

The McMaster School for Advancing Humanity Presents:

McMaster Symposium & Academic Colloquium

April 14-15, 2026

THE QUESTION OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES AS CRITICAL TO
IMPROVING THE HUMAN CONDITION



Tuesday, April 14, 2026

4:00 PM:

DANA 22

Opening Remarks

Bridgette Winslow, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dr. Agnes Caldwell, Executive Vice President and Academic Dean

Reclaiming the Past Through Community-Based Research: Exploring our Partnership with Skibbereen Heritage Centre

Keynote Speaker: Terri Kearney

Moderator: Dr. Agnes Caldwell

Join us for a virtual keynote presented by Terri Kearney, Manager/Curator at Skibbereen Heritage Centre in West Cork, Ireland. Additional in-person discussion will follow, moderated by Dr. Caldwell.

*Appetizer reception in the Women's Commission Art Gallery immediately following.

5:00 PM:

BUCHMAN BOARD ROOM

Outstanding Orator in World Issues Competition Dinner

**By invitation only - This dinner is for participants in the Outstanding Orator in World Issues Competition*

6:00 PM:

BUCHMAN BOARD ROOM

Outstanding Orator in World Issues Competition

AJ Seedorf, Parker Cone, Blake Beaulieu, Larissa Follmar, Donovan Winkeljohn, Lindee Lammon, Rayne Cook, Julia Thabet, Zander Culbertson, Trenton Weber

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

8:00 - 8:10 AM:

SCHOMBURG AUDITORIUM

Opening Remarks

Dr. Agnes Caldwell, Executive Vice President and Academic Dean

Dr. Richanne C. Mankey, President

8:10 - 8:50 AM:

SCHOMBURG AUDITORIUM

McMaster Local Learning Community: PATH Center: Growing Roots in Our Community

Fellow: Dr. Mollie Sorrell

Scholars: Ella Cummins and Baylee Ingle

The McMaster Local-PATH Center Learning Community will present its community-based research initiatives conducted at the PATH Center during the 2025-2026 academic year. This presentation will highlight the development of a functional greenhouse, ongoing composting efforts, and the broader impact of student-led projects. Attendees will gain insight into the process of implementing sustainable practices within a community setting and the meaningful contributions made through this collaborative initiative.

DANA 22

Local Nutrition Education

Presented by: Connor Gephart, Alexander Jung, Alexander Moritz, Blake Beaulieu, Carter Sudhoff, Riley Keeran

Faculty Advisors: Dr. Olivia Lozar and Dr. Jeanna Tran

This presentation explores the role of community-based nutrition education in improving health outcomes. Students will highlight key nutrition challenges identified in local data and describe strategies used to promote healthier eating behaviors. The project emphasizes practical, accessible interventions tailored to community needs.

9:00 - 9:50 AM:

SCHOMBURG AUDITORIUM

McMaster Biloxi, MS Learning Community

Program Lead: Bridgette Winslow

Program Assistants: Lisa Crumit-Hancock, Jennifer Walton, Mike Winslow

Students: Gabriella Fisher, Kolton Greear, Ryan Neff, Kaylee Pierce, Patrick Russell, Blake Tucker

The partnership between the Defiance College McMaster Freshman Initiative and Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi is rooted in shared values of community outreach, service, and the betterment of Humanity. This collaboration integrates first-year college students into immersive, hands-on poverty research and community development efforts. The initiative serves a dual purpose: to provide critical housing rehabilitation and community support to vulnerable populations along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and to foster early collegiate civic engagement, ethical leadership, and intercultural competency among Defiance College students.

DANA 22

From Counterculture Movements to Pop Culture's Play Spaces: America's Renaissance Festivals

Presented by: Ella Cummins

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Steven Bare

A study was undertaken to address how the roots of the American countercultural movement, paired with the physical environment of Renaissance festivals, have created a unique social setting detached from the modern world. The Ohio Renaissance Festival, Michigan Renaissance Festival, and Great Lakes Medieval Faire were visited by the researcher with the intention of curating a photographic archive to study the architectural environment. By applying Foucault's principles of heterotopia, Bakhtin's theory of carnival, and Bohme's concept of atmosphere, a theoretical framework was developed to analyze the creation of a temporary reality of freedom based on social norms encouraged through play acting and the built environment. While renaissance faires and festivals no longer adhere to the initial intention of historical accuracy, they continue to exhibit the 1970s countercultural goal of societal escapism and encouraging play in adults, while maintaining an air of faux historicity.

DANA 27

Irish Reproductive Loan Funds in County Cork: A Spatial Analysis of Outcomes

Presented by: Zадria King

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Agnes Caldwell

This research project explores the outcomes of individuals who borrowed money through microfinancial institutions (Irish Reproductive Loan Fund) in rural County Cork, Ireland during An Gorta Mor (The Great Hunger 1845-1852). It examines the localized efficacy of Reproductive Loan Funds in the townlands of Ballineen, Baltimore, Castletownsend, Durrus, Glandore, Kilmoe/Crookhaven, and Schull. Using secondary data on the 1853 loan default followup interviews, and made available through the The Skibbereen Heritage Center website in Skibbereen, Ireland; we analyzed the outcomes and quality of life of borrowers from 1840-1853. The data was then mapped using ArcGIS Pro to geographically represent the outcomes of those who borrowed loans and their mortality, emigration, or living status. The findings indicate that the loans did not fulfill their objective of improving the lives of individuals who borrowed. Of the individuals who took out loans, more died than emigrated or did not experience a positive improvement in their living conditions. The data also suggests that people who were located on major roads had a better overall outcome when compared to those who were more isolated or lived near the Atlantic Ocean in this rural part of western County Cork. Finally, the gender of those who borrowed were recorded, and the outcomes suggest that men borrowed more often than women.

BUCHMAN BOARD ROOM

Math Major Capstones

Presented by: Tristan Frazzini, Tyler Hall, Aiden Behrman, Joseph O'Neil, Cole Mabis

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Seonguk Kim

In this session, five students present their senior capstone projects, each focusing on fundamental theorems in mathematics and statistics and their implementation using Python. The projects connect theory and practice by showing how key concepts—such as those in statistical and mathematical analysis—can be analyzed through simulations and numerical methods. By combining mathematical ideas with programming, these presentations help make abstract concepts easier to understand. They can be especially helpful for students and anyone interested in seeing how mathematics is applied in real-world contexts.

10:00 - 10:50 AM:

SCHOMBURG AUDITORIUM

McMaster Rome Learning Community

Fellow: Dr. Kathryn Phillips

Associate Fellows: Dr. Lisa Beringer

Scholars: Kaylee Dickinson, Zadria King, Braylin Shaner

The Rome McMaster Learning Community is focused on issues facing refugees around the world. Italy is currently in the middle of a humanitarian crisis, receiving more asylum seekers than any other country in Europe. These McMaster scholars spent the academic year researching various issues refugees face including in areas of integration, education, and public policy. In Rome, the scholars will work with our community partner, Programma Integra, to learn from experts in the field about best practices in assisting refugees in their new host countries.

DANA 22

Sleep, Sanity, and Sports: Investigating the Link Between Sleep Patterns and Well-Being in Men's and Women's Collegiate Volleyball Athletics

Presented by: Christa Phillips and McKenna Walker

Advisors: Dr. Olivia Lozar and Dr. Timothy Rickabaugh

This study examines the relationship between sleep patterns, mental health, and athletic performance in collegiate volleyball players. Using weekly self-reported data, the project explores how sleep quality and duration impact well-being and performance outcomes. Preliminary findings suggest meaningful associations between sleep disturbances and both mental and physical performance indicators. These results highlight the importance of sleep as a key factor in athlete health and success.

DANA 27

CSCI 498 Senior Capstone (10:00 - 10:15 AM)

Presented by: Elijah Mayes

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Katie Tiwari

This project is about creating a personal website hosting system using a small computer at home instead of paying for a hosting service. I built two real websites—a dog grooming business site and my portfolio—and made them accessible to anyone on the internet. I also focused on making the system secure and reliable so it works like a professional setup. I made the websites using html, css, and javascript.

Improving the Referral Process for Falls in Defiance County (10:20 - 10:35 AM)

Presented by: Addalyn Allen

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Jeanna Tran

This presentation evaluates current gaps in the referral process for fall prevention services in Defiance County. Local systems were analyzed and opportunities to improve coordination between healthcare providers and community resources were identified. The project proposes streamlined referral pathways to enhance access to prevention programs. Recommendations aim to reduce fall risk and improve outcomes for older adults.

BUCHMAN BOARD ROOM

Older Adults: Move More, Age Well

Presented by: Jacqueline Vanderpool, Haley Hammer, Kate Suter, Ryan Neff, Taylor Craft

Faculty Advisors: Dr. Olivia Lozar and Dr. Jeanna Tran

This project focuses on promoting physical activity among older adults to support healthy aging. Students examined barriers to movement and developed strategies to increase strength, balance, and overall activity levels. The presentation emphasizes the connection between regular movement and reduced fall risk, improved independence, and quality of life. Practical recommendations for community-based programming will be shared.

11:00 - 11:50 AM:

SCHOMBURG AUDITORIUM

McMaster Local Learning Community: The Ability Center

Fellow: Dr. Clarissa Barnes

Scholars: Nevaeh Schiffhauer and McKenna Walker

How can local partnerships transform the caregiving experience? This presentation explores the inaugural year of the McMaster Ability Center Local Learning Community. We will focus on the development of this local partnership and the insights gained from replicating a community event for caregivers of young children with disabilities. We will highlight practical tools developed to enhance the caregiving experience, featuring specific contributions from scholars who hosted stations focused on augmentative communication and emotional regulation. Join us to explore community engagement and the importance of collaborative support systems.

DANA 22

Empty Bowls 2026

Presented by: Social Work Junior Class

Faculty Advisor: Professor Tess Salisbury

This will be a panel presentation covering the logistics and process behind organizing the Empty Bowls fundraiser and then the way in which we integrate this into CSWE Social Work curricular expectations. We will describe also how this fundraiser goes from the classroom outward to social work macro practice into the community.

DANA 27

Local Tobacco Prevention

Presented by: Addalyn Allen, Addison Martinez, Alya Ibrahim, Anna Emswiler, Emma Rodgers, Madison Guggenbiller, Zander Culbertson

Faculty Advisors: Dr. Olivia Lozar and Dr. Jeanna Tran

This project examines tobacco use trends and prevention efforts within the local community. Students conducted compliance checks, assessed environmental factors such as signage, and developed outreach initiatives. The presentation highlights key risk factors and opportunities for prevention, particularly among youth and vulnerable populations. Strategies for strengthening community-wide tobacco control efforts will be discussed.

12:00 - 12:50 PM:

HUBBARD BANQUET ROOM

Underclass Honors and Service Leaders Luncheon

By invitation only - This luncheon is for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year members of the Honors and Service Leaders Programs. Service Leaders must have completed 50 hours this academic year to attend.

1:00 - 1:50 PM:

PILGRIM LIBRARY

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

The Relationship Between AI Tool Reliance and Academic Self-Efficacy in College Students

Presented by: Jacob Saxby

Faculty Advisor: Dr. James Sliwinski

Sport Psychology in Baseball

Presented by: Connor Gephart

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Timothy Rickabaugh

Best Practices in Baseball Strength and Conditioning

Presented by: Anthony Guardado Silvera

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Timothy Rickabaugh

A Comparison of High School Football Strength and Conditioning Programs

Presented by: Hunter Bentley

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Timothy Rickabaugh

Predicting Career Expectancy of MLB Pitchers Using Kaplan-Meier Survival Analysis and Machine Learning

Presented by: Joseph O'Neil

Faculty Advisors: Dr. Yun Heui Jeon and Dr. Seonguk Kim

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Parent-Centered Occupational Therapy on Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Presented by: Anna Emswiler

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Jeanna Tran

Evaluation Framework for MyPlate Assessments

Presented by: Alexander Jung

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Olivia Lozar

**1:00 - 1:50 PM:
POSTER PRESENTATIONS (*Continued*)**

Under the Influence: Cardiovascular Effects of Ethanol on Water Fleas

Presented by: Zадria King
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Mollie Sorrell

Long-Term Assessment Study on Water Quality in the Upper Maumee River Watershed

Presented by: Sophia Kerr and Jake Stephens
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Mollie Sorrell

Environmental Effects of Cortisol Levels in Mice

Presented by: Ellyn Murphy
Faculty Advisors: Dr. Mollie Sorrell and Dr. Patrick Cain

Hunting Strategies of Jumping Spiders Based on Prey Position

Presented by: Ava Rosengarten
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Patrick Cain

Reducing Overpopulation and Saving Lives: The Impact of Spay/Neuter, TNR, and Adoption in Northwest Ohio

Presented by: Sophia Kerr
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Patrick Cain

Effect of Light Color on Aggression and Anxiety in Fish

Presented by: Taylor Bates
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Mollie Sorrell

The Affordable Housing Crisis in the U.S.

