

CAE NEWS

The Center for Academic Excellence | Volume 11, Issue 2

Inside Our Large Grieving

As we prepared to write to you to offer a sense of our late spring workshops and summer plans at this difficult time when we are being asked to stay the course and to lean in to challenge, a Fairfield colleague shared with us an article that said it all: [Before Rolling Out Post-Pandemic Plans, Let People Grieve](#). The words "Post-Pandemic Plans" seem premature to us at this point, but we know *grieving is important*. We feel the loss ourselves in many interactions we have at CAE with you. We want you to know we never forget that. We never could.

Some lines of the poem we share at right seem almost too on point, too painful to fully approach: *you've seen the refugees heading nowhere*. The poet addresses survivor's guilt and the acknowledgment that some didn't survive. Others have a long road ahead of them. [Staying with the pain of our common trauma](#) is important. Naming the world as changed—even mutilated—is an absolute necessity. There is room in our ongoing grief process to acknowledge sadness and regret. And yet the poet also counsels us to *remember the moments when we were together... and the curtain fluttered./ Return in thought to the concert where music flared*. The poet reminds us that even during difficulty we took actions—you gathered acorns even as leaves eddied over the earth's scars. He implores us to praise each small detail. Finally he reminds us that though the gentle light *strays* and *vanishes*, [it also returns](#).



Try to praise the mutilated world.

Remember June's long days,
and wild strawberries, drops of wine, the dew.
The nettles that methodically overgrow
the abandoned homesteads of exiles.
You must praise the mutilated world.
You watched the stylish yachts and ships;
one of them had a long trip ahead of it,
while salty oblivion awaited others.
You've seen the refugees heading nowhere,
you've heard the executioners sing joyfully.
You should praise the mutilated world.
Remember the moments when we were together
in a white room and the curtain fluttered.
Return in thought to the concert where music flared.
You gathered acorns in the park in autumn
and leaves eddied over the earth's scars.
Praise the mutilated world
and the gray feather a thrush lost,
and the gentle light that strays and vanishes
and returns.

—Adam Zagajewski

This year each of us has strayed, has vanished, has returned. Even as we experience our grief, we can acknowledge that our teaching, service, and research are crucial ways that we have found to [praise the mutilated world](#). We know there are many small moments of praise inside our large grieving. But we are with you for all of it, the dark, the light, the remembering, the vanishing. Call on us if we can help.

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

We Are Here To Talk It Through

We know that this has been a singular year for each of us, **with challenges we were preparing our whole lives for** without knowing it. That gave our normal CAE offers to consult on immediate and emerging challenges of faculty a new depth and meaning, and we want you to know we are available for consultations throughout the year. Write to us at cae@fairfield.edu, and a director will get back to you promptly with a time to meet. This is essential work and it means a lot to us that you trust us with your challenges. We will do everything we can to help.

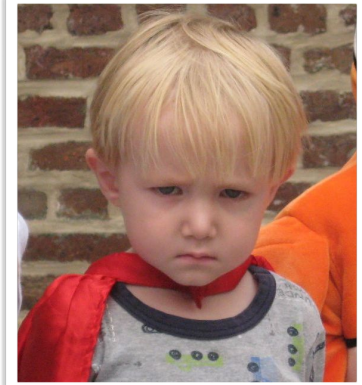
FDEC Day to Feature Acknowledgment of Faculty Teaching

We are pleased but not at all surprised that this spring's FDEC Day will highlight the extraordinary teaching and service contributions of faculty during this COVID year. We hope you will join the event for opportunities for acknowledgment and reflection.

Save the Date!
FDEC Day will be held **virtually Wednesday, May 5** after the General Faculty Meeting. Watch faculty announcements for more information.

Everything We Learned at Our Back to School Workshops We Learned From You!

We know we had days, maybe whole weeks, when we felt like the toddler at right and that that old poem was wrong: maybe **what we'd learned in kindergarten** wasn't all we needed to know. We are not quite sure where you picked up all you used to do all you did this year, but the ways in which you shared your new learning with us during Back to School workshops showed us who we are at our best, and the extraordinary work and commitment of faculty to bring their best selves and teaching to our students shown through like the light in the picture below. We gathered **many important takeaways** from that week of pedagogical workshops, a few of



which we highlight here as we continue to teach during challenging times:

- **Model humanity** to students and they will return it. Perform vulnerability and empathy.
- **Metanarrate** your thinking to your students: let them inside your pedagogical decisions, your dilemmas, your concern for them.
- **Keep communication open:** listen, check in,

create mechanisms for regular communication.

- **Prioritize** and build relationships. • **Focus** on engaging students.
- **Be true to yourself.** What you are committed to hasn't wavered: your learning outcomes and student engagement. You are at your best when you are letting their needs drive your pedagogy.
- **Model** and practice **self care**.



Ongoing work at the Center:

New Faculty Cohort

The **New Faculty Cohort** has met monthly since August 2020 to bring together new faculty across campus for community-building, workshops, and discussion topics and questions of concern and interest to new faculty. This semester, we've built an additional time for new faculty to engage informally, as these opportunities for informal connections are difficult to find in our Zoom world.

Leadership Cohort

The **2021 CAE Leadership Cohort** has officially launched, and we are thrilled to be engaged with thirteen colleagues from across campus who are eager to explore and develop their leadership. The Leadership Cohort meets monthly to address readings, topics, and questions of interest to beginning leaders. We've begun to focus on the **self-as-leader**, and are tackling issues of vulnerability, vision, and managing conflict.

MATs on Zoom

This semester, **CAE Liaisons** (read more about them on the next page) conducted **30 Mid-semester assessments of teaching (MATs)**, again via Zoom. We are thrilled to see faculty continuing to find MATs helpful for providing real-time feedback on their teaching that they can use during the semester.

CAE's Peer Observation of Teaching for the Online/Hybrid Classroom Program

Once again this spring, the CAE launched a **Peer Observation of Online/Hybrid Teaching Program** to help faculty assess the success of their pedagogical strategies and adaptations for these not-so-normal times. Joshua Elliott, Assistant Professor of the Practice and Director of the Educational Technology Program returned as the CAE coordinator for this project, and called upon colleagues in the College of Arts and Sciences (Jillian Smith-Carpenter and Sergio Adrada Rafael) and the Egan School of Nursing and Health Studies (Karen Burrows) to serve as peer observers. Though the semester is past the mid-point, **our PROT team is still here** to attend your class and assist you in your teaching. Before we observe, faculty are asked to choose from four areas of focus identified by CAE as especially challenging in the Online/Hybrid environment:

Course Goal and Student Learning Objective Design:

Faculty examine the clarity of the course with **focus on links between outcomes, assessments, and activities**.

Student Engagement and Course Activities: Faculty assess the level of engagement between faculty and students and among students, and aim to **enhance opportunities** for engaged online activities.

Integration of Technology and Tech Tools: Faculty work to **balance technology tools** with student engagement opportunities.

Online Assessment: Faculty look at adjustments of assessments to the online modality and the balance of **formative and summative** assessments.

This self-assessment initiates a formative and confidential process by which your peer observer can assist you in the isolation of particular improvements or adjustments that will be most impactful to this challenging teaching moment.

We understand that not only individual faculty but program directors and chairs have found it challenging to integrate the observation of teaching into this teaching year. Please reach out if the PROT for Online/Hybrid methodology could be helpful to you. We'd be happy to consult at cae@fairfield.edu, or to provide our materials.

Support for Faculty

Be Sure to Join the NCFDD

Fairfield University has joined the **National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (NCFDD)** as an Institutional Member. The NCFDD is a nationally-recognized, independent organization that offers online career development and mentoring resources for faculty and graduate students with particular attention to diversity. The NCFDD provides **various programs and resources** that compliment those offered at Fairfield University while connecting members into a national professional network. To claim your free Institutional Membership, go to <http://www.facultydiversity.org/join>, or contact contact Prof. Jocelyn M. Boryczka, Associate Vice Provost for Scholarly, Creative, and Community Engagement at jboryczka@fairfield.edu.

