Director’s Note

We appreciate the time you devote to our TMAC monthly newsletter. This month we offer the usual mix of summaries and links to books, articles, and feature stories related to higher education and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Of particular note this month is a focus on teaching with games and a snapshot of the disciplinary journals in teaching and learning. Of course, we welcome your contributions of topics and materials to share with your colleagues.

Please consider attending the all-department workshop on “Threshold Concepts Across Disciplines” on Friday, March 13, noon - 2:15 p.m. We will explore together the essential concepts and skills, often experienced as bottlenecks, that serve as gateways to progress in college level learning. See the inset box below to RSVP.

Stay warm!

Announcing…

THRESHOLD CONCEPTS WORKSHOP! You are invited to an all-department event on “Threshold Concepts Across Disciplines” on Friday, March 13 from 12-2:15 p.m. in the Campus Center, Executive Meeting Room. Using the notion of “threshold concepts” for the critical things students must learn in order to advance, we will together articulate concepts for success in college in general and consider how Gen Ed courses contribute to learning those concepts. Working in small groups, we will flesh out threshold concepts of our respective disciplines and conclude by exploring how to build these concepts into course and departmental learning goals. Lunch will be provided! Please RSVP here.

Brown Bag Discussion Series on Grading: In the second part of our two-part series, we will discuss grading practices and policies, the challenges of grading at the assignment level and the course level, and doing so fairly, meaningfully, and efficiently. We will meet in the Small Conference Room in the Dean’s Suite during free period on April 14.

View TMAC Resources on Grading and Rubrics and Threshold Concepts.

The Camden Faculty Reading Group is underway. We have started with Engaging Ideas by noted educator John Bean. We will read chapters 7-8 for our February meeting on:

- Thursday, February 26, from 3-4 p.m. in the Small Conference Room, or
- Friday, February 27, from 12:15-1:15 p.m. in the Small Conference Room.

If you are interested in joining, contact us at: teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu
In The News

What Teachers in Other Fields Can Teach You: Interdisciplinarity has been a watchword in academia for at least two decades. Yet when it comes to pedagogy, most of us are still unlikely to go looking for inspiration outside of our own disciplines. In Pedagogy Unbound, David Gooblar suggests that there is much to learn from paying attention to how colleagues in other disciplines are changing the way they teach.

Test Finds College Graduates Lack Skills for White-Collar Jobs: According to the results of a test of nearly 32,000 students, four in ten U.S. college students graduate without the transferable complex reasoning or critical thinking skills to manage white-collar work. The test, known as the Collegiate Learning Assessment Plus, measures the intellectual gains made between freshman and senior year, and does not cover subject-area knowledge; rather it assesses things like critical thinking, analytical reasoning, writing and communication—essentially mimicking the baseline demands for professionals.

I Don't Think So: Writing Effective Counterarguments: The Common Core emphasizes writing arguments as essential to student success beyond the classroom, but, as educator Grant Wiggins points out, the kind of writing those standards demand goes beyond what students typically see as argumentative. In this lesson, students analyze the work of winners of the Learning Network’s 2014 Student Editorial Contest as well as professional models from the NY Times editorial pages to learn how writers effectively introduce and respond to counterarguments.

Can Outcomes Save the Liberal Arts? One of the great battles ongoing in American higher education centers on the continued vitality and relevance of a liberal arts education. Dr. Brian Mitchell, Director of the Edvance Foundation, explains that we must “develop a new defense for a liberal arts education. In doing so, this argument must combine equal measures of language and outputs. And, happily, it can be done without sacrificing the integrity or spirit of the older arguments.”

No Profit Left Behind: In the high-stakes world of American education, the British publishing giant, Pearson, makes money even when its results don’t measure up. A POLITICO investigation has found that Pearson stands to make tens of millions in taxpayer dollars and cuts in student tuition from deals arranged without competitive bids in states from Florida to Texas. The review also found Pearson’s contracts set forth specific performance targets — but don’t penalize the company when it fails to meet those standards.

#worthassigning: Effective Peer Review Assignment Design from the Eli Review Team: The team at Eli Peer Review has a new professional development piece on designing effective peer review assignments. If you do faculty development, tutor training, like using digital tools to teach, offer a writing or the teaching of writing course, you'll find this invaluable.

Teaching with Games

Syllabus Journal is a peer reviewed venue through which academics can publish syllabi, toolbox assignments and articles on teaching. A new special issue, “Teaching with and about Video Games,” offers 15 articles from international authors. The collection represents the depth and breadth of video games in academic discourse. Not only do they add to the literature and pedagogical approaches in game studies, but these contributions highlight the interdisciplinary nature of game studies in history, computer science, literature, social science, and so forth.
Girls, Gaming, and Gender Stereotypes: Anita Sarkeesian, the heart of #Gamergate, states: “The notion that gaming was not for women rippled out into society, until we heard it not just from the games industry, but from our families, teachers and friends.” Girls play games too. The challenge for teachers is to move beyond the stereotypes and remove the walls that block the sharing of ideas, so that we can all learn together as a community of many, not a group of two genders.

Scholarship on Teaching and Learning

This month, we feature a selection of journals and sample articles in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) focused on undergraduate education across the disciplines:

Hybrid Pedagogy is an open-access, peer-reviewed, digital journal that combines the strands of critical pedagogy and digital pedagogy to arrive at the best social and civil uses for technology and new media in education.

