



Assumption University

SCHOOL OF
GRADUATE STUDIES

THE SIXTEENTH ANNUAL GRADUATE SCHOOL SYMPOSIUM

April 30, 2026

5:30pm – 8:30pm

Testa Science Center

OR

<https://assumption.zoom.us/j/91647723962?pwd=XEa9h3Zer6GZCqpGNdTR0xtOxVpdf8.1>

Password: Assumption

Program Schedule at a Glance

5:30pm - 5:40pm	Welcome Session
5:40pm - 5:55pm	Virtual Presentation (1 presentation)
5:55pm - 6:30pm	Poster Session I (8 presentations)
6:30pm - 6:35pm	Break
6:35pm - 7:20pm	Concurrent Lecture Session (6 presentations)
7:20pm – 7:25pm	Break
7:25pm – 8:00pm	Poster Session II (7 presentations)
8:00pm	Presentation of Certificate of Recognition & Closing Remarks



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Office of the Graduate School

Assumption University's mission statement speaks to awakening a sense of wonder in our students. When that wonder, or curiosity, is combined with critical thinking, problem solving, and research, new frontiers are explored and important questions addressed. The process of getting to an answer is as important as the actual answer. I hope you will join me in appreciating the efforts of our graduate students, supported by faculty mentors, as they asked bold questions and charted paths to uncover answers. Whether the path was easy or littered with obstacles, the students persevered and are here today to share their journeys. Perhaps they will inspire you to wonder.

Kimberly A. Schandel, Ph.D.

Acting Provost & Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

Symposium Schedule

5:30pm-
5:40pm

WELCOME SESSION (Testa 006)

Dr. Nanho Vander Hart, Director of the Special Education & Transition Specialist Programs
Dr. Kimberly Schandel, Acting Provost & Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

5:40pm-
5:55pm

GENERAL SESSION (Virtual Presentation)

Macy's, Reinventing the Department Store

Presenter: Aaron Pelletier & Nana Otoo
Program: Master of Business Administration
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michael Lewis

This project examines Macy's strategic challenge as declining mall traffic and long-term shifts toward e-commerce undermine the viability of its traditional department-store model. Drawing on industry analysis, organizational context, and the company's "Bold New Chapter" initiative, the study explores how Macy's can redesign its business model, reallocate capital, and leverage its strongest assets including luxury formats, loyalty programs, and experiential retail to remain competitive. Findings highlight the need for a more focused physical footprint and a differentiated in-person experience that complements Macy's growing digital capabilities.

5:55pm-
6:30pm

POSTER SESSION I (Testa Atrium)

Training to Teach Staff Implementation of Token Economies

Presenter: Sophia Croft
Program: Applied Behavior Analysis
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nicole Pantano

Behavior skills training (BST) is an effective procedure for teaching staff to engage in different workplace procedures. BST has been successfully implemented for discrete trial instruction, functional analyses, and most-to-least prompting. Despite this, no research has evaluated the use of BST to teach staff to implement a token economy. This study taught staff to implement three skills: pairing tokens as reinforcers, identifying if tokens are reinforcing, and implementing a token economy. The results show that BST was effective in teaching staff to implement many token economy procedures.

Control and Structure in Parent/Child Conflict Conversations: How Parental Style Relates to Child Engagement

Presenter: Jalen Leonce
Program: Clinical Counseling Psychology
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Johanna Sagarin

Parenting literature has historically combined parental control and structure when reviewing child outcomes; however, Self-Determination Theory distinguishes between these through autonomy support. The purpose of this research was to determine the correlation between parent's control or structure and child affect/engagement. Fifty-three child-parent pairs were asked to problem-solve around a conflict for 5 minutes. Children were rated on a 5-point Likert scale for both engagement and affect, and parents were similarly assessed for use of control and structure. Bivariate correlation analysis found higher parental control associated with more negative child affect and disengagement while the opposite was true for parental structure.

5:55pm-6:30pm **Improving Educator Practice through Self-Reflection**

Presenter: Alexandra Brand

Program: Special Education (Positive Behavior Supports)

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nanho Vander Hart

Classroom/behavior management is a challenge for new teachers. There has also been an increase in student difficulties with self-regulation strategies and independent work completion. Based on my experience as an urban elementary school teacher, I was able to develop a tool to be used by other educators in order to guide them through self-reflection and goal setting. Using the tool as a reflection checklist, teachers are able to identify areas of strength as well as areas of difficulty. Using the tool for goal setting, teachers are then able to make plans for the next school year.

Analyzing Peloton's Recent Revenue Decline and Recommended Future Growth Strategies

Presenter: Teagan Kamm, Alexandra Padula & Eric Giarnese

Program: Master of Business Administration

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michael Lewis

When the world shut down in 2020 and public gyms or in-person fitness classes were no longer an option, Peloton's at-home workout equipment became the solution for many. However, many returned to their normal routines following the pandemic, initiating a stark decline in Peloton's revenue that had not been accounted for. This research project uses several Business Strategy models to assess the source of Peloton's competitive advantage in an individual context, as well as its relation to competitors and the health and fitness industry. In light of this analysis, possible strategic solutions are provided to bolster Peloton's underperforming revenue amounts.

The NCAA's NIL Dilemma: Regulation and Competitive Balance

Presenter: William Farley & Katherine Baker

Program: Master of Business Administration

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michael Lewis

This examines how the NCAA should regulate Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) compensation in a rapidly evolving and legally constrained environment. Following key legal rulings and market shifts, NIL has weakened the NCAA's centralized authority and widened competitive imbalances across programs. This case explores stakeholder tensions, legal limitations, and structural changes shaping college athletics. It presents the NCAA's strategic dilemma between maintaining a decentralized system or implementing a centralized framework, asking how the organization can balance fairness, compliance, and its traditional amateur model moving forward.

Market Leaders Regaining Their Crown: A Case about Tesla's Role in the Electric Vehicle Industry

Presenter: Alexander Boligan & Wandzia Prytko

Program: Master of Business Administration

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michael Lewis

Since its introduction to the electric vehicle (EV) industry in 2003, Tesla, Inc. has been a market leader, pushing the bounds of EV manufacturing with its leading technology and innovation, owing much of its success to its CEO, Elon Musk. However, in the past year, its sales have decreased, and BYD, a Chinese manufacturing conglomerate, surpassed Tesla in total sales. This case explores the reason for Tesla's loss in sales and seeks to find opportunities to seize to regain market share, increase sales, and continue its reign as the world's top seller of EVs.

5:55pm-
6:30pm

Using Adaptive Leadership to Promote Responsible AI Use in Higher Education While Fostering Critical Thinking

Presenter: Laurie Palumbo
Program: Organizational Leadership
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Laura Miller

Adaptive leaders are tasked with recognizing and analyzing challenges, managing conflicts and resistance, and reducing stress while fostering a productive environment that supports stakeholders. With the rise of mainstream AI, higher education faces a challenge comparable in scope to the emergence of the World Wide Web. Supporters claim that AI can enhance learning by helping with cognitive offloading, enabling students to concentrate on higher-level thinking skills. Opponents argue AI leads to cheating. Assumption University has a moral obligation to its students and society to cultivate ethical individuals capable of critical thinking. As AI use increases, how can leadership ensure this?

Balancing Transformation and Workforce Capacity: Managing Change Fatigue at Charles River Laboratories

Presenter: Kaitlyn Desrochers
Program: Organizational Leadership
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Laura Miller

This case examines how Charles River Laboratories navigates the tension between global standardization, digital transformation, and workforce capacity. As the organization accelerates enterprise-wide change initiatives, employees experience increasing change fatigue, creating risks to engagement, compliance, and operational performance. The case challenges readers to evaluate how transformation efforts may be bypassing critical stages of effective change management and to assess the strategic tradeoffs between speed, consistency, and sustainability. Drawing on Kotter's change framework, the ADKAR model, and change fatigue research, the case prompts analysis of how organizations can implement large-scale change while maintaining workforce resilience and long-term effectiveness.

6:35pm-
7:20pm

GENERAL CONCURRENT SESSION A (Testa 006)

Using Video-Based Training to Teach Error Correction

Presenter: Jaime Brodeur
Program: Applied Behavior Analysis
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nicole Pantano (Moderator of Concurrent Session A)

Staff training is a crucial component of effective behavior analytic programming. Service agencies often do not implement evidence-based training methods due to a lack of available resources despite empirical evidence that supports its use. Behavioral skills training (BST) is an evidence-based training protocol involving instructions, modeling, rehearsal, and feedback. The current study used video-based BST to teach staff in a clinic to implement error correction procedures. The results of this study indicated that error correction accuracy improved compared to baseline levels following the implementation of video BST.

Clinician Burnout and the Role of Graduate Schools in Prevention

Presenter: Jessica Nowakowski
Program: Clinical Counseling Psychology
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Jennifer Dealy

6:35pm-
7:20pm

Clinician burnout is an increasingly prevalent problem despite years of experience a clinician has. Data was collected on clinicians' current levels of burnout, the contributing factors, and graduate school preparation. Open-ended questions asked clinicians to reflect on the preparation they wish they received in graduate school. Factors contributing to burnout included maintaining a work-life balance, managing expectations, struggling to engage in self-care, and reflecting on work to feel engaged. Three themes emerged as areas for better graduate school preparation: navigating the healthcare system, workload balance, and self-care. Graduate schools can use these results to inform their curriculum practices.

Improving Procedural Fidelity in a School Setting using PDC-HS

Presenter: Ryan Singley
Program: Applied Behavior Analysis
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nicole Pantano

Procedural fidelity (PF) describes the extent to which the components of an intervention are implemented correctly and according to established procedures (Cooper et al., 2020). One method for improving procedural integrity includes the Performance Diagnostic Checklist - Human Services (PDC-HS; Carr et al., 2013). Two recommendations from this checklist include using behavior skills training (BST) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) to increase trainee PF scores. We assessed whether changing the environment and implementing BST and ACT based on PDC-HS results is a sufficient intervention to improve the procedural fidelity of discrete-trial programs implemented by direct care staff.

6:35pm-
7:20pm

GENERAL CONCURRENT SESSION B (Testa 106)

Behavior Specific Praise as a Function-Based Intervention for Students with Autism

Presenter: Amanda Eichholz
Program: Autism Spectrum Disorders
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Samantha Goldman (Moderator of Concurrent Session B)

Behavior-specific praise is highlighted in this presentation as an evidence- and function-based intervention to increase appropriate help-seeking behavior in students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Across academic settings, event-recorded data demonstrated that visual supports, pre-correction, and immediate, specific reinforcement increased appropriate requests for help while decreasing calling out and physical prompting behaviors. Applied Behavior Analysis and Positive Behavior Supports are grounded in these frameworks, which show that consistent adult responses structured by reinforcement systems can promote communication, independence, and generalization across settings for students with ASD.

How Do Organizational Incentive Systems Create Conditions under Which Managers Engage in Unethical Practices?

Presenter: Danielle Aiken
Program: Master of Business Administration
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Tyler Wasson

This presentation explores the relationship between organizational incentive systems and unethical managerial behavior, arguing that misconduct often emerges as a structural outcome rather than an individual failing. Drawing on behavioral ethics research, it examines how performance pressures contribute to phenomena such as ethical fading, moral licensing, and the social normalization of misconduct. Particular attention is given to the role of middle managers

6:35pm-7:20pm who operate at the intersection of organizational expectations and practical implementation. Through examples and recommendations regarding aggressive goal-setting and data-driven pricing strategies, the analysis demonstrates how reward structures shape decision-making processes and organizational culture.

Transition Planning for Students with Extensive Support Needs: Incorporating Student Input into the IEP

Presenter: Julienne LeBlanc-Dunnigan
Program: Transition Specialist
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Samantha Goldman

Transition planning is the process of preparing students with disabilities for their transition from school to adulthood. There is limited evidence-based literature on transition planning for students with extensive support needs. The purpose of this study was to provide special educators working with this population with materials and training on soliciting, interpreting, and incorporating student input into the IEP. Additionally, this study evaluated educators' perceptions of the usefulness and acceptability of the materials to make improvements for future use.

7:25pm-8:00pm **POSTER SESSION II (Testa Atrium)**

Teaching Caregivers Behavior Analytic Programming

Presenter: Catherine Walsh
Program: Applied Behavior Analysis
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nicole Pantano

Guardians play a pivotal role in the maintenance of skills taught to clients. To ensure generalization and maintenance of skills it is important for clients receiving clinic-based behavior analytic services to practice skills at home. Behavior skills training (BST) is an evidenced-based training that includes instructions, modeling, rehearsal, and feedback to teach a variety of skills (Miles & Wilder, 2009). The current study used BST to teach one caregiver to implement programs with their child. The results of this study indicated that BST was effective for teaching parents to implement behavior-analytic programming.

Preparing for Future Coparenting Relationships? Non-Parents Family-of-Origin Perceptions and Simulated Co-Caregiving Dynamics

Presenter: Aidan Keefe
Program: Clinical Counseling Psychology
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Regina Kuersten-Hogan

Even prior to becoming parents, young adults form mental representations of coparenting relationships. Non-parents' co-caregiving dynamics were observed to explore whether perceptions of family-of-origin coparenting and expressiveness were reflected in their actual caregiving coordination during a simulation task. Findings indicated that negative perceptions of coparenting and greater expressiveness experienced in their families of origin correlated with antagonistic co-caregiving observed during simulated caretaking of a computerized doll and with pessimism about non-parents' own future coparenting relationship. Present findings provide support for the notion that co-caregiving behaviors can be meaningfully assessed prior to the transition to parenthood.

7:25pm-8:00pm **Staff Training on Discrete Trial Teaching Using Train-to-Code**

Presenter: Riane Anderson
Program: Clinical Counseling Psychology
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Karen Lionello-DeNolf

Discrete trial training (DTT) is a highly structured technique that teaches basic skills to children with intellectual disabilities by breaking tasks into smaller components while implementing prompting and reinforcement. DTT is conducted by entry-level staff, such as behavioral technicians, but providing training to these staff can be challenging due to the fast-paced environment and staffing constraints. Train to Code (TTC) is a computer software designed to teach direct-care staff to provide three types of DTT programs effectively, including social questions, receptive labeling, and motor imitation. The software displays a series of video clips depicting both correct and incorrect examples of discrete trials. Participants assigned a code to each one to indicate whether an error occurred and, if so, identified the type of error. For all three programs, the results showed that participants' ability to provide DTT improved after completing the training. The training could serve as a practical approach for developing staff competency in settings that utilize discrete trials.

Simplifying Health Insurance for Better Patient Access: A Simulated Project

Presenter: Keila Carmona
Program: Master of Business Administration
Faculty Advisor: Professor Jessica Wijesundara

This course-based, simulated project focuses on improving Patient Access Services by using monitoring and evaluation to find workflow challenges and improve team communication. Since this is not a real-world project, it is based on realistic scenarios and common issues seen in healthcare settings. The goal is to come up with practical changes that help staff work more efficiently and improve the overall patient experience. It also looks at how small issues in daily tasks can impact both staff and patients if they are not addressed. By tracking things like wait times, communication gaps, and workflow consistency, the project shows how data can help guide better decisions. Overall, it highlights how ongoing evaluation and small changes can make a big difference in team performance and service quality.

Ascent, Turbulence, and Recovery: A Case Study on Spirit Airlines' Strategic Pivot

Presenter: Heidi Renshaw & Pradeep Sharma
Program: Master of Business Administration
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michael Lewis

This case study utilizes strategy frameworks to analyze Spirit Airlines, highlighting the growing unsustainability of its ultra-low-cost carrier model due to increased competition and evolving consumer preferences for personalized experiences. Our research shows Spirit must strategically transition to a hybrid model, differentiate itself with technology, interactive in-flight entertainment, and enhanced services, and generate additional ancillary revenue. Crucially, Spirit should shift its institutional logics from prioritizing cost efficiency over customer service to emphasizing customer experience. This strategic renewal will better align Spirit with passenger demands and position the airline for renewed relevance and growth.

7:25pm-8:00pm **Balancing Growth and Profitability in The Walt Disney Company's Streaming Strategy**

Presenter: Helena Lampzey & Thoa Tran
Program: Master of Business Administration
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michael Lewis

This study analyzes the strategic transformation of The Walt Disney Company in response to the rapid expansion of the streaming market. Focusing primarily on Disney+, the research examines the trade-offs between subscriber growth and long-term profitability. Employing theoretical frameworks such as Porter's Five Forces, VRIO, and the PEST model, the study evaluates Disney's competitive positioning relative to rivals such as Netflix and Amazon, thereby proposing strategies to balance growth, profitability, and sustainable competitive advantage.

Par for the Course or Time for Change? Leadership at Grand Oaks

Presenter: Heather Pecoraro
Program: Organizational Leadership
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Laura Miller

Over the past several years, Grand Oaks Golf Club, a private nine-hole golf course, has experienced persistent managerial and operational challenges associated with the current General Manager's leadership style. These challenges have raised concerns regarding organizational effectiveness, service quality, and strategic alignment. Consequently, the Board of Directors faces a critical governance decision: whether the observed performance deficiencies can be remedied through targeted professional development and performance management interventions or whether a leadership transition is warranted to support the club's strategic objectives and long-term sustainability.

8:00pm **PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION (Testa 006)**
CLOSING REMARKS

Dr. Kimberly Schandel, Acting Provost & Dean of the School of Graduate Studies
Dr. Karen Lionello-DeNolf, Director of Applied Behavior Analysis Program

Graduate School Programs

Master of Arts (MA)

Master of Science (MS)

Certificate of Graduate Studies (CGS)

Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS)

Master of Business Administration (MBA)

Applied Behavior Analysis (MA)

Autism Spectrum Disorders (CAGS)

Clinical Counseling Psychology (MA)

Organizational Leadership (MA)

Physician Assistant Studies (MS)

Rehabilitation Counseling (MA & CAGS)

Resiliency in the Helping Professions (CAGS & CGS)

School Counseling (MA & CAGS)

Special Education (MA & CAGS)

Special Ops: SMVF (CAGS & CGS)

Transition Specialist (CAGS)



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