Support for Research

Liaison Michael Andreychik



CAE's research liaison Michael Andreychik remains available to faculty for any stage of the research process. He has worked to support faculty both in the design and conduct of their own disciplinary research and in the evidence-based evaluation of their pedagogy. Interested faculty should contact Dr. Andreychik directly at mandreychik@fairfield.edu

Supporting faculty and professional staff since 2003

Meet the Spring CAE Liaisons

Spring 2021 CAE Liaison **Kendra Andrews** is Assistant Professor of the Practice for the Core Writing Program of the College of Arts and Sciences. Kendra's academic interests include critical digital pedagogy and multimodal composition, and she works with students on writing within 21st century literacies. In her free time, Kendra enjoys running around St. Mary's, watching new documentaries, and adding to her vinyl collection. kandrews@fairfield.edu



Uma Balaji is Associate Professor and Chair of the Bioengineering and Electrical Engineering Department in the School of Engineering. Uma uses software simulation tools and laboratory demonstrations to effectively support the theoretical concepts taught in her classes. At home, she enjoys cooking and reading and can be reached by email at ubalaji@fairfield.edu.

Tom Schmidt is Visiting Assistant Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity. Tom is interested in the formation of the New Testament and the history of early Christian communities in the Middle East and Asia. At Fairfield he also enjoys reliving his past profession as a School Media Specialist. tschmidt@fairfield.edu.

We at the Center thank our liaisons for their incredible creativity and vision!



Back-to-School

A Year In Learning Communities for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Throughout this year, faculty have engaged in small-group workshops and **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)** reflecting their desire to further deepen antiracist pedagogies across campus. Co-facilitated by Dr. Stephanie Storms and CAE Directors, our Difficult Conversations PLC wrapped a yearlong effort in December 2020 that explored professional readings on this topic and analyzed cases from **our own classrooms** as we developed knowledge and skills for engaging in the essential work of exploring difficult topics with our students. In addition, CAE partnered with Dr. Rachelle Brunn-Bevel, Faculty Chair for Inclusive Excellence, and Dr. Kris Sealey, Coordinator for the Social Justice Element of the Magis Core, to develop workshops on Antiracist Pedagogy that were offered to faculty in August 2020. Those workshops led to **fall and spring PLCs** focused on particular aspects of pedagogy, including antiracist syllabus design. We thank all our partners in this work, including the more than **50 faculty** who've integrated this work into their year in ways that inspire us!

Write with us!
CAE Virtual Writing Retreat
Friday, May 28!

Looking Toward Summer

Course Design for the Magis Core

The CAE will once again **partner with the Magis Core leadership team to offer** Course Design Institutes for faculty wishing to adapt their courses to the Social Justice (SJ) and Interdisciplinary Learning (ID) Signature Elements of the Magis Core. We design these institutes with two days of virtual workshops, with a **syllabus work day in between**. Faculty should therefore plan to work on the intervening day in order to fully integrate their learning. Here are the dates for this year's Magis Core CDIs:

Social Justice Course Design Institute: Monday, May 24 & Wednesday, May 26, with independent work Tuesday, May 25. Apply by Monday, May 10 at this [link](#).

Interdisciplinary Learning Course Design Institute: Monday, June 7 & Wednesday, June 9, with independent work Tuesday, June 8. Apply by Monday, May 24 at this [link](#).

Summer Course Design at the Center

In addition to our work on the Core, the CAE will **also offer our traditional** Course Design Institute for any faculty wishing to substantially redesign or reimagine a course, or to design a new course. In addition to our structure from past years, we have worked to integrate into our CDIs all we have learned in the past year about antiracist pedagogy, since antiracist teaching is good teaching, so look for our CDI to include many updates to our design from this transformative work. The CAE's Summer Course Design Institute will be offered Tuesday, June 8 & Thursday, June 10 with independent work Wednesday, June 9. Apply by May 24 at this [link](#).

