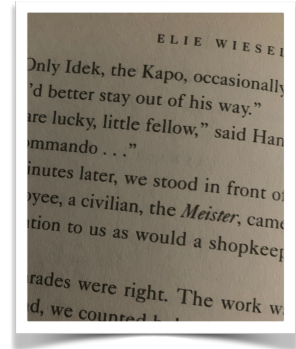


CAE NEWS

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The Dream of a Common Language

In her poem "Origins and the History of Consciousness," poet Adrienne Rich talked about a common room which we all enter, cataloguing all the experiences accrued on our way to this room, noting that "No one enters this room/without living through some kind of crisis," and later on, concluding, "No one sleeps in this room without [the dream of a common language](#)." Rich's common language had to do with the acknowledgment of her own power as a woman and a lesbian in the context of first wave feminism, articulating the sense she had that love could overcome trauma and discrimination, that art could play a role in activism, and that we could, through the embrace of one another's "language," come to rest ("sleep") in what is common among us. In its own way, out of its own experiences of beauty and pain, Elie Wiesel's *Night*, pictured at right, argues something similar.



Most of us would agree that a key part of what we do as a learning community is bring this dream of commonality into view, through scholarship, artistic production, and the fostering of inquiry. [The dream of a common language](#) is important to our enterprise, and nowhere more beautifully is this common language expressed than in the language of teaching and learning that we build together. Though none of us enters the room of our teaching language [without living through some kind of crisis](#), the entering of that room—whether it's classroom, workshop, learning community, or writers group—has the power to restore to us the [intricate design of our own common enterprise of teaching and learning](#).

We want you to know that we cherish the common language of teaching and learning that [we see everywhere around us](#) in the ways that you continue to work through challenges, celebrate significant milestones, and [gather together to discuss](#) how to assure your own classroom teaching (and your own learning) rises to this moment. The dream of a common language makes its glorious design clear to all of us every time you gather to match your ideas with another's. Thank you.

*Carol Ann Davis, Jay Rozgonyi & Emily Smith
Directors, Center for Academic Excellence*

FDEC Day To Focus on Universal Design

This year has brought its share of teaching challenges, but it has also brought the opportunity to rethink and reframe our ideas about what it means to meet every student's learning and teaching needs. In keeping with this opportunity, Fall FDEC Day (held virtually December 14) will focus on **Universal Design: Imagining Teaching and Learning for All Students**. You will find a wealth of information on various aspects of UD, including accessibility, crafting invitational syllabi, incorporating UDL in lab settings, and more!

December Drop-Ins at the Center

We've missed our in-person time with you and we will be inviting you to come to an open-house celebration at the Center during our January back-to-school workshops, but please also drop by during the afternoons during exam period (1 - 3 p.m. Dec. 16 - 22) for a cup of coffee or tea and a **tour of our new home!** Find us at NHS 218!

New Digs for CAE and a Welcome Addition to Our Ranks!



Center directors (l-r, Rozgonyi, Smith, Davis) are thrilled to welcome Debbie Whalley, far right, as CAE's Senior Instructional Technologist!

In August the Center made a big move to NHS 210 and an adjacent office suite at NHS 218, but even more importantly, we've added some significant creative muscle to our team as **Debbie Whalley joined us as Senior Instructional Technologist and Assessment Manager**. We've greatly valued our longtime collaboration with Debbie and are thrilled to have her as a full-time member of the CAE to support and enhance the innovative teaching and learning spaces you create in both in-person and virtual settings. Some of the initiatives that Debbie has played a major role in include adopting Zoom for the COVID era; supporting iPads for all full-time faculty; simplifying classroom AV with AppleTVs in all general use classrooms for easy projection; and employing Quip for collaborative writing and group work. She has also been a frequent presenter at regional conferences on the many innovative projects she's worked on at Fairfield. **Come see Debbie** (and the rest of us) during our December Drop-Ins (see left sidebar for specific times).

Ongoing work at the Center:**New Faculty Cohort**

The CAE is thrilled to be gathering regularly with the **many new faculty** who joined Fairfield this Fall. We were happy to meet them at our annual New Faculty Luncheon in August as well as the University's New Faculty Orientation in September. The **New Faculty Cohort** meets monthly to address topics of relevance for new faculty. We also hold space for our first- and second-year faculty to gather and connect.

The Long & Short on IDEA Evaluations

During our New Faculty Cohort, we pay special attention to helping colleagues **choose learning objectives on IDEA**. We also recommend the long form as it provides **important linkages** between objectives and teaching pedagogies. This advice ages well: at each stage of our careers, it's important to stay tuned into IDEA feedback. Contact us for resources on how to best integrate the process.

