Annual Report
2025-2026 Academic Year
September, 2026

Executive Summary

During the 2025–2026 academic year, the SCIENCE Collaborative community successfully accomplished the following goals:

- Developed and implemented network structures and practices to provide long-term fiscal stability for our community.
- Laid the foundation to scale our initiatives for broader and greater impact.
- Continued supporting and enhancing our network for educators, staff, students, and administrators.
- Supported 4 Communities of Practice (CoPs) in directly implementing evidence-based teaching and learning strategies.

Our community currently comprises approximately 300 educators, staff, students, and administrators across 14 institutions. This reflects an ~31% increase in membership over the past year and an ~140% increase over the last two years. Across our 4 CoPs, 13,631 students were enrolled in supported courses across more than 16 disciplines. Additional institutional programming expanded our reach, supporting more than 15,000 students across the entire Collaborative. Our work is a grassroots effort driven by the needs of our students, educators, and institutions.

2025-2026 Design Team

As the governing body of the SCIENCE Collaborative, the Design Team oversees our network mission, supports initiatives, engages the community, manages process design, and guides strategic planning. Members for the 2025–2026 academic year were:

Katie Johnson, SCIENCE Collaborative Executive Director
Gabie Smith, Elon University, Design Team Lead
Tamar Bernfeld, University of Iowa, Students as Partners Lead
Joan Esson, Otterbein University, Alternative Grading Lead
Christine Rodriguez, Fairfield University, Ascend Lead
Shoshana Zeisman-Pereyo, Portland State University, Corequisite CoP Lead
Gary Lewandowski, Xavier University, Finance Lead

Collaborative-wide Initiatives
In the summer of 2025, representatives from all 14 institutions collaborated to refine the SCIENCE Collaborative's vision, focus, and core terminology, building upon the original framework established in 2021. This revised framework informed our updated branding, logo, and website (studentsuccessinSTEM.org). To address evolving communication needs, the community also adopted Basecamp as our centralized platform for messaging, resource sharing, and scheduling.

The Collaborative sponsored 4 CoPs, each dedicated to a specific evidence-based teaching and learning practice. These groups met monthly and were further supported by trainings, special events, and an in-person workshop.

In the spring of 2026, the SCIENCE Collaborative community adopted an institutionally funded model to ensure long-term sustainability by securing ongoing operational funding. Transitioning away from sole reliance on grant funding, this model guarantees support for core operations while enabling expansion through additional project funding. Supplementary revenue has already been secured through sponsorship agreements and successful grant applications, including an NSF-IUSE conference grant of just under $100,000. This conference grant was one of four proposals submitted during the 2025–2026 academic year, with two additional proposals currently in development.

Participation and Impact of Communities of Practice
Each CoP within the SCIENCE Collaborative supports educators, staff, administrators, and students implementing evidence-based practices. Detailed assessment efforts are underway across all CoPs to evaluate program impact; specific findings are available in their respective 2025–2026 CoP impact reports.

Ascend CoP
Established in the fall of 2024, the Ascend CoP supported the implementation of the Ascend classroom climate survey by 71 faculty members across 10 institutions during the 2025–2026 academic year. Administered up to three times per semester, the survey gathers student feedback to help instructors make timely course adjustments and provides relevant pedagogical resources. A total of 4,702 students were enrolled in courses participating in the Collaborative-wide Ascend survey implementation.

Alternative Grading CoP
The Alternative Grading Community of Practice was established in the spring of 2025, with the goal that each participant adopt alternative grading in at least one course during the 2025–2026 academic year. The community provided peer support and collaboration for instructors across all 14 institutions as they designed and implemented modified courses. In July 2025, Otterbein University hosted 23 community members from 12 institutions for a two-day in-person workshop. Over the course of the academic year, 63 faculty and staff actively engaged with the CoP, teaching more than 60 courses and reaching 2,623 students.

Corequisite Courses CoP
The Corequisite Course Community of Practice was launched in the spring of 2025 to focus on designing, implementing, and evaluating corequisite courses across various STEM disciplines. During the 2025–2026 academic year, 50 faculty and staff from 8 institutions engaged with the CoP, with 5 institutions actively delivering corequisite courses serving 810 students. For the 2026–2027 academic year, the CoP is transitioning to a Network of Expertise to facilitate ongoing dialogue and support without requiring regular meetings.

Students as Partners Community of Practice
Formed in fall 2023 with two institutions, the Students as Partners Community of Practice offers logistical guidance, support, and theoretical frameworks for institutional programs that engage students as observers and co-creators of courses and curricula. During the 2025–2026 academic year, 7 institutions participated, with 5 fully implementing programs and the remaining 2 scheduled to launch in fall 2026. Over the past year, 46 faculty/staff and 37 students actively participated, impacting 5,496 students enrolled in participating courses across the Collaborative.

Looking Forward to 2026-2027
For the 2026–2027 academic year, the Design Team will direct the SCIENCE Collaborative's efforts toward three primary goals: 1) nurturing and expanding community relationships, 2) executing our sustainable fiscal structure, and 3) developing a Collaborative-wide framework for measuring and demonstrating impact on student success. The network plans to onboard 2–4 new institutions during 2026–2027, with recruitment and onboarding currently underway. Grant writing and sponsorship development efforts will continue at an active or expanded level.

Moving into the new academic year, the Collaborative will expand its professional development offerings from a single model (CoPs) to three distinct structures: Working Groups, CoPs, and Networks of Expertise. Three CoPs will remain active (Alternative Grading, Ascend, and Students as Partners) to build upon their current momentum; the Alternative Grading CoP held an in-person workshop at the University of Iowa in July 2026. A new Working Group focused on AI and student learning is currently being co-developed as a precursor to a potential CoP. Additionally, two focus areas (Corequisite Courses and Peer-to-Peer Student Learning) will transition into Networks of Expertise, providing continuous community connection and resource sharing without formal meeting schedules.