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*CTL's Monthly Newsletter keeps you updated on research-informed teaching strategies, events, and support available to everyone in the UMSL teaching community.*



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# FTTC Keynote Recap: Refocusing on Intentional, Meaningful Teaching

*For the first time in four years, the CTL's regional [Focus on Teaching and Technology Conference \(FTTC\)](#) returned to campus on Friday, October 6! Day one of the conference took place virtually on Friday, September 29. The article below, written by Assistant Director Jenna Alexander, explores the keynote address presented by Dr. Bridget Arend.*



As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us find ourselves busier than ever. Teaching has become far more complex and demanding over the past few years. Fortunately, in her keynote address at the Focus on Teaching and Technology Conference (FTTC) this past week, Dr. Bridget Arend shared [“Five Strategies to Refocus on Intentional, Meaningful Teaching.”](#) She posed the following question: “*How do we move forward with some sense of control, some sense of purpose?*” Then she outlined five strategies that can help us find purpose and joy in our work.

## 1

### Design for Long-Term Learning.

We often think about the outcomes or objectives that we want students to achieve by the end of the course. But Arend challenges us to look further into the future. She urges us to consider our “big dreams” for the class, using the following thought experiment:

Think about one course you’re teaching. Imagine that the course was perfect in every way. The technology works, you’re teaching the course at the ideal time, students show up to class and participate, and so on. Then, imagine your students five years into the future and think about how you want that course to have changed their lives. How would their lives be impacted as a result of taking your course? How would those students be different from those who didn’t take your course?

If you teach a math course, for instance, you may want students to feel more confident with math. If you teach a literature course, you may want students to gain a deeper appreciation for literature. In the end, reflecting on those questions can help us shift our priorities and focus on the larger purpose of our work.

## 2

### **Incorporate Values and Care.**

Caring is not only about being nice or flexible with students. Caring involves showing concern for ourselves, others, and the world. But how can we teach students to care about themselves, others, and the world?

Arend argues that we need to create opportunities for students to develop the value of caring. For example, she references an article called [“Scientist Spotlight Homework Assignments Shift Students’ Stereotypes of Scientists and Enhance Science Identity in a Diverse Introductory Science Class.”](#) The authors wanted their students to relate to scientists from diverse backgrounds (a value-caring goal). They conducted a study that divided students into a control group and a treatment group. The students in the treatment group read articles from diverse groups of scientists, learned about those scientists and their backgrounds, and then reflected on their own attitudes toward science throughout the class. The researchers found that the students in the treatment group shifted their mindsets about science, changed their perspectives on scientists, and could imagine themselves pursuing careers in the sciences. The longitudinal data also showed that students in the treatment group had a greater interest in science as well as increased course grades. In short, Arend uses this article to illustrate how faculty can teach students to care more about the subject matter.

## 3

### **Address Pedagogical Challenges.**

While this may seem like a sweeping strategy at first, Arend directs our attention to challenges that involve students. For instance, she mentions a philosophy professor who said that students don’t know how to disagree with one another in productive ways. To address that challenge, the professor came up with an ice-breaker that prompted students share unpopular opinions with their peers, like “I like pineapple on my pizza.” The activity provided a fun and low-stakes way for students to disagree with one another from the beginning of the semester.

## 4

### **Proactively Identify Limitations.**

Arend suggests that we identify our limitations as educators. In other words, she says, “Identify the banks of your teaching rivers.” Think about what you’re trying to accomplish with the course. How much time do you have? How does the physical space of the classroom impact your approach? Think about what is acceptable, as well as what is not. Being proactive about identifying those limitations can help us achieve as much as possible under those constraints.

## 5

## Develop Reflective Practitioner Habits.

Arend outlines the many benefits of reflection. She says that reflection can help us make meaning in our lives. Reflection allows us to zoom out and see the big picture. We use reflection to deepen and transfer our learning, to develop a more positive outlook on our work, and to unburden our minds. By bringing our thoughts and feelings to the surface of our conscious minds, we can connect those thoughts and feelings to our larger goals. Then we can check in with ourselves; are we spending our time in ways that match our values? In that sense, reflection keeps us grounded and focused on our personal missions.

