



## Teaching Matters and Assessment Center (TMAC)

Dr. William FitzGerald, Director | Catherine Buck, Graduate Assistant



### Director's Note

Welcome back to the Spring semester and to the continuation of our Teaching Matters bi-monthly newsletters! We are excited to make you aware of a range of professional development opportunities.

These include a mini-symposium (2/9) on teaching research to undergraduates, “Beyond the Research Paper,” and workshops designed for TAs and new faculty on “Handling Classroom Situations” (2/14) and “Connecting with Students” (3/5). Finally, we re-run an event from Fall on “Making Sense of Your Course Evaluations” (4/5). You can read about and register for individual events below.

Is your course ready for Gen Ed? TMAC is working with the Dean's office to help you prepare courses for the Gen Ed approval process. See below for useful links to assist you along the way.

I close by welcoming our new Vice-Chancellor for Students Success, Jason Rivera.

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## In The News

### The Cost of Student Comfort

As college admissions continue to fight for the most well-equipped undergraduates, conversations regularly turn to how to best allocate funding to attract new students, as well as serve those already enrolled. A critical [New York Times Op-Ed](#), *No College Kid Needs A Water Park to Study*, argues that extensive spending on recreational amenities such as the [Louisiana State lazy river](#) and [similar programs](#) nationwide are excessive and dangerously steer colleges away from their primary focus of education.

Such programs are controversial among students, especially as they are often funded through [additional fees](#) added to the cost of tuition. Fees at LSU and many other universities have increased dramatically in [recent years](#), and are approved by collegiate boards of trustees as well as by presidents and with student input. The NYT Op-Ed by James Koch, former president of the University of Montana and Old Dominion University, furthers the conversation that continues to be held in college campuses across the country, a discussion that strikes to the heart of understanding the primary function and purpose of university education.

### **Reviewing Remedial Education**

For many undergraduates who enter into universities and are assigned non-credit remedial classes, the challenge of completing and paying for such courses can prove so daunting that they do not continue on their degree. [Some studies](#) point to deficiencies in high school education as partly to blame for the high number of undergraduates beginning their college careers with these remedial courses. [Similar numbers](#) of underprepared students are seen both at community colleges and four-year institutions.

[Elaine Maimon](#) of Governors State University [is featured this week](#) in Inside HigherEd discussing ways to rethink remedial education to better serve the students who need it most. She argues that seeing students not as ‘empty vessels to be filled’ but as individuals with skills to build upon, the introductory classes can serve as a solid foundation for the rest of their educational pursuits. In a [related article](#), discussion of how community colleges can support incoming students deals closely with challenges related to standardized testing and placement tests.

### **Activist Professor Arrested**

Last week, Arizona State University professor Scott Daniel Warren, of the environmental studies department, was [arrested](#) by Border Patrol agents on a federal harboring charge. Warren volunteered for Tucson non-profit *No More Deaths*, which provides humanitarian aid to those crossing the border. His arrest came hours after the group released [footage](#) of Border Patrol agents kicking over and pouring out bottles of water left in the desert meant to aid migrants. The criminal complaint against Warren [indicated](#) that he had given “food, water, beds, and clean clothes” to the undocumented migrants.

In a [statement](#), an ASU spokesperson said that Warren was “not acting in his capacity as an ASU employee” at the time of the arrest, and that there was no indication he would be unable to fulfill his duty as an instructor.

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### **Reengineering General Education**

As we begin the spring semester, there is often rich conversation to be had surrounding General Education classes: how one can get a Gen Ed class approved, and what it takes to qualify. If you

are developing or seeking approval for one of these courses, the steps below can be a useful tool to ensure that your class is 'Gen Ed Ready'.

1. Familiarize yourself with Gen Ed Requirements and Expectations
  - a. [Gen Ed Categories and Learning Goals](#)
  - b. [Writing Intensive Courses](#)
2. Ensure your course is on the [Master Course List](#)
  - a. If a new course, submit to the [Academic Policy Committee](#) for approval.
3. Begin submission on the [Gen Ed Portal](#)
4. Ensure that course and [Gen Ed category](#) (Themes and Approaches or Cross-Cutting) connect through learning goals, and fully explain.
5. Submit course syllabus including both course-specific and Gen Ed category learning goals.

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## TMAC Calendar of Events

### **Beyond the Research Paper | February 9<sup>th</sup> | 12-1:30 | Armitage Faculty Lounge**

TMAC director Bill FitzGerald ([The Craft of Research](#)) and librarian Julie Still lead participants in a discussion over lunch on teaching research across the disciplines. We'll explore ways to engage students in meaningful inquiry that goes beyond the traditional 'research paper'. Lunch will be served. [RSVP online](#).

### **Handling Classroom Situations | February 14 | 11:20-12:20 | Writers' House 302**

TMAC will host and moderate a conversation to discuss how to manage challenging classroom situations. We will work through the needs of participants and work to problem-solve their individual concerns, as well as discuss commonly occurring difficulties. Lunch will be served. [RSVP online](#).

### **Connecting With Students | March 5<sup>th</sup> | 12:45-1:45 | Armitage Faculty Lounge**

Join TMAC for a discussion of best practices in maintaining a positive connection with students. This conversation will be designed to best benefit Teaching Assistants, but other instructors across departments are welcome. Lunch will be served. [RSVP online](#).

### **Making Sense of Your Course Evaluations | April 5<sup>th</sup> | 12:45-1:45 | Armitage Faculty Lounge**

As the semester winds down, we will be holding a reboot of our popular program on Making Sense of Your Course Evaluations. Come for a fruitful discussion of ways that you can use student responses to adjust future teaching or how to best present the results to represent your strengths in the classroom. Lunch will be served. [RSVP online](#).

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If your department would be interested in holding a particular pedagogically focused event, please reach out to [teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu](mailto:teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu).

For additional resources, visit [tmac.camden.rutgers.edu](http://tmac.camden.rutgers.edu), or write us at [teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu](mailto:teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu)

