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From Our Directors

Greetings, Friends,

We've been talking in the Stearns Center, as we imagine you have been talking with your friends and colleagues, about our experiences so far in Fall 2021; the "only statement we can come to consensus on is, "It's complicated!" We're negotiating excitement and anxiety, familiarity and new challenges, connection and exhaustion, renewed confidence and unexpected questions. If that sounds like your conversations, please know that you have lots of company. Teaching in Fall 2021 is like riding a third wave of change: following on the sudden pivots of Spring and Summer 2020—and then the more deliberate, mostly distanced teaching and learning of last year—we're now exploring additional combinations of approaches, energies, and tools for teaching and learning. Please know that we're here to support you in all of your teaching endeavors.

One of the Stearns Center resources that you can count on every year is just around the corner: our all-virtual [Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference](#). [Just two weeks away!](#) Have you [registered](#)? (It's free to all Mason faculty, staff, and students!) Have you added our Zoom-based Keynote session (Monday, September 20, 9:30-11:00 am) to your calendar, so you can hear the AACU's Tia Brown McNair presenting on "Strengthening and Sustaining a Culture of Equity"? We hope so. Last year, over 800 of you registered for the conference; this year, we hope to see even more of you there, for one session or for several across the week!

We're also finishing up the lists for our Fall 2021 [Teaching Squares](#). To get matched with three colleagues for a lightly-guided exchange and conversation about teaching, be sure to complete our [two-minute survey](#) by this Friday, September 3.

And that's not all! You can see our [full Fall Calendar](#) on our new events page, which includes options coming up this month such as

- Continuing Professional Development Workshops on Efficient Grading and Writing Assignments that Engage Students
- Webinars featuring Tips and Strategies from our Instructional Design team and advice about Engaging Asynchronous Students

If joining a formal event doesn't match your goals right now, we invite you to take a break from reading or grading to explore our website: you can find updated resources on [Inclusive Teaching](#) or [Active Learning](#), or watch a previously recorded [webinar](#) on Teaching with Zoom or Creating Engaging Videos for your class.

Along with our partners (including the Office of the Provost, Faculty Affairs and Development, Writing Across the Curriculum, Undergraduate Education/Mason Impact/OSCAR/CECIL, Graduate Education, GradLife, University Libraries, and Information Technology Services) we wish you energy, patience, humor, and grace as you continue your Fall 2021 explorations in teaching and learning.

Shelley & Faisal

E Shelley Reid, Ph.D.
Director for Teaching Excellence
Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning
Associate Professor, English Department
ereid1@gmu.edu

Faisal Mahmud, Ph.D.
Director for Digital Learning
Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning
fmahmud5@gmu.edu

Events & Deadlines

INNOVATIONS in Teaching & Learning

Register Now! Innovations in Teaching & Learning conference

September 20-24, 2021 | Online

Join us for the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning's annual [Innovations in Teaching & Learning \(ITL\) conference Sept. 20-24](#), which brings together Mason's instructors from across disciplines to share teaching strategies through lively virtual interactive workshops and panels. From the comfort of your home, brew a cup of coffee and enjoy 100+ Synchronous and On Demand sessions in which Mason instructors share their best teaching strategies. You will walk away with something to use in your class the next day, week or semester.

On Monday September 20, 9:30-11:00 a.m., keynote speaker Dr. Tia Brown McNair, Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Student Success and Executive Director for the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Campus Centers at the Association of American Colleges and Universities, will share her insights and expertise on fostering equity and inclusive excellence in higher education. Her book is [From Equity Talk to Equity Walk: Expanding Practitioner Knowledge for Racial Justice in Higher Education](#) (click link for FREE Mason access to her e-book thanks to University Libraries).

Whether you're full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, graduate student, or support office staff, we hope that you can join us for an inspiring week filled with conversation, fellowship, and fun! [Register](#) and find out more at <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/itl>.

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.

Teaching Excellence Awards

Full-time TEA Nomination Deadline: Friday, October 8, 2021

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.
 - Our TEAs for full-time faculty** (term and tenure-line) offer recognition for excellent teaching overall, and special recognitions for excellence in teaching General Education (Mason Core) or High Impact Learning. Faculty who have already completed three or more years teaching at Mason are eligible.
 - 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 at Mason. 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.

See additional information [on our website](#). To indicate your interest for Fall 2021, [please complete our two-minute form](#) by Friday, September 3, 2021.

See additional information [on our website](#). To indicate your interest for Fall 2021, [please complete our two-minute form](#) by Friday, September 3, 2021.

Online Teaching and Learning (OTL) Webinar Series

Stearns Center Digital Learning team will be facilitating online teaching and learning (OTL) series webinars in the fall. Our experienced QA team and instructional designers will share examples from designed courses with tips and strategies to make an online course highly effective. These webinars are open to all faculty regardless of the teaching modalities. Previously, faculty attending these webinars found it very effective for their F2F and hybrid teaching.

September 10, 2021, 1:00 - 2:30 pm | Rethinking Assessments

- Facilitators: Larisa Olesova and Ala Showers
- [Register for this webinar](#)

September 14, 2021, 1:00 - 2:30 pm | Basic Questions about Accessibility and Usability in Online Courses

- Facilitators: Darlene Smucny and Korey Singleton
- [Register for this webinar](#)

October 1, 2021, 1:00 - 2:30 pm | Engaging Asynchronous Students

- Facilitators: Ala Showers and Larisa Olesova
- [Register for this webinar](#)

October 7, 2021, 1:00 - 2:30 pm | Utilizing Multimedia for Course Design

- Facilitator: Katrina Johnson
- [Register for this webinar](#)

New Applications Help Students Engage Online: VoiceThread, Harmonize, MS Teams

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 Fall 2021 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.

In addition, the conversion of all student email addresses over the summer enables students to join faculty in [Microsoft Teams spaces](#), which provide threaded discussion, chat, web-conferencing, file-sharing, calendaring, and more. Access to MS Teams is automatic, but faculty who wish to build classroom communities will need to create and invite students to specific "teams."

ITS Blackboard Webinars/Workshops

Are you looking to learn Blackboard basics, beyond basics, grade center, Kaltura media, Collaborate Ultra, using rubrics in Bb, or anything relevant to Bb? Consider attending any or all of these Blackboard training sessions/webinars facilitated by Mason's Bb team. The date, time, and registration links are here: [Blackboard Online Webinars/Workshops](#).

Writing Across the Curriculum

Fall Faculty Writing Sprints

Every Friday of the semester: 9:00 - 11:00 am

Our virtual Friday Writing Sprints are underway, and all faculty with any kind of writing project are invited to participate. Add it to your calendar, tell your friends, and prepare to marvel at just how much you can accomplish in two hours alongside your fellow Mason writers. To participate in the sprints, simply connect to our Faculty Writing Community workspace in MS Teams and look for the meeting in the General channel.

Registration: [Sign up here](#) and receive reminders about joining sessions and setting goals.

To participate in the sprints, simply connect to our [Faculty Writers Community](#) workspace in MS Teams (make sure to sign in with your Mason credentials) and look for the meeting in the [General channel](#).

Questions: email us at wac@gmu.edu. For more information about this and related programming, please [visit our website](#).

New 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 expected 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 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.

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.

From Our Partners

Faculty Affairs

Guidelines for Evaluation of Teaching

Guidelines for Evaluation of Teaching: If you are evaluating or being evaluated on teaching this fall, please consider checking the resource page [Supporting Efforts to Document and Assess Teaching and Learning](#).

Faculty Affinity Groups

If you would like to join newly formed groups for Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Multi-racial (BLIM) faculty; for Asian, Asian-American, and Pacific Islander (AAPI) faculty; or for First Generation faculty, please see more information on the Provost's new [Inclusive Excellence webpage](#).

SAIL and CECIL

Resources for Community Engaged Teaching

Your colleagues in both [Social Action and Integrative Learning \(SAIL\)](#) and the [Office of Community Engagement and Civic Learning \(CECIL\)](#) are available to provide resources and information regarding Community Based Experiences here at George Mason University.

- If you are [including a community-based learning component](#) with your course during the 2021-2022 academic year, please help us contact you by using this [Community Based Learning Form](#).
- If you are interested in hosting a conversation with your class or department, or just learning more about the [Transformative Education through Anti-Racist Community EngagementQEP](#), please email Kristen Wright at kwright22@gmu.edu.
- If you or your class would like more resources, please use the [SAIL Resources Page](#), check out our [SAIL Orientation Video](#), or use [our form](#) to request a presentation.
- We hope you'll join us [Friday, September 10, 2021](#), from 11-1pm on Wilkins Plaza for our annual [George Mason University Service Fair](#) as part of the [Mason Nation 9/11 Day of Service](#).

OSCAR

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

Spring 2022 Application Deadline: October 27, 2021

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 scholarly 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](#).

University Libraries

VIVA Grants to Develop OER Materials: Applications Due October 4, 2021

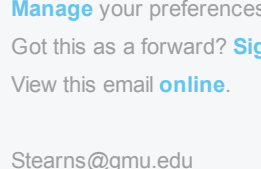
Virginia's Academic Library Consortium (VIVA) recently announced a new round of VIVA Open Adopt Grants. VIVA Open Adopt Grants provide awards of \$2,000 to individual instructors to support the time it takes to integrate existing open or no-cost materials into a syllabus and to ensure that the results of those efforts are widely available to Virginia educators. The VIVA Open Adopt Grant RFP, application materials, and informational webinars can be found on the [VIVA website](#). [Applications are due Monday, Oct. 4.](#)

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