



Teaching Matters and Assessment Center (TMAC)

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Director's Note



Well, it's on! We are now weeks into the semester and we have a sense of what is working well for us and our students and, perhaps, what we'll do differently next time.

If you are worried you might be replaced by a robot, or concerned about the politics of social justice on our campuses, or mindful of access and affordability as key issues in higher ed, you will find links to info and resources below.

Also below, is a description of upcoming TMAC events, including next week's syllabus "refresher" workshop. If you would like a supportive space in which to assess or improve your course syllabi, join us for **lunch** (!) next Tuesday, October 10, and the following Wednesday, October 18.

Tracking the Freshmen

This week, the New York Times is [reporting](#) on a national UCLA [survey](#) of first year students, run by their Higher Education Research Institute. The findings show a number of trends about this year's incoming class, tracking their admissions experience, academic ability, personal health, family background, and political viewpoints.

Among the findings: 57% of students are attending their first choice college, many feel overwhelmed and less emotionally stable than their peers, though 75% believe they are above average academically. See the NYT for [infographics](#), or visit the main [HERI](#) website to download a full report.

Imagining Professor Robot

A recent Quartz [article](#) delved into an ongoing [conversation](#) on artificial intelligence in a college classroom, imagining a world in which graduate student teaching assistants are replaced or supplemented with AI assistants, particularly when it comes to [online](#) courses. Seen as a way to provide relief to an already stretched-thin workforce, adaptive learning technology has found supporters from Facebook's [Mark Zuckerberg](#) to Netflix's [Reed Hastings](#).

The overreliance on these new technologies has also received pushback, and writer [Nick Carbone](#) recently picked apart each argument from the [Quartz](#) piece. In a new [article](#), he writes that “These AI iterations of old ideas do not make teachers obsolete. They make teachers more necessary.” He argues that the art of teaching is irreplaceable, and recalls that regularly [changing technology](#) has for centuries been unable to replace the need for talented and dedicated educators.

This may prove to be a challenge as the [demand](#) for additional online offerings from students increase, and universities adjust to meet that need. While Rutgers offers a number of [degree programs](#) fully or partially online, many smaller colleges can have difficulties offering the same number and quality of courses.

Politics and Justice in the University

As questions of social justice are continually at the forefront of our conversation, for some schools it's getting personal. There has been vocal pushback at [Virginia Tech](#) against an alleged [white supremacist TA](#), with students [protesting](#) during President Timothy Sand's State of the University speech last week. While advocates drew connections to August's [Charlottesville](#) protests, Sand cited concerns about freedom of speech and a desire to “maintain an inclusive campus.”

Elsewhere in the south, Georgia State professor Katie Acosta [argues](#) for the importance of bringing her ‘Political Self’ to the classroom, including bringing in diverse and topical [materials](#). And outside of the classroom, many [student athletes](#) are weighing their role in the continuing movement of ‘[taking a knee](#)’ started by Colin Kaepernick in 2016.

Quality Education for All

[Bandwidth Recovery](#), a new publication from [Stylus Publishing](#) is tackling the issues of ‘poverty, racism, and social marginalization’ in academia, and looking at how high schools and universities can best serve students who come from a variety of disadvantaged backgrounds. With a forward by [AAC&U](#) President [Lynn Pasquerella](#), the text provides a both an understanding of the causes of such educational disadvantages and concrete steps on how to intervene and mitigate its effects.

Such publications as the above are increasingly important as newly released [papers](#) by the [National College Access Network](#) reveal that despite [changes](#) to the FAFSA process, the lowest income students are still behind their peers in wealthier districts in filling out the necessary documentation to receive aid.

TMAC Calendar—Upcoming Events

October 10th and 18th | Syllabus Refresher Course | Free Period | Writer's House

Join us for a one hour check in on syllabus design and implementation. What makes a great syllabus, and how can it showcase the most important elements for students? Come to review this essential part to any successful course. Lunch provided. [RSVP: http://bit.ly/2xWmTx6](http://bit.ly/2xWmTx6)

October 27th | Childhood Studies Teaching Workshop | 11 am - 3 pm

TMAC will be leading the Childhood Studies TAs in a half-day workshop scheduled to cover a range of pedagogical topics. We will review syllabus and assignment design, student learning assessment, and grading. Attention will also be paid to classroom management, course policies, and moderating class discussions.

November 1st | Minding the Stack: Tips and Strategies | 11:20-12:20 | Faculty Lounge

Gone are the days where you must face down a daunting pile of student papers. TMAC presents a series of tips and strategies designed especially for busy instructors to respond quickly and effectively to student work. We will review the best practices for responding to a variety of writing.

November 14th | Making Sense of Your Course Evaluations | 12:45-1:45 | Faculty Lounge

As course evaluations come in each semester, we are provided with opportunities to adjust and improve our teaching practices. How can we best use these evaluations as tools, and what could the impact be for an instructor's classroom and career? Join us for a lively discussion and concrete support. **Note:** This is a new date for this session.

For additional resources, visit tmac.camden.rutgers.edu, or write us at teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu

