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Insights for educators from the Center for Teaching and Learning

August 2023

Welcome!

The Fall 2023 semester is already here. I'm ready for cooler weather, pumpkins, and football season! This issue of the 1-8-2-5 contains resources and tools to integrate into your course planning, resources for supporting first-year students, and self-paced professional development. Check out our main feature for opportunities to incorporate community and civic engagement events (on and off campus) into your course.

If you have questions or an idea for future content, please reach out!

Sincerely,

[Rachel E. Johnson](#)

Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning

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1 – Way to Get to Know Your Students

The [Who's in Class?](#) Form

Developed by Tracie Addy and colleagues for their book [What Inclusive Instructors Do: Principles and Practices for Excellence in College Teaching](#), this survey tool acknowledges that “diversity in a classroom can be both visible and invisible” (p. 139). Instructors can invite students to complete this form anonymously to share information about various factors that might influence their learning. For example, using this survey might help you learn of the presence of several first-generation students in a particular course or section. In response, you might make slight modifications to your course such as inviting previously successful students to visit your class and share study strategies or resources. Or you might choose to include more low-stakes assessments to create more opportunities early on for practice and feedback.

For ease of use, I’ve adapted the form to an electronic format (a practice recommended by the authors). You can use the link above to duplicate this electronic form, customize it to your specific context, and collect anonymous results. Check out Chapter 6 of *What Inclusive Instructors Do* (available in the CTL library) for more information about how to introduce the survey to students, interpret their responses, and ideas for adapting or modifying your course.

8 – Community and Civic Engagement Opportunities

Screening of the Louisiana Gubernatorial Forum

September 28th at 6:30pm, Carlile Auditorium (Mickle Hall 114)

At this event, students can watch the Louisiana Gubernatorial debate hosted by Louisiana Public Broadcasting. A discussion of the event featuring members of Centenary's Department of History and Political Science will provide an opportunity for students to reflect on the issues discussed, review candidate platforms, and explore broader connections to their college courses and lived experiences. Screening of the forum begins at 7pm. Snacks provided.

Voter Registration Drive

September 6th and 7th (Wednesday and Thursday) Magale Library and Café Deck

September 11th and 12th (Monday and Tuesday) Magale Library and Café Deck

The deadline to register to vote in the upcoming Louisiana Gubernatorial election is September 13th. At these voter registration events, students can learn more about the voting process, details of upcoming elections in Louisiana, voter education resources, and register either online or by paper application. This is a great opportunity for students to learn more about the processes that influence participation in civic life.

Day of Service in Centenary's Community Garden (with Shreveport Green)

October 21st at 10am, Centenary Community Garden (near Centenary Square)

The Learning Commons is co-sponsoring a day of service learning at our very own campus community garden. Students will hear from local leaders from [Shreveport Green](#) about their work promoting healthy living, waste reduction, and community education. Students will have a chance to get involved with campus efforts to maintain the garden and improve access to healthy food in our community.

Visit to the Shreveport Farmer's Market

August 26th at 9am, Meet at Centenary Square

The Learning Commons will provide limited transportation to the last day of the Shreveport Farmer's Market, which has been in operation for more than 20 years. The [mission](#) of the market is to: "encourage a strong local food system; increase sustainability of independent local farmers, ranchers, and food producers; and foster stewardship of land and community through public markets." This visit will give students the opportunity to interact with local artisans and leaders and witness community-building in action.

Shreveport City Council Meetings

September 12th at 3pm, Government Chambers of Government Plaza (505 Travis Street)

The Shreveport City Council meets every second and fourth Tuesday at 3pm ([view the full schedule here](#)). Consider asking your students to attend a meeting and share their experience. Students will have the chance to observe how various ordinances and regulations are considered and witness the kinds of authority delegated by citizens to local elected officials. City council members are generally more accessible than regional or national politicians and students may have the opportunity to meet their own representative for District B ([Gary Brooks](#)).

Artist Talk - Visual Gumbo by Terry Konrath

September 20th at 6:30pm, Meadows Museum of Art

Konrath's photography will be on display in the Meadows throughout Fall 2023. Her work documents cultural traditions and places of historical significance in Louisiana. Konrath is from the local area (Bossier City). Of this exhibit she writes, "My camera has allowed me to witness and share how people's lives have unfolded and capture the holy trinity of Louisiana's folk arts, music, and food traditions in this exhibition of our visual cultural gumbo." Learn more at the [Meadows Museum website](#).

Highland Jazz & Blues Festival

September 16 from 11am to 6pm in Columbia Park (just a few blocks from campus)

This free event features great music, food, and art from local and regional artists (including from one of Centenary's own, Professor [Michael Futreal](#) and his band Twang Darkly). Students can easily walk from campus to check out the community festival, and there are opportunities to [volunteer](#) (and earn a free commemorative t-shirt).

Highland Neighborhood Association (HRA) Second Saturday Clean Ups

September 9th or October 14th at 10am, Meet at Centenary Square

The HRA is a grassroots volunteer association advocating for the historic Highland neighborhood where Centenary's campus is located. Every second Saturday of the month, a group of volunteers meets at the parking lot across from the Highland Center on Olive Street to clean up the neighborhood. The group provides gloves, grabbers, and bags. The Learning Commons will provide limited transportation to and from the event.

A little lagniappe...

Are you or students you know looking for an opportunity to volunteer? Connect with a community partner at <https://www.justserve.org/>.

2 – Self-Directed Professional Development Resources

Are you looking for free professional development that you can complete at your own pace? Check out these two resources for a wide range of learning opportunities. These programs offer micro-credentials and certification in topics like disability justice; teaching for intercultural competence; using action research to improve teaching and learning; trauma informed pedagogy; and technology integration.

[The Digital Promise Micro-credential Library](#)

[National Education Association Certification Bank](#)

What are micro-credentials?

“Micro-credentials provide educators with recognition for the skills they develop throughout their careers, regardless of where or how they learned them. Micro-credentials articulate a discrete skill to support educator practice and the specific evidence educators must submit to demonstrate their competence in that skill. Each micro-credential is grounded in sound research that illustrates how that competency supports student learning.” (Digital Promise)

5 – Online Resources to Share with First-Year Students

[Centenary's Academic Planner](#)

All first-year students were offered a paperback copy of the Learning Commons 2023-2024 "Conquer the Chaos" Academic Planner. Many of our students prefer digital notetaking and organizational tools, so we've created a digital version of the planner that's easily accessible online and made for students to download and customize. Please share this with your students!

[Canva](#)

This easy-to-use graphic design tool has both a free and premium version. The free version allows users to create a variety of document types and graphics. Students can use this tool to develop dynamic presentations, multimodal projects, and attractive visuals for social media. The "[Design School](#)" section of their website contains hundreds of short videos and guides which make Canva very accessible.

[Focused Study Apps](#)

Many students struggle to cultivate spaces and routines conducive to deep learning and focus. Consider recommending an app like [Forest](#). This app lets the user set a timer to work as a virtual tree grows. The app also quiets other background apps to minimize notifications and distractions. Over time, users can grow forests and use virtual coins toward real-world tree planting. Users can also connect with each other to create accountability networks.

[Microsoft 365](#)

Believe it or not, some students don't realize they have free access to Microsoft Office. Students also may not realize that they can download and install all the applications on up to five devices to use both on and offline. Students can also take advantage of features like Outlook's email and calendar integration with their smartphone. Google Classroom and associated products are widely used in local high schools, so just taking a few extra moments during an early class to introduce students to these tools can ease the transition to Centenary.

[Canvas Student App](#)

Most first-year students will have used a learning management system in the past. Some may be familiar with Canvas and others may be adjusting from having used Blackboard or Google Classroom. Remember: Students are often using mobile devices to access web applications and tools. The Canvas app has a user-friendly interface (much better than a mobile browser) and connects them to their course calendar, to-do list, notifications, and messages inbox.