FINAL PROGRAM OUTLINE · October 22, 2026

2026 — 23rd Annual Institute for Emotional Intelligence

Transformative Emotional Intelligence (TEI) for Hope, Resilience & Growth

Practical Tools for Navigating Change, Fostering Connections, and Sustaining Well-Being

November 5–7, 2026 · Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi, Conference Room 210 · **All times Central Standard Time (CST)**

Pre-Conference: TEI Certification Workshop, November 2–4 · Early Registration Wednesday, November 4, 4:30–6:00 PM, Hilton Garden Inn Corpus Christi (Library Room)

Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI · Espindola & Associates Management Group

Schedule at a Glance

Start (CST)	Day 1 · Thursday, November 5 HOPE — Foundations of Hope	Day 2 · Friday, November 6 RESILIENCE — Resilience in a Changing World	Day 3 · Saturday, November 7 GROWTH — Growth in Practice
8:00 AM	**Registration & Check-In**	**Check-In & Coffee**	**Check-In & Coffee**
8:30 AM	**Warm Welcome & Opening Remarks** *Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI* *Espindola & Associates Management Group* *Gary Low, PhD & Rick Hammett, EdD, EITRI Co-Leaders*	**Welcome Back** *Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI*	**Welcome Back** *Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI*
8:50 AM	**KEYNOTE — Al Duncan**	**Dave Rude, EdD (45 min)** *TEIF Update · Center of Excellence Unveiled*	**LTC Crystal Jones, PhD & Gerald Sewell, MA, MS (hybrid)** *The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Holistic Success*
10:00 AM	*Relaxation & Networking*	*Relaxation & Networking*	*Relaxation & Networking*
10:15 AM	**Gary Low, PhD & Rick Hammett, EdD** *TEI and PERL Skills for Lifespan Growth*	**Kevin Peek, PhD & Ali Esmaeili, PhD** *Student EI in an Era of Systemic Challenges*	**Edward Clarke, PhD, MA, MBA, FAAGC & Joshua Kumbula, PhD (virtual)** *Student Teachers on Placement*
11:00 AM	**Tayo O. George, PhD (virtual)** *Traditional Widowhood Practices: Well-Being & Coping Strategies*	**Vinoth Durairaj, PhD (30 min)** *Congruence of Thought, Feeling & Action*	**Delia Mateiaş, PhD with Rick Hammett, EdD & Gary Low, PhD (hybrid)** *Patterns of Authentic Leadership*
12:00 PM	*Lunch & Networking*	**11:45 AM** *Lunch & Networking*	*Lunch & Networking*
1:00 PM	**Dave Rude, EdD & Panel (hybrid)** *TEIF in Action: Instruments & Lessons Learned*	**Fernando X. Gutierrez, MEd & Panel (70 min)** *Think Constructively, Teach/Learn Wisely: A Reflection on the Teacher-Student Connection*	**Gina A. Hawkins, PhD** *Teaching EI to First-Year Students*
1:50 PM	**Glenn Short, MEd, LPC, NCC** *Motivational Dimensions + TEI*	**2:15 PM Michael Higgins, MS (in process) & Rose Baker, PhD, PMP** *UDL for Autistic Learners*	**1:45 PM Fritz Lebowsky, PhD (virtual)** *Exploring an intricate inflection point: Whom are you thankful to about providing inspiring ideas creating the desire of learning better together — today, this week, this month?*
2:50 PM	*Relaxation & Networking*	**3:00 PM** *Relaxation & Networking*	**2:30 PM Thank You — Gary Low, PhD & Rick Hammett, EdD**
3:05 PM	**Lauren Denver-Potter, PhD** *Embedding TEI into an Online Course*	**3:15 PM Michael Higgins, MS (in process) & Rose Baker, PhD, PMP** *AI to Support People with Autism*	**2:45 PM Closing — on to 2027!** *Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI*
3:50 PM	**Day 1 Wrap-Up** *Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI*	**Day 2 Wrap-Up** *Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI*	
4:45 PM	**Mixer · Hilton Garden Inn**		

Shaded rows = breaks. Times in teal inside a box differ from the start time in the left column.

Day 1 — Thursday, November 5, 2026

Theme focus: HOPE · Foundations of Hope · Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI · Espindola & Associates Management Group

Time (CST)	Session & Presenter(s)	Call-for-Programs match	Format · Delivery	Theme · PERL
8:00 – 8:30 AM	**Registration & Check-In** — Coffee and water			
8:30 – 8:45 AM	**Warm Welcome & Opening Remarks** — Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI · Espindola & Associates Management Group · Gary Low, PhD & Rick Hammett, EdD, EITRI Co-Leaders			
8:50 – 9:50 AM	**Opening Keynote** Al Duncan, creator of Duncan Nuggets® and the Five Soft Skills Clusters *First keynote in EITRI history*		Keynote · In person	— PERL: —
10:00 – 10:15 AM	*Morning Relaxation & Networking*			
10:15 – 11:00 AM	**Transformative Emotional Intelligence and PERL Skills for Lifespan Growth: Fostering Connection, Navigating Change, and Sustaining Well-Being** Gary Low, PhD & Rick Hammett, EdD · EILS & EITRI	PERL skills for resilience & growth; positive psychology	Lecture + interactive workshop · In person	**Hope · Resilience · Growth** PERL: P · E · R · L
11:00 – 11:45 AM	**Traditional Widowhood Practices: Well-Being & Coping Strategies (virtual)** Tayo O. George, PhD · Dept. of Sociology, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria	Well-being & coping through life transitions (human condition)	Presentation · Virtual	— PERL: —
12:00 – 12:45 PM	*Lunch & Networking*			
1:00 – 1:45 PM	**TEIF in Action: Panel Discussion on Instruments, Application, and Lessons Learned (Hybrid)** Dave Rude, EdD · TEI Foundation, with panelists (to be named)	Applying TEI assessments (PEM, SCALE, ESAP) in practice	Panel + skills practice · Hybrid (in person / virtual)	**Hope · Resilience · Growth** PERL: P · E · R · L
1:50 – 2:50 PM	**Integrating Motivational Dimensions with Transformative Emotional Intelligence: A Comprehensive Learning Framework** Glenn Short, MEd, LPC, NCC · Sul Ross State University	Inner knowledge & self-mastery (positive psychology)	Lecture · In person	**Hope · Resilience · Growth** PERL: P · E · L
2:50 – 3:05 PM	*Afternoon Relaxation & Networking*			
3:05 – 3:50 PM	**Embedding the TEI Process into an Online Course** Lauren Denver-Potter, PhD · Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi	Teaching TEI online; connection in virtual learning	Lecture · In person	**Hope · Growth** PERL: P · E · R · L
3:50 – 4:00 PM	**Day 1 Wrap-Up** — Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI · Espindola & Associates Management Group			
4:45 – 5:45 PM	**Networking Mixer** — Hilton Garden Inn Corpus Christi			

Day 2 — Friday, November 6, 2026

Theme focus: RESILIENCE · Resilience in a Changing World · Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI · Espindola & Associates Management Group

Time (CST)	Session & Presenter(s)	Call-for-Programs match	Format · Delivery	Theme · PERL
8:00 – 8:30 AM	**Check-In & Coffee**			
8:30 – 8:45 AM	**Welcome Back** — Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI · Espindola & Associates Management Group			
8:50 – 9:35 AM	**TEI Foundation Update — Unveiling the TEI Center of Excellence** Dave Rude, EdD · Board President, TEI Foundation	Future directions for TEI	Interactive workshop · In person	**Hope · Resilience · Growth** PERL: P · E · R · L
10:00 – 10:15 AM	*Morning Relaxation & Networking*			
10:15 – 11:00 AM	**Recommendations for Developing Student Emotional Intelligence in an Era of Unprecedented Systemic Challenges** Kevin Peek, PhD & Ali Esmaeili, PhD · South Texas College	Education & career readiness; AI-related job change	Lecture + interactive workshop · In person	**Hope · Resilience · Growth** PERL: P · E · R · L
11:00 – 11:30 AM	**Exploring the Inner World of Emotions: Creating Congruence of Thought, Feeling, and Action** Vinoth Durairaj, PhD · Pegasus Institute for Excellence, India	Self-exploration & emotional awareness (positive psychology)	Experiential / skills practice · In person	**Hope · Resilience** PERL: P · E · L
11:45 AM – 12:45 PM	*Lunch & Networking*			
1:00 – 2:10 PM	**Think Constructively, Teach/Learn Wisely: A Reflection on the Teacher-Student Connection** Fernando X. Gutierrez, MEd (Educational Administration / Principal Leadership), and panelists	Teacher-student connection; teaching & learning TEI	Panel · In person	**—** PERL: —
2:15 – 3:00 PM	**Adapting Universal Design for Learning Standards to Autistic Learners Across Diverse Educational Environments** Michael Higgins & Rose Baker, PhD, PMP · University of North Texas	Inclusive education & training design	Lecture + discussion · In person	**Resilience** PERL: P · E · R · L
3:00 – 3:15 PM	*Afternoon Relaxation & Networking*			
3:15 – 3:45 PM	**Utilization of Artificial Intelligence to Mitigate Cognitive Deficits in People with Autism** Michael Higgins & Rose Baker, PhD, PMP · University of North Texas	AI and the human experience; ethics	Lecture + discussion · In person	**Resilience** PERL: P · E · R · L
3:50 – 4:00 PM	**Day 2 Wrap-Up** — Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI · Espindola & Associates Management Group			

Day 3 — Saturday, November 7, 2026

Theme focus: GROWTH · Growth in Practice · Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI · Espindola & Associates Management Group

Time (CST)	Session & Presenter(s)	Call-for-Programs match	Format · Delivery	Theme · PERL
8:00 – 8:30 AM	**Check-In & Coffee**			
8:30 – 8:45 AM	**Welcome Back** — Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI · Espindola & Associates Management Group			
8:50 – 9:50 AM	**The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Holistic Success (hybrid)** LTC Crystal Jones, PhD & Gerald Sewell, MA, MS · U.S. Army Command and General Staff College	Work-life harmony; organizational development	Research + interactive workshop · Hybrid (in person / virtual)	**Hope · Resilience · Growth** PERL: P · E · R · L
10:00 – 10:15 AM	*Morning Relaxation & Networking*			
10:15 – 11:00 AM	**Emotional Competence of Student Teachers on Placement: A Mixed-Methods Pilot in Gauteng and Limpopo (virtual)** Edward Clarke, PhD, MA, MBA, FAAGC & Joshua Kumbula, PhD · Thuto Trust	Teacher preparation; recent research	Research presentation · Virtual	**Resilience · Growth** PERL: P · E · R · L
11:00 – 11:45 AM	**Patterns of Authentic Leadership for Agile Organizations (hybrid)** Delia Elena Mateiaş, PhD · University of Bucharest, with Rick Hammett, EdD & Gary Low, PhD	Recent TEI research (600 top leaders)	Research presentation · Hybrid (Delia virtual; Hammett & Low in person)	**Growth** PERL: P · E · R
12:00 – 12:45 PM	*Lunch & Networking*			
1:00 – 1:45 PM	**Teaching Emotional Intelligence to First-Year College Students** Gina A. Hawkins, PhD · Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi	Academic achievement & career development	Research presentation · In person	**Resilience · Growth** PERL: P · E · R · L
1:45 – 2:30 PM	**Exploring an intricate inflection point: Whom are you thankful to about providing inspiring ideas creating the desire of learning better together — today, this week, this month? (virtual)** Fritz Lebowsky, PhD · Founder & CEO, FLY-CE-SAI Solutions SASU · Grenoble, France	Gratitude & inspiration for learning together (positive psychology)	Presentation · Virtual	**—** PERL: —
2:30 – 2:45 PM	**Thank You** — Gary Low, PhD & Rick Hammett, EdD			
2:45 – 3:00 PM	**Closing: Wrap of the 2026 TEI Conference — and on to 2027!** — Moderator: Grace Espindola, MSW, BBA, C-TEI · Espindola & Associates Management Group			

Virtual Presenters — Local Time Check

U.S. clocks fall back November 1, so the conference runs on CST (UTC−6). Virtual sessions sit in the morning (no later than 7:00 PM local time), except Fritz Lebowsky on Day 3 at 1:45 PM.

Virtual presenter	Day	Conference time	Presenter location	Their local time
Tayo O. George	Day 1 · Thu Nov 5	11:00 AM CST	Nigeria (WAT)	**6:00 PM**
Delia Elena Mateiaş	Day 3 · Sat Nov 7	11:00 AM CST	Romania (EET)	**7:00 PM**
Edward Clarke & Joshua Kumbula	Day 3 · Sat Nov 7	10:15 AM CST	South Africa (SAST)	**6:15 PM**