the actionable solutions presented by the NLLA cohort, the hashtag became a digital space where attendees could amplify the conference's core messages and keep the momentum going.

As we gathered for the final session of the conference and award ceremony, there was a palpable sense of camaraderie in the room. Attendees exchanged ideas, reflected on key takeaways, and made plans to take the lessons learned in New Orleans back to their campuses and communities. The energy was contagious. The connections made here, both personal and professional, would continue to resonate long after the conference ended. The closing remarks were filled with gratitude and optimism as the conference organizers thanked everyone for their participation and commitment to shaping the future of education. The excitement in the room was a clear sign that this wasn't just another conference; it was the continuation of a movement. A movement to rethink, reimagine, and redesign student success in ways that are as vibrant, diverse, and dynamic as the city of New Orleans itself.

Looking ahead to the 2026 NOSS Conference in New York City, we are reminded that a single point doesn't define student success. It's not about a single test score or a one-size-fits-all achievement. It's about the journey, the growth, the exploration, the collaboration, and the continual evolution of both students and educators alike. And in a city like New York, with its infinite energy and limitless opportunities, we know that success can take many forms.

