



Teaching Matters and Assessment Center

Dr. William FitzGerald, Director | Brynn Kairis, Graduate Assistant

Director's Note



Enjoy our December edition of the *Teaching Matters* newsletter over some egg nog this holiday season. Below, we offer some links to stories documenting the growing and concerning trend toward “exposing” liberal bias in academia. (They’re called the “liberal arts” for a reason.) We also point to some interesting articles on teaching grammar, engaging the wider community through literacy, and the use of digital portfolios. We highlight assessment through several offerings that explore a range of perspective and practices. Finally, we put the question to you, “Should you Turn It In?”

I’m on record objecting to the commercialization of plagiarism detection through vendors like Turnitin. You can ask me about my manifold objections or just read the links below for a more balanced review of the benefits and drawbacks of using Turnitin as a pedagogical practice.

Many of us sense that 2017 will be a year of surprises, good or bad. May it also be a year of growth and success in your teaching. We’ll be back with a new edition of the newsletter to start the Spring term.

Let's Talk Teaching

[Professor Watchlist](#), a project sponsored by [Turning Point USA](#), recently went viral on social media. The site claims its purpose is to “expose and document college professors who discriminate against conservative students and advance leftist propaganda in the classroom.” In response, *NYT* released an [article](#) questioning the list’s implications for academic freedom, while another [article](#) by *Inside Higher Ed* explores reactions from faculty and administrators. Some academics are pushing back directly. The blog [Watchlist Redux](#) argues that inclusion on such a list would be an “honor” and urges professors to self-nominate, while the faculty at the University of Notre Dame released an [open letter to Professor Watchlist](#) demanding to be included.

In an [article](#) for *The Atlantic*, Michelle Navarre Cleary discusses strategies for teaching grammar, arguing that students learn more from interacting with language in the real world than completing abstract grammar exercises.



A recent special issue of the AAC&U newsletter explores the role of higher education in wide-ranging efforts to heal racial divides in communities across the country. Specifically, it focuses on the partnership of more than a hundred diverse organizations and individuals in W.K. Kellogg Foundation's [Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation](#) enterprise.

Interested in learning more about literacy and community engagement? Check out *Temple Now's* recent article, "[Reading, Writing, Relationships](#)", for the story of how one bookstore in North Philly is fostering a community of readers.

This past summer, *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* released the [results](#) of a study focused on the impact of instructor clarity and organization on student learning.

Many educators recognize the benefits of using digital portfolios to assess student work. Are you interested in possibly using digital portfolios in your classroom? Check out this recent [issue](#) from the *Journal of Interactive Technology & Pedagogy*.

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



Assessment for Students & Teachers Alike

As we reach the end of the semester, many of us are mindful of best practices for assessing our students' work. For more information on student assessment, read through Barbara Walvoord's "[Assessment Clear and Simple.](#)" In addition, Carnegie Mellon offers useful [tips and strategies](#) for conducting assessment.

In this [article](#) for *Inside Higher Ed*, Colleen Flaherty reports on Evergreen State College's alternative take on student assessment and graduation requirements.

Just last spring, TMAC conducted our own assessment with a Campus Wide Survey on Writing. Check out the results [here](#)!

The end of the semester doesn't just include student assessment; it also provides an opportunity for reflecting and evaluating our teaching practices. Visit these [links](#) for [tips](#), [tools](#), and [strategies](#) to engage in self-reflective teaching.

Seeking observation and feedback from colleagues can be a valuable tool for evaluating your teaching practices. [Teacher Scholar](#), [Education World](#), and [Northeastern University](#) all describe best practices for gaining the most of your observations.

Should You Really “Turn It In?”

While many instructors use Turnitin to detect and deter plagiarism in student work, others question its effectiveness, and still others argue that the electronic service does more harm than good. Visit the following links to learn more and decide for yourself.

In 2010, *NYT* released an [article](#) exploring the growing number of universities embracing Turnitin. In this [post](#), a blogger and community college dean considers its benefits and limitations. Further, these articles from *Inside Higher Ed* question how instructors’ feelings about plagiarism might affect their [relationships with students](#) and consider [alternative strategies](#) to Turnitin.



Grant Opportunity

As part of the Open and Affordable Textbooks Project, the Rutgers University Libraries will be awarding twelve \$1,000 grants to full and part-time faculty from across the Rutgers system who agree to design (or redesign) a course to rely on open access education resources, library subscription resources, and/or course reserves. More information about the program can be found [here](#). Grant applications are due by December 9th and can be found [here](#).

Call for Papers

Currents in Teaching and Learning released a CFP for their Spring 2017 issue focused on “Teaching Students with Disabilities: Concepts, Approaches, and Practices.” For more details, including submission guidelines, click [here](#).

Visit us at tmac.camden.rutgers.edu. Send us your questions, links, and comments at teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu

