



JANUARY 2026 FLEX SCHEDULE

- Zoom links are embedded in titles as well as provided with workshop descriptions.
- Please note that each session is tailored to: All Campus or Faculty.



Approved by the **Faculty Professional Development Committee** as student equity focused and qualifies as training required by AP7120.



Session led by JEDI Academy graduates incorporating practices for advancing student equity by fostering equitable, inclusive, and anti-racist practices.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 14, 2026

Welcome coffee and pastry in RM 2609 supplied by the Faculty Professional Development Committee beginning at 7:45 a.m.. **Please RSVP here** by Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2026 at 12:00 Noon

8:00–9:00 a.m.	STAR Signal All Campus RM 2609 Zoom
9:10–10:10 a.m.	Safe Zone Training All Campus RM 2609 Zoom
10:20–11:50 a.m.	One More Question: Communication for Understanding All Campus RM 2609
11:50 a.m.–12:20 p.m.	Lunch Break RM 2609 Please RSVP here by 12:00 Noon on Monday, Jan. 12, 2026
12:20–3:20 p.m.	The ART and Science of High-Performing Teams All Campus RM 2609
3:30–5:00 p.m.	CCAP/Dual Enrollment Faculty Designee Roundtable Please RSVP here All Campus RM 2609 Zoom
3:30–5:00 p.m.	Facilitating Difficult Dialogues Faculty Zoom
5:00–5:30 p.m.	Book Club: The Woman They Could Not Silence by Kate Moore All Campus Zoom

THURSDAY, JAN. 15, 2026

Welcome coffee and pastry in RM 3219 supplied by the Faculty Professional Development Committee beginning at 8:15 a.m.. **Please RSVP here** by Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026 at 12:00 Noon

8:30–10:00 a.m.	Designing Your Own Personalized Course AI Tutor with Nectir AI Faculty RM 3219 Zoom
10:15–11:45 a.m.	Showcasing Success Stories & Lessons Learned from the OEI Rubric Alignment Process Faculty RM 3219 Zoom
11:45 a.m.–12:15 p.m.	Lunch Break RM 3219 Please RSVP here by 12:00 Noon on Monday, Jan. 12, 2026
12:15–1:45 p.m.	InstructureCon and Online Teaching Conference (OTC) Take-Aways Faculty RM 3219 Zoom
2:00–3:00 p.m.	Transparent Assignments: Practical Tools for Equity-Minded Teaching Faculty Zoom
5:00–5:45 p.m.	Grading for Growth Community Faculty Zoom

UPCOMING FLEX OPPORTUNITIES

QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer)
Jan. 23, 2026 10:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)
March 6, 2026 | 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. and
March 13, 2026 | 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Dr. Okey Ndibe | Coming in April 2026

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Welcome coffee and pastry supplied by the Faculty Professional Development Committee beginning at 7:45 a.m. | Please RSVP here by Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2026 at 12:00 Noon

STAR Signal

8–9 a.m. | All Campus | RM 2609 | [Zoom](#)
Araceli Espinoza-Wade and Alexandra Kahane

As a follow-up to the August session, we will revisit the STAR Signal process and address any questions. We'll also share the latest data on utilization rates and student engagement, along with practical tips and tricks to help instructors effectively leverage STAR Signal for student success.

Safe Zone Training

9:10–10:10 a.m. | All Campus | RM 2609 | [Zoom](#)
GALA Pride and Diversity



The GALA Pride and Diversity Center joins us to present a Safe Zone workshop, advancing understanding of 2SLGBTQIA+ student experiences and sharing tools to support this student population.

One More Question: Communication for Understanding

10:20–11:50 a.m. | All Campus | RM 2609
Frida Blackwell and Panelists



The workshop will begin with a presentation by [a faculty member] highlighting the Year of Communication topics that have been covered by the Opening Day keynote speaker and the October FLEX session. The faculty presenter will share best practices for supportive communication with students who are struggling in class, and hold a short Q+A. Next, a student panel moderated by ASCC Senator Frida Blackwell will share examples of positive communication from faculty that has supported their completion of transfer-level math and English and/or contributed to their term-to-term persistence at Cuesta. Students will demonstrate by asking "one more question" to understand the barriers to success students may be facing in class and addressing those barriers. The workshop will conclude with a Q+A session with the student panel. Both faculty and student-led portions will focus on equity, support, and the experience of DI groups identified in the 2022–2025 Student Equity Plan.

Lunch Break

11:50 a.m.–12:20 p.m. | RM 2609

Lunch provided by the Faculty Professional Development Committee

Please RSVP here by 12:00 Noon on Monday, Jan. 12, 2026

The ART and Science of High-Performing Teams

12:20–3:20 p.m. | All Campus | RM 2609
National Conflict Resolution Center (NCRC)
Facilitators: Marc Meyer and Ashley Virtue

In consideration of Fall 2025 Flex session feedback, this offering is designed to continue efforts to improve communication and collaboration across roles, address respect concerns, and model equity-minded practices. There is no overstating the importance of teamwork today. And with our workplaces being more polarized than ever before, this can seem like a daunting task. Institutions rely on the strengths of diverse roles, identities, and perspectives to solve problems and meet shared goals; yet often struggle to create the conditions where that diversity can truly thrive.

In *The ART and Science of High-Performance Teams*, an interactive workshop developed by the National Conflict Resolution Center (NCRC), participants will learn practical skills for strengthening team dynamics, improving cross-role communication, and fostering psychological safety. Training scenarios will reflect real world campus dynamics, including misunderstandings rooted in role-based assumptions, navigating challenging communication behaviors, and fostering constructive feedback for collaborative work.

NCRC presents compelling new research from leading universities that reinforces the concepts and skills being taught. Participants learn the attributes of an ideal team member, based on empirical data, and gain insight into the conditions that foster high-performance teams. The material is presented in an environment that is collaborative, respectful, and energizing.

By the end of the course, participants will be able to:

- Synthesize findings from research on High-Performance Teams and apply the principles to their own behavior and communication practices.
- Recognize the impact that verbal and non-verbal communication has across different institutional roles and identities and adapt to colleagues with diverse communication styles.
- Work more effectively with people who have different identities and perspectives, including in challenging situations.
- Apply strategies for creating inclusive and structured communication environments; including feedback channels that promote transparency and psychological safety.

JANUARY 2026 FLEX SCHEDULE

CCAP/Dual Enrollment Faculty Designee Roundtable

3:30–5 p.m. | All Campus | RM 2609 | [Zoom](#)

Please [RSVP here](#).

Mario Espinoza-Kulick

This roundtable invites current and prospective Faculty Designees to join a collaborative discussion on the Annual Course Evaluation process for High School Teacher Led College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) courses. This process currently includes an annual in-person site visit, evaluation forms, and student survey tools. As Cuesta College continues to grow its dual enrollment offerings in alignment with the California Community Colleges Vision 2030, it's essential that our evaluation processes reflect consistency, academic rigor, and faculty input. The evaluations also provide a distinct opportunity to gather students' perspectives on the structure and function of dual enrollment classrooms. We will review the current site visit form and gather feedback to inform recommendations for improvement. This session also serves as an open invitation for faculty interested in participating in the newly approved Academic Senate Council Task Force on the Annual CCAP Course Evaluation Process and Corresponding Paperwork. Join us to share your insights, learn more about this initiative, and help shape the future of dual enrollment at Cuesta College. Food and refreshments provided.

Facilitating Difficult Dialogues

3:30–5 p.m. | Faculty | [Zoom](#)

Melissa Charles



This workshop will focus on providing participants with tools and methods for facilitating difficult dialogues in the classroom space. In particular, when dealing with topics related to DEI, participants will deepen their toolbox in navigating situations where students/learners are coming together from various backgrounds and experience levels to discuss topics that might require more cultural sensitivity. This will focus on uplifting the opportunity to learn for folks who are new to DEI and Social Justice conversations while simultaneously not allowing harm to exist for folks coming from marginalized backgrounds.

Book Club:

The Woman They Could Not Silence:

One Woman, Her Incredible Fight for Freedom, and the Men who Tried to Make Her Disappear by Kate Moore

5–5:30 p.m. | All Campus | [Zoom](#)

Elisabeth DeSwart

Join us in discussing award winning best-selling biography The Woman They Could Not Silence: One Woman, Her Incredible Fight for Freedom, and the Men who Tried to Make Her Disappear by Kate Moore. Travel back to the 1800s to follow mother Elizabeth Packard into the Illinois State Hospital insane asylum where she is imprisoned by her own husband for having "independent thoughts." Packard's ceaseless compassion and quest for justice challenged the medical science of the day and led to a giant leap forward in human rights. This uplifting biography reminds us that sometimes, the greatest heroes we have are inside ourselves



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Welcome coffee and pastry supplied by the Faculty Professional Development Committee beginning at 8:15 a.m. | Please [RSVP here](#) by Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026 at 12:00 Noon

Designing Your Own Personalized Course AI Tutor with Nectir AI

8:30–10 a.m. | Faculty | RM 3219 | [Zoom](#)
Gabriel Cuarenta-Gallegos

Join us for a hands-on workshop introducing Nectir AI, a tool currently available through a California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office pilot program. In this session, you'll learn how to create your own personalized course AI tutor that can support students 24/7, reinforce course concepts, and adapt to your teaching style—no coding required. We'll also review how faculty can sign up for the pilot program to receive full access, resources, and account activation from the Nectir team, which is required even though the app appears in Canvas. This workshop will help you explore the tool confidently while understanding the structure and support provided through the statewide pilot.

Showcasing Success Stories & Lessons Learned from the OEI Rubric Alignment Process

10:15–11:45 a.m. | Faculty | RM 3219 | [Zoom](#)
Cynthia Wilshusen

Join us for a focused and inspiring roundtable showcasing faculty who have completed the OEI Course Design Rubric alignment process. Presenters will share brief overviews of their courses before and after alignment, highlighting key improvements in navigation, accessibility, engagement, and instructor presence. Participants will gain insight into what the OEI review process looks like, lessons learned along the way, and practical strategies for strengthening their own online course design. This session offers a valuable opportunity to learn directly from colleagues, see real examples of quality improvements, and gather ideas that can be applied immediately in Canvas. Perfect for faculty preparing for OEI alignment or anyone seeking to incorporate high-quality, student-centered design practices into their online teaching.

Lunch Break

11:45 a.m.–12:15 p.m. | RM 3219

Lunch provided by the Faculty Professional Development Committee

Please [RSVP here](#) by 12:00 Noon on Monday, Jan. 12, 2026

InstructureCon and Online Teaching Conference (OTC) Take-Aways

12:15–1:45 p.m. | Faculty | RM 3219 | [Zoom](#)
Cynthia Wilshusen, Laura Harris, Faculty Panel

Faculty who attended the Online Teaching Conference (OTC) and InstructureCon will share key takeaways, new tools, and emerging practices in online teaching and learning. Presenters will briefly highlight what they learned, including updates to Canvas, strategies for increasing student engagement, accessibility improvements, AI-enhanced workflows, and innovative approaches to course design. Participants will gain practical ideas they can bring back to their classrooms, learn about upcoming Canvas features, and explore evidence-based teaching practices showcased at both conferences. This collaborative session provides an opportunity to reflect, exchange insights, and support continuous improvement in our online and hybrid learning environments.

Transparent Assignments: Practical Tools for Equity-Minded Teaching

2–3 p.m. | Faculty | [Zoom](#)
Vanessa Garcia



In this interactive session, participants will explore how transparent assignment design can promote student success and reduce opportunity gaps. Drawing from the work completed in the JEDI Academy, the workshop will offer practical strategies, real examples, and hands-on activities to help faculty make small but meaningful changes in their own courses. Attendees will leave with a deeper understanding of how language, structure, and transparency can impact students from historically underrepresented groups—and with tools they can begin using right away.

Grading for Growth Community

5:00–5:45 p.m. | Faculty | [Zoom](#)
Erin Naegle and Jen Shellhorn



This community will meet monthly to discuss ideas for assessment based on the four pillars outlined in Grading for Growth: clearly defined standards, helpful feedback, marks that indicate progress, and reassessments without penalty. We will explore and support one another as we work to implement assessments that motivate student learning. Copies of Grading for Growth are available to participants. The group will meet 3:30–5:00pm on first Mondays of the month: 2/2, 3/2, 4/6, and 5/4.

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UPCOMING FLEX OPPORTUNITIES

QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer)

Jan. 23, 2026 | 10:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m. | Zoom

For more information or to register, please email:
studenthealthcenter@cuesta.edu

QPR stands for Question, Persuade, Refer, 3 simple steps anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide. QPR teaches participants how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to appropriate help. Join the hundreds of SLO County community members who have already been trained to help our friends, colleagues, family members, and neighbors through a suicide crisis.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

March 6, 2026 | 9 a.m.–1 p.m. | Zoom

March 13, 2026 | 9 a.m.–1 p.m. | Zoom

For more information or to register, please email:
studenthealthcenter@cuesta.edu

Mental Health First Aid Mental Health First Aid is a skills-based training course that teaches participants about mental health and substance-use issues. Mental health challenges are a leading cause for students dropping out of college. What we say and do in response to the signs and symptoms of a mental health or substance use challenge can have a tremendous impact on the perceptions, actions and outcomes of all involved. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) focuses on identifying and responding to the early signs and symptoms of a challenge. After all, the earlier we can intervene, the better. It aims to reduce stigma for people experiencing mental health challenges.

This is an 8-hour course delivered over two 4-hour sessions. Attendance at both dates is required to receive the 2-year MHFA certification.



Dr. Okey Ndibe

Coming in April 2026



Dr. Okey Ndibe is a distinguished author and Professor of English and Africana Literature. Raised in Nigeria, Dr. Ndibe earned his PhD in the United States, and has raised multiple children here. Based on decades of experience as a student, professor, and parent, Dr. Ndibe is keenly aware of the ways in which teachers of students of color in this country tend to expect the **least** from them. Rather than encouraging students of color to strive and to thrive, all to often, teachers tell them to simply “do the best you can,” and seek means to lower the bar for them. These seemingly well-meaning habits of seeking the least from students of color have long lasting negative impacts. Based on his extensive experience with this problematic dynamic in the classroom, Dr. Ndibe wrote an article entitled, “Eyes to the Ground: the perils of being a Black student.” As a guest presenter at Cuesta College, Dr. Okey Ndibe will offer a presentation and thoughtful conversation about how we as teachers can shift out of the habit of expecting less from our students of color.

