

DFI July Faculty Newsletter

In this issue of the DFI Faculty newsletter, we want to share the exciting **DFI Faculty retreat, Master Chef: Digital Kitchen**, happening remotely on **August 11, 2026**. This day-long retreat focuses on practical, actionable strategies to enhance student engagement and integrate interactive learning tools. You can learn more and view the agenda below!

We also have our next installment of DFI's Who's Who section featuring our **Senior Instructional Technologist, Johanna Guastaferro**.

Lastly, we would also like to remind you of the Summer B course support options DFI can provide.

We hope you have a wonderful month, and thank you for reading!

What's New?

1. Master Chef: Digital Kitchen



This year's DFI Faculty Retreat is a dedicated space to collaborate, share innovative teaching practices, and prepare your courses for the upcoming semester. This day-long event focuses on practical, actionable strategies to enhance student engagement and integrate interactive learning tools.

Throughout the day, we will cover four key areas:

- **Effective Course Design:** Walk through the essentials of backward design, align learning objectives with assessments, and explore practical AI strategies for your teaching.
- **Faculty Innovation Showcase:** Connect with colleagues to see how they are using innovative tools and approaches to elevate student learning in their own online courses.
- **Digital Learning:** Discover simple, actionable techniques to build community, encourage learner autonomy, and support student success in digital environments.
- **Interactive E-Learning Tools:** See how authoring tools can transform static content into active, dynamic experiences.

Whether you are refreshing an existing syllabus or building a new course from scratch, you will leave with concrete tools and fresh ideas to elevate your teaching practice.

[View the Agenda](#) to see what we have planned!

[Register Now](#)

2. Summer B Course Support:

Individual assistance from DFI:

If you would like assistance setting up your Canvas course please [fill out our Canvas course support form](#) and one of our Instructional Support Associates (ISAs) will contact you to assist.

We can assist with:

- Importing content from last summer
- Utilizing [one of the TC templates](#)
- Answering any questions you might have about adding content to your Canvas course

Do-it-yourself:

This simple [10-step Canvas Quickstart guide](#) is a great resource for faculty who would like to set up Canvas courses on their own.

3. DFI's 2026-2027 Multimodal Faculty Fellowship

DFI's 2026-2027 Multimodal Faculty Fellowship applications are now open! This year we're offering two opportunities to collaborate with our DFI media and design teams: a **media fellowship** and, for the first time, a **gallery fellowship**!

For the **media faculty fellowship**, benefits to faculty *could* include:

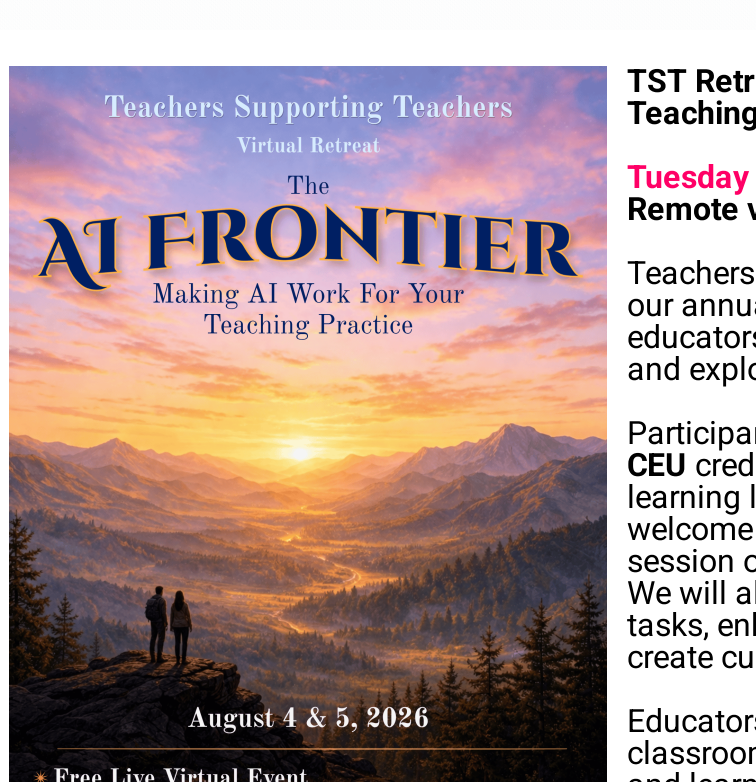
- Support for creation and dissemination of media scholarship such as:
 - Podcasts
 - Videos or video series
 - Multimedia projects

