



Teaching Matters and Assessment Center

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Director's Note



Welcome to Spring 2017! Like many, I'm trepidatious about what this new political season brings, including with respect to issues in higher education and education in general. This month's Newsletter highlights the anxiety that many feel about the value of higher education today, whatever the change of administration in Washington, and about the climate on our campuses at a time of widening cultural divides. Below, you will find links to pieces on college affordability and the prospects of employment after college, including a new book, *Paying the Price*, that captures the plight of many of our students all too well. There's a new era of political "incorrectness" upon us and one of the forms this takes is aggressive push back against, of all things, civic engagement. It seems that one person's engaged civic learning is another's social activism orchestrated by leftist professors and overpaid university staff. I predict that we're in for an even bumpier ride!

Also below find links for tips on making the most of early days in the semester to establish a good rapport with your students. In our next newsletter, at the end of this month, we will begin a new series reporting on the creative teaching with technology that many of our faculty are doing as Digital Teaching Fellows, past and present. And lot's more.

Wishing you a good year ahead

Let's Talk Teaching

A recent [article](#) from *The Washington Post* explores why today's college students are having significant difficulty finding employment after graduation, despite the fact that one of the primary goals for college enrollment continues to be finding a "good job."

In this eye-opening [piece](#), poet Sara Holbrook highlights the issues and inadequacies of standardized testing as she struggles to correctly answer questions about her own works of poetry on the STAAR reading tests.

What do you think? Let us know at teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu





Introductions and Icebreakers for a New Semester

Are you looking for different and interesting ways to start class this semester? Check out these [articles](#) from *Faculty Focus*, in which professors share tips and strategies for getting off on the right foot!

In this extensive [list](#) from Lansing Community College, you'll find a plethora of potential icebreaker activities to get students interacting on the first day.

If you have the resources to get your students up and moving on the first day of class, you might consider trying some of these outside-the-box icebreaker [activities](#). They can also be useful tools for faculty advisors of student organizations.

The Academy and the Civic Sphere

For the last few fraught months, journalists, academics, activists, and a host of others have wondered about the impact of Donald Trump's election on college campuses. In his [op ed](#) for *The New York Times*, Nicholas Kristoff warns of the danger for college campuses to become echo chambers, arguing that students should be exposed to a wide range of political ideologies.

The National Association of Scholars (NAS) recently issued a [new report](#) on the role of civics in universities. In this [blog post](#), John K. Wilson questions and responds to the report's argument for what he deems the "political repression of education."



Paying the Price: College Affordability

College affordability and the student debt crisis have historically been the focus of [wide-spread debate](#). Recently, the private organization Student Debt Relief issued a [report](#) describing how Donald Trump's election could impact student borrowers.

To stay up-to-date on recent statistics, visit the U.S. Department of Education's [College Affordability and Transparency Center](#). The DOE outlines its strategies for 2017 on its [website](#).

In 2014, Lumina Foundation released a detailed [report](#) on college affordability, arguing what is (or is not) reasonable for students and their families to pay for a college education. In response, *Inside Higher Ed* published an [article](#) outlining reactions to the report from various educators and scholars.

Just this week the federal government filed lawsuits against Sallie Mae and its former affiliate, Navient for violating borrowers' repayment rights. Click [here](#) to read CNN's report.

From the Bookshelf

A new book written by Sara Goldrick-Rab and published by the University of Chicago Press titled [*Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream*](#) exposes and explores the current student debt crisis.

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