

# Center for Teaching

Year in Review 2021-2022

The Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching promotes university teaching that leads to meaningful student learning. By helping members of the Vanderbilt community become more effective teachers, the Center for Teaching supports the educational mission of the university and enhances the learning experiences of its students.

## From the Executive Director

In responding to new patterns in teaching, learning, and working at the university this year, the Center for Teaching recalibrated its programs, services, and other offerings to meet the current needs of the campus teaching community. For instance, after a year's hiatus, our long-running Junior Faculty Teaching Fellows welcomed a new cohort of fellows this year, the CFT began managing and supporting two Provost-funded teaching grant programs, and we enhanced our support for instructional technologies in response to continued demand.

We also celebrated the CFT's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year with a special panel open to the higher education community and a virtual union of staff and graduate student alumni. Reflecting on these events, I was reminded that teaching centers like ours can become centers for resiliency in the face of teaching and learning challenges, like the COVID-19 pandemic, and that we can help our teaching communities grapple with the grand challenges they face in the future.

*Derek Bruff, August 2022*

## By the Numbers



"Clients" and "reached" data includes program and event participation and consultations, but not Brightspace support tickets.

# New Ideas in Teaching

## Teaching Grants

The CFT administers two internal grant programs funded by the Office of the Provost, the Educational Advancement Fund and the Course Improvement Grant program, both designed to support excellence in the classroom through pedagogical advancements and long-term educational transformation. In this inaugural year of the program, the CFT offered the **22 faculty grant recipients** a learning community through which they developed strategies for maximizing their resources, assessing their innovations, and transforming their teaching practices. A total of \$7,232 was distributed through Course Improvement Grants, and \$17,946 distributed as Educational Advancement Fund awards.



**Savanna Starko**, senior lecturer in physics, received a grant to offer yoga exercises that illustrate physics principles for her students. This effort, a collaboration with Peabody graduate student Lauren Colliau, had the dual goals of promoting students' mental health and helping them see applications of their physics learning. **Will Grissom**, associate professor of biomedical engineering, received a grant to purchase software that helps integrate coding exercises with other types of learning. His positive experience led him to host a colloquium about the software for eight peer faculty.



## Course Design Institutes

This spring the CFT offered its second annual Course Design Institute on inclusive teaching. In May, **32 instructors** from across campus participated in the four-day event, delving into the scholarship on inclusive teaching and applying it to their course design work. They met with each other in large and small groups, and with resource faculty and staff from across campus. All respondents to the post-institute survey either agreed or strongly agreed that the institute prepared them well, equipped them with concrete plans, and is likely to have a positive impact on their teaching.



In August, the CFT offered a Course Design Institute on collaborative teaching. Designed in partnership with the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, this was a three-day summer course that supported **7 faculty fellows** in three teams as they developed interdisciplinary, team-taught courses on the theme of "environments." Through structured dialogues about their teaching, the RPW Fellows explored the research on interdisciplinarity, team-teaching, learning assessment, and student engagement to refine their courses in ways that can lend greater rigor and enjoyment to both their teaching and student learning.

## Digital Media Services

The Center for Teaching's digital media services team provided guidance, instruction, and resources to all university instructors, regardless of technology experience, who want to improve their technology skills and incorporate media into their teaching. The CFT's two studio spaces, the Digital Media Lab and the One-Button Studio, were used by **51 faculty, staff, and students a total of 221 hours this year**, including significant usage in support of the Divinity Schools Lifelong Learning program and Doctorate of Ministry program and the Law School's Master of Legal Studies program. The digital media services team moved to the Office of Digital Education in July 2022.



## Leading Lines

Six years ago, the Center for Teaching and the Vanderbilt Libraries launched *Leading Lines*, a podcast on educational technology in higher education. Through interviews with educators at Vanderbilt and elsewhere, the podcast explores creative, intentional, and effective uses of technology to enhance student learning. On November 15, 2021, the 100th episode of the podcast featured an interview with former CFT graduate student Zoe LeBlanc, now an assistant professor of information science. The 113 episodes of *Leading Lines* thus far have generated **over 68,000 downloads** since 2016 (over 600 downloads per episode on average), and the podcast has roughly 400 regular subscribers across higher education.



CENTER for TEACHING



In honor of the **Center for Teaching's 35th anniversary**, the CFT hosted a special anniversary panel on October 29, 2021, featuring staff and graduate student alumni of the CFT. The panelists (**Peter Felten**, Elon University; **Brielle Harbin**, US Naval Academy; **Katie Headrick Taylor**, University of Washington; and **Shederick McClendon**, Sphinx Global Solutions) discussed a series of questions on teaching and learning in higher education and the field of educational development, moderated by former CFT director **Allison Pingree** (Harvard University). **Eighty people** attended the panel, including faculty and staff from 40 different institutions.



Allison Pingree



Peter Felten



Brielle Harbin



Shederick McClendon

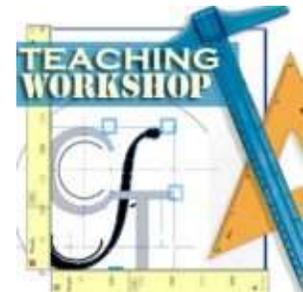


Katie Headrick Taylor

# Campus Conversations on Teaching

## Teaching Workshops

This year, the CFT offered 19 teaching workshops to the campus on such topics as inclusive teaching, open pedagogy, flipping the classroom, and using Brightspace and other educational technology tools. These workshops attracted a total of **205 faculty, staff, and student participants**.



The CFT also facilitated 20 teaching workshops in partnership with departments, schools, and other academic units that involved **236 participants in total**. These included workshops on inclusive teaching for the Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health, instructional design for the School of Law, competency-based assessment for the School of Nursing, and responding to course evaluations for the Chemistry Department, among many more.

While the CFT's come-one-come-all workshops broaden our reach on campus, our invited workshops with campus partners deepens the impact of our educational development work.

## Learning Communities

The CFT hosts and facilitates yearlong learning communities designed to support the ongoing development of curricula, courses, and teaching techniques. This year, the CFT offered four learning communities involving **93 faculty, staff, and student participants**:

**The Cumberland Project.** Since 2011 the Cumberland Project has been a course design workshop for faculty developing interdisciplinary curricula in environmental and sustainability studies. This year's learning community was a partnership with **Teresa Goddu** (English) and **Jonathan Gilligan** (Earth & Environmental Sciences) to aid faculty in developing the Climate and Environmental Studies major.

**Online Teaching.** This learning community is for those who want to dig deeper into online course design principles in order to create excellent online courses. The group hosted three external speakers this year and worked together to contribute to the CFT's Online Course Development website and the CFT's teaching guides.

**Queer Teaching, Queer Thriving.** The CFT and the K.C. Potter Center for LGBTQI Life offered a series of discussions about the ways all campus educators (faculty and staff) may best support LGBTQI students to thrive academically and socially, with discussions focused on LGBTQI student and faculty self-care, theories and practices of queer pedagogy, and inclusive teaching strategies.

**Teaching with Learning Assistants.** Learning assistants (LAs) are students who serve as peer mentors in courses they have previously taken. The CFT supports the College of Arts & Sciences LA program through this learning community. In it, faculty who are currently working with LAs or are considering doing so in the future meet to discuss promising practices.

# Foundational Teaching Skills

## Junior Faculty Teaching Fellows

The JFTF program offers a structured set of professional development activities designed to help select junior faculty members refine their teaching skills while learning from CFT staff and colleagues across campus. In its first ten years, the program helped more than 100 faculty from eight colleges and schools consider new practices in their teaching.

This year, we welcomed the 11<sup>th</sup> cohort to the program consisting of **18 faculty** from five schools who participated in course design seminars, classroom teaching visits, mentored dinner discussions, and individual consultations. Thanks to the College of Arts & Science and the School of Engineering for additional program funding this year.

**Ravindra Duddu**, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, credits his 2016-2016 Junior Faculty Teaching Fellowship with changing the way he thinks about teaching. "JFTF made me really excited about teaching, made me realize that teaching is, perhaps, the most crucial part of the faculty job; graduate student advising is teaching, mentoring is a form of teaching." This paradigmatic shift in his thinking about teaching has led him to believe that production of knowledge should be part of courses, especially in graduate courses. This had a positive impact on his teaching and in communicating about his research, which contributed to his successful application for an NSF CAREER award.



## Teaching Consultations

The CFT offers individual teaching consultations to the Vanderbilt teaching community. Through these interactions, CFT consultants help instructors make teaching choices that are guided by their pedagogical goals, suited to their particular teaching contexts, and informed by the literature on teaching and learning.

In 2021-2022, CFT staff conducted a total of **635 teaching consultations with 345 individuals**, including 182 faculty, 31 staff, and 114 graduate students. These included consultations about course and syllabus design, about Brightspace and related technologies, and consultations following classroom teaching observations, among others.



As one story of the transformative potential of consultations, **Kejia Hu**, assistant professor of operations management, praises the support of her CFT consultant for her growth and success as a teacher. After noting a significant improvement in her student evaluations, she wrote to her consultant, "Your generous support and constructive suggestions play a significant role in my progress. I cannot express how grateful I am just thinking you are there at the Center for Teaching as a guru full of teaching wisdom.... THANK YOU."

## Certificate in College Teaching



Co-sponsored by the CFT and the Graduate School, the CCT assists Vanderbilt graduate students and post-doctoral fellows who wish to gain a deeper and more practiced understanding of teaching and learning in higher education. Through a seminar and a practicum, participants must develop their teaching portfolios - including a teaching statement, sample syllabi, and observations and evaluations of their teaching - to aid in the development of their careers in higher education. This year, **66 individuals** completed the CCT, including

58 graduate students and 8 postdocs.

## Orientations

*Teaching at Vanderbilt.* A total of **33 faculty** participated in the CFT's August orientation for new faculty, which featured a variety of short workshops that addressed specific teaching challenges as well as a panel of senior faculty reflecting on their teaching experiences.

*Teaching Assistant Orientation.* The CFT's orientation for new teaching assistants (TAs) was attended by **240 graduate students** who explored effective strategies for their varied teaching duties and engaged with experienced TAs.



## Graduate Teaching Fellows



Each year the CFT hires four Graduate Teaching Fellows (GTFs) as part of the CFT's efforts to mentor and train graduate students in teaching, including those serving as teaching assistants or instructors of record at Vanderbilt and those interested in developing teaching skills for future academic careers. The GTFs conduct most of the CFT's consultations with and workshops for graduate students, facilitate the Certificate in College Teaching seminars and practicums, and collaborate with CFT senior staff on a variety of special projects.

The GTFs are experienced graduate student teachers, typically doctoral students in their final years of study, and the GTF program is a valuable professional development experience for these students. Alumni of the program have gone to both tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty positions, academic staff positions within higher ed (including at least three now serving at teaching and learning centers), and careers outside higher ed.

# University Service

Given their expertise in educational development, CFT staff are often invited to contribute to college, school, and university efforts around teaching and learning initiatives. This work doesn't often fit into neat categories, but it is a significant way CFT staff support the teaching mission of the university. Following are four examples of this kind of university service.

The College of Arts & Science launched a **Learning Assistants program** this year involving faculty teaching gateway courses across six departments. Learning Assistants (LAs) are undergraduates who serve as peer mentors in courses they have previously taken. Research on the Vanderbilt LA program has shown the program significantly increases students' sense of belonging in individual courses and in STEM more broadly. CFT associate director Cynthia Brame has been instrumental in launching and sustaining the LA program by leading a learning community for faculty using LAs, contributing to the selection and training of new LAs, and working with faculty on assessment of the program.

Vanderbilt's Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion is launching a new series of **"critical conversation" workshops** for faculty, staff, and students in fall 2022. Designing the curriculum for that series was a collaborative effort by EDI and CFT staff, notably CFT assistant director Joe Bandy. Drawing on his years of experience leading workshops on inclusive teaching and facilitating learning communities on teaching, power, and difference, Bandy advised on both the content and form of the new workshops. The new EDI workshops represent an important tool in fostering a more diverse and inclusive campus environment at the university.

The Divinity School launched a new online **Lifelong Learning program** in fall 2021. The program was aimed at the school's extensive and diverse alumni network, as well as the general public, as a way for participants to explore matters of faith and culture. Launching a new online program, even a non-degree program, involves a great deal of curriculum and course design, as well as the production of digital media, particularly video, for use in courses. CFT assistant director for instructional design Julaine Fowlin and CFT assistant director for digital media Rhett McDaniel provided consultation services to the Lifelong Learning program faculty, and the program made use of the CFT's digital media studios.

The CFT has a longstanding partnership with the Office of Immersion Resources (OIR) to support **Immersion Vanderbilt**. Starting in 2018, the CFT facilitated a design process leading to an articulation of learning outcomes for Immersion's four pathways and consulted on formative and summative assessment practices aligned with those outcomes. This year, the CFT and OIR co-designed an Immersion 101 workshop for faculty and staff serving as Immersion mentors, and CFT staff joined a team of Academic Affairs staff at the American Association of Colleges & Universities' High Impact Practices Institute to further integrate high impact practices into students' residential college experience.

# Instructional Technology Support

The CFT began administering and supporting Provost-provisioned educational technologies in 2015, starting with Vanderbilt's course management systems, Blackboard and later Brightspace. Today, these technologies include Kaltura, Turnitin, Perusall, Top Hat, Gradescope, and more.

In a fall 2021 MyVU story about the ways faculty were continuing to improve their teaching as a result of lessons learned from pandemic teaching,



**Anita Wager**, associate dean for undergraduate affairs at Peabody College, said, "A common thread among faculty is that the resources provided by the university, and especially through the Center for Teaching, were invaluable last year and are at the heart of what is making us even better teachers this year."

While demand for instructional technology support has subsided from peak pandemic levels, it is significantly higher than it was before the pandemic. For instance, the CFT Brightspace support team fielded 2.7 times as many requests in 2020-21 (8,695 tickets) as in 2018-2019 (3,233). That team doesn't just solve technical problems, but also helps instructors learn to teach more effectively with technology. Indeed, the team conducted 67 individual consultations this year that went beyond tech support into best teaching practices.

# Staff Teaching

While most of the work that the CFT does to support student learning at Vanderbilt is indirect (that is, working with faculty and other instructors who then directly teach students), some PhD-holding members of the CFT senior staff teach credit-bearing courses in their home academic departments. This year, CFT staff taught three undergraduate courses at Vanderbilt:

BSCI 2520: Biochemistry, Fall 2021, taught by **Cynthia Brame**

SPAN 1100: Elementary Spanish I for True Beginners, Fall 2021, taught by **Stacey Johnson**

SOC 3314: Environmental Inequality and Justice, Spring 2022, taught by **Joe Bandy**

# Staff Notes

On May 23, 2022, CFT lead instructional technologist **Paige Snay** was honored with the Vanderbilt University Early Impact Staff Award. This award is given annually to a full-time staff member who exemplifies professionalism and has made significant contributions as a junior staff member at Vanderbilt.

Longtime assistant director for digital media **Rhett McDaniel** left the CFT in April to take a new position at the Vanderbilt School of Nursing, and CFT associate director **Cynthia Brame** announced she would be moving to a full-time faculty position in the biological sciences department in August.

# Staff Scholarship

The CFT senior staff are active scholars in various fields, including educational and organizational development and discipline-based educational research, and often in collaboration with faculty and graduate student colleagues. Below are scholarly publications authored by CFT staff that were published this year.

Aref, H., Wright, B., Davis, B., & **Fowlin, J.** (2021). High-level curricular integration in pharmacy schools: A Systematic literature review. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2021.09.046>

**Bandy, J.**, Harbin, M. B., & Thurber, A. (2021). Teaching race and racial justice: Developing students' cognitive and affective understanding. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 9(1), 117-137.

Brown, S., & **Fowlin, J.** (2022). Open systems, closed interventions? A way forward requires systems thinking. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 15(1), 95-98. doi:10.1017/iop.2021.138

Clements, T., Friedman, K., Johnson, H., Meier, C., Watkins, J., Brockman, A., & **Brame C.** (2022). "It made me feel like a bigger part of the STEM community": Incorporation of learning assistants enhances students' sense of belonging in a large introductory biology class. *CBE–Life Sciences Education*. doi: 10.1187/cbe.21-09-0287

Eiland, L., **Fowlin, J.**, & Chung, A. (2021). Improving student pharmacists' learning through the use of pediatric simulation. *The Journal of Pediatric Pharmacology and Therapeutics* 26(8), 815-820.

Frey, R., **Brame C.**, Fink A., & Lemons P. (2022). Teaching discipline-based problem-solving: An evidence-based teaching guide. *CBE–Life Sciences Education*, doi: 10.1187/cbe.22-02-0030.

**Johnson, S. M.**, & Hawkins, M. (2022). Peer observation of teaching: A university *profesora* and a lower-school *maestra* learn from each other. *Hispania*, 105, 167-172. DOI: 10.1353/hpn.2022.0034

**Johnson, S. M.** (2022). Languages at the Margins: Criticality and Counternarratives. *Journal of Christianity & World Languages*.

Taylor, C., Dewsbury, B., & **Brame C.** (2022). Technology, equity, and inclusion in the virtual education space. In *Technologies in Biomedicine & Life Science Education: Approaches and Efficacy for Learning*. Editor: M. Lee. Springer International Publishing AG.

Teller L., McDaniel J., Schuele C., & **Brame C.** (2022). The Blended and Online Learning Design Fellows program: Developing teacher-researchers in communication sciences and disorders. *Teaching and Learning in Communication Sciences & Disorders*, 6(2), Article 4. <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/tlcsd/vol6/iss2/4>,

In addition, **Stacey Johnson** serves as editor of *Spanish and Portuguese Review*, the graduate student journal of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, and **Cynthia Brame** serves on the editorial board of *CBE–Life Sciences Education* and co-editor of the CBE-LSE evidence based teaching guides.

# CFT Staff 2021-2022



Derek Bruff  
Assistant Provost  
and Executive  
Director



Cynthia Brame  
Associate  
Director



Joe Bandy  
Assistant Director



Stacey Johnson  
Assistant Director  
for Educational  
Technology



Rhett McDaniel  
Assistant Director  
for Digital Media



Ransford Pinto  
Assistant Director  
for Graduate  
Programming



Julaine Fowlin  
Assistant Director  
for Instructional  
Technology



Juliet Traub  
Administrative  
Coordinator



Paige Snay  
Lead Instructional  
Technologist



Erica Brandon  
Instructional  
Technologist



Michael Coley  
Instructional  
Technologist



Jenny Park  
Instructional  
Technologist



Seth Shepherd  
Digital Media  
Specialist



Tracye Davis  
Digital Media  
Specialist



Leah Roberts  
Senior Graduate  
Teaching Fellow



Sara Eccleston  
Graduate  
Teaching Fellow



Jose Luis de  
Ramon Ruiz  
Graduate  
Teaching Fellow



Yvonne Chen  
Graduate  
Teaching Fellow