For the **gallery faculty fellowship**, the project would entail:

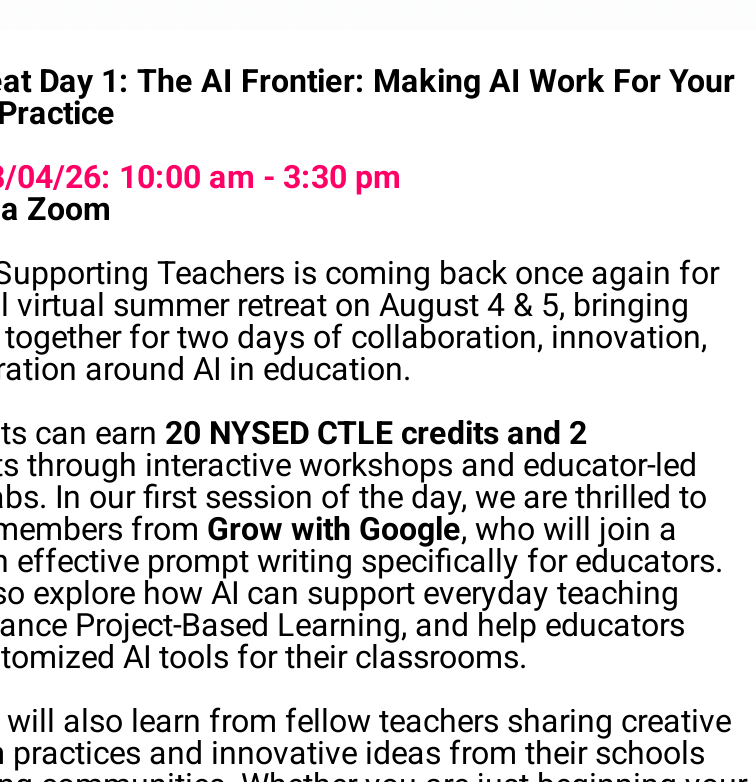
- Collaboration in creating an interactive gallery show/exhibit on the fifth floor of Russell Hall
- Physical and digital support from the DFI Design Studio to showcase work in the exhibit.
- A launch event for the exhibit on the fifth floor with a media launch event
- Digital tour of the exhibit recorded

We are intentionally leaving this call open-ended. We use the term "multimodality" to invite you to think about scholarly processes and outputs expansively, and to imagine what you might be able to do in collaboration with mediamakers and/or designers on our DFI team.

If you're interested, please fill out the applications below **by Friday, July 31**!

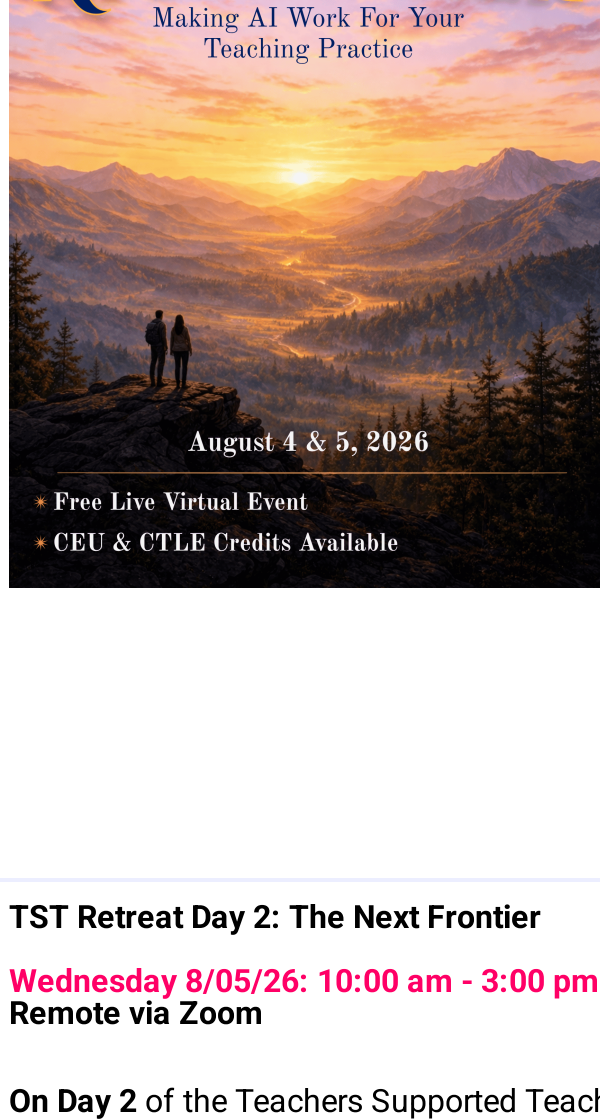


[Media Faculty Fellowship Application](#)



[Gallery Faculty Fellowship Application](#)

Upcoming PD



TST Retreat Day 1: The AI Frontier: Making AI Work For Your Teaching Practice

Tuesday 8/04/26: 10:00 am - 3:30 pm
Remote via Zoom

Teachers Supporting Teachers is coming back once again for our annual virtual summer retreat on August 4 & 5, bringing educators together for two days of collaboration, innovation, and exploration around AI in education.

Participants can earn **20 NYSED CTLE credits and 2 CEU** credits through interactive workshops and educator-led learning labs. In our first session of the day, we are thrilled to welcome members from **Grow with Google**, who will join a session on effective prompt writing specifically for educators. We will also explore how AI can support everyday teaching tasks, enhance Project-Based Learning, and help educators create customized AI tools for their classrooms.

Educators will also learn from fellow teachers sharing creative classroom practices and innovative ideas from their schools and learning communities. Whether you are just beginning your AI journey or already experimenting with tools such as Google Gems or Custom GPTs, this retreat will provide practical strategies and classroom-ready resources for navigating the evolving AI frontier in education.

[View the Agenda now](#) to see what to expect.

[Register](#)

TST Retreat Day 2: The Next Frontier

Wednesday 8/05/26: 10:00 am - 3:00 pm
Remote via Zoom

On Day 2 of the Teachers Supported Teachers virtual summer retreat: "The Next Frontier." This 7-hour Hands-on learning lab moves beyond basic AI use to help you design customized AI supports for your teaching practice. Participants can choose between the Beginner Builder Track (foundational prompting and Google Gem design) or the Advanced Agent Design Track (Custom GPTs, Claude Projects, and multi-step workflows).

Both pathways emphasize ethical implementation and practical classroom tools that support, rather than replace, educator expertise. By analyzing classroom challenges and mastering structured workflows, you will leave with an idea on how to build your own Custom AI Teaching Assistant. This immersive day provides the classroom-ready strategies needed to navigate the AI frontier while helping you complete your requirements to earn 20 NYSED CTLE credits and 2 CEU credits.

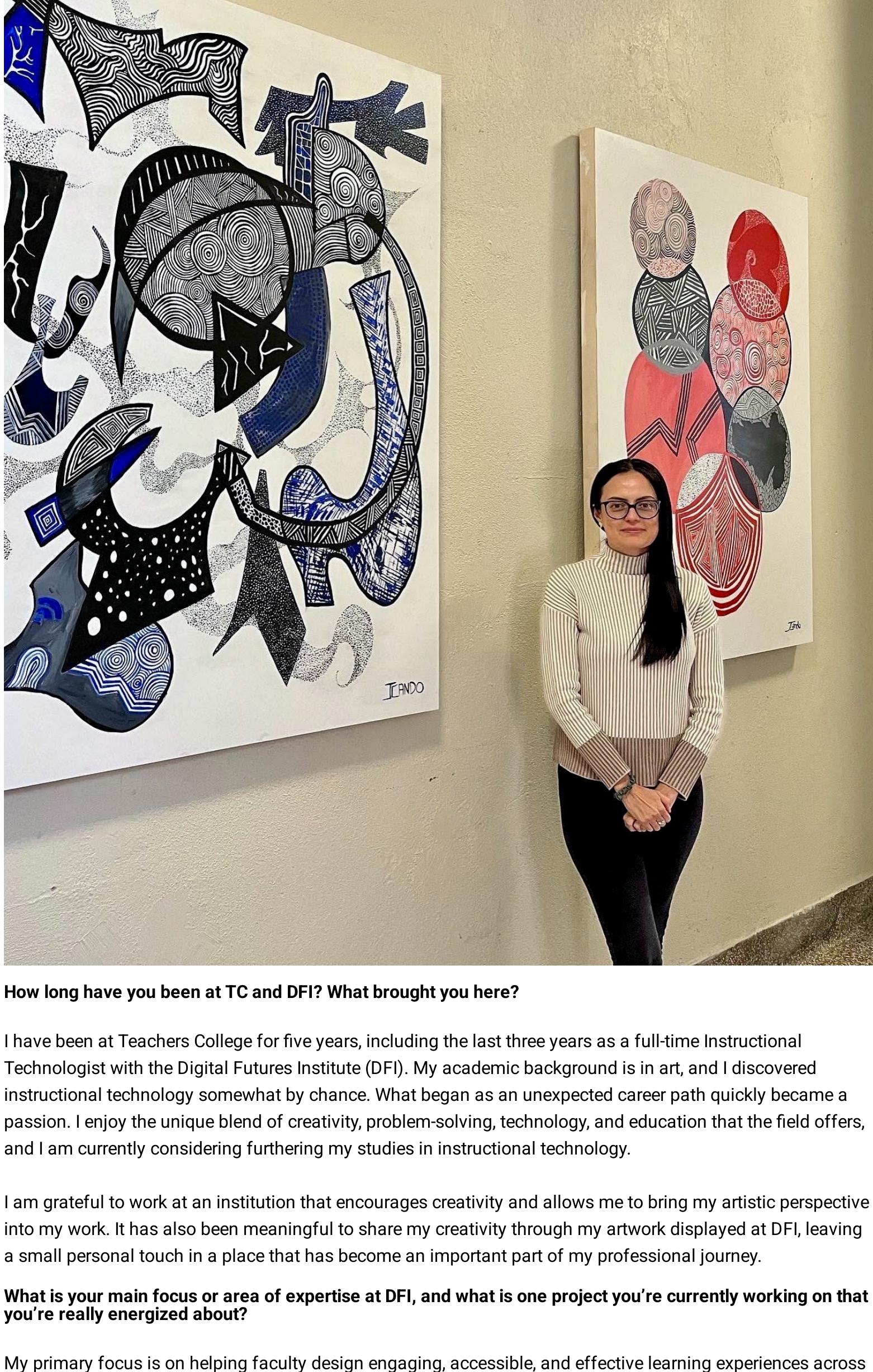
[Register](#)



Who's Who at DFI

This month, we are spotlighting our **Senior Instructional Technologist, Johanna Guastaferro**.

Check out Johanna's answers below to learn more about her and the incredible work she does to support our community year-round.



How long have you been at TC and DFI? What brought you here?

I have been at Teachers College for five years, including the last three years as a full-time Instructional Technologist with the Digital Futures Institute (DFI). My academic background is in art, and I discovered building a new course, revising an existing one, or exploring a new teaching strategy, I enjoy brainstorming ideas and helping faculty find solutions that work for their unique teaching style.

I am grateful to work at an institution that encourages creativity and allows me to bring my artistic perspective into my work. It has also been meaningful to share my creativity through my artwork displayed at DFI, leaving a small personal touch in a place that has become an important part of my professional journey.

What is your main focus or area of expertise at DFI, and what is one project you're currently working on that you're really energized about?

My primary focus is on helping faculty design engaging, accessible, and effective learning experiences across in-person, online, and hybrid environments. I work closely with instructors to leverage Canvas and other educational technologies in ways that support their teaching goals, foster student engagement, and enhance the overall learning experience.

One area I am especially excited about right now is improving and expanding the workshops we offer to faculty. I enjoy creating learning experiences that are practical, interactive, and immediately useful, and I am always looking for new ways to make our sessions more engaging and impactful.

How can faculty best collaborate with you, or what is one DFI resource you wish more people knew about?

The best way to collaborate with me is to reach out early in the course design process. Whether you are building a new course, revising an existing one, or exploring a new teaching strategy, I enjoy brainstorming ideas and helping faculty find solutions that work for their unique teaching style.

One DFI resource I wish more people knew about is our one-on-one consultations. Faculty often think of us as technical support, but we are also partners in course design, accessibility, engagement strategies, and online teaching practices.

Outside of your work at DFI, what is a hobby, book, or personal pursuit keeping you inspired lately?

Outside of work, I still enjoy painting whenever I can find the time. I am also focused on being the best wife and parent I can be, which inspires me to keep learning and growing both personally and professionally. Lately, I have been investing time in expanding my knowledge of instructional technology and emerging educational practices while balancing family life, creativity, and professional growth.