MATs

This semester our liaisons (see next page) performed over **35 Mid-semester assessments of teaching (MATs)**. An increasing number of faculty find MATs helpful for providing real-time feedback on their teaching that can be quickly implemented mid-semester. Watch for the next MAT call early next spring.

Online Course Design

The CAE continues to support the growth of the University's online courses and program offerings with our regular **Online Course Design Institutes**. Run over series of four weekends, the CDI places faculty members in the role of students as they participate in a fully online, asynchronous "class" that walks them through the process of building their own online course while they experience what highly engaged, student-centered instruction can look like when no one is meeting in the same physical space. If you're **planning on teaching an online class** sometime soon - either as an undergraduate Winter Break or Summer Session offering or as part of one of the fully online graduate programs - why not consider joining our Spring Online CDI, starting in early February? Just reach out to us at cae@fairfield.edu

2021 Leadership Cohort

The CAE welcomes back 11 faculty and staff leaders from across the university to the

fall version of the year-long **2021 CAE Leadership Cohort**.

Unlike many of our programs, which run the academic year, we are trying out working on the administrative calendar for these leaders in order to better meet the needs

of those who work throughout the year. We meet monthly to discuss topics and concerns relevant to being a new (or newish) academic leader. Our work is especially poignant as we support leaders to lead during this time of uncertainty and challenge.



IDEA Evaluations are a key way to reflect on your teaching, and we are here to help you interpret your data, spot trends, and develop strategies for improvement or the implementation of recommended pedagogical strategies. Since much of this work is specialized and confidential, we offer individual consultations at any stage of your process. Write to us at cae@fairfield.edu for assistance with IDEA.

Meet the Fall 2021 CAE Liaisons & Spring 2022 Liaison Preview!

The Center for Academic Excellence is pleased to welcome seven faculty members as liaisons for the 2020-2021 year. During the Fall 2021 semester, Gwen Alphonso, Bryan Crandall and Nick Kapoor will serve as liaisons. During the Spring 2022 semester, Katsiaryna (Katya) Bardos, Kevin Feeney, and Dilani Perera will serve as liaisons. Mike Andreychik (see sidebar, next page) will continue to serve as a research consultant for the 2021-2022 academic year. Liaisons support faculty development by facilitating workshops, consulting with faculty about their teaching, conducting mid-semester assessments of teaching (MATs), and serving as a line of communication between faculty and the Center. Please feel free to reach out to any of the liaisons (as well as the CAE Directors at cae@fairfield.edu) for consultation about your teaching or other faculty development needs.

Fall 2021 CAE Liaison **Gwen Alphonso** is Associate Professor of Politics and American Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences. Her teaching and award-winning publications center on the family as a political institution that structures American political development, including party politics, race and gender inequalities, and political polarization. She holds two terminal degrees, in the fields of Political Science and Law: PhD in Government from Cornell University, and JSD (Doctor of Juridical Science) from Cornell Law School; in addition she has law degrees from Oxford University and National Law School of India University. (galphonso@fairfield.edu)



Bryan Ripley Crandall is Associate Professor of English Education and Director of the Connecticut Writing Project in the School of Education and Human Development. He publishes regularly on best practices for teaching writing in diverse, inclusive settings, and most recently co-created The Write Time, a National Writing Project initiative for teachers across the country to interview authors of children's and young adult books. Each summer, he hosts an Invitational Leadership Institute for educators and several award-winning Young Adult Literacy Labs, including Ubuntu Academy, a program for immigrant and refugee youth. (bcrandall@fairfield.edu)

Nick Kapoor is an Instructor in the Math Department and alumnus of Fairfield University. He is passionate about STEM pedagogical development and the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty. His research focuses on

the intersection of mathematics and political science in gerrymandering and redistricting as well as voter behavior and LGBTQ+ politics. In his spare time, Nick serves on the Monroe Board of Education and the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. (nicholas.kapoor@fairfield.edu)



Learning Communities & Teaching Circles

This Fall the CAE will resume our Faculty Learning Community focused on **anti-racist syllabus design** and pedagogy. Some of our "graduates" are busy teaching their redesigned courses and have paired up with other graduates to support each other's teaching.

Following up on a successful summer program, the CAE has carried forward into the Fall semester a pair of **monthly Teaching Circles**. Each Circle consists of approximately a half dozen full-time and part-time faculty who convene with a CAE Director for facilitated conversation around a wide range of teaching-related topics - some presented by the Director and others brought forward by the Circle members themselves. The one-hour sessions have proven to be a welcome space for faculty from a wide range of disciplines and departments to share ideas about classroom challenges and brainstorm solutions. If you're interested in joining a **Spring Teaching Circle**, just email cae@fairfield.edu.