No Time Like May for Online Course Design

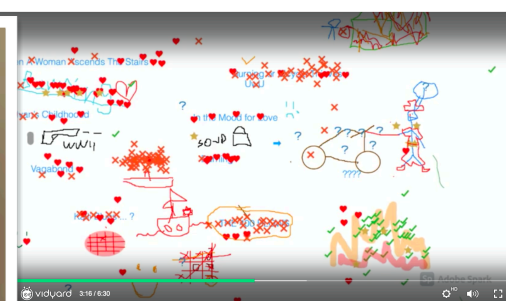
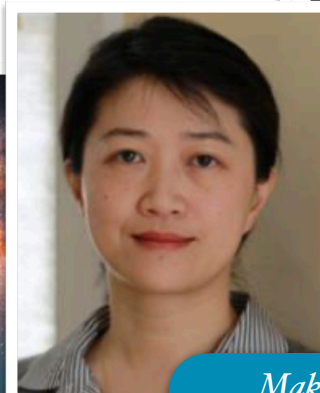
On May 20, the CAE will launch our next **Online Course Design Institute**. This completely asynchronous workshop places instructors in the role of online students as they're guided, step by step, through the process of designing a fully online class, developing goals and outcomes, and building out authentic assessments and activities, all as they experience how it's possible to bring Fairfield's unique brand of teaching to the online environment. The Online CDI runs over the course of four weeks, with modules released on Thursdays for completion by the following Tuesday. Apply by May 13 at this [link](#).

WAC/WID Week May 31 - June 4

Our colleagues in Core Writing will be repeating their highly successful WAC/WID Week for colleagues interested in adapting their courses to the WAC Signature Element of the Magis Core. Contact Core Writing Director Kim Gunter at kgunter@fairfield.edu for more information!

CAE Lessons Learned Project: In Celebration of Faculty Wisdom

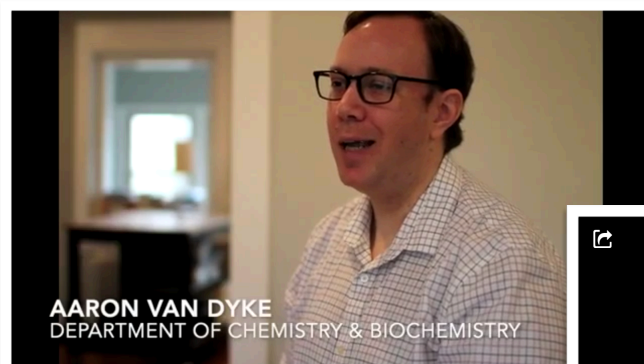
In early December, CAE hatched the idea for the **Lessons Learned Project**, a video project in which we would invite faculty to reflect on what they had learned from teaching in the Fall, and to capture those lessons both in celebration and in order to take forward that learning into the Spring 2021 semester. We invited faculty to choose some aspect of their teaching experience to share with us in short videos, and then we had a viewing party on the last day of our January Back-to-School Workshop week. It sounds repetitive, we know, but again faculty amazed us with their humanity, compassion, and resiliency. We highlight a few screenshots and quotations below, but please go see yourself by following this [link](#) to the password-protected Lessons Learned Project. And consider doing your own Lessons Learned video as the semester ends! It's a great way to observe and **memorialize your contributions to teaching and learning** this year.



Make your teaching relevant; motivate students to do more or find more—to find the relevance.

--fiwei Xiao,

Modern Languages and Literatures
in her video, "A Long Shot of Fall 2020"



Human beings are made so that they cannot live, develop and find fulfillment except in the sincere gift of self to others. Nor can they fully know themselves apart from an encounter with others.

--*Fratelli tutti*, shared by

Aaron Van Dyke, Chemistry