Presented by: Rayne Cook
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lisa Beringer

Beyond Physical Placement: Variables Influencing Feelings of Belongingness for Neurodivergent Youth

Presented by: Chloe Kern
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Clarissa Barnes

Cerebral Blood Flows: Neurotypical and Neurodivergent Brains

Presented by: Taylor Bates
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Clarissa Barnes

2:00 - 3:00 PM:

SCHOMBURG AUDITORIUM

Outstanding Inquiry Paper in FYE Competition

Lydia Christenson - "Mental Health in Children with Chronic Illness"

Rayne Cook - "Behind the Smile: The Hidden Social and Mental Struggles of Chronically Ill Youth"

Drew Kachmarick - "Finding My Identity Through Change"

Brenda Patterson - "Running Towards a Better Me"

Julia Thabet - "The Silent Struggle"

DANA 22

2025 STEM SURP: Williams County Health Assessment

Presented by: Addalyn Allen, Addison Martinez, Anna Emswiler, Carter Sudhoff
Advisor: Dr. Jeanna Tran

This presentation summarizes findings from the 2025 Summer Undergraduate Research Program focused on the Williams County Health Assessment. Students collected and analyzed community health data to identify key trends and priority areas. The project emphasizes collaboration with local health departments and the application of public health frameworks. Results will inform future interventions and community health planning efforts.

DANA 27

Developing an Enhanced Student Recreation Program at Defiance College

Presented by: Jack Brubaker-Flood, Connor Gephart, Anthony Guardado Silvera, Kaylee Heath, Riley Keeran, Riley Kennedy-Chaffin, Tevin Lewis-Johnson, Damon McCracken, Ryan Reckner

Advisor: Dr. Timothy Rickabaugh

Purpose: To carefully consider and project DC student interests related to recreation programming and facilities five years into the future (2031-2032 academic year).

4:00 PM:

SCHOMBURG AUDITORIUM

Krieger Visiting Scholar in Religious Studies Presentation
Rich Rewards of Risk-Taking in Research

Presented by: Dr. Isobel Johnston

In this talk, Dr. Johnston describes how one seemingly quirky "throw away" question on a pilot survey revealed a surprisingly quiet yet widespread phenomenon of healing through the Jewish ritual of water immersion. This question, inspired by her own mikvah healing moment, was the most personal and seemingly frivolous question on the pilot survey. It's original purpose was a self-centered curiosity about whether anyone had a similar experience. The surprising responses to this question blossomed into the central focus of her dissertation. Dr. Johnston's research journey showcases that successful risk-taking calls for curiosity, openness to inquiry and opportunities, networking, and willingness to pivot in response to new data.

5:00 PM:

DEFIANCE HALL LOBBY

Faculty Reception

7:00 PM:

SCHOMBURG AUDITORIUM

Honors Convocation

By invitation only

**Thank
you!**

Thank you to all presenters and faculty advisors for making this year's McMaster Symposium and Academic Colloquium a great success!

**Save
the Date**

2027 McMaster Symposium
& Academic Colloquium
April 13-14, 2027

ABOUT THE MCMASTER SCHOOL FOR ADVANCING HUMANITY

The McMaster School for Advancing Humanity was founded to serve as a focal point for teaching, service, scholarship, and action to improve the human condition worldwide. The mission of the McMaster School is:

- To educate students for responsible citizenship;
- To produce committed global citizens and leaders who understand the importance of individual liberties in improving the human condition worldwide;
- To encourage graduates to take an active role in addressing these issues in whatever professions they may choose.

The School serves as a catalyst for innovative, interdisciplinary, community-based work by creating and supporting opportunities for teams of faculty, students, and staff to use their academic and professional skills to address a community need.

ABOUT DEFIANCE COLLEGE

Defiance College, founded in 1850, is a private liberal arts college affiliated with the United Church of Christ. Building on a strong foundation of more than a century of educating citizens for lives of leadership and service, Defiance College provides opportunities for its students to make meaningful impact on society in the twenty-first century with an educational experience of engagement. Defiance's spirit of service through leadership sets us apart.

Defiance College's role as a national and innovated leader in service learning and engagement was recognized by the Corporation for National and Community Service which named Defiance among the top 20 schools in the nation for community service and engagement. This designation was made by naming Defiance College as a Presidential Award Finalist for the 2013 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.

The Princeton Review features Defiance College in Colleges with a Conscious: 81 Great Schools with Outstanding Community Involvement. Defiance is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the National Council of Teacher Education, Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, the Council on Social Work Education, the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education, and the International Assembly of Collegiate Business Association.

As a national leader in the field of service learning and engagement, DC teaches students to take the knowledge they have gained and use it to change lives for the better - in their communities, in their careers, and in the world.