

NEXTGEI

Empowering the Next Generation of Educational Leaders

2026 Annual Report



The Rowan University College of Education's Next Generation Education Initiative (NextGEI) is centered around educational transformation. Launched in the spring of 2025, NextGEI connects students, faculty, staff, and alumni to innovative ideas shaping and advancing education. NextGEI seeks to create educational disruptors who see existing needs within our colleges, universities, schools, and classrooms and create solutions.

Discoveries in Education

Powered by NextGEI, Discoveries in Education launched at the beginning of the Fall 2025 semester. It spotlights the many ways the College of Education's community shapes the present and future of education. Discoveries in Education featured 20 stories of current students, alumni, and faculty with an entrepreneurial mindset in education. Based on NextGEI's core mission, Discoveries in Education enabled the College of Education to show how every step forward in education matters, whether it's a bold innovation, a quiet breakthrough, or a simple shift that makes learning more meaningful. Our year-end event brought together our entrepreneurial Discoveries in Education spotlights, innovative guest speakers, and NextGEI supporters for an evening of celebration and honoring.



SCAN FOR DISCOVERIES
IN EDUCATION STORIES

NEXTGEI



“Saying yes doesn't guarantee success, but saying no guarantees that you'll stay exactly where you are. In education, we talk about innovation. We talk about growth. We talk about preparing students for the future, but you can't grow if you're afraid to say yes. You don't need a perfect plan. You don't need to feel ready. You don't need permission. You just need one word — yes. And if you're still not sure, start small. Say yes to something that scares you a little, because you never know where that might take you.”

— **Matt Groark, Educator, Founder of Groark Boys BBQ, & Author**
Featured Guest Speaker: Year-End Celebration | 03/24/2026



Featured Guest Speakers



Dr. Kara Ieva
College of Education Professor &
In the Moment Group CEO



Dr. Keisha Stephenson-Taylor
Senior Director at NAF



TD Bank
Greg Carlisle, Mike Dick,
Gary Gilmore, & Doug Stasuk



Matt Groark
College of Education Alumnus,
Educator, Founder of Groark Boys
BBQ, & Author

A Message From NextGEI's Founder & Coordinator



Since 2025, I have had the distinct privilege of leading the Next Generation Education Initiative and witnessing its growth into a dynamic force for educational transformation. What began as a vision to connect people with innovative ideas has evolved into a thriving community of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and partners who are actively shaping the future of education. Through our workshops, keynote events, and collaborative experiences, we have not only explored entrepreneurial thinking – we have put it into practice. We have created meaningful opportunities for individuals to move from ideas to action, and in doing so, we have cultivated a network of educators who are prepared to challenge convention and lead change.

One of the most powerful outcomes of this work has been the launch of Discoveries in Education, which reflects our belief that innovation happens every day—in both bold initiatives and quiet breakthroughs that make learning more impactful. I have been continually inspired by the creativity, passion, and commitment of our community. These experiences have reinforced for me that when educators embrace an entrepreneurial mindset, they expand their ability to solve problems, seize opportunities, and ultimately make a greater difference in the lives of others. I encourage each of you to continue pushing beyond traditional boundaries – lean into your ideas, take thoughtful risks, and remain committed to creating solutions that will shape the future of education.

I am deeply grateful to TD Bank for its visionary leadership and generous support, which has made this initiative possible. Their investment extends far beyond funding—they have provided expertise, guidance, and inspiration that have strengthened every aspect of our programming. Because of their partnership, we have been able to empower our community to think differently, act boldly, and turn ideas into meaningful impact. As we look ahead, I am confident that, together, we will continue to build on this momentum and create even greater possibilities for education and the world it serves.

— Dr. Joanne Connor | College of Education Senior Associate Dean, External Affairs

NEXTGEI

2025-2026 Events

12/04/2025 | *Leading With Heart: Building a Well-Being Business from the Ground Up* with **Dr. Kara Ieva** (College of Education Professor & In the Moment Group CEO)

01/27/2026 | *From Idea to Impact: Launching Your Consulting Empire* with **Dr. Keisha Stephenson-Taylor** (Senior Director, NAF)

02/25/2026 | *Developing a Business Plan* with **TD Bank's Gary Gilmore** (Vice President: Relationship Manager, Commercial Banking), **Mike Dick** (Vice President: Relationship Manager), & **Doug Stasuk** (Senior Vice President: Retail Banking)

03/24/2026 | NextGEI's Year-End Celebration with **Matt Groark** (College of Education Alumnus, Educator, Founder of Groark Boys BBQ, & Author)

Sponsoring for Success



This academic year, TD Bank, a proud sponsor of NextGEI, hosted a hands-on business plan-building event. Attendees received templates, tools, and expert tips to turn their ideas into action. Additionally, they gained practical insights into creating a strong business plan and starting and sustaining a business.

Partnering for Possibilities



A resourceful partner, Rowan's Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship helps attendees actualize their entrepreneurial visions. The Center co-hosts NextGEI events and helps secure faculty guest speakers.