

Center for Teaching 2016-17 Year in Review

Mission

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



By the Numbers

In 2016-17, the CFT reached

429

full-time faculty members across campus through consultations, programs, and events.

That's **35%**

of all full-time faculty outside the School of Medicine¹.

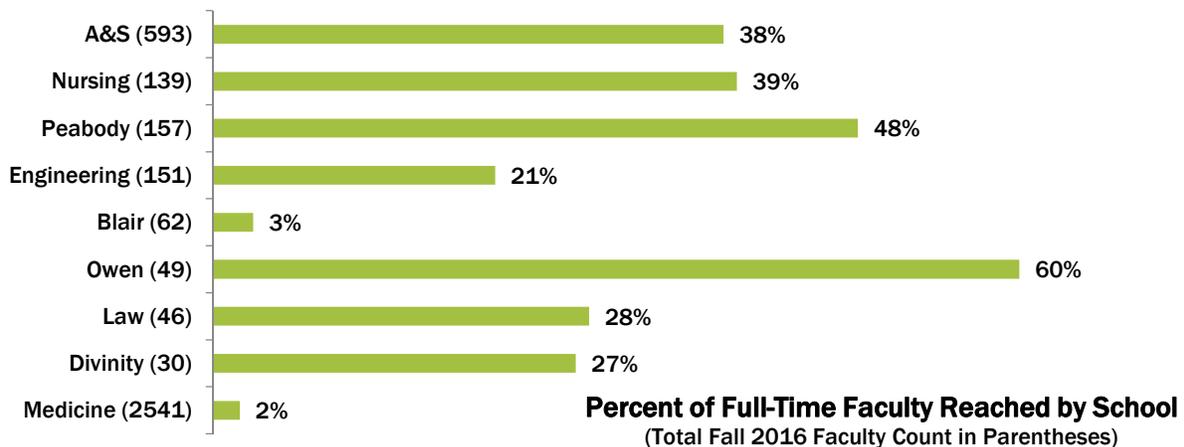
The CFT also reached

503

PhD students in 2016-2017 through its various offerings.

That's **24%**

of all PhD students at Vanderbilt.



¹ The School of Medicine is omitted here because many Medicine faculty have limited formal teaching duties.

The CFT enhances the student learning experience by helping instructors develop and refine foundational teaching skills and explore new teaching practices.

Faculty and TA Orientations

The CFT's annual orientations provide new faculty and teaching assistants strategies and resources for launching effective teaching careers at Vanderbilt. This year, 72 faculty and 254 TAs participated in our orientations.

Workshops & Events

The CFT offers professional development workshops on a variety of topics. This year, the CFT offered 19 events open to the campus and facilitated an additional 58 invited sessions for departments, schools, and programs. Frequent topics included educational technology, inclusive teaching, and discussion leading.

New this year was the CFT's **Just-in-Time Teaching Conference**, a set of workshops held August 18-19 attended by 31 faculty, staff, and students.



Science Teaching Lunches

This year the CFT launched a series of teaching lunches for faculty in Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Earth & Environmental Sciences, and Physics & Astronomy. Topics included interpreting student evaluations to inform teaching, dealing with students in distress, and incorporating active learning. More than half of the faculty in these four departments attended at least one lunch.

One participant noted, "It was very useful to set aside an hour to think about teaching and to get new perspectives on what I can do both in and out of the classroom." Another said, "It was a chance to take a break from the 'what do I need to do today' routine and think about my teaching and ways to improve learning in the classroom."



Course Design Institute

The CFT offered its second annual Course Design Institute in May 2017. In this three-day workshop on the theme "Students as Producers," 14 faculty

members from 4 colleges and schools designed (or redesigned) courses that engage students not only as consumers of information, but producers of knowledge.

"The discussions I had with colleagues and CFT staff were illuminating and energizing for both my teaching and my research; I walked away feeling better able to design courses that mobilize my intellectual engagements and disciplinary expertise to evoke students' intellectual passions."

Elizabeth Meadows, Senior Lecturer, English



Teaching Consultations

The CFT provides a range of confidential consultation services for instructors interested in reflecting on their teaching experiences and engaging their students in deeper learning. This year, CFT staff conducted a total of 579 consultations with 352 unique individuals.

Small Changes, Big Results

Negative course evaluations and a desire to retool her teaching led one junior faculty member to meet with a CFT consultant this year. After a classroom observation and a small group analysis (the CFT's mid-semester student feedback service), it was clear that the instructor was lecturing too much and not striking the right balance of theory and practice.

After discussing her course design and lesson planning with the CFT consultant, the faculty member made some relatively minor changes in her approach to content and discussion facilitation. Those changes led to big improvements in student engagement during class and more positive evaluations at the end of the semester.

The CFT fosters innovative and effective use of educational technologies by supporting instructors as they incorporate both new and established technologies in their teaching.

Leading Lines

In collaboration with campus partners, the CFT launched Leading Lines, a podcast exploring creative, intentional, and effective uses of technology to enhance student learning. The podcast features interviews with educators, researchers, and technologists at Vanderbilt and beyond.



"I'm not only an interviewer for Leading Lines, I'm also an audience member. Given the rapidly changing environment of educational technology, hearing others discuss changes and advances allows me to rethink what we are doing at the university."
John Sloop, Associate Provost for Digital Learning

To date, 20 episodes have been produced, and those episodes have been played or downloaded (collectively) more than 6,000 times. See leadinglinespod.com for the full episode list.

Blended and Online Learning Design (BOLD) Fellows

The BOLD Fellows program supports faculty-graduate student teams in developing and assessing online learning modules for STEM courses at Vanderbilt. Since the program launched in 2013, there have been 30 BOLD Fellows with projects implemented in 20 courses, affecting more than 2,500 Vanderbilt students. BOLD Fellows have presented their work at 15 conferences, one Fellow has published his project, and three more have submitted manuscripts.

In 2016-17, nine teams participated in the program, including 11 faculty members, 10 graduate students, and one undergraduate from A&S, Engineering, and Medicine.

Brightspace Support

The CFT provides administrative leadership, technical and pedagogy support, and educational outreach for Brightspace, Vanderbilt's new course management system. CFT staff worked with campus partners this year to configure and implement Brightspace and to transition the campus from its prior system, Blackboard. Brightspace launched in the spring, with all summer 2017 courses running on the new system.



In support of the Brightspace launch, the CFT offered 21 orientation sessions for the new platform, attended by 213 faculty, staff, and students. The CFT also launched a Brightspace support website, featuring 47 on-demand resources, tutorials, and walkthroughs for instructors and students.

Meanwhile, the CFT continued to support Blackboard throughout the year. CFT staff resolved more than 3,400 help tickets for Blackboard and Brightspace support in 2016-17.

"I have had several questions about Brightspace in the past week, and your staff have been wonderful in getting back to me in a timely manner with helpful information. Each staff member has answered questions for me, and they have each been great. Thank you for having such capable people!"

Nancy Lea Hyer, Associate Dean, Owen Graduate School



The CFT supports the Vanderbilt community in developing a more diverse and inclusive environment for teaching and learning.

Workshops & Events

CFT staff designed and facilitated several workshops and presentations on inclusive teaching, some open to the campus, others at the invitation of individual schools and departments. Specific topics included implicit bias, microaggressions, students in distress, difficult dialogues, and teaching in tumultuous times.



Class Matters

As an extension of its ongoing explorations of teaching, difference, and power, the CFT hosted a learning community on teaching and social class for faculty, staff, and students that met monthly during the academic year. The group shared its work and engaged the broader campus in conversation during the CFT's Class Matters symposium, held in April 2017. The symposium featured a wide-ranging discussion about ways in which class differences and conflicts manifest in campus life, as well as strategies faculty and staff can employ to create a more class conscious and inclusive culture.



Opening speaker **Sharon Shields**, Professor of the Practice of Human and Organizational Development, challenged the audience: "Do you commit to an engaged pedagogy that recognizes the importance of constructively confronting issues of class? That means welcoming the opportunity to alter our

classroom practices creatively so that the democratic ideal of education for everyone can be realized."

Creating Art in an Inclusive Classroom

There's a new piece of art hanging in the Center for Teaching: a quilt made by Nila Huddleston, a Next Steps student who took Alex Sargent's costume design course in the fall of 2016. Next Steps supports students with intellectual disabilities to take classes at



Vanderbilt. A senior lecturer of theatre, Sargent took the CFT's 2016 Course Design Institute on the theme of "Students as Producers." Sargent worked with Next Steps to develop a design project for Nila. While the quilting portion of the project was a collaborative effort among the whole class, Nila did all the design work and drew the animals woven into the quilt.

Undergraduate student Hannah Lazarz, Nila's Next Steps ambassador, took the costume design course, too. "Nila's quilt is a perfect example of a creative process through which I got to collaborate with someone I admire as an individual who is confident and bold in her artistic choices."

Teaching Consultations

CFT staff consulted with dozens of faculty and graduate student instructors on issues of diversity in the classroom and inclusive teaching.



The CFT supports trans-institutional collaborations by hosting and facilitating cross-campus conversations and programs that engage faculty, staff, and students.

Learning Communities

The CFT hosts a number of learning communities each year, intended to help participants develop deeper understandings and richer practices around particular teaching and learning topics.

Topics for 2016-17 included teaching and social class, teaching Maymester courses, lab pedagogies, coordinating language courses, and teaching with podcasts. A total of 95 faculty, staff, and students from seven colleges and schools participated in this year's learning communities.

Teaching Visits

New this year, the CFT organized "Open Doors," two days of teaching visits in which 35 faculty from four colleges and schools opened their classrooms to colleagues to observe their teaching and discuss shared teaching challenges. A total of 90 faculty, staff, and students participated in the event as hosts or visitors.



"It's always impressive to see how different people lead discussion, what kind of examples they use, and what kinds of questions they ask. It's useful to get a sense of what other people are doing so that you don't feel like you're on your own."

Sara Mayeux, Assistant Professor of Law

Teaching Design Thinking

Design as an Immersive Vanderbilt Experience (DIVE) was selected this year as Vanderbilt's Quality Enhancement Plan. The new program will teach students across campus to apply human-centered design processes to tackle complex problems with creative confidence. CFT staff consulted on the structure of the program, and worked with faculty to add design-thinking elements to new and existing courses.

Junior Faculty Teaching Fellows

The faculty fellows in this yearlong program engage individually and as a cohort in a set of activities designed to improve their teaching skills and help them build courses that foster meaningful student learning. The 9 fellows this year came from a variety of departments in Arts & Science and Peabody.



Teaching in Tumultuous Times

Each year the CFT hosts a dinner for current and former Junior Faculty Teaching Fellows. This year, the invitation posed the following question for discussion at the dinner: How is the current political climate affecting your interactions with your students? That question proved to be a compelling one, motivating 35 past and present Fellows to join the CFT for dinner and discussion.

The conversation was a lively one. Fellows and CFT staff identified learning goals with particular importance in the current climate, including developing students' skills in evaluating arguments and their ability to understand others' perspectives. The group also shared several teaching practices they use to help reach these goals, including depersonalizing or defamiliarizing issues, creating classroom civility guidelines, and engaging students in debates and simulations.

The CFT strengthens graduate education by providing professional development for students planning careers that involve teaching.



Certificate in College Teaching

This program focuses on the research on how people learn as well as best teaching practices, preparing participants for future teaching roles in the academy. This year, 50 graduate students and postdocs completed the program.



Certificate in Humanities Teaching and Learning

Participants in this program explore and develop skills in teaching diverse learners in the humanities as part of a liberal arts curriculum. This year, 17 graduate students completed the program.

Evidence-Based Undergraduate STEM Teaching Courses

With funding from a multi-institution NSF grant, the CFT offers two free online courses designed to provide future STEM faculty with an introduction to effective teaching strategies and the research that supports them. Over 6,000 participants from around the world were active in the courses this year.

The CFT's scholarly work contributes to national and international conversations on teaching and learning.

Publications

Peer-reviewed publications by CFT staff this year included articles *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, *Dimension*, the *Journal of Microbiology & Biology Education*, and the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*.

Invited Talks

In 2016-17, CFT staff gave invited talks at Brown University, Franklin (TN) Special School District, Indiana University-Purdue University, Northwestern University, University of Alabama-Huntsville, University of Minnesota, University of Sharjah (UAE), and Yale University, among others.

Online Resources

The CFT website, cft.vanderbilt.edu, features more than 70 literature-based teaching guides on various topics authored by CFT staff, as well as regular blog posts exploring perspectives on teaching and learning. The website received over 3 million pageviews this year.

Conferences

This year, CFT staff presented at conferences held by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP), the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), Imagining America, the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network, the Southern Regional Faculty and Instructional Development Consortium (SRFIDC), and Supporting Learning and Technology in Education (SLATE), among others.

New Teaching Guides for 2016-17:

- Understanding by Design
- Dealing with the Unexpected
- Active Learning
- Learning and Course Management Systems
- Leveraging Travel Abroad
- Digital Textbooks
- Teaching Adult Undergraduate Students

Staff

In 2016-17, the CFT employed eleven full-time staff members as well as four Graduate Teaching Fellows and one post-doctoral fellow. Five members of the CFT staff have secondary appointments in Arts & Science or Peabody and teach courses in those colleges.



Derek Bruff, PhD
Director
Mathematics



Joe Bandy, PhD
Assistant Director
Sociology



Cynthia Brame, PhD
Assistant Director
Biological Sciences



Vivian Finch
Assistant Director
German



Stacey Johnson, EdD
Assistant Director for
Educational Technology



Rhett McDaniel
Educational
Technologist



Lee Scarborough
Instructional
Technologist



Ashley Burton
Instructional
Technologist



Brandon Crawford
Instructional
Technologist



Tracy Tveit
Program Coordinator



Juliet Traub
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Noah Green
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Lydia Bentley
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Michael Fisher
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Alexis McBride
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