



Teaching Matters and Assessment Center (TMAC)

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Director's Note



Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the 2017-18 academic year! It is one of great change at Rutgers-Camden, with the largest first year class and the start of a new Gen Ed curriculum that will change how departments design courses and deliver instruction. And we have a fantastic Nursing and Science Building to celebrate and get to know.

As director of the Teaching Matters and Assessment Center, I (with assistance this year from Catherine Buck, a student in our MFA in Creative Writing program) prepare a bi-weekly newsletter to share news and views on pedagogy and politics in Higher Ed and to keep you informed of resources, including workshops, to support your teaching. Please see below the calendar of upcoming events on syllabi design, responding to writing, and learning from course evaluations. Also, note that Teaching Matters has accepted an invitation to meet with TAs in Childhood Studies for a half-day course in professional development. If your department is interested in a tailored event for TAs, PTLs or full-time faculty, please reach out to us. Finally, check out the many resources on the Teaching Matters website: mac.camden.rutgers.edu.

Best wishes for a successful year.

Change in the Air

As the year gets into full swing, we return to a vibrant debate on everything from assessment practices to textbook costs. Australian educator Royce Sadler proposes a [different view](#) of feedback and grading practices, suggesting radical reforms that are worth our consideration. As examined by [Dr. Maryellen Weimer](#), Sadler suggests that 'formative assessment, clearly separated from summative evaluation' would provide students with a more authentic arena in which to prove their skills.

With many fast-changing disciplines, there is constant need to provide continually updated information and resources. For economics students, that just got a little easier. [CORE Econ](#), as profiled in a New Yorker

[article](#), is freely available online with a wealth of comprehensive information. This is one of [many](#) in a line of free online instruction, and should surely provide additional support to a range of students.

Teaching Writing Truisms

A recent series of guest blogs at [Inside Higher Ed](#) have discussed some of the best-known rules for teaching writing. Responding to the a critical Washington Post [article](#) on student's lackluster writing abilities, author [John Warner](#) asserts a number of [rules](#) that most writing instructors will agree are generally effective in teaching writing, if they were just implemented.

As a response, Susan Schorn, Writing Program Coordinator of UT Austin, has [outlined](#) several proven ways to support writing instructors in this pursuit. There is a financial element to her recommendations, as in Seth Kahn's [critique](#) of the commonly asserted notion that writing instructors need less training than their colleagues in other departments.

Instructing the Introvert

As part of the Susan Cain-led [Quiet Revolution](#), a new program is seeking to focus in on less talkative students who are at risk of being left behind in the educational system. Known as [Quiet Education](#), the initiative works to build the confidence and inner strengths of introverted students. A Haverford University [profile](#) of director Heidi Kasevich delves into the challenges of teaching for a wide range of students.

[Articles](#) on the Quiet Education website provide features on students finding success in their own comfort zone, as well as provide [examples](#) for effective feedback for both introverts and extroverts. It's an important distinction to remember for educators as well, argues an early-2016 Atlantic [piece](#) that discusses burnout of introverted teachers.

Students In Need

It's no secret that many undergraduates are struggling to finance their education, but a recent New York Times [Op-Ed](#) takes a second look at the '[typical college student](#)'. It discusses the many undergraduates who are over 25, low-income, as well as those attending [community colleges](#). As Rutgers-Camden's student body continues to change, these students remain on the forefront of discussion.

For those students particularly struggling, many universities are moving to creating resources that go beyond office hours and resubmission policies. There is a documented [push](#) towards including 'basic needs' language on syllabi that offers students support in finding food and housing resources.

Spearheaded by [Sara Goldrick-Rab](#) of Temple University, the inclusive syllabus language goes hand in hand with practical resources, such as [food pantries](#) on campus.

Of particular focus should also be the first year students, who are at an [increased risk](#) of dropping out, for a wide range of reasons. From struggles in [mental health](#) to the choppy [adjustment](#) to a more rigorous academic environment, many freshmen are at an increased [risk](#) during the first months of a new school year.

TMAC Calendar—Upcoming Events

October 10th and 11th | 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.

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 15th | Making Sense of Your Course Evaluations | 11:20-12:20 | 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.

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