“Multimodality as a Frame for Individual and Institutional Change”

College English is the professional journal for the college scholar-teacher. CE publishes articles about literature, rhetoric-composition, critical theory, creative writing theory and pedagogy, linguistics, literacy, reading theory, pedagogy, and professional issues related to the teaching of English.

The Journal of Business Cases and Applications publishes quality applied business cases and classroom applications/exercises designed to help business academics. The goal of JBCA is to share short cases and exercises developed for classroom use in any area of business education.

“Creative-thinking Exercises for Entrepreneurship Class”

The Journal of Biological Education covers policy and curriculum developments, emphasizing research into the teaching, learning and assessment of biology.

The Journal of Criminal Justice Education provides a forum for the examination, discussion and debate of a broad range of issues concerning post-secondary education in criminal justice, criminology, and related areas.

The Journal of Environmental Education: Based on recent research in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, this journal details how best to present environmental issues and how to evaluate programs already in place for primary through university level and adult students.

The Journal of Political Science Education invites submissions that span a broad scope of issues in political science education, including teaching-related issues, methods and techniques, learning/teaching activities and devices, educational assessment in political science, and curriculum development.

Reading is Fundamental

Imagine what you could do in class if all of your students did the readings! Getting Students to Do the Readings offers suggestions and resources for selecting course materials, teaching effective reading strategies, and selling your students on the readings.

Looking for Strategies that Foster Critical Reading? This guide explains approaches like the ‘KWL Tool’ and the ‘Believing and Doubting Game’ that faculty can use to promote careful reading and critical thinking.
The Write Stuff

The Desire to Write: In “Personal Writing in the Classroom,” Irvin Peckham blogs about the desire to write and a workshop he led in which he noticed a gap, a physical distance, between the desire and the consummation of writing.

Writing Your Way to Happiness: Some researchers believe that by writing and then editing our own stories, we can change our perceptions of ourselves and identify obstacles that stand in the way of better health.

Write Nerdy to Me: Utilizing Fanfiction in WAC/WID Courses: Caitlin Dungan, WAC Graduate Research Assistant and Mason PhD student, shares an emerging research project in WAC/WID.

From our Teaching and Learning Peers: Center of the Month

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at UC Davis offers and abundance of resources that foster a bold and innovative spirit in teaching, learning, and assessment.

Teaching with Technology

Technology and education are virtually intertwined these days and nearly every teacher has a few favorite tech tools that make doing his or her job and connecting with students a little bit easier and more fun for all involved. Yet as with anything related to technology, new tools are hitting the market constantly and older ones rising to prominence, broadening their scope, or just adding new features that make them better matches for education. Stay up-to-date and explore this list of "50 Education Technology Tools Every Teacher Should Know About."

We continue to build an ever-expanding list of apps and technology that our faculty here at Rutgers Camden are using…

🔗 Socrative is a smart student response system that empowers teachers to engage their classrooms through a series of educational exercises and games via smartphones, laptops, and tablets.

🔗 Piktochart is a free web-based infographic creator that can be used to enhance visual presentations in the classroom or create visually interesting assignment sheets or syllabi. It can also be a way for you or your students to visually represent how ideas relate.

Check out all of the apps and technology resources on our website!

Are you using an app or teaching tool not on the list? Send it to us at teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu
From the Bookshelf

*Securing a Place for Reading in Composition* addresses the dissonance between the need to prepare students to read, not just write, complex texts and the lack of recent scholarship on reading-writing connections. Considering the role of reading within composition from both historical and contemporary perspectives, author Ellen C. Carillo makes recommendations for the productive integration of reading instruction into first-year writing courses. She details a "mindful reading" framework wherein instructors help students cultivate a repertoire of approaches upon which they consistently reflect as they apply them to various texts. This metacognitive frame allows students to become knowledgeable and deliberate about how they read and gives them the opportunity to develop the skills useful for moving among reading approaches in mindful ways, thus preparing them to actively and productively read in courses and contexts outside first-year composition. (Utah State University Press, 2015)

*Higher Education in America* is a landmark work--a comprehensive and authoritative analysis of the current condition of our colleges and universities from former Harvard president Derek Bok, one of the nation's most respected education experts. Sweepingly ambitious in scope, this is a deeply informed and balanced assessment of the many strengths as well as the weaknesses of American higher education today. Bok provides a thorough examination of the entire system, public and private, from community colleges and small liberal arts colleges to great universities with their research programs and their medical, law, and business schools. Drawing on the most reliable studies and data, he determines which criticisms of higher education are unfounded or exaggerated, which are issues of genuine concern, and what can be done to improve matters. (Princeton University Press 2013)

Conferences and Workshops

**AAC&U 2015 Summer Institutes**

- **Institute on General Education and Assessment**  
  June 2–6, 2015  
  University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma

- **Institute on High-Impact Practices and Student Success**  
  June 9–13, 2015  
  University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, Wisconsin

- **Institute on Integrative Learning and the Departments**  
  July 14–18, 2015  
  University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware

- **PKAL Summer Leadership Institute for STEM Faculty**  
  Institute I: July 14–July 19, 2015  
  Institute II: July 21–July 26, 2015  
  The Claggett Center, Adamstown, Maryland  
  Institute III: July 25–30, 2015  
  The Baca Campus of Colorado College, Crestone, Colorado
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If you’re interested in being interviewed for the Faculty Spotlight, or if you have a link or topic you’d like to share, please email us at teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu.