Director’s Note

Bet you’re glad spring is here. But it’s still cold! Over break, I escaped the last (?) snow of the season by attending the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in Tampa FL. There, I chaired a session on writing in STEM fields. In that session, I also presented a paper on mentoring undergraduates in STEM, documenting the success of our own Dr. Rajiv Gandhi (Associate Professor, Computer Science) as a national model for how to professionalize students through undergraduate research. In preparing this profile of Rajiv and his students, I arrived at an insight that mentoring is an unrecognized fourth category of professional activity along with teaching, research, and service. (Would you agree?) While at Cs, I sampled multiple workshops and panels on pedagogy, faculty development, and the challenges facing all of us in higher ed. The best part, for me, was meeting outstanding undergraduates standing beside their impressive research posters.

I returned, as always, with renewed appreciation for the labor of intellectual work, and I’d like to send a shout out to our teaching assistants, especially those in my home department of English. Under the direction of my colleague, Dr. Shanyn Fiske (Associate Professor, English), our eleven TAs do valiant, essential work nurturing the literacy of our students in first-year composition. Introducing students to college level reading, writing, and research is no easy task, especially when we (unrealistically) expect that the problems we see in our students’ writing can be “solved” in one or even two semesters. The reality is that students typically experience a decline in writing proficiency following their first year, in part because the skills and, equally, the habits of mind fostered in a writing class are not reinforced in the middle years of college. If we want our students to write better, we must dedicate a significant portion of every course to that end. Without a commitment to build on the work of first year composition with strong writing assignments that model intellectual rigor, reward critical thinking, and present real rhetorical challenges, students will not progress; they’ll regress. Having said that, what are the most substantive areas of concern for you in the writing abilities of your students? What are you doing to address those concerns? teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu.

Finally, I invite you to sample the copious links in this month’s newsletter after reading our “Spotlight” featuring Dr. Wayne Glasker (Associate Professor, History).

Faculty Spotlight

Welcome to our continuing series of conversations with Rutgers-Camden faculty on teaching and learning. This month, TMAC sat down with Dr. Wayne Glasker, Associate Professor of History, to discuss Civic Engagement in the classroom.

Wayne: Engaged Civic Learning helps the students to feel empowered; it helps them realize that there IS something that they can do to make a difference, rather than sinking into pessimism and a sense of hopelessness and despair over the unfortunate challenges that persist. Engaged Civic Learning also connects theory with practice.
**TMAC:** How do you incorporate Engaged Civic Learning into your classes?

**Wayne:** One of the issues that we discuss in African American History II is the persistence of racism, poverty, and inequality in contemporary America. We discuss the reduction in poverty that has taken place since 1960, but also note that in 2014 some 15% of all Americans lived in poverty. This was 10% of whites, 27% of African American, and 24% of Hispanics. As part of civic engagement in this course, we try to connect theory and practice, so if poverty persists, then what are the solutions and what can we do about it?

**TMAC:** Your answer?

**Wayne:** Beginning this semester, I have built into the course a community service/Engaged Civic Learning component. For our first service activity, we held a small food drive, partnering with the Food Bank of South Jersey. With the assistance of the Office of Civic Engagement, we organized a field trip to the Food Bank. On Monday, March 23rd, we brought with us the food that we had collected throughout the semester, and the students sorted food and stocked shelves, whatever was asked.

**TMAC:** Tell us about the Food Bank.

**Wayne:** The Food Bank of South Jersey exists to provide an immediate solution to the urgent problem of hunger by providing food to needy people, teaching them to eat nutritiously, and helping them find sustainable ways to improve their lives. One American in seven suffers from food insecurity. The Food Bank distributes food to local pantries and "soup kitchens," providing for 196,000 people per year (including 57,000 children), in Camden, Burlington, Gloucester, and Salem counties.

**TMAC:** What do you hope students remember most about their experience at the Food Bank?

**Wayne:** Part of my goal in the course is to promote education for civic participation, and to teach students that although challenges such as poverty still persist we are not powerless. Nor should we feel that the problems are "too big" to be solved, and therefore give up in despair. There are steps we can take to make a difference. Each of us can be one of a thousand points of light.

**TMAC:** Indeed. Thank you, Wayne!
Announcing…

2015 Rutgers University–Camden Faculty eLearning Conference - Save the date! Our second annual Faculty eLearning Conference is scheduled for Tuesday, April 28, 2015 in the Campus Center. This year will be bigger and better, with multiple tracks and expanded themes, including not only online and hybrid teaching, but also new technologies in the classroom and teaching live to distance students. This conference will run from 8:30am to 3pm, with lunch and refreshments served. Registration is required, but is free for all Rutgers University–Camden faculty, full or part time. Can’t make it for the whole day? Feel free to come whenever your schedule allows.

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, 12:25-1:25, on April 14.

View TMAC Resources on Grading and Rubrics.

The Camden Faculty Reading Group will conclude our discussion of Engaging Ideas at our final meeting of the semester on Thursday, April 23, 12:25-1:25, in the Faculty Lounge. If you are interested in joining the group, or if you have a suggestion for our next book, please let us know at teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu.

In The News

Teaching History the Pearson Way: Alan singer writes a scathing review for Pearson My World Social Studies: The Growth of Our Country. Here’s a snippet: “Pearson promotes Common Core and Common Core creates markets for Pearson. Teaching history the Pearson way means teaching it the Common Core way, without any meaningful content. The text, no matter how inaccurate or misleading, rules. Myth replaces history, if teachers have the time to include social studies at all while prepping students for Pearson standardized tests.”

Taking It to the Streets: Preparing for an Academy in Exile: University education in our country is increasingly not academic: it is vocational; it is commercial; it is becoming anti-intellectual; and, more and more, it is offering standardized products that seek to train and certify rather than to educate people. If and when we can no longer call the university a home, we will need to build new shelters in civil society.

Contagion in the Classroom: Or, What Empathy Can Teach Us about the Importance of Face-to-Face Learning: If we want clues to classroom dynamics in the "interface" between teacher and students, and between students themselves, William Major suggests that we might look to primatology, neurobiology, and cognitive science and advances in the understanding of empathic primate behavior.

The Important Things Standardized Tests Don't Measure: Marion Brady writes an op-ed piece in The Washington Post about standardized testing. She argues that figuring out how to measure original thought isn’t the only challenge test manufacturers need to address, and she lists 33 other problems. It’s a very useful article, unless you like standardized testing.
The MOSTLY Paperless (and Increasingly Empathetic) Classroom: A Revised Technology Goal: Read about how one instructor’s attempt to go paperless in her classroom evolved into a learning experience and a modification of her goal.

Classroom Tips

The Educators’ Guide to Infographics: Infographics have gained popularity over the last year or so. This blog takes a look at some of the tools that instructors can use to put together useful infographics for use in the classroom.

Active vs. Passive Video Viewing: Active video viewing will allow students the opportunity to organize their thoughts in a visual way, thus allowing teachers the ability to guide thinking during the learning process. View and add to this ‘Listly’ list of tools that work for this particular task.

Video-Is it Plagiarism? Rebecca Moore Howard is a scholar of plagiarism. In this short video, Dr. Howard relates her early experiences with “patchwriting” and how it led her to become “the plagiarism lady.”

Reading is Fundamental

Reading Circles Get Students to Do the Reading: The success of Reading Circles depends on two things: everyone coming prepared by having read the assignment and everyone participating. Sounds good; right?

Strategies That Foster Critical Reading: Get the bottom line on strategies such as the ‘Believing and Doubting Games,’ which faculty can use to promote careful reading and critical thinking.

The Write Stuff

The Journal of Response to Writing is pleased to announce the publication of its very first issue. Edited by Dana Ferris, JRW publishes papers based on research, theory, and/or practice that contribute to an understanding of how response practices lead to better writing. It is a peer-reviewed, multi-disciplinary journal addressing the topic of response in Composition, Applied Linguistics, and Foreign Language Teaching. The current issue includes editorials about the purpose and justification for a journal dedicated to response to writing. Featured articles examine response in classrooms, writing centers, and cross-disciplinary contexts. Included is a review of Nancy Sommers’ text, Responding to Student Writing.

From our Teaching and Learning Peers: Center of the Month

The Institute for Learning and Teaching (TILT) at Colorado State University offers a wealth of Teaching Resources as part of its Professional Development Program.
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

*One Day in the Life of the English Language: A Microcosmic Usage Handbook*: Frank Cioffi’s approach to grammar is unusual. Instead of reviewing and reinforcing rules on sentence structure and other related precepts, the author examines the English language as it is actually written in the real world of today and places great emphasis on its evolving nature. In fact, Cioffi, writing director at Baruch College, challenges many accepted conventions and wholeheartedly endorses new practices such as beginning sentences with conjunctions, ending them with prepositions, and splitting infinitives. At the same time, he argues that proper form still enhances effective communication while nonstandard English often marginalizes or stigmatizes a writer. To make his points, Cioffi effectively employs a fast-paced narrative style that readers will find entertaining and insightful. (Princeton Univ. April, 2015)

*The Mother of All Booklists: The 500 Most Recommended Nonfiction Reads for Ages 3 to 103*: Nonfiction is a buzzword at the moment, thanks to the Common Core. And for a few years now, more authors and publishers have been answering the call and writing exceptional informational books. In an effort to separate the wheat from the chaff in a very crowded genre, bookstore owner and former education professor, William Patrick Martin, has compiled this hefty guide to the 500 most recommended nonfiction books for ages 3 to 103. What makes the list stand out is that it culs from more than 100 other authorities (annual awards as well as recommendations from noteworthy sources including librarians, teachers, magazines, and more), providing a number of diverse points of view. Covers are shown and titles are annotated and there is a great multicultural representation. (Rowman & Littlefield 2015)
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

Eighth International Conference on e-Learning and Innovative Pedagogies: 2-3 November 2015; University of California, Santa Cruz

The current review period closing date for the latest round of submissions to the Call for Papers (a title and short abstract) is 7 April 2015. Please visit the website for more information on submitting your proposal, future deadlines, and registering for the conference. If you are unable to attend the conference, you may still join the community and submit your article for peer review and possible publication, upload an online presentation, and enjoy subscriber access to Ubiquitous Learning: An International Journal.

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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.