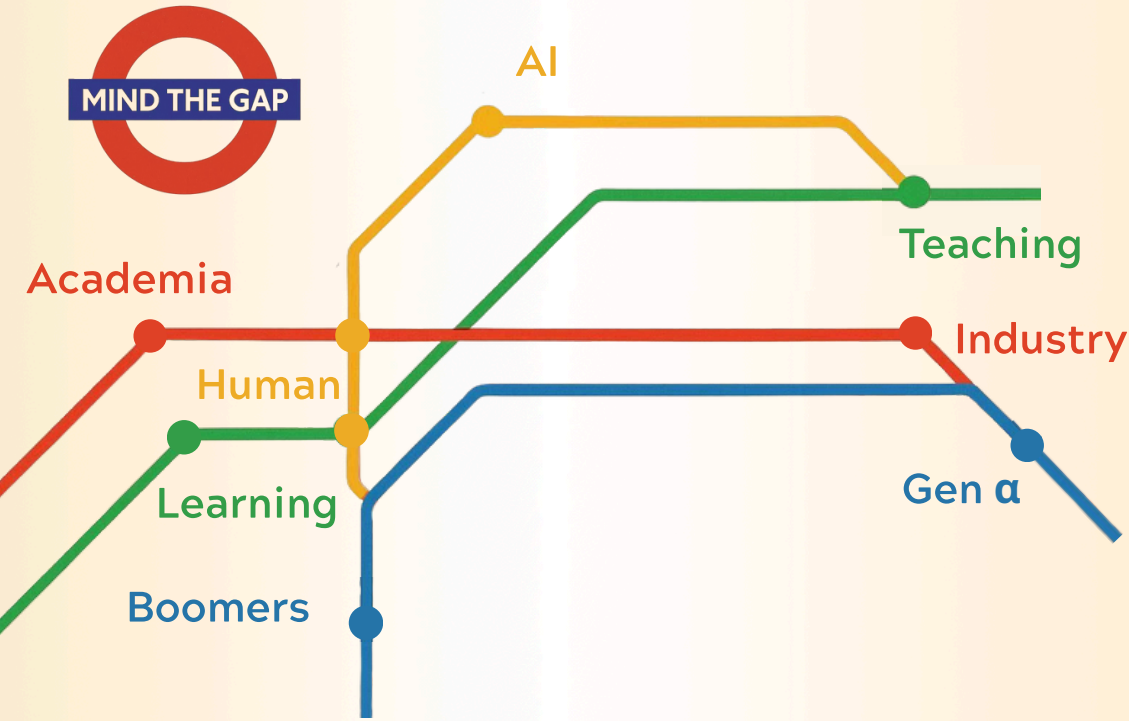
Duke Kunshan University
Annual Teaching and Learning Showcase
December 5, 2025

Mind the Gap

Program



Agenda

Friday, Dec. 5, 2025
Academic Building
Duke Kunshan University

9:00 Check-in

9:30 Opening Remarks

9:45 Keynote Speech

10:45 Tea Break

11:00 DKU Student and Faculty Panel

12:15 Lunch Roundtable

13:30 Afternoon Sessions - AB 1087

13:30 Afternoon Sessions - AB 2103

13:30 Afternoon Sessions - AB 2107

Keynote Speech
9:45 at AB Ballroom

Creating a Culture of Shared Responsibility for Minding the Gaps

The gaps are real — between academic disciplines within universities, between theory and practice at the intersection of universities and society, between the cultures and systems in which educational activities are embedded, and increasingly between humans and machines in the age of AI. Drawing on lessons from institutional experiments at Singapore Management University, Olin College of Engineering, and The University of Hong Kong, this keynote explores practical ways to bridge these gaps. It also offers meta-lessons on creating a culture of shared responsibility for minding the gaps, a responsibility shared by everyone involved in teaching and learning, that is, the entire university community.

Keynote Speaker

C. Jason Woodard
Professor and Co-Director, School of Innovation, The University of Hong Kong
Senior Academic Partner, Olin College of Engineering

Prof. Jason Woodard joined HKU in 2025 to help prepare a new generation of innovators to tackle global challenges. His work focuses on technology strategy, platform ecosystems, educational transformation, and building bridges between academia, industry, and society. He is passionate about creating learning environments where students take risks, pursue ideas that matter, and discover both their capabilities and their responsibilities as innovators. Before HKU, Jason spent a decade at Olin College of Engineering, working with colleagues to develop project-based, human-centered approaches to entrepreneurial engineering education. He also served as Olin's first Dean of External Programs and Partnerships and continues to support Olin's mission as a Senior Academic Partner. Earlier in his career, Jason was a faculty member at Singapore Management University's School of Information Systems and worked for IBM in technical and marketing roles.

He received an A.B. from Princeton University and a Ph.D. from Harvard University in Information, Technology and Management.

DKU Student and Faculty Panel
11:00 at AB Ballroom

Student Panelists

Emaan Asad
Class of 2028,
Intended Major:
Quantitative Political Economy - Economics

Bikalpa Panthi
Class of 2027,
Computation and Design - Social Policy

Sofia Martinez Gallardo Quijano
Class of 2026
Molecular Bioscience - Genetics and Genomics

Faculty Panelists

Paul Weng
Associate Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Paolo Epifani
Professor of Economics

Shan Wang
Assistant Professor of Psychology

Moderator:
Hanbing Lin, Senior Educational Consultant for Sciences

Afternoon Sessions
AB 1087

13:30 - 14:00

Mindful Listening, Moving Silences: Reimagining the University as a Living Practice Hall

Ben Van Overmeire
Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, DKU

In an era of rapid technological change and shifting generational expectations, meaningful communication in the classroom can feel increasingly elusive. This presentation explores how mindful listening, Tai ji, silences in education, and the idea of the university as a Buddhist temple can help bridge emerging gaps between faculty and students, and between global pedagogical traditions. Drawing inspiration from the Chinese Arts of Education Lab, the session treats the university as a contemplative practice hall—one where movement, breath, and stillness support intellectual inquiry. Participants will experience brief activities designed to sharpen attention, attune perception, and cultivate shared presence. These embodied practices pair with approaches to contemplative silence that function not as empty pauses, but as generative spaces inviting reflection, creativity, and deeper listening. Aligned with the showcase theme Mind the Gap, this presentation suggests that viewing the university as a kind of modern Buddhist temple—an environment oriented toward awareness, compassion, and disciplined curiosity—offers a powerful framework for navigating the widening divide between how faculty teach and how students learn. Ultimately, it invites educators to interface with the Chinese Arts of Education Lab in exploring how such embodied, contemplative traditions can reshape the future of teaching and learning at DKU.

Afternoon Sessions
AB 1087

14:00 - 14:30

Instructor-Designed AI Agent Empowering Formative Assessment in Spanish Teaching

Ling Tan
Lecturer in Spanish, XJTLU

María Victoria Tissera
Lecturer in Spanish, XJTLU

Lujia Li
Associate Lecturer in Spanish, XJTLU

Student Co-presenters:

Caiyan Zhang, Financial Mathematics, XJTLU & Yuxuan Shi, International Business with a Language, XJTLU

At Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), Spanish courses are offered as a second foreign language and as minor courses in the International Business program. The Spanish courses are student-centered, feature personalized instruction, and develop linguistic proficiency while introducing the cultures of Spanish-speaking countries. In this project, instructors design AI agent that adapts teaching content appropriately to generate Spanish exercises and create randomized self-assessment banks on the Moodle online teaching platform for students' self-testing. The project supplements post-class consolidation exercises, addresses delays in feedback during self-study, and meets students' personalized learning needs. The key features of this project are: User-friendly and highly accessible; Timely feedback; Regular formative assessment in large-enrollment modules; Precise review of key and challenging teaching points to enhance teaching quality.

Additionally, with vivid instructional case studies, we demonstrate how we integrate a diverse suite of AI tools into Spanish language instruction, including AI-driven image, video, and music generation tools, etc., on the XIPU AI platform, developed by XJTLU Learning Mall. From both teacher and student perspectives, we analyze the comparative advantages of traditional pedagogy and AI-supported approaches, delineate the areas in which AI can effectively augment foreign language teaching.

Afternoon Sessions
AB 1087

14:30 - 15:00

[Student panel] The Green and Red Lines in AI Use - Navigating the Fine Lines in ARHU101

Shuran Li
Class of 2029,
DKU

Xinbei Jiang
Class of 2029,
DKU

Isabella Nichols
Class of 2029,
DKU

Hanxi Zheng
Class of 2028, Intended Major: Quantitative Political Economy - Economics;
DKU

Student moderator:
Muhammad Hashir Magoon, Class of 2029, DKU

This panel features 4 students from Dr. Tao Zhang's ARHU101 course. Their discussions will be focused on how AI-use can be beneficial to student learning, the green lines. At the same time, in reading- and writing- intensive courses like ARHU101, red lines are drawn concerning whether AI should be involved in academic writing, whether it may enhance or hinder student competence in written communication, and what is ethical and acceptable practice when AI is involved in student writing, etc. These questions spark another discussion focus on the gaps between the understanding of the professor and students on AI use and AI literacy. The 4 student panelists expect, by sharing their own experiences of navigating the fine lines in AI use in ARHU101, to open a space for further discussions on interdisciplinary AI literacy training, AI policy design both at the university/administrative level and course/practical level, and on other AI-related topics.

Afternoon Sessions
AB 1087

15:15 - 15:45

Thinking Outside the Screen: Cultivating Curiosity in the Classroom

Yeshim Iqbal
Assistant Professor of Behavioral Science,
DKU

With her student:

Jiazhi Tang
Class of 2027,
Behavioral Science - Psychology

The gap between the institutional need to engage with and innovate on the use of AI and technology in teaching and the fact (soundly based in evidence) that constant engagement with this technology is detrimental to mental health. This session will explore the tension between the push for innovation and the need to foster healthy, meaningful learning environments. I will present my teaching approach, which involves a nuanced engagement with technology: in-depth use of AI and digital tools outside of class, while implementing a complete ban on their use during in-person classroom interaction.

My classroom philosophy advocates for reconnecting with curiosity and rediscovering the joy of learning through deliberate, tech-free methods. Key strategies to be discussed include enforcing laptop and phone bans, embracing moments of ‘doing nothing’ to encourage deeper thinking, and incorporating movement and art to enhance creativity, engagement, and overall well-being.

Afternoon Sessions
AB 1087

15:45 - 16:30

[Faculty panel] Are We Teaching for the Future? Navigating AI, Critical Thinking, and Embodied Knowledge

Lin Huang
Assistant Professor in Entrepreneurship(T&L), Nottingham University Business School China

Roser CERVERA
Director of the Language Centre,
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, UNNC

Yina Sima
Assistant Professor in Urban Science and Analytics, Faculty of Science and Engineering, UNNC

Michael Stevens
Course Tutor in English for Academic Purposes, Writing Lab Team Leader, Centre for English Language Education, UNNC

Moderator:
Jiaxin Wu, Deputy Director of Learning Technologies, UNNC

Generative AI is reshaping higher education, challenging established approaches to assessment and skill development. This panel moves beyond broad concerns to focus on actionable pedagogical responses. A central tension emerges around AI guidance: while students increasingly use these tools, they often lack structured support. We explore how student-centered course design can turn this gap into a learning opportunity—training students to treat AI as a collaborative partner rather than a substitute for critical thinking and intellectual curiosity.

Moreover, as AI automates written output, we must rethink how we evaluate learning. The discussion will advocate for assessing authentic human skills through oral, interactional, and embodied demonstrations of knowledge. These modes of real-time dialogue and engagement capture capabilities that AI cannot replicate. Join us to explore practical strategies for redesigning courses and assessments to foster the essential skills students need in an AI-integrated future.

