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From Our Directors

Greetings, Friends,
In true 2021 parlance, we hope our last newsletter of the year finds you "well-boostered"—by last week's gatherings, this week's leftovers or celebrations, your students' final projects taking shape, our crisp sunny days, or even just the prospect of a Week Without Blackboard in your near future. Your Stearns Center crew thinks you deserve extra credit for the semester, and we hope you can take time to credit your own successes, small and large, as well as those of your students and colleagues.

We have a couple of deadlines and opportunities coming up to remind you about:

- **Nominate a colleague!** Nominations for Online Teaching Excellence Awards and Adjunct Faculty Teaching Excellence Awards are due tomorrow (Friday Dec. 3)
- **Apply for Course ReDesign Academy** by December 6, so you can have company and a stipend as you tinker with your upcoming courses (again!)
- **Register for the January Writing Retreat** by December 10, to kick off your 2022 writing projects with support and camaraderie
- **Join our First-Gen Conversation:** Register for our second of three workshops, "Developing an Ethic of Care Toward First-Gen Student Belonging," Monday December 6, 12:00-1:00
- **Stearns Center is Hiring Faculty Associates!** See below for information about our stipended **Spring 2022 Faculty Associate** positions to support **Anti-Racist and Inclusive Teaching, Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning**, and updates on our full-time position hires.

The Newsletter will take January off, but we'll be back in February! In the meantime, you might register for some early spring workshops, and check back with our [Events Calendar](#) to help plan your spring schedule:

- **Spruce up your syllabus** with our NEW online mini-course, January 5-14
- **Energize your writing projects** with our Winter Virtual Writing Retreat, January 12-14
- **Plan to engage first-gen students** with our workshop on "Promising Pedagogies to Support First-Generation Students," Thursday, Jan. 13, 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.
- **Polish your online course** with our quality review webinar, January 21, 11:30-12:30 p.m.
- **Write On!** More Virtual Faculty Writing Sprints will start January 28, to help with those New Year's Resolutions

See more details below.

Along with our partners (including the Office of the Provost, Faculty Affairs and Development, Writing Across the Curriculum, Undergraduate Education/Mason Impact/OSCAR/CECL, Graduate Education, GradLife, University Libraries, and Information Technology Services) we wish you patience, stamina, laughter, satisfaction, grace, and joy as you wrap up Fall 2021 and step into your winter break.

Shelley & Faisal

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Events & Deadlines

Teaching Excellence Awards

Adjunct TEA and Online TEA Nomination Deadline: Friday, December 3, 2021

The 2022 George Mason University Teaching Excellence Awards are open to faculty with significant teaching experience at George Mason.

- **The Adjunct Teaching Excellence Awards** recognize excellence in the teaching of part-time faculty who have already completed teaching courses in at least six semesters at Mason.
- **The Online Teaching Excellence Awards** recognize teaching excellence in faculty members who have been teaching fully-online courses during the semester. Faculty may be full-time or part-time, and need to have taught online courses during at least four complete semesters at Mason.

Students, faculty members, or administrators may nominate any faculty member for an award (we don't accept self-nominations). See more information [on our website](#).

To nominate: Please use our [Qualtrics survey](#) to provide the information about your nominee and a few paragraphs about your recommendation for them.

New Adjunct Faculty Success Workshop

January 15, 2022 from 9:30 am - 5:00 pm | Zoom

Registration is now live for the January New Adjunct Faculty Success Workshop! Additional details and information can be found on the [Orientation page of the Faculty Resources website](#). Please share this information and strongly encourage your new adjunct faculty to attend. [Registration](#) is required. [Visit our website](#) to find out more about our Faculty Resources.

Course ReDesign Academy is Virtual again in January!

Tuesday, January 11 and Wednesday, January 12, 2022

Application Deadline: Monday December 6, 2021

Course ReDesign Academy will be online again in January! We'll use a blend of synchronous meetings and workgroups 8:30-5:00 on the two key days, plus some asynchronous learning, to support your course project. Depending on participant interest, we may offer options to complete some of the sessions *on campus, with cake!* Use our academy as a just-in-time consultation about teaching in a new modality or with new assignments in your Spring 2022 course—or get a jump on a course you want to build or redesign for Summer or Fall terms.

Course ReDesign Academy provides a stipend to support faculty from all ranks, levels, disciplines, and modalities as they build or revise engaging, relevant, manageable courses. [See our site for deadlines, dates, details, and FAQs.](#)

Stearns Center Events Calendar

Never miss an event! Bookmark our [Event Calendar](#) to stay up to date on all Stearns Center trainings, workshops, webinars, and deadlines.

Faculty Development Workshops

Webinar: "Developing an Ethic of Care Toward First-Gen Student Belonging"

Monday, December 6, 2022 | 12:00 - 1:00 pm | Zoom

Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning and the First-Gen+ Center welcome you to Session #2 of the "Supporting First-Generation College Students in the Classroom and Beyond" series.

Dr. Amber Holton-Thomas from the First-Gen+ center will host "Developing an Ethic of Care Toward First-Generation Student Belonging," a workshop to provide frameworks and strategies you can use with students in your course as the semester ends. This will be an action-oriented follow-up session from the First-Gen Week Book Talk with Dr. Blake Silver and Dr. Lisa Nunn (held Monday, November 15th).

The first 30 minutes will be a time to "listen in" to content (you are encouraged to move around or have your lunch during this portion!) and the final 30 minutes will be spent in conversation with one another. All participants will be sent a copy of the slides and a resource handout following the session. *Note: if you were not able to attend the November 15 session, you may still join us!

[Registration](#) for the program is required.

Questions? Please contact shampton@gmu.edu

Online Mini-Course: Designing Your Syllabus

January 5-14, 2022 | Blackboard

In this 7-to-10-hour asynchronous mini-course, faculty will design a syllabus that promotes student success and engagement by making goals and assignments clear and relevant for students. Faculty will create or revise existing student learning outcomes, align them with assessments with clear criteria for grading and organize course content to maximize student learning. Participants can earn a Level 2 credential for Educational Resource Development in Stearns Continuing Professional Development program. Please direct questions to Crystal Anderson, cander8@gmu.edu.

[Registration](#) is required.

Webinar: Checking Quality

Friday January 21, 2022 11:30-12:30 PM | Zoom

Do your online course and teaching reflect quality? As Mason instructors, we must take care that we create and facilitate high-quality online learning experiences for our students. Checking quality courses should be ongoing: You need to check as you prepare your courses prior to the semester, revisit throughout the semester, and then review after your courses end. How to begin checking for quality? What are the quality standards to address, how to check for quality, what does quality look like, and where to find resources at Mason to help ensure quality?

In this 60-minute webinar, our Quality Assurance (QA) Team will introduce, review, and discuss Stearns Center Digital Learning resources for online course quality, including Faculty Self-Checklist, Guidelines for Quality in Online Courses, and Online Course Essentials Infographic. These resources, available to all Mason communities, provide expectations and guidance for quality in online course design, teaching, and facilitation. We will demonstrate how to use the Faculty Self-Checklist to ensure that your online course is ready for Spring 2022, including elements essential for quality online courses. Experienced online faculty will share examples of their online courses, showing how their course design, teaching & facilitation indicate online quality.

This webinar is primarily directed to faculty and GTAs who currently teach, plan to teach, or are interested in teaching asynchronous online courses. The guidance, tips, and best practices for quality course design and teaching will be helpful for all instructors teaching courses in any modality, including on-site, hybrid, and synchronous online. All are welcome to attend!

Goals and Objectives:

- To use the Faculty Self-Checklist to check for the quality of your course and teaching.
- To locate where to find resources for online quality on Stearns Center website.
- To learn how online quality is shown in course design and teaching, including seeing examples from Mason courses.

Key Learning Outcomes:

- Use the "Faculty Self-Checklist" to check the quality of their courses and teaching.
- Know where to find resources for online course quality on Stearns Center website, and how to contact our Quality Assurance Team for guidance.
- Identify best practices for online quality indicators in online courses, based on examples shared by experienced Mason online faculty.
- Consider how the Online Quality Checklist standards apply to course design and teaching in any/all modalities.

Facilitators: Darlene Smuency (Stearns Center), Monisha Tripathy (Stearns Center), Faculty Co-Facilitators (TBD). Date: Friday, January 21, 2022, 11:30 – 12:30 PM.

[Register](#) here. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Workshop: Promising Pedagogies to Support First-Generation Students

Thursday, Jan. 13, 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. | Zoom

In collaboration with the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning, the First-Gen+ Center will host the 3rd session of its faculty/staff development series – "Supporting First-Generation College Students in the Classroom and Beyond." The theme of this January session will be Promising Pedagogies to Support First-Generation Students, and attendees will engage with evidence-based practices to support them in preparing Spring 2022 syllabi that are inclusive of first-generation student needs and ways of learning. The 1-hour workshop will offer simple tips that can make a big difference to your students.

