

DePeters Family Center for Innovation and Teaching Excellence

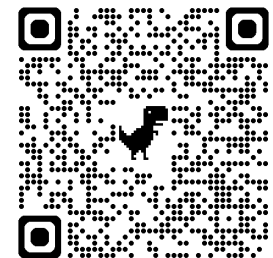


Basil Hall Room 216 Receives National Recognition

St. John Fisher University's Basil Hall Classroom 216 has been recognized by Spaces4Learning as a Project of Distinction in their 2026 Education Design Showcase. Over the past five years, Fisher has been transforming learning spaces one classroom at a time, reimagining how they should look and feel in higher education today as part of the Learning Space and Technology Strategic Plan. "Classrooms today must support flexible, mobile-friendly, and dynamic environments that seamlessly transition between whole-class presentations and small-group collaboration,"

says Katie Sabourin, assistant vice president for digital learning. "Our renovated spaces are built to do just that: adapt to exactly what faculty and students need on any given day." For each of the renovated classrooms, every detail was considered including furniture height and table configuration, shade of paint on the wall, lighting that energizes rather than drains, writing surfaces that invite spontaneous collaboration rather than remain untouched, and more. All of the research, conversations, and interactions led to the new look and feel of Basil 216, which was renovated in summer 2025. "Basil 216 stands out as a highlight of these efforts, exemplifying how high-tech tools and low-tech design can coexist to bridge the gap between direct instruction and active student collaboration, ultimately turning the physical environment into a catalyst for learning rather than a barrier."

Founded in 1999, the Education Design Showcase recognizes innovative planning, design, and construction in learning environments. Spaces4Learning brings together a broad array of vital resources and services that keep readers abreast of current issues, trends and research; provides professional development opportunities; and keeps those who share a common interest connected.



Use the QR code to
read the full story.

Educational Technology & Pedagogical Support

116**WORKSHOPS & SIGNATURE
EVENTS****795+****ATTENDEES****350+****1-ON-1 CONSULTATIONS**

DePeters Family Center Signature Events

Signature events are professional development experiences that require ~20 hours of time and effort from participants. These sessions go beyond the one-hour workshop and provide time to apply new skills and reflect on their use within specific contexts. DePeters Family Center staff and faculty fellows offered 10 signature events last year including:

- **Fisher Apple Academy 1.0** - Winter & Fall
- **Fisher Apple Academy 2.0**
- **Fundamentals of Online Teaching** - Summer, Fall, & Spring
- **Inclusive Teaching Academy** - Spring & Summer
- **Active Learning Institute**
- **OER Community of Practice**

98

Faculty & staff
completed signature
events this year

MISO Survey Feedback

This year the University participated in the MISO survey seeking feedback on library, technology, and instructional design related services and tools from all campus stakeholders. Here are some highlights from these results related to DePeters Family Center services:

- Faculty rated DePeters Family Center staff as friendly, knowledgeable, reliable, and responsive, all with **95%** or higher agreement.
- **82%** of faculty rated their work with technology professionals as either moderately or greatly contributing to their achievement of their teaching goals.
- **86%** reported satisfaction overall with the services offered by the DePeters Family Center.

Educational Technology Enhancements

The tools used for teaching and learning are always changing and new tools emerge all the time. The DePeters Family Center staff work hard to keep up with these changes and support the campus to ensure we have the right mix of tools to support effective teaching practices.

Brightspace

Fisher's course management system is an essential component of the educational technology ecosystem of the University. Below are stats on how the system is being used across campus:

- **99%** of undergraduate students reported logging into Brightspace four or more times per week and **93%** rated Brightspace as a very important campus service, according to the MISO survey.
- **97%** of instructors used Brightspace for at least one of their courses over the 2025/2026 academic year.
- **86%** of courses have at least one Content module and topic within their course.
- **80%** of courses use the assignments and grades functionality of the system.



This year Brightspace went through a major upgrade transitioning to the **New Content Experience**, which upgraded the content section to a more modern, user friendly, more visual design that makes building and navigating course content smoother for instructors and students.

Poll Everywhere 2.0

Poll Everywhere is a engagement software used to poll an audience and gather responses in real time during a class, meeting, or presentation. This year, Poll Everywhere released a major upgrade to their software called Poll Everywhere 2.0. The new experience features a refreshed, more intuitive interface along with powerful new tools designed to make creating and delivering interactive activities easier than ever. Enhanced AI capabilities can help instructors quickly generate polling questions from a simple prompt, including the ability to reference text from class content. New attendance features also make it easier for instructors to track participation. Poll Everywhere 2.0 puts interaction at the center of the experience helping faculty create more dynamic, engaging learning experiences across campus.

iOS 26

Apple's release of iPadOS 26 marks a major leap in functionality for our Apple Distinguished School, bridging the gap between tablet portability and desktop productivity for faculty, staff, and students alike. The introduction of Windowed Apps came with customizable layouts, flexible resizing, and a traditional menu bar. Stage Manager can support windowed app tabs for quick context-switching across complex tasks. A dedicated Preview app brings desktop-grade PDF and image editing directly to the iPad. Additionally, Math Notes in the Calculator app now supports dynamic 3D graphing for interactive learning. Together, these enhancements transform the iPad into a versatile, laptop-class device built to elevate daily academic work campus-wide.

Teaching Excellence Program

In the fall of 2025, we saw our second cohort of **10** new full-time faculty begin their journey in our Teaching Excellence Program. This program offers a series of in-depth professional development courses that equip faculty with evidence-based skills and knowledge essential for creating high-quality learning environments that positively impact student outcomes. Faculty participate in the first two required courses in the program, *Teaching for Student Learning* and *Inclusive Teaching Academy*. In addition to these two courses, faculty are asked to complete four other signature events of their choosing in a timeframe that works best for them. Each signature event involves approximately 20 hours of work on the part of the faculty, so participating in these experiences calls for dedication and commitment. Upon completion, which requires the completion of six signature events in total, participants will be recognized for their commitment to teaching excellence through public acknowledgment and a customized growth trophy (example shown to the right).



We are excited to welcome our third cohort of **9** new full-time faculty into the program for the fall of 2026, which brings the total number of faculty in the program to **33**. Of these faculty,

- **3** have completed 6 signature events completing the full program.
- **8** are well on their way to completing the program with either 4 or 5 courses already done.
- *"I found all of the events in the Teaching Excellence Program to be really helpful as I started teaching" says Teresa Liu, Ph.D. assistant professor in the Wegmans School of Pharmacy and member of the second Teaching Excellence Program cohort. "Each event challenged me to think about my classes in a different way and pointed to potential blind spots I may have had. I think taking the events have helped me rethink how to teach students."*



Teaching & Learning Library

Next time you're in the Center, don't miss our lending library. Center staff populate the shelves with their favorite teaching and learning books, or books from some of our own Fisher faculty scholars. If you have suggestions for books to add to the collection, let us know at cite@sjf.edu. We are always adding more, so check back often!



Apple Distinguished School 2026-2029

St. John Fisher University has been recognized again as an Apple Distinguished School for the 2026-2029 program term. The original recognition was awarded in 2022 through 2025. Schools apply and are selected for this distinction based on their commitment to continuous innovation in education and using Apple products to inspire, imagine, and impact teaching and learning. Apple Distinguished Schools are centers of leadership and educational excellence, with a clear vision for how technology-rich environments support learning goals. In 2020, the University piloted the iFisher: Next Generation Learning Initiative, which would provide an iPad, keyboard case, and Apple Pencil to every undergraduate student on campus. The initiative rolled out to faculty first, and to students in 2021. To date, more than 480 faculty and staff have engaged in Fisher Apple Academy training and over 300 are now Apple Certified Teachers on campus, enhancing the use of Apple technology in the classroom.



**Distinguished
School**

Recognized by Apple as a distinguished school for continuous innovation in learning, teaching, and the school environment.

Apple Distinguished Educator Class of 2026

Katie Sabourin, assistant vice president of digital learning at Fisher, has been recognized by Apple as a Class of 2026 Apple Distinguished Educator, the first on St. John Fisher's campus. The Apple Distinguished Educators (ADE) Program was created in 1995 to recognize K-12 and higher education pioneers who are using Apple technology to transform teaching and learning in powerful ways. Celebrating 30 years, the program has grown into a worldwide community of visionary and innovative leaders in education, helping other educators rethink what's possible with iPad and Mac.



The Rise of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The pace of rapid development has not slowed down for generative AI tools and features, and its impact across campus has expanded. The DePeters Family Center have continued to offer professional development on the use of AI in education, explore new tools and features, and support the thoughtful adoption of AI into courses across campus. Some highlights from the work this year include:

- Over **17** professional development sessions were offered this year by DePeters staff on a variety of AI topics.
- AI Tools available for campus use, including **Microsoft Copilot & Agents, Google Gemini & Gems, Gemini Notebooks, Brightspace Lumi AI, Zoom AI Companion, and Poll Everywhere AI**
- Significant updates to the **AI Toolkit** in order to stay current with technological developments.
- Helped to support the development of the newly launched **AI Literacy Minor** at Fisher, including teaching of the first required course, *AI: Foundations & Impact*.
- Extensive support for the creation of **custom bots**, using both Gemini Gems and Copilot Agents, by both faculty and staff across campus. Custom bots allow for a special instruction to be given to the AI to act as a tutor or to role-play a specific scenario with a student. These bots have been used to create simulated patients for nursing students, as well as role-play scenarios for pre-service teachers. Explore the Custom Chatbots page within the Toolkit to learn more: <https://sites.google.com/sjfc.edu/ai-toolkit/home/custom-chatbots>.

AI Strategiest & Fisher Alumnus - Tim Holmes

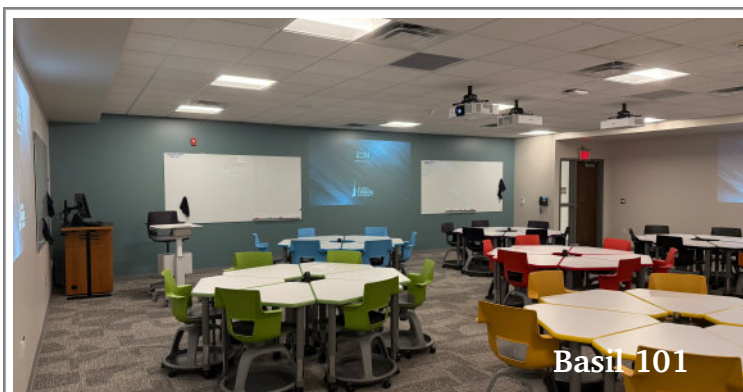
Fisher alumnus, Tim Holmes 98', AI strategist and founder of Navigating AI, visited campus two times this year to share his expertise with our campus community. In March, Tim gave a presentation and facilitated a discussion with the AI Advisory Board on the current state of AI and its impact on education and industry. Tim then joined us again for our Fall Convocation Day as the keynote speaker, presenting his talk titled, *The Most Human Thing About ai: Reclaiming Time. Revitalizing Higher Education*. He challenged the campus to consider the use and implications of AI from a person-first perspective. His insights fueled great conversation and further discussion on the future of AI broadly and across campus.

Explore Fisher's AI Toolkit



Innovative Learning Spaces

Five classrooms were updated this year as Fisher continues to enhance the learning spaces across campus. Wegmans School of Nursing rooms 101, 102, and 103 were renovated to enhance each classroom with moveable furniture. Room 103 underwent the greatest transformation transitioning from static rows to group tables and multiple projection screens to support collaborative learning activities. This project was made possible thanks to the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation. Two additional rooms were updated in Basil Hall, Basil 101 and Basil 200. As part of the larger Communication Suite project currently underway, these two room locations were swapped and updated to bring the campus Mac Lab to the second floor and closer to the Communication Suite final location. To learn more, please visit sjf.edu/centers/cite/learning-spaces.



Basil 101



Basil 200



Wegmans School of Nursing 101



Wegmans School of Nursing 102



Wegmans School of Nursing 103

Fundamentals of Online Teaching

The DePeters Family Center staff offer an in-depth training experience for faculty new to teaching online or hybrid courses. Taking place over a four-week period, the Fundamentals course exposes faculty to effective online teaching methods by first putting them in the shoes of a student learning online. This training, offered multiple times per year since 2011, is required for faculty planning to teach in these modalities at Fisher. Faculty find this training extremely valuable as they begin to develop their first online or hybrid course. In addition to the formal training experience, DePeters Family Center staff often work with faculty 1-1 as they prepare their courses for delivery in an alternative format. This includes a thorough course review process evaluating the course against a set of established best practices for online delivery.

iFisher: Next Generation Learning Initiative

The initiative, which provides students, faculty, and staff with an Apple iPad and accessories, connects the campus community to each other and to the world through a dynamic mobile environment. Now in the fifth year of the program, iPads have become a vital component of the educational experience at Fisher. All classrooms on campus are equipped with Apple TVs to allow for easy sharing of materials from both instructors and students alike. A growing number of classrooms include multiple displays, each with their own Apple TV connection, which enables many presenters to share their work simultaneously. The iFisher initiative creates a common learning platform for our campus, ensuring everyone has access to the same hardware and software capabilities, and elevates the level of engaging course work that can take place across disciplines.

Fisher Next

Fisher Next offers access to high-quality learning experiences produced by Fisher's expert faculty and staff to learners seeking to advance their skills. Fisher Next learning experiences include continuing education and professional development opportunities for learners from a variety of fields and industries. DePeters Family Center staff supported the AP Summer Institute, which included 110 high school AP teachers in a four-day training experience in July of 2026. This year also saw substantial growth in the number of learners from healthcare fields accessing the system via the partnership with Golisano Institute for Developmental Disability Nursing, as well as growth in both offerings and total enrollment through the Center for Non-Profit Leadership in partnership with the Institute of Civic and Community Engagement. We look forward to continued growth on the Fisher Next platform in the coming year.

449

Fundamentals of
Online Teaching
Completions

482

1.0 Completions

139

2.0 Completions

314

Apple Certified
Teachers

129

Programs
offered this year

853

Unique learners
this year

Meet the Staff



Katie Sabourin, Assistant Vice President for Digital Learning

Katie oversees the Center operations and project planning with a special emphasis on the generative AI and learning space renovation.



Chris Plantone, Educational Technologist

Chris provides training and support on Brightspace, among other tools. He is also a point person for the use of iPads in the classroom.



Robin Schmid, Senior Training Support Specialist

Robin is a technology expert and provides training to faculty, staff, and students on a number of tools used across campus.



Katie Bush, Instructional Designer

Katie offers pedagogical workshops, supports faculty teaching online and hybrid courses, and develops content for Fisher Next programs.

Meet the Faculty Fellows



**Dan Brown
Apple Faculty
Fellow**



**Zach Murphy
Active Learning
Faculty Fellow**



**Kaitlin Bonner
OER Faculty
Fellow**



**J. Ricky Price
Inclusive Teaching
Faculty Fellow**



**Cassandra Scherr
Inclusive Teaching
Faculty Fellow**



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This document was created entirely in Pages using both a Mac and iPad.