Even if you can't join an FLC or Teaching Circle, we're here! Talk through your challenges with us at cae@fairfield.edu

Support for Research at CAE

Dr. Michael Andreychik, Research Consultant



During the 2021-2022 academic year (Sept.-May), CAE faculty liaison Dr. Michael Andreychik will continue in his role as a research consultant for faculty. In this role, Dr. Andreychik will support faculty research in a number of ways such as **assisting with research design** and statistical analysis/interpretation (including how to use Qualtrics to help support research activities), navigating ethical review procedures, and helping to make one's research more transparent and accessible. Although assistance is available for any stage of the research process, in the past Dr. Andreychik has primarily

worked with faculty to help **design research projects** prior to data collection, to develop data analysis plans, and to help with interpretation of results. Dr. Andreychik is happy to work with faculty on their own disciplinary research and/or on projects related to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Because **faculty projects differ greatly** in scope, population of interest, and aims, much of the work of the consultant will occur in one-on-one or small group consultation with faculty. However, if there are common areas of interest related to research design, a group workshop could be designed and offered. Interested faculty should contact Dr. Andreychik directly at mandreychik@fairfield.edu

Congrats to Alpha Sigma Nu Teachers of the Year

We are pleased to congratulate this year's **Alpha Sigma Nu Teachers of the Year**: Center Director Carol Ann Davis (undergraduate), and Associate Professor of Nursing Kathryn Phillips (graduate). Both provided remarks at October's ASN induction ceremony where each shared transformative learning experiences that had shaped her teaching approach. In their nomination, Davis' students shared that, particularly in the context of the pandemic, Prof. Davis created a safe environment marked by **kindness and compassion** where they found the comfort needed to learn effectively. Students who nominated Prof. Phillips spoke to her **ability to transform** a classroom of students into a community of learners and providers where all could learn from each other in an environment marked by support. We are **pleased but not surprised** that students recognized two veteran educators specifically for crafting safe learning environments during a year when that was especially challenging! Well done, Katy and Carol Ann!

Faculty Spotlight & Interview: Felix Fan



Recently, CAE checked in with **Felix Fan**, an Assistant Professor of Management in the Charles F. Dolan School of Business. He joined Fairfield for the Fall 2020 semester after completing his Ph.D. in Organization Behavior at the Georgia Institute of Technology. We've noticed from talking to Felix at workshops he already has a lot to offer by way of expertise in teaching and learning, so we shot him a few interview questions.

How have you found Fairfield to be different from other schools at which you've taught - both positively and negatively?

I have taught in one place before, at Georgia Tech. I would say Fairfield is very different. For starters,

Fairfield University is in a suburban area, while Georgia Tech has an urban campus (public roads run through campus); and Fairfield is a lot smaller than Tech. I actually came to love the small campus community, where relationships with colleagues and students are more personable and less transactional. I feel more like a meaningful member of the campus community, rather than just another brick in the wall. Moreover, I feel Fairfield cares much more about students and the actual education they are getting. If I have to give a negative, I would say the lack of diversity on campus. I understand there are legitimate reasons why the campus is not as diverse, but that is definitely one thing I miss and hope we could do better.

How would you describe your shift in teaching practice during COVID? Was there something in doing that work that you discovered or tried that you intend to carry forward as we move beyond COVID adaptations?

For me, I considered it as an experiment or an opportunity to try new things. I always believe that there is no one best method of teaching and the best is the one that fits the situation and the constraints. Therefore, I was quite excited about hybrid teaching during last year. I was able to put the lecture portion online and focus more time on in-class activities that reinforce the concepts from online lectures. I found that combination liberating for me and exciting for the students. Furthermore, I got to explore the online discussion boards, which, until Covid, I had used very little. I found that online discussion boards actually brought more opinions from students, who do not get to speak in class, due to their shyness, or time constraints in class.

If you could give one piece of teaching-related advice to faculty who are just coming to Fairfield, what would it be?

Good question! Being new myself I don't feel I am the best person to give advice. Yet, I would definitely recommend that new faculty members feel more freedom to design classes in more interactive ways, given that the class size is small (or smaller than those in big state schools that produced most of us). With fewer students, there are a lot more options and opportunities to implement experiential learning and all the great teaching ideas you gathered over the years but cannot do in a 70-person classroom. And the students will reward you for the effort, with their motivation and commitment.

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