Hosts: Dr. Shelley Reid (Director for Teaching Excellence, Stearns Center) and Dr. Graziella Pagliarulo McCarron (First-Gen+ Center Affiliate Faculty and Assistant Professor of Leadership Studies, School of Integrative Studies).

Please join us! [Registration](#) for the program is required.

Questions? Please contact stearns@gmu.edu.

New Applications Help Students Engage Online: VoiceThread and Harmonize

In an effort to continuously improve opportunities for engagement and collaboration in Mason's online and hybrid courses, we are introducing two new tools within Blackboard: VoiceThread and Harmonize. Learn more about these tools, and watch the recorded demonstrations on the Stearns Center's [Webinar & Training page](#). To receive access to either application for your Spring 2022 course(s), please complete the [License Request Form](#). Licenses are limited during this pilot year and will be distributed on a first-come-first-served basis. Faculty are encouraged to describe a plan as to how they would like to use either tool in the upcoming year.

Writing Across the Curriculum

Winter Faculty Writing Retreat: Registration now open!

January 12-14 | Microsoft Teams

Hoping to start Spring semester with a blast of writing productivity? Consider registering for the Winter Faculty Writing Retreat, held virtually on Microsoft Teams, running January 12th-14th. This two-and-a-half day event—co-sponsored by Writing Across the Curriculum, the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning, and the Office of Faculty Affairs and Development—offers an active approach to uninterrupted writing time, a chance to learn from our guest speakers, and a supportive and collegial community of peers to boost your writing productivity. Participants work on a variety of research and creative projects at all stages of completion. Registration is open through Friday, December 10, but there's no time like the present.

[Click here for more information](#) (scroll down to "Faculty Writing Retreats"). The online registration is [available here](#).

Please send questions to retreat facilitators at wac@gmu.edu.

FLC on Teaching with Writing: Registration now open!

Every Tuesday | February 1 - March 8, 2022 | 2:00 - 3:30 pm

Are you revising your writing-intensive course or looking for new ways to strengthen your assignments and incorporate more active learning into your writing-enriched course? In spring 2022, the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program will be leading an online faculty learning community (FLC) focused on teaching with writing. This FLC is designed to help faculty align learning tasks with course outcomes and incorporate more active learning opportunities for students.

By the end of the community, participants will have a scaffolded sequence of writing tasks to support the learning outcomes for writing in their course and a drafted WI course application (if applicable).

Interested in this FLC opportunity? Please [complete this survey](#) to let us know. Have any questions about the FLC? Please [visit our website](#) or email us at wac@gmu.edu.

Resources for Teaching with Writing

The WAC Program continues to add new resources for teaching with writing to [our website](#). As the semester continues, you might find our brief guides on assignment design, low-stakes writing assignments, and feedback helpful. You might also want to consider joining us for one of our [upcoming workshops](#). Finally, WAC staff are available to talk with individuals, groups, or departments about writing instruction and curriculum design. To arrange a consultation, please email us at wac@gmu.edu.

Join Us To Explore New Learning Outcomes for Writing-intensive Courses

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the WAC Committee developed new learning outcomes for WI courses in an effort to more directly articulate the goals of the WI course and to provide additional clarity for course planning and assessment. Courses seeking to newly acquire the WI designation will be expected to integrate these outcomes when they apply for the WI attribute: courses that already have the WI designation will be cycle to integrate the outcomes into their course designs during their next review cycle. More information about the outcomes and the new application process is available on the [WAC Program's website](#) and will be forthcoming. We are currently developing new resources to help faculty meet these outcomes and will keep you updated when they become available.

As part of that effort, we are recruiting faculty members who are interested in becoming early adopters and working with WAC staff to integrate these new outcomes into course designs for the spring and fall 2022 semesters. If you are interested in this opportunity, please email us at wac@gmu.edu.

Stearns Center News

Stearns Center Faculty Associates for Spring 2022

Application Deadline: Wednesday, December 15, 2021

Anti-Racism Associates: In conjunction with President Washington's Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence Task Force, the Stearns Center is seeking **TWO** Mason faculty members—from any field, rank, or appointment type—to serve in Spring 2022 as **Faculty Associates for Anti-Racist and Inclusive Teaching Support (ARIT)**.

Community-Engaged Teaching Associates: In conjunction with the Transformative Education Through Anti-Racist Community Engagement OEP, Stearns Center is seeking **ONE** Mason faculty member—from any field, rank, or appointment type—to serve in Spring 2022 as Faculty Associate for Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning. All Faculty Associates will work closely with the Stearns Center Directors and team members, as well as other faculty and staff engaged in work to improve our faculty colleagues' curriculum and pedagogy. Each position will be supported for the Spring 2022 semester, with the possibility of some Summer 2022 work. Each Associate will earn a \$5000 stipend for approximately 10 hours per week of work.

See our website for a [full position description](#) and information about how to apply; send a letter of interest and cv (or any questions about the position) to stearns@gmu.edu; review begins December 15.

Stearns Center is hiring! | Educational Developer with Inclusion & Equity focus

Review begins January 28, 2022

We invite applications for an Educational Developer with a specialization in inclusive and equitable pedagogies and faculty development. This is a full-time, administrative professional position; applicants should have a PhD/EdD, experience leading inclusion and equity programming, and at least two years' college-level teaching experience. For more information, see the [GMU Jobs Board](#), and please share this information with colleagues who may be interested.

Congratulations Dr. Larisa Olesoval

Congratulations to Dr. Larisa Olesova, Senior Instructional Designer, Stearns Center Digital Learning, for her appointment as the President of Educational Communication and Technology (AECT). AECT is the premier professional international organization for instructional designers and educators actively involved in a systematic approach to learning. As President-Elect for DDL, Dr. Olesova recently led and facilitated panels, sessions, and events about distance learning research, practice, and future directions at AECT 21 International Convention, Chicago, Illinois (November 2-6, 2021). In the picture right, Dr. Olesova is formally accepting the position from the outgoing president.

Check out our Quality Assurance resources for online courses!

QUALITY ASSURANCE CHECKLIST AND GUIDELINES For Online Courses

- **Faculty Self-Checklist:** Use the Faculty Self-Checklist to review your online course and online teaching
- **Online Course Quality: Essential Elements:** Review our infographic on Online Course Quality: Essential Elements to get the most out of your course.
- **Want to learn even more?** Our Quality Assurance Checklist and Guidelines contains both a faculty self-checklist and essential quality indicators for each domain with examples of how they can be demonstrated in an online course.

This is an extensive document, and we encourage you to schedule an appointment with our QA team if you have any questions regarding it. [Click here](#) to request a copy of the guidelines. You can indicate whether you would like a brief consultation with our QA team when submitting the form.

Contact QA Team: For any questions regarding Online Quality Assurance, please contact: gateam@gmu.edu

Want Tips and Guidance for Teaching Online?

Subscribe to the Stearns Center Digital Learning's Online Teaching Coaching Newsletter, whether you are new to teaching online or an experienced online instructor wanting additional guidance. The Fall 2021 Biweekly Online Teaching Coaching email newsletter will include topics such as: Supporting your students' learning online, Time management for online teaching, Online student engagement Inclusive, equitable teaching online, and more.

[Subscribe today](#)

Questions? Contact the Stearns Center at stearns@gmu.edu.

Stearns Center Consultations

Stearns Center staff will be glad to assist you with any questions related to teaching, managing, and developing your face-to-face, hybrid or online courses. We can respond via email or Zoom. Please submit your questions by [clicking here](#). We work to answer your questions as quickly as possible; however, response times may vary.

From Our Partners

OSCAR

Summer Team Impact Projects application open

Proposal Deadline: December 3, 2021

The Office of the Provost is excited to offer grants for [Summer Team Impact Projects \(STIP\)](#) for Summer 2022. The Offices of Undergraduate Education, OSCAR, and CECL will fund multidisciplinary summer projects of undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members. These projects will explore a central theme, a research question, or a community-identified problem. Proposals focusing on the UN Global Goals or Anti-Racist Community Engagement are encouraged.

Fall Virtual Celebration of Student Scholarship

December 9-10, 2021

Undergraduate students from all over campus, including OSCAR and several of the colleges will have videos available for you to watch, describing their work this fall. Please come to view the presentations and post comments or questions. Joins us as we celebrate the work of our student scholars.

Students who want to present their work at the celebration should [visit our website](#) for more information.

Research Assistant Positions

OSCAR is expanding opportunities for students to learn research, creative, or scholarly methods in their field and giving faculty free support on their projects at the same time. [Learn how you can hire a research assistant.](#)

Undergraduate Research Scholars Program

Applications for the Summer 2022 Cycle will open in the spring.

URSP supports undergraduate students collaborating on a research, creative, or scholarly project with a faculty mentor. [Find more information on our website.](#)

Undergraduate Student Travel Fund

The Undergraduate Student Travel Fund (USTF) supports research and writing related travel for undergraduates who are presenting their projects via poster, talk, screening, round table, performance, etc. USTF can support costs associated with presentations at virtual conferences. Students must apply 30 days before the start of the event. [Learn more here.](#)

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