Afternoon Sessions
AB 2103

13:30 - 14:00

Beyond the Recipe: Bridging the Gap from Lab Practicals to Real Research

Ferdinand Kappes
Associate Professor of Biology, DKU

With his students:

Kenes Serik
Class of 2029, DKU

Shaban Muhammad
Class of 2027,
Molecular Bioscience - Genetics & Genomics, DKU

Yuqing Cheng
Class of 2026, Molecular Bioscience - Cell and Molecular Biology, DKU

The goal of a typical lab practical is to get the "right" answer. The protocol is optimized, the expected outcome is clear, and success is measured by achieving a predetermined result. Real research, however, begins with a question for which the answer is unknown. This transition from a world of known answers to one of unknown questions represents one of the most significant challenges for science students.

This session addresses a critical, often unspoken gap in science education: the difficult journey from structured, answer-driven lab practicals to the open-ended, iterative process of authentic molecular biology research. Success in this transition requires a fundamental mindset shift—from seeking a "correct result" to constructing a compelling scientific narrative. We will frame this discussion around the concept of "productive failures"—the essential missteps that pave the way to becoming a proficient researcher—and explore why university is the ideal environment to make them. Specifically, we will focus on navigating common pitfalls along this transition. Joining the discussion will be members of the 2024 SRS group and the iGEM team, who will share their personal experiences and insights from their own transitions into research.

Afternoon Sessions
AB 2103

14:00 - 14:30

[Student presentation] Attendance After the Pivot: Pairing Policy with Pedagogy that Students Value

Ziyan Zhao,
PhD student in Public Health,
XJTLU

Nauman Saeed,
Associate Professor of Practice,
Educational Development Unit,
Academy of Future Education,
XJTLU

Generational and technological shifts have normalized “strategic attendance”: students come to class when the in-person payoff is clear. Drawing on institutional data and student surveys from the School of Sciences at a transnational university in China, this study isolates what actually brings students to the room. Across cohorts and disciplines, the strongest drivers were quality teaching and content, specifically, comprehensible explanations, well-designed slides and examples, purposeful pacing, non-redundant material, and clear links to future goals. Structural levers mattered, but secondarily: a mandatory attendance policy rebuilt habits in some contexts, while assessment-linked participation produced mixed results unless in-class work was authentically irreplaceable (hands-on, applied, tightly aligned to outcomes). We situate these findings within the conference theme of gaps between how professors teach and how students now learn. Rather than relying on penalties or convenience alone, the evidence points to making in-person time cognitively legible and uniquely valuable.

The session will briefly present the data and then open a facilitated discussion: How do we design STEM sessions that students choose to attend in a hybrid, on-demand ecosystem? What context-sensitive combinations of policy and pedagogy can different departments adopt to make attendance both expected, and worth it?

Afternoon Sessions
AB 2103

14:30 - 15:00

Orientation Assignments: Getting to Know Your Students in a Structured Way

Junius Brown
Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Economy, DKU

With his students:

Zihan Chen
Class of 2026,
Institutions and Governance - Political Science

Yujia Zhou
Class of 2026,
Political Economy - Economics

In this presentation, I will share an “orientation assignment” that I have used at the start of all my courses for the last year. Structured like a Qualtrics form, this assignment invites students to share information about themselves, including their background, career plans, feelings about the course, and existing knowledge and opinions about the course topic. In doing so, the assignment helps the instructor close several gaps: (1) between students’ learning needs and the instructor’s teaching practices; (2) between students’ existing knowledge and the knowledge base lesson plans assume; (3) between students’ career plans and the preparation the course provides. It also closes a psychosocial gap between student and instructor, giving students an opportunity to talk about their personal interests and aspirations and showing that the instructor is interested in seeing them as individuals. Two current and former students will share their experiences with this orientation assignment, including comparison to courses where these three gaps were not addressed.

Note: The first version of this orientation assignment was developed in a working group at the 2024 APSA Teaching and Learning Conference. Original drafts from that event are available online as open-access resources.

Afternoon Sessions
AB 2103

15:15 - 15:45

Uncovering the Homework-Classwork Gap: Reading, Writing and AI Mediation

Layla Shelmerdine
Senior Lecturer of English Language, DKU

This presentation examines a widening homework–classwork gap in postgraduate reading engagement in the age of AI. In my academic writing course, students submitted polished homework responses that appeared to show a solid grasp of the assigned readings. However, when completing short, handwritten in-class quizzes on the same texts, some produced partial, inaccurate, or off-topic interpretations. A comparative analysis of four texts per student (two homework assignments and two in-class writing tasks) revealed clear discrepancies in both the substance of students' interpretations and the writing skills they demonstrated. While differences in fluency between homework and in-class writing are expected, these mismatches raise important questions about how students completed their homework. Did they read the text carefully? Did they read it at all? Or did they rely on an AI-generated summary that allowed them to produce writing more polished than their independent understanding?

I will share patterns observed across 15 students, illustrate typical examples, and discuss how brief in-class anchoring quizzes and end-of-semester dialogic reflections helped students recognize where their homework was supported by tools or shortcuts and how this compared to what they could produce independently. Participants will leave with strategies for mapping homework–classwork differences, designing in-class comprehension checks, and running dialogic reflections that encourage students to examine where their homework relied on support tools (AI or otherwise) and how that compares to what they can produce independently.

Afternoon Sessions
AB 2103

15:45 - 16:30

[Faculty & staff panel] Graduate School Applications: Myths and Truths

Anastasia Tsigkou
Associate Professor of Biology,
Major Convener for Molecular Bioscience, DKU

Tracy Xu
Director of Career Services, DKU

Changcheng Zheng
Associate Professor of Physics,
Associate Chair for Division of Natural and Applied Sciences,
Major convener for Materials Science, DKU

Benjamin Bacon
Associate Professor of Media and Arts,
Major Convener for Computation and Design, DKU

Moderator:
Arianne Riley, Senior Coordinator for Academic Advising, DKU

In this panel, faculty from Natural Sciences and Arts and Humanities, alongside the Director of Career Services, will answer students' most pressing questions about the graduate school application process. From personal statements to letters of recommendation, the panelists will explore common myths and share practical advice for navigating the application journey. This discussion will also address how generational and cultural shifts in academia. It will also bridge the gap between students' and faculty expectations and the realities of graduate school. Join us for an insightful conversation that will provide valuable guidance for students and faculty alike.

Afternoon Sessions
AB 2107

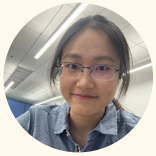
13:30 - 14:00

Charting the Path: From Campus to Career
Tracy Xu
Director of Career Services, DKU

We break down the 2022-2024 post-graduation results by major to showcase the mapping of grad school outcome landscape. Understand how career interests evolve from freshman to senior, based on real coaching conversations history with career services. Learn how to anticipate and support students' changing needs. Discover the core skills and qualities that top employers are actively seeking when they recruit young talents.

14:00 - 14:30

[Student presentation] Bridging the Academia–Industry Gap at DKU: How Can Courses More Directly Support Job Readiness



Ke Ning
Class of 2028,
Intended Major: Data Science
DKU

Yuanjun Du
Class of 2027,
Economics, DKU

Jiahe (Jay) Chen
Class of 2026, Computation and Design - Computer Science, DKU

Industry-oriented students (those not pursuing academia) often struggle to translate research strength into career-ready signals. Drawing on student interviews and a survey, this session surfaces core gaps— little hands on experience, scare business sense in tech courses, unclear role paths/alumni linkage, and internship-course misalignment-and suggestions from students for low-cost actions. We'll compare faculty perceptions with student data, hear brief student voices, and leave with practical options.

Afternoon Sessions
AB 2107

14:30 - 15:00

Digital Humanity in Action: An Immersive Exhibition Connecting Community-Based Learning, Frontier Technology, and Global Sustainable Future

Luyao Zhang
Assistant Professor of Economics, DKU

With her students:

Matvey Izmaylov
Class of 2026,
Computation & Design - Digital Media, DKU

Jiaojiao Zhao
Class of 2026, Applied Mathematics & Computer Science - Computer Science, DKU

Jiahe Chen'26 and Zihan Chen'26 will also join the presentation.

This immersive session showcases how community-based learning can connect student creativity with real community needs and global sustainable development goals. Featuring an interactive exhibition of student-created visualizations—developed in community-based learning with support from local partnerships such as the Kunshan Zhouzhuang Mystery of Life Museum—participants will explore how these projects help students learn while meaningfully contributing to local public education and cultural sustainability. The session includes TED-style collaborative student–professor talks delivered alongside community and industry partners who supported the work. These short talks highlight how students' motivations—such as caring for the environment, engaging younger audiences, or connecting cultural heritage with global futures—intersect with faculty goals for interdisciplinary inquiry, ethical reflection, and civic engagement. Through the lens of Digital Humanity, the session surfaces key gaps: between classroom learning and community expectations, between individual academic performance and contributing to shared global goals, and between faculty-designed outcomes and students' lived sense of purpose. A facilitated discussion invites attendees to consider how community partnerships and global frameworks like the UN SDGs can transform learning into contribution, bridging the space between campus, community, and the wider world

Afternoon Sessions
AB 2107

15:15 - 15:45

Mind the Gap: I Chose to Learn Foreign Languages in the Age of AI!

Roser CERVERA
Director of the Language Centre,
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, UNNC

Generational shifts and rapid technological evolution are fundamentally altering the landscape of foreign language learning. Students today engage with languages through the lens of Artificial Intelligence, challenging the pedagogical assumptions we hold as educators. This presentation confronts the disconnect between traditional teaching methods and the lived digital reality of our diverse student body.

In this presentation, I will explore how AI tools serve as bridges rather than barriers. I advocate for a dynamic curriculum that promotes Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, ensuring AI enhances accessibility for all learners rather than widening biases. We will move beyond the fear of academic dishonesty to embrace a student-centered partnership where technology amplifies human connection and intercultural competence.

Join this session to understand the importance of learning foreign languages and reimagine our role in the classroom. Together, we will consider the benefits of technology-enhanced foreign language classrooms and re-think of a future-ready pedagogy that respects how students actually learn, ensuring our teaching remains relevant, inclusive, and profoundly effective in this automated age.

Afternoon Sessions
AB 2107

15:45 - 16:30

[Panel with community member] Bridge the Gap Between Campus and Community: A Case Sharing in Collaborative Ethnography with Dayu New Village

Jiawen Cai
Senior Coordinator of Undergraduate Academic Activities, DKU

Keping Wu
Associate Professor of Anthropology, DKU

Yuechi Kelly
Lecturer of English for Academic Purposes, DKU

Liuxin Zhao
Community Leader of Dayu New Village

Nashan Zhao
Class of 2028, DKU

The Ethnography of China (CULANTH 206) is a course that takes the ethnographic lens to the understanding of Chinese societies and introduces the ways of appreciating and writing ethnography through the lens of Chinese societies. It attempts to answer what insights a worm's eye-view of such a complex society may offer us. It has two components – one is in-class discussion, which introduce the students to a range of ethnographic writings on China; the other is Community-Based Learning, which will allow the students to explore various aspects of one community, the Dayu New Village in Kunshan. This panel will bring together the instructors, student, and the leader of Dayu New Village to share their unique perspectives on the promises and challenges of co-creating knowledge through community-based ethnography.

Organizing Team

Haiyan Zhou, Director for CTL

Mengyu Ma, Senior Learning Experience Designer

Fan (Luisa) Li, Educational Technology Analyst III

Hanbing Lin, Senior Educational Consultant for Sciences

Yishan He, CTL Intern

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Center for Teaching and Learning