



THEME: *Engage 360: Adventure, Innovation, and Immersive Impact*

A dynamic journey through touchpoints, transformation, and technology in hospitality, tourism, and event education.

DESCRIPTION:

Set against the backdrop of the immersive and adventure-rich Kalahari Resorts in the Pocono Mountains, the 2026 NENA Conference invites you to explore engagement from all angles—where high-tech meets hands-on, and where academic excellence converges with real-world impact.

Engage 360: Adventure, Innovation, and Immersive Impact offers a panoramic experience that reflects the evolving terrain of hospitality, tourism, and event education. Drawing inspiration from the resort’s spirit of exploration, this year’s theme embraces both cutting-edge technologies and timeless touchpoints that fuel connection, creativity, and career readiness.

From classroom breakthroughs and virtual tools to experiential learning and community-centered design, this conference empowers educators, scholars, and industry professionals to navigate the future with curiosity, purpose, and adventure. Join us for a journey that blends strategy with storytelling, research with relevance, and tradition with transformation—all within a setting built for exploration.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- 1. Explore Dynamic Engagement Frameworks**
Participants will evaluate the impact of both high-tech and high-touch engagement strategies across hospitality, tourism, and event education, gaining insight into balancing innovation with human connection.
- 2. Apply Experiential Learning Through Immersive Activities**
Participants will actively engage in experiential pedagogy—such as simulations, property tours, and service-learning projects—to translate theory into practice and foster deeper student-centered learning.
- 3. Advance Technology Integration for Teaching and Learning**
Participants will experiment with emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, to reimagine curriculum design and student collaboration, with emphasis on ethical use, accessibility, and practical applications.
- 4. Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaboration and Student Voice**
Participants will co-create actionable strategies to elevate student voices and foster partnerships between academia and industry through competitions, panels, and networking opportunities that reflect current student and employer needs.

Friday, March 27

11:00 am Registration Open

1:00 pm - Opening Session - Zambizi

Opening Remarks - Maureen Peters Gittelman, NENA President

Remarks - Don Pleau, General Manager of Kalahari

Warm-Up Activity

Closing Remarks - Maria Matthews, NENA Vice President

1:15 pm Let's Adventure

Pick Your Adventure	Round 1 1:15 - 1:45	Round 2 2:00 - 2:30
1	Behind the Slides Scavenger Hunt Art Tour	
2		
3		

2:30 pm Afternoon Snack - Zambizi

3:00 - 4:30 pm - AI Session - Zambizi

Each presenter will introduce their AI concept. After the spotlight round, each presenter will host a table where participants can dive deeper into the concept. Participants will rotate between tables every 20-25 minutes, engaging with multiple presenters, asking questions, and gathering practical insights.

Presenters:

- AI in Action: Designing Experiential Learning with Artificial Intelligence - Christine Cleaver, NYU
- Reinforcing the Need for Human Skills in an AI World - Ruth O'Rourke, Delaware County Community College, Sheryl Kline, University of Delaware, Fred Mayo, NYU
- The Digital Twin Classroom: Trusting AI as an Autonomous Co-Instructor in Hospitality Education - Yiran Liu, James Madison University, Chang Ma, University of South Carolina

- From ChatGPT to Canvas: Bridging AI, Access, and Equity in the Classroom - Miguel Baltazar, James Madison University - Hart School of Hospitality, Sport and Recreation Management

4:45 - 5:45 pm Service Learning Project - Zambizi

Feminine Hygiene Kit Building With United Way of the Poconos for Pleasant Valley Ecumenical Network (PVEN) Food Pantry

6:00 pm - 8:00 pm Opening Reception - Zambizi

Opening Remarks - Maureen Peters Gittelman, NENA President

Remarks - Chris Barrett, President, Pocono CVB

Networking Activity

Closing Remarks - Maria Matthews, NENA Vice President

Networking

Saturday, March 28

8 am Breakfast - Salon E

Opening Remarks - Maureen Peters Gittelman, NENA President

Rapid Poster Presentation

- Revenue Management in Hospitality: Evolution, Impact, and Future Directions - Miguel Baltazar, James Madison University - Hart School of Hospitality, Sport and Recreation Management

Legacy Lecture Conversation with David Schweiger - Interviewed By: Christine Cleaver, Rebecca Heid, Ruth O'Rourke

Closing Remarks - Maria Matthews, NENA Vice President

Connection Time

9:15 am Connection Activity - Jenga with Questions and Conversation - Salon E

10:10 NENA Photo - Metal Tree

10:15 - 11:45 am - Breakout One

Timing				
	<p>Salon G</p> <p>Research Paper Presentations</p> <p>1 session, 40 minutes</p>	<p>Salon F</p> <p>Professional, Program, Curriculum Development</p> <p>2 sessions, 20 minutes each</p>	<p>Salon H</p> <p>Experiential Pedagogy</p> <p>1 session, 40 minutes</p>	<p>Salon E</p> <p>Student</p> <p>2 sessions, 20 minutes each</p>
<p>10:15 - 10:55 am</p>	<p>Beyond Satisfaction: How Idiosyncratic Service Experience Shapes Behavioral Intentions in Boutique Hotels</p> <p>Yongwook Ju, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania</p> <p>SooCheong (Shawn) Jang, Purdue University</p>	<p>Co-Creating Workforce Futures: Lessons from a Tri-Sector Hospitality Partnership</p> <p>Minkyung Park, George Mason University</p> <p>Jai Girard, Virginia Restaurant, Lodging, and Travel Association</p>	<p>Dr. Med Kharback</p> <p><i>AI in the Classroom: Enabling Critical Thinking</i></p>	<p>Lego - Mini Figure Activity</p>
<p>11:00 - 11:45 am</p>	<p>Immersion and Narrative Transportation: How 360-Degree</p>	<p>The Meta-Guest Experience</p> <p>Damien</p>		<p>Personality Poker</p>

	Virtual Sustainable Farm Tours Shape Consumers' Local Produce Advocacy Anni Ding, Pennsylvania State University Amit Sharma, Pennsylvania State University	Duchamp, Hospitalente		
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11:45 pm Lunch 45 Minutes - Salon E

Remarks - Maureen Peters Gittelman, NENA President

Rapid Poster Presentations

- Re-humanizing the Frontline Employees: The Effect of Workplace Fun on Self-objectification - Xiaolu Huang, Pennsylvania State University, Heyao Yu, Pennsylvania State University, Michael Tews, Pennsylvania State University
- Applying Situational Effects to Understand the Intention to Use Online Food Delivery Services in Travel Situations - Ju Yeon Shin, Virginia Tech, Manisha Singal, Virginia Tech, Eojina Kim, Virginia Tech

Dining And Conversation

Closing Remarks - Maria Matthews, NENA Vice President

12:30 - 2:00 pm - Breakout Two

Timing	Tracks - 2 sessions, 20 minutes each			
	Salon G Research	Salon F Professional, Program,	Salon H Experiential Pedagogy	Salon E Student

	1 session, 40 minutes	Curriculum Development 1 session, 40 minutes	2 sessions, 20 minutes each	
12:30 - 1:15 pm	<p>Sleeping to Serve Better: A Self-Regulatory Perspective on Proactive Customer Service Performance</p> <p>Yanqiao Lei, Penn state</p>	<p>Reimagining Online Hospitality Education for Today's Learners: Designing Inclusive, Workforce-Ready Curriculum</p> <p>Allyson Schrimper-Mino, Miami University</p>	<p>Integrating Consultancy Projects into the Curriculum: A High-Impact Practice</p> <p>Peter Szende, The Culinary Institute of America</p> <p>Experiential Learning Through Community Industry Partnerships</p> <p>Joseph Scarcelli, York College of Pennsylvania</p>	Student AI Competition
1:15 - 2:00 pm	<p>Title: AI Adoption in Tourism and Hospitality Education: Insights from Undergraduate Students</p> <p>Maria Matthews, Mount Saint Vincent</p>	<p>The Arsenal: A Customer Service Tool</p> <p>Damien Duchamp Hospitalented</p>	<p>Mentored Momentum: Leveraging Conference Preparation as a High-Impact Practice in Hospitality and Tourism Management Education</p> <p>Frank Tsai, Slippery</p>	

	University		Rock University of Pennsylvania Lisa Kate Price-Howard, Troy University James Dombrosky, Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania Frugal Fun: Designing Accessible Learning Activities That Foster Autonomy, Competence, and Connection with Limited Resources Thomas Little Penn State Yoko Negoro Penn State Phil Jolly Penn State	
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2:15 Afternoon Snack - Salon E

3:00 Keynote - Dr. Med Kharback - AI Impacts on Higher Education - Salon E

4:00 Simulation - Salon E

5:15 - Evening Remarks - Best Part of Your Adventure So Far - Salon E

5:30 - Evening Adventure On Your Own

Sunday March 29

8:30 am - 9:00 am Breakfast - Salon E

9:00 am Session

Opening Remarks - Maureen Peters Gittelman, NENA President

Rapid Poster Presentations

- The Tipping Dilemma: A comprehensive comparison of tipping practices and their respective effects on employee retention and customer sentiment in the U.S. and Europe - Chloe Deters, NYU, Jacob Gorovoy, NYU, Anjali Felder, NYU
- Tourism Without Borders: Examining Cross-Border Tourism as an Integrated Ecosystem in the Niagara Falls Region - Alison Jordan, Mount Saint Vincent University, Keith Gallie, Mount Saint Vincent University, Brenda MacDonald Lona, Mount Saint Vincent University, Maria Matthews, Mount Saint Vincent University

Best Paper Presentation

Best Eta Sigma Delta Poster

Bridging the Gap: Student Talent Meets Industry Reality Panel - Moderator - Maria Matthews

This interactive and honest panel explores the transition from classroom to career through the voices of students and industry professionals navigating that journey in real time. Bringing together three students and three professionals from hotels/resorts, food & beverage, and events, the session goes beyond résumés and job titles to address what really shapes career readiness.

Panelists will discuss the realities—and anxieties—students face as they prepare for interviews, internships, and their first full-time roles, including fears around confidence, expectations, imposter syndrome, and “getting it right” on day one. Industry professionals will respond candidly, sharing what they look for in emerging talent, common misconceptions they see, and how experiential learning—whether through internships, class projects, campus roles, or live events—builds skills, mindset, and resilience over time.

Designed to reflect students at different stages of professional exposure, this session emphasizes perceived value as well as lived experience, highlighting how learning by doing prepares students for an evolving hospitality and events landscape. The conversation will surface lessons learned on both sides and offer practical insights for educators, students, and industry leaders committed to building stronger, more human-centered career pipelines.

Closing Remarks - Maria Matthews, NENA Vice President

10:15 am NENA Business Meeting - Salon E

10:45 am Awards and Closing Remarks - Salon E

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