



On behalf of The Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University, the Educating Character Initiative invites submissions for the following conference:

***Educating Character Across Differences:
Cultivating Communities of Character in the University***

December 5-7, 2024

Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem, North Carolina



Photo credit Beowulf Sheehan

Keynote speaker **Jesmyn Ward** is an American novelist as well as Professor of English and Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Humanities at Tulane University, where she teaches creative writing. She is a MacArthur Genius Grant recipient and the first woman and the first person of color to win two National Book Awards for Fiction. In 2016, she won the Strauss Living award, given every five years by the American Academy of Arts & Letters for literary excellence. In 2018, she was recognized among *Time's* 100 Most Influential People, and she is the winner of the 2022 Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction.

Call for Papers & Workshops

Educating Character Across Differences is an international, interdisciplinary conference that aims to explore opportunities for cultivating communities of character among university faculty, staff, and students across a variety of differences. We hope to consider both how to educate character across differences and what a focus on character and character education may contribute to efforts to recognize, respect, and bridge deep differences and foster meaningful and inclusive community. We intend “differences” broadly, including but not limited to differences related to ability, discipline, educational background, gender and sexuality, ideological viewpoint, moral and religious tradition, political commitment, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and type of institution (public or private, secular or religious, 2- or 4-year, etc.).

In line with the general aims of the Educating Character Initiative, the purposes of this conference are to:

- Increase knowledge and understanding of what educating character can contribute to meaningful community engagement across differences; which virtues, strategies, and measures are most important for cultivating communities of character; and the limits of a character approach to bridging differences.
- Equip faculty, staff, and administrators with concepts, strategies, and resources that might support their efforts to educate character across differences and support meaningful and inclusive community.
- Catalyze interdisciplinary and cross-institutional conversations that promote collaboration and partnership beyond academic specializations and institutional silos.
- Foster a meaningful community of educators from different backgrounds and institutions who can learn from and support each other in the work of educating character across differences.

Possible Themes and Questions

To achieve these aims, we welcome submissions that might meet one or more of the following aims:

- Scholarly research on understanding or educating character across differences and/or connecting the education of character across differences to the aims of higher education (including curricular developments, co-curricular programming, and other cross-institutional efforts).
- Practical examples of existing courses, programs, interventions, or initiatives to foster particular virtues of character across differences or to help students bridge various kinds of difference.
- Scholarly, practical, or pedagogically-focused work that shares tools, frameworks, activities, and other wisdom for educating character across differences at institutions of higher education.

Submissions can be on any topic addressing the conference theme. We welcome submissions from faculty, staff, or leaders in any academic discipline or administrative unit from any institution of higher education—including undergraduate, graduate, and professional education—or from organizations working with undergraduate, graduate, or professional student populations. We encourage submissions from a wide range of public and private institutions of higher education—including but not limited to major research universities, liberal arts colleges, military academies, community colleges, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, religiously affiliated colleges, single-gender colleges, and tribal colleges.

We invite two types of submissions:

- **Presentations:** Please submit an abstract of up to 500 words for papers suitable for a 15-20-minute presentation. Abstracts should identify the key theme of the presentation and the claims, evidence, and/or expertise that supports the presentation.
- **Workshops:** Please submit a proposal of up to 1,000 words to lead practical workshops offering frameworks, tools, or examples to equip educators at institutions of higher education. Proposals should indicate workshop length (either 35 or 75 minutes), list key learning outcomes for the workshop, describe workshop activities aimed at meeting those outcomes, and explain any expertise and/or experience workshop organizers have relevant to leading the proposed workshop.

Potential topics for papers and workshops might include:

- What are the possibilities and limits of character and character education for contributing to meaningful community across differences within a diverse and pluralistic society? How do we navigate the scope and depth of character across differences within our institutions?
- How do we do the work of educating character across differences? Which strategies or frameworks might be most useful for educating character across differences or helping to foster meaningful and inclusive community? How do we design courses, programs, and interventions to foster character across differences?
- How might a focus on character and character education help to prepare all students for civic friendship and engagement in a diverse and pluralistic society?
- Which virtues are most important for cultivating communities of character across differences? How do educators support the development of these virtues?
- Are particular virtues necessary for students pursuing specific professions or courses of study (e.g., compassion for those pursuing medicine or justice for those pursuing law)? Or are all virtues relevant for all students? What are the benefits and limitations of educating character across disciplinary silos? How do we determine which virtues to develop?
- What can intentional conversations about differences, or intentional approaches to recognizing and bridging differences, contribute to the understanding and education of character?
- In what ways might a character approach be limited in its potential for bridging differences? Are there examples in which a character approach to recognizing and bridging differences has failed?
- What does attention to various moral and/or religious traditions contribute to educating character across differences? How can these differing worldviews, practices, and traditions complicate or support educating character across differences?
- How do we tailor efforts and resources for educating character to particular disciplines, courses, types of institutions, populations of students, or areas of student life (e.g., athletics, arts, residence life, study abroad)? How do we work in particular areas while contributing to the character education of the whole student and across an entire institution?
- How can we incorporate assessment and measurement into our efforts to educate character across differences? What are examples of effective assessment and measurement? What are the benefits and limits of such efforts?

- How can we build robust networks of individuals and institutions committed to educating character? How can we productively learn from one another, share resources, and support one another as educators aimed at cultivating communities of character?

This list of topics is meant to be suggestive only and by no means exhausts the possibilities for excellent submissions on the conference theme. We look forward to your submissions and your partnership in the important work of educating character across differences.

Submissions

All submissions should be either a Word or PDF file and uploaded to the [ECI Conference Submission Portal](#) by **June 1, 2024**. All those submitting abstracts or proposals for review must be [registered members](#) of the Educating Character Initiative community (registration is free and open to all). All questions can be directed to LCconfer@wfu.edu.

Sponsorship

This conference and keynote are made possible through the generous support of Lilly Endowment Inc., the Kern Family Foundation, the Face to Face Speaker Forum, and Wake Forest University.

About the Organizers

[The Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University](#) aims to inspire, educate, and empower leaders of character to serve humanity. Through innovative teaching, creative programming, and cutting-edge research, the Program seeks to transform the lives of students, foster an inclusive culture of leadership and character at Wake Forest, and catalyze a broader public conversation that places character at the center of leadership.

[The Educating Character Initiative](#) is an external-facing project of the Program for Leadership and Character designed to support work cultivating character in higher education institutions. The Educating Character Initiative aims to equip a wide range of public and private institutions of higher education—including but not limited to major research universities, liberal arts colleges, military academies, community colleges, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, religiously affiliated colleges, single-gender colleges, and tribal colleges—with the resources, funding, and support needed to integrate character education into their distinctive institutional contexts, curricula, and cultures. The broader aspiration is to foster a robust community that supports the education of character within institutions of higher education. For more information on the Educating Character Initiative, visit our website and [register for the ECI Community](#).