

In this issue:

- Profile Spotlight: Student Experience Program Participants
- Looking Back at the 2026 Midwest RCD Annual Meeting
 - 103 People. 30 Institutions. One Growing Community
 - AI Wasn't Just a Track; It Was Woven Throughout the Meeting
 - The Hallway Conversations Mattered as Much as the Presentations
- Midwest RCD in Action
- The 2025-2026 RCD Emerging Leaders Cohort: Building Momentum
 - Speaker Series: Leadership Beyond the Technology
 - Site Visit: University of Minnesota
 - Connecting with the Broader RCD Community
- Residency Fellows Program: Funding Opportunities Available
- Get Involved: Learn About the Affinity Group Application Process
- Student Opportunities
- Upcoming Related Events and Opportunities

Midwest Research Computing and Data Consortium

Midwest RCD Newsletter

September 3, 2026



Midwest RCD Profile Spotlight: Student Experience Program Participants

- **Ali Belhrak**, Grand Valley State University
- **Edgar Cruz**, Grand Valley State University
- **Hajoon Yi**, Grand Valley State University
- **Naihao Deng**, University of Michigan

Series: Exploring the Landscape of Midwest Research Computing and Data Consortium

This is a series where we're diving into the world of the Midwest Research Computing and Data Consortium, exploring its members,

the challenges, and future prospects. In this edition, we feature participants from the **2026 Midwest RCD Annual Meeting Student Experience Program (SEP)**.

The Student Experience Program pairs students with experienced RCD professionals and provides opportunities to explore the field through mentorship, networking, and participation in the Annual Meeting. This year, four students from two institutions participated in the program, with three of the four students representing a non-R1 institution.

In the profiles below, participants reflect on their experiences, what they learned from engaging with the RCD community, and how the program has influenced their academic and professional goals.

[Read the Interview with Student Participants](#) →

[Recommend a Colleague for a Profile Spotlight Interview](#) →

**Midwest Research Computing
and Data Consortium
Annual Meeting**



**103 People. 30
Institutions. One Growing
Community!**



The **2026 Midwest RCD Consortium Annual Meeting** took place **May 6–7** at the **Big Ten Conference Center in Rosemont, Illinois**, bringing together **103 participants from 30 institutions** across the Midwest and beyond. The meeting welcomed research computing professionals, faculty, cyberinfrastructure leaders, students, and national partners, including **27 attendees from non-R1 institutions**, reflecting the Consortium's ongoing commitment to broadening participation and strengthening the regional RCD ecosystem.

Over two days, attendees explored topics spanning artificial intelligence, quantum computing, research networking, workforce development, cyberinfrastructure, and institutional strategy. While the sessions covered a wide range of emerging technologies and operational challenges, one theme surfaced again and again: institutions are navigating many of the same opportunities and obstacles. Whether the conversation centered on deploying AI, modernizing infrastructure, supporting researchers, or building sustainable service models, participants weren't just exchanging ideas—they were sharing practical experiences and solutions that others could adapt and bring back to their own campuses.

[Read More about Past Annual Network Meetings](#)



AI wasn't just a track; it was woven throughout the meeting.

From Ian Foster's keynote on agentic AI for scientific discovery to technical sessions on AI-enabled HPC, infrastructure planning, and emerging workflows, the discussions reflected a broader shift: AI is no longer an emerging topic in research computing; it's becoming part of the day-to-day work of supporting research.

The hallway conversations mattered as much as the presentations.

The highest-rated part of the meeting wasn't a technical session, it was the networking reception. Participants consistently highlighted the opportunity to connect with peers, compare experiences, and build relationships that continue long after the meeting ends. That sense of community has always been one of the Consortium's greatest strengths, and this year's meeting reinforced its importance.

Want the full picture?

The complete Annual Meeting Report includes attendee demographics, session highlights, survey findings, and key recommendations that will help shape future Consortium programming.

[Read the Full 2026 Annual Meeting Report](#)

Midwest RCD in Action

Highlighting the collaborations and ideas that continue long after our meetings end.

From Panel Discussion to Ongoing Collaboration

A panel discussion on LLM inferencing services at the **2025 Midwest RCD Annual Meeting** sparked an ongoing collaboration among participants from Purdue University, the University of Kentucky, the Ohio Supercomputer Center, and other institutions. What began as a conference session evolved into a regular forum where colleagues continue to exchange ideas, compare technical approaches, and share lessons learned as they develop AI services at their own institutions.

"One of the biggest benefits wasn't that we all adopted the same solution—it was having a trusted group of peers to bounce ideas off of and learn from as we built services that made sense for our own institutions."

— Karen Tomko, Ohio Supercomputer Center

Strength in Shared Data

Another collaboration began with a simple question. Following the Annual Meeting, Preston Smith invited colleagues across the Consortium to contribute GPU utilization data for a proposed **PEARC'26** paper. Although the paper was ultimately not accepted, the effort produced something equally valuable: participating institutions gained access to a richer, multi-institutional dataset that offered new insights into GPU usage patterns, highlighting both shared trends and the unique characteristics of individual research computing environments.

As Karen Tomko reflected, the collaboration demonstrated that the value wasn't limited to the publication itself, it was in the opportunity to learn from one another through shared data and collective analysis.

The 2025-2026 Midwest RCD Emerging Leaders Cohort: Building Momentum

The inaugural Midwest RCD Emerging Leaders cohort continues to make the most of every opportunity to learn, connect, and grow. Since our last newsletter, the cohort has participated in leadership conversations with experienced RCD professionals, visited another Midwest institution to learn about its research computing ecosystem, and joined the broader community at the 2026 Midwest RCD Annual Meeting. Together, these experiences continue to strengthen the cohort's leadership skills while expanding their professional networks across the region.

[Read the Fellows' Bios](#)

What The Cohort Has Been Up To:

Speaker Series: Leadership Beyond the Technology

The Emerging Leaders cohort continued its Speaker Series with an engaging conversation facilitated by **Maureen Biggers**, former Executive Director of Indiana University's Center of Excellence for Women & Technology and a longtime leader in National Science Foundation-supported broadening participation initiatives. She was joined by **Kristy Long**, Associate CIO for Infrastructure and Chief of Staff at the University of Oregon, and **Von Welch**, former Associate Vice President for Information Security at Indiana University and Executive Director of the Center for Applied Cybersecurity Research. Together, they shared candid reflections on the leadership experiences, career decisions, and lessons that shaped their professional journeys.

Rather than focusing on career milestones alone, the conversation explored what truly prepares someone to lead: building trust, finding mentors and sponsors, communicating with purpose, navigating organizational change, and creating impact wherever you are.

Reflecting on the turning points in her own career, Long emphasized that technical competence alone is rarely enough to propel someone into leadership.

"I learned that just being competent and doing a good job does not get you ahead. I learned about relationships. I learned about networks. I learned about sponsors."

She encouraged fellows to intentionally cultivate professional relationships, seek out mentors and sponsors, and recognize that career growth often comes from the people who challenge you, advocate for you, and broaden your perspective.

Long also shared one of her favorite leadership philosophies—"Help me **get an A.**" Rather than trying to have all the answers, she approaches conversations with colleagues by inviting them to help achieve the best possible outcome. She explained that this simple mindset fosters trust, lowers barriers, and encourages collaboration by making others feel like valued partners rather than passive participants.

Drawing on more than three decades of experience in research computing and cybersecurity, Welch reinforced that leadership is ultimately about people.

"Leadership is about 10–20% technology. The rest is people skills."

He encouraged fellows to invest in relationships, communicate consistently, and build networks both within and beyond their institutions. According to Welch, influence comes less from formal authority than from earning trust, understanding people, and helping others succeed.

While their career paths were different, both speakers arrived at the same conclusion: leadership isn't defined by a title or technical mastery. It's earned through trust, strengthened by relationships, and measured by the

impact you have on others. It was a fitting message for a cohort preparing to become the next generation of research computing leaders.

Site Visit: University of Minnesota

The cohort's second institutional site visit brought fellows to the **University of Minnesota**, where they were warmly welcomed by **Ben Lynch**, Director of the Minnesota Supercomputing Institute (MSI), and colleagues. On behalf of the Consortium, we extend our sincere thanks to Ben and the entire MSI team for their generous hospitality, thoughtful planning, and willingness to openly share their expertise and experiences.



Over two days, fellows gained an inside look at how a leading research computing organization operates. Through presentations, guided discussions, tours, and interactive Q&A sessions, they explored topics ranging from institutional strategy and sustainable infrastructure to operational resilience, research informatics, outreach and training, and the evolving role of research computing in supporting modern scholarship. A tour of the University's B40 data center and participation in the University's internal Research Computing Exhibition provided additional opportunities to see these ideas in practice.

Equally valuable were the conversations that happened between sessions. As fellows compared their own institutional experiences with those at the University of Minnesota, they exchanged ideas, reflected on common challenges, and strengthened the professional relationships at the heart of the Emerging Leaders program. The visit reinforced one of the program's central goals: learning not only from established leaders, but also from one another as they prepare to shape the future of research computing.

Connecting with the Broader Community

Following their University of Minnesota site visit, the Emerging Leaders cohort reunited at the **2026 Midwest Research Computing and Data Consortium Annual Meeting**, where they stepped beyond the cohort and into the broader research computing community. Alongside more than 100 professionals from 30 institutions, fellows explored emerging topics, exchanged ideas with leaders across the region, and expanded the professional networks they'll continue to build throughout their careers. The meeting also included a dedicated cohort session led by **Todd Shechter** and **Esen Gokpinar-Shelton**, where fellows



reflected on their growth, shared updates on their capstone projects, and looked ahead to the program's final months.

Residency Fellows Program: Funding Available

Have plans to spend time at another Midwest institution to grow your expertise and strengthen CI collaboration? The Midwest RCD **Residency Fellows Program** is here to support you.

The program provides **\$1,200 in travel support** for selected individuals to complete a self-arranged, week-long residency at another Midwest institution. It's a great opportunity to deepen professional connections, gain hands-on experience, and explore new ideas with peers across the region.

Residencies should be co-developed by the applicant and the host institution and must align with the Consortium's mission of collaboration and capacity building in research computing and data. Fellows are asked to share a short reflection or summary of their experience after the visit.

Interested? Reach out for details or submit your proposal at pti@iu.edu

Affinity Groups: Learn More About the Application Process

Affinity Groups provide a platform for collaboration around shared topics of interest in research computing and data.

Have an idea? Propose a new group, and we'll support you in bringing it

to life! We can provide a limited financial support to help you organize events, discussions, and activities that benefit the research computing and data community. Current groups include:

- AI in RCD
- Cryo-EM
- Next Generation Data Centers
- Globus Compute
- Scientific Cloud Computing
- CI Value: Return on Investment and Impact

For further information, please email us at pti@iu.edu

[Learn More About Affinity Groups](#)

[Affinity Group Application Form](#)

Student Opportunities

Know an event to include here? [Submit your upcoming student opportunity.](#)

Various application deadlines!

[Ewing "Rusty" Lusk Travel Scholarship](#)

Want to attend ACM SIGHPC conferences but need funding? The Ewing "Rusty" Lusk Travel Scholarship can help!

The Ewing "Rusty" Lusk Travel Scholarship provides conference registration plus up to \$1,600 in travel reimbursement to help graduate students attend

PASC, PEARC, and SC conferences when they lack institutional funding support.

Accepting applications NOW!

[ACM/IEEE CS George Michael Memorial HPC Fellowship](#)

Endowed in memory of George Michael, one of the founders of the SC Conference series, the ACM/IEEE CS George Michael Memorial HPC Fellowship honors exceptional PhD students throughout the world whose research focus is on high-performance computing applications, networking, storage, or large-scale data analysis using the most powerful computers that are currently available.

The award committee is selected by the two societies and includes past winners as well as leaders in the field. The Fellowship includes a \$5000 honorarium, recognition on the ACM, IEEE CS, and ACM SIGHPC websites, and travel expenses to attend SC. The recipients will be honored at the SC Conference Awards Ceremony.

Various application deadlines

[Sandia National Laboratories - Center for Computing Research](#)

The CCR offers a variety of pathways for graduate and undergraduate students to engage in cutting-edge computational research. Students have joined through programs such as the Computer Science Research Institute Summer Program, MARTIANS, Sustainable Horizons Institute, NNSA internship programs, Grande CARES, NSF Mathematical Sciences Graduate Internship, and the University Research Association Fellowship. With such a wide range of projects and topics, there are opportunities to match many interests and skill sets.

Various application deadlines

[U.S. Naval Research Laboratory Student Programs](#)

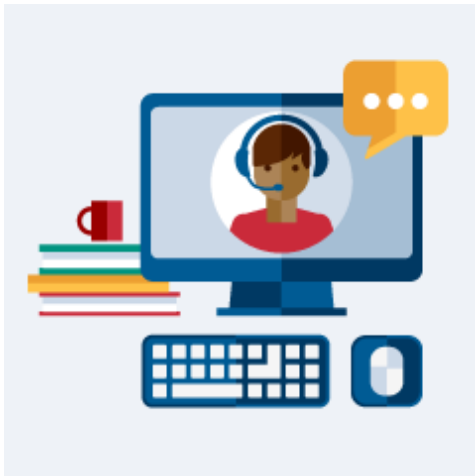
NRL participates in several Student Programs, each with their own features and requirements. Select a program for more information and learn how to apply for each one.

Various application deadlines

IEEE Computer Society Student Achievements in Computing

Get recognized for your achievements as a student member of the IEEE Computer Society by applying for a scholarship or award program.

Connect with the Midwest RCD Program Office at IU



Reach Out To Explore Ideas and Opportunities

We're happy to meet with you in person and discuss ideas. To schedule a meeting, please email us at pti@iu.edu, and we'll get back to you as soon as possible to coordinate next steps.

[Join/Follow Our LinkedIn Page](#)

Upcoming Related Events and Opportunities

Know an event to include here? [Submit your Midwest RCD-related event or opportunity.](#)

Various • Online submission

[ACCESS Events & Training](#)

ACCESS is an acronym that stands for “Advanced Cyberinfrastructure Coordination Ecosystem: Services & Support.” ACCESS is a program established and funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) to help researchers and educators utilize the nation’s advanced computing systems and services. Almost any computer application that requires more than a desktop or laptop could qualify as needing an advanced computing system.

Saturday, July 25, 2026 • Chicago, IL

INDIS 2026 Paper Submission Deadline

The International Workshop on Innovating the Network for Data-Intensive Science (INDIS), held in conjunction with SC26, brings together researchers, cyberinfrastructure professionals, and practitioners to share innovations in networking, distributed systems, and data-intensive science. This year's theme, "Connected Science: Bridging Research and Industry," highlights collaborations that advance the future of research cyberinfrastructure.

Sunday-Thursday, July 26-30, 2026 • Minneapolis, MN

PEARC26: Practice and Experience in Advanced Research Computing

PEARC26 brings together the research computing and data community to share innovations, best practices, and emerging technologies that advance computational and data-enabled research. The conference features technical sessions, tutorials, workshops, panels, and networking opportunities for researchers, cyberinfrastructure professionals, and students.

Wednesday, September 23, 2026

Oklahoma Supercomputing Symposium 2026

Mark your calendars for the Oklahoma Supercomputing Symposium 2026, taking place Wednesday, September 23, 2026, 9 AM–5 PM CT. The symposium will be held virtually on Zoom, bringing together researchers, educators, and students to explore the latest in supercomputing and computational science.

Tuesday - Friday, September 29, 2026 - October 2 • Denver, CO

EDUCAUSE Annual Conference

The EDUCAUSE Annual Conference connects the best thinkers in higher education technology. This is THE event where professionals and

technology providers from around the world gather to network, share ideas, grow professionally, and discover solutions to today's challenges. It's the largest gathering of your peers...people you can relate to, learn from, and stay connected to throughout the year.

Sunday - Friday, November 15 - 20, 2026 • Chicago, IL

[SC26: The International Conference for High Performance Computing, Networking, Storage, and Analysis](#)

Plan to attend the SC26! Each year, SC provides the leading technical program for the HPC community. The Program is designed to share best practices in all areas of high performance computing.

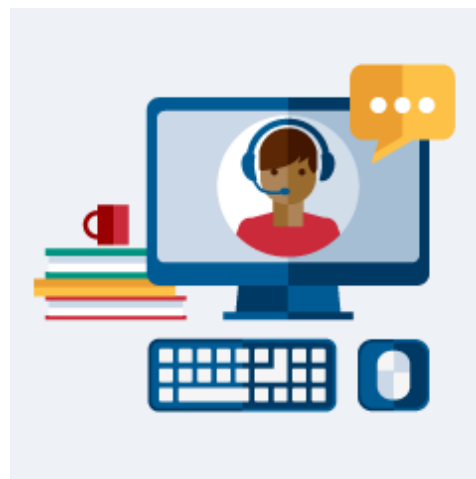
Connect with the Community

[Slack](#) | [Join Slack](#) →

[LinkedIn Group](#) | [Page](#) →

[Join Mailing List](#) →

[Forward This Email](#)



AI in RCD Affinity Group

This group explores the intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Research Computing in higher education and research institutions. We provide a space for professionals to discuss how AI is reshaping research support, infrastructure planning, and policy development. Members share experiences, tackle common challenges, and highlight lessons learned to advance responsible and effective AI integration in research environments.

[Join the AI in RCD Affinity Group](#) →

Cryo-EM Affinity Group

The Cryo-EM Affinity Group is a community of practice focused on supporting researchers and facilitators working with cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM) across the Midwest. Cryo-EM is a rapidly growing set of experimental techniques for studying biological structures at scales ranging from entire cells down to individual proteins. These methods come with complex workflows that span various devices, data types, and computational platforms. The group brings together those facilitating cryo-EM research, from RCD professionals to core facility staff, to share lessons learned, collaborate on common challenges, and build a shared understanding of tools, workflows, and needs across institutions.

[Join the Cryo-EM Affinity Group →](#)

Next-Gen DC Affinity Group

The Next-Generation Data Center group focuses on learning about advancements in facilities and operations of data centers.

[Join the Next-Gen DC Affinity Group →](#)

Globus Compute Affinity Group

We strive to build an inclusive and equitable culture which will promote and increase diversity. This group is being created to ensure that there is diversity in committees, events (annual meetings), and leadership positions.

[Join the Globus Compute Affinity Group →](#)

ROI Affinity Group

This group focuses on approaches to gauging impact as well as quantitative and qualitative measures needed to communicate the benefits of investments in cyberinfrastructure on our campuses.

[Join the ROI Affinity Group →](#)

Scientific Cloud Affinity Group

This group focuses on how HPC centers approach cloud computing to support increasingly diverse scientific and engineering research and education endeavors and what skill sets CI professionals will need to support cloud workflows and data management.

[Join the Scientific Cloud Affinity Group →](#)

Help Grow the Midwest RCD Consortium: Forward This Newsletter to Your Students & Colleagues



About the Midwest Research Computing and Data Consortium

Regional stakeholders working collectively in a trusted forum can shape the future by working collectively on topics of mutual interest, by onboarding organizations that find value in the mission of the organization, by sharing information transparently, and by providing opportunities for CI professionals staff members in our organization to contribute, to be mentored, to belong to a cohort, and to become leaders.

[Read more about Midwest RCD →](#)



RCN:CIP: Midwest Research Computing and Data Consortium

This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 2227627. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

[NSF Award information](#) →

