



Teaching Matters Monthly

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Director's Note

They say hindsight is 2020. This truth notwithstanding, most will be happy to see 2020 in the rearview mirror. While I count myself in that number, I would say there are lessons, blessings even, from this singular year. Besides gifts of health and fortune personally, I am mindful that for many this year offered opportunities to assess and reengage, with new priorities and insights about our work. I can't speak to the full scope of such things here, but I offer a few observations that we hope resonate with those who read this newsletter.

First, we bid farewell to 2020 with deep appreciation for the work of our students and our colleagues who have responded to epic challenges brought by a pandemic and a clarifying confrontation with demands for social and racial justice. These challenges make our work both more difficult but also more rewarding as we strive for the greater good.

Second, honoring the principle that a crisis should never go to waste, the shift to online learning this year invites us to consider teaching and learning going forward. We cannot simply return to normal after this moment has passed but instead resolve to apply lessons from this year to our future efforts. No doubt we have discovered gaps to address as well as creative responses born of necessity. As we continue to teach primarily online, 2021 is a year to compile and leverage insights and to work with colleagues for systematic change. We hope that Teaching Matters plays a vital role in that process.

Finally, we salute our colleagues in Instructional Technology on campus and across the University—our educational first responders supporting us with expertise and patience. No doubt they will continue to be invaluable partners as we integrate teaching techniques and tools for the benefit of our students.

Enjoy the pieces below and plan to attend one or more weekly Zoom meet-ups in 2021!

News

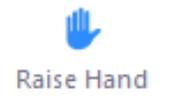
The Biden Administration's Plan for Higher Education

President-elect Joe Biden has [big plans](#) for higher education. Infrastructurally, he's proposed eliminating some or all of student loan debt, which will have positive effects on college-educated individuals and the economy. He has a track record for improving the affectability of Title IX to protect victims of sexual harassment and assault. He's projected to make it easier for international students to study in the United States, to make higher education free, and to pay teachers more. All of these plans offer promising change for the future of higher education, but what we're perhaps most eager to hear are Biden and his advisors' plans for campus safety amidst COVID-19.

Biden has announced he will make Dr. Rochelle Walensky the next director of the CDC. Walensky is a researcher and physician who has come up with the most effective [method of controlling COVID-19](#) on college campuses, although it is difficult for many campuses to instigate. In this new position, she may be able to offer additional guidance to universities on operating safely. We look forward to hearing more about procedures that will allow us to return to campus safely in the future.

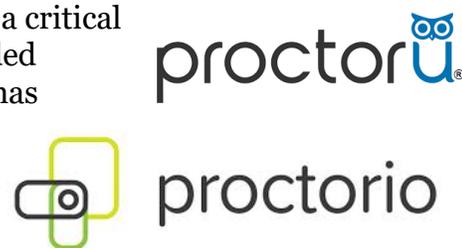
One Method of Increasing Participation over Zoom: Stickers

A [new phenomenon](#) documented across online platforms like Twitter and TikTok has teachers putting stickers on their faces in class. As goofy as this may seem, teachers are incentivizing participation with students of all ages—including college students—by putting a sticker on their face each time a student answers a question in class. Some instructors have garnered so much attention from this tactic that they're able to have small competitions: assigning students to color-coded groups and seeing which group garners the most stickers by the end of class. Although it's definitely an unorthodox method, instructors are saying it works. Students are able to see an effect of their participation in real time, despite distance learning. They are able to look at their sticker-spangled instructor and see that they are listening. If anyone's feeling ambitious next semester, let us know how this goes!



The Trouble with Big Ed-Tech

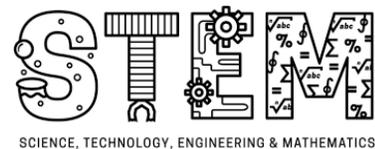
A [recent article](#) from *Brown Political Review* takes a critical look at the online proctoring economy that's exploded during the pandemic. The shift to remote learning has caused some universities and professors to feel the need to rely on online proctoring software like ProctorU and Proctorio to monitor students during exams. The software detects things like



head movement, multiple faces on camera, noise levels, poor internet connection, and more, and flags these occurrences as possible indications that the student is cheating. It may record students, their screens, and their environments, and use algorithms to detect these occurrences, or it may require students submit to being monitored by a person whom the students cannot see (or both). The degree to which students have to [surrender their privacy](#) sends the message that students are untrustworthy, that we expect them to cheat. Students are responding by calling out and even [suing big ed-tech companies](#). Under normal, in-class circumstances (or even pre-COVID online classes), students maintained more privacy than this. Is now the time to utilize such software that implies suspicion of cheating is grounds for stripping of privacy? Or is now the time to respect students' privacy and give them the benefit of the doubt?

Views on Feedback from Dance Pedagogy

To many instructors, feedback is a [part of grading](#). However, we at Teaching Matters would say that feedback needn't be associated with a letter grade or point value. Feedback is meant to further motivate students to learn, to show them what they've excelled in and what they could improve. This [article](#) from *Inside Higher Ed* discusses a unique way to incorporate feedback in STEM courses based on choreographer Liz Lerman's pedagogy. The dance and STEM crossover is an unlikely pairing, but it presents an easy-to-follow method of separating statements of meaning, questions, and opinions to better provide feedback to students. This method does not necessitate the association of feedback with grades but rather focuses on feedback for learning's sake.



Spring 2021 Workshops

Next semester we're offering a new lineup of workshops related to remote teaching, writing across the curriculum, assessment, and more! Check out the list below. For more information, to sign-up for next semester's workshops, and to view presentations from previous workshops, please click [here](#).

1. **Facilitating Discussion over Zoom, Thursday, February 4th**
Join us for a workshop on getting students to start talking. We'll explore methods of facilitating discussion that can be implemented on Zoom as well as employing remote classroom etiquette.
2. **Low-Stakes Writing, Wednesday, February 10th**
We'll talk about incorporating low-stakes writing assignments into your courses, including types of writing genres relevant to your field.

3. **Giving Writing Feedback (without a Writing Background)**, *Thursday, February 18th*, we'll talk about how to give meaningful feedback on writing even if you're not a trained writing instructor.
4. **High-Stakes Writing**, *Wednesday, February 24th*
What high-stakes writing assignments do you use in your class? How can we optimize the learning opportunities of these assignments? Let's talk about that!
5. **Group Work over Zoom**, *Thursday, March 4th*
We'll discuss group work activities to do remotely and how to use group work to develop community.
6. **Incorporating Student Feedback**, *Wednesday, March 10th*
We'll discuss practices for collecting relevant feedback and including students' perspectives in course design/materials.
7. **Designing Rubrics**, *Thursday, March 25th*
Bring your assignment sheets and we'll build task-specific rubrics based on them!
8. **Assessment and Grading in Remote Teaching**, *Wednesday, March 31st*
We'll talk about grading practices, assessment practices, and the degree of overlap in your classes.

Antiracist Pedagogy Working Group

In addition to our workshop series, we invite interested instructors to join our antiracist pedagogy working group. This group will explore the praxis of antiracism—where theory meets practice, and how we can implement antiracist pedagogy in our teaching. If you're interested, please complete this [form](#).

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

