Editor's Introduction

As an educator, I have spent many summers on college campuses, surrounded by families participating in their children's first-year orientations. Though the primary focus in first-year orientation is on the student and the student experience, one cannot help but to also note the excitement and trepidation on the faces of the parents as they prepare to send their children out into the world. This summer, I am that nervous and excited parent, and as I prepare to send my own firstborn to college I find myself reading these essays with dual lenses; one as educator, and one as parent. These assembled works impress and reassure me on both fronts, offering a look at the continued progress that is being made in our field.

Although it can be scary to try something completely new in the classroom, it can also be exciting and energizing. I spent almost a decade teaching pedagogy and course design classes to graduate students, in which we spent our semesters building a toolbox of engagement strategies and active learning techniques. Often, my students also had teaching assistantships and were excited to try out the things that they were learning about. Their trial runs were not always successful, but when they returned to our classroom to report on their experiences we began by celebrating not the level of success, but that 1) they had the courage to try something new, and 2) they felt comfortable enough with the classroom community to examine their experiences, determine what did and did not work, and consider what future changes could be made.

Classroom climate is important. Creating a space where students feel safe enough to fail is one of the most important things that any teacher can do for their students. When a strategy fails, we must welcome it and then work the problem together, approaching it from different angles and perspectives to understand the nuances of the strategy, and considering different situations in which it might be more or less effective. Similarly, we must also give faculty members permission to dare to try new things, and to possibly fail. This is crucial in order to develop educators who will be as bold and vulnerable as we ask our students to be, who will not give up and hide from failures, who will instead use those opportunities to reassess, strengthen, and grow.

In these pages, you will read essays from faculty members who have transformed some aspect of their teaching. Many of these are assignment-level changes, which is often the natural place to start. Kimberly Hays describes a three-step process that she uses to encourage group discussions by building confidence and ownership in the STEM classroom. Lee Grimes tells of using a mock poster session designed to promote professionalism as students present knowledge to their peers. Michele Hill and Jennifer Hightower discuss using a personal experience journal to help students apply and reinforce their understanding of counseling theories. Robert A. Griffin asks graduate students in his online reading assessment and intervention course to first confront their own reading history through a reading autobiography before they begin working with a striving PK-12 reader. Carin Lightner-Laws and Craig Hill describe a synchronous online activity that uses games and breakout rooms to engage all of their students.

A number of essays discuss approaches to having difficult conversations with students. Sohyun An addresses difficult knowledge and misperceptions about the United States' relationship with the Philippines during WWII through narratives and counter-stories. Bethany Scullin encourages "courageous conversations" by giving students the chance to have them on paper first, before they begin discussing them out loud. By using ClassWrappers to allow students to reflect on their own learning, Sandra Anderson helps students confront misunderstandings, and reinforces new material.

Other essays focus on providing more immersive experiences for students. Jackie Kim helps students learn to develop problem solving skills through collaborative role-playing in online forums. Andy Frazee shares a strategy to foster true collaboration in a group assignment, rather than the ubiquitous "divide and conquer"

approach. Vanessa Slinger-Friedman discusses how she uses field trips to enhance learning through direct experience.

Several authors describe ways that they have involved students in research at different levels. Arpita Saha and Leah Williams talk about a semester-long opportunity for inorganic chemistry students to engage in authentic research. Glenda Swan shares a course-long research project in art history, using peer-reviews to create a "community of researchers."

Simulations are another powerful way to provide students with a more authentic learning experience. Samantha Bishop describes an intensive, four-hour model where nursing students work in a simulated hospital environment. Josie Doss and Debbie Greene describe another nursing simulation that uses a program designed to improve teamwork and communication. Jeffrey Berejikian and Molly Berkemeier share a "future-oriented" foreign policy simulation to help students understand the past and think creatively about the future.

While allusions to the long-lasting effects of COVID-19 in education are present in many of these works, the two essays by Wendy J. Turner and Susan Murray each focus on lessons learned in the organization of online courses during the pandemic, sharing research and experienced-based strategies to improve student performance and achieve success in online environments.

Finally, Jordan Cofer describes the process of campus-wide collaboration and engagement that Georgia College implemented to build and launch their award-winning "GC Journeys" program, which exposes students to five high-impact practices during their undergraduate years.

In reviewing these essays, I am heartened that my child—who will attend a University System of Georgia institution in the fall—will be surrounded by faculty members who care deeply enough about their students to put such careful thought and consideration into the teaching of their disciplines, and to know that reading these essays may inspire other faculty to do the same.

Denise P. Domizi, Editor
Director of Faculty Development
University System of Georgia