Many of us feel so overwhelmed and overworked that we may not have time for reflection. We often feel like we should wait until we've graded our assignments, prepared for classes, answered our emails, washed the dishes, folded the laundry, and completed all of our other tasks and chores before we do any reflection. However, Arend reinforces the importance of critical reflection during these periods of stress, stating, "A key underlying principle is that the busier we are, the more reflective we need to be." Prioritizing reflection means that we're making time for ourselves and our own well-being. Then teaching will be more intentional, effective, and enjoyable.

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## FTTC 2023 Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Award



We are very excited to have the regional FTTC Instructional Designer I.D.E.A. (Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Award) go to our own **Jason Vasser-Elong, Assistant Teaching Professor in the Honors College** and also a current doctoral candidate in the College of



Education. This award was selected from among 14 nominees by a selection committee of [regional partner](#) representatives. Learn more about the I.D.E.A. Award on the [FTTC website](#). Congratulations, Jason!

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## Thank you to all of the volunteers who made this year's FTTC a success!



Conference volunteers, Erik Gustafson from Missouri Baptist University and Jenna Alexander from UMSL's CTL greet attendees and help them get access to the conference eProgram and wifi.



Lauren Terbrock-Elmestad and Lauren Obermark from English present their workshop, "Curiosity, Generosity, and Writing in a ChatGPT World."



Marc Spingola from Biology chats with a vendor in the conference exhibit hall.



Conference volunteers, Malcom Hays from Missouri S&T, Manon Allard-Kropp from Missouri Online, and Tiffany Lang from Washington University in St. Louis, greet registrants at the MSC welcome desk.



A group of conference attendees stop for a quick photo-op.



Conference attendees enjoying this year's event in the MSC!

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## Meet New Colleagues

*Each newsletter will feature full-time faculty who have recently joined us at UMSL. Please welcome our new colleagues to campus!*

### Christina Castellano, College of Nursing



Christina Castellano, PhD, RN is a new addition to the College of Nursing Faculty, serving as an Assistant Teaching Professor. Dr. Castellano completed her graduate education at University of Missouri-St. Louis. She has a broad background in psychology, with specific training and expertise in women's health nursing and education. Dr. Castellano spent most of her career as an educator on the Gynecology Oncology inpatient unit, then on Labor and Delivery. Her research interests include exploring the necessity of social and peer support, and the role it plays in the transition to motherhood. Dr. Castellano has served as adjunct faculty since 2018 and is excited to be a member of the UMSL community! She is passionate about mentoring and empowering students to grow as both individuals and nurses.

Castellano met her husband in high school where they were friends for 10 years before dating then marrying. They have four daughters (ages 6, 5, 3, and 1.5) and two Golden Retriever puppies. Castellano currently serves as a Peer Mentor and Group Facilitator for Sisters of St. Mary's MomsLine where she speaks with mothers weekly to support, empathize, and hold space for childbearing women to express

their needs and concerns. She is also a member and Peer Mentor of Postpartum Support International. While similar to MomsLine, it serves women and men worldwide to promote psychological wellbeing.

## **Emily Marler, Department of Psychological Sciences**



Emily Marler will be an Assistant Professor of Psychology at UMSL starting this fall. She received her Bachelor's degree in Psychology with a minor in Neuroscience at Southern Illinois University Carbondale and her Master's degree and Ph.D. at Saint Louis University in Experimental Psychology with a concentration in Cognitive Neuroscience. As a graduate student at Saint Louis University, Emily taught an Advanced Research Methods and Statistics lab and Cognitive Psychology for two semesters each. Upon graduation, Emily received a teaching position at McKendree University for a year (plus two summer courses), teaching Psychological Statistics, Research Methods, and three sections of Introduction to Psychology. She will be teaching Biological Psychology, Drugs and Behavior, and Psychological Statistics full time at UMSL. Emily will also be a psychology advisor and assist in operating the SONA subject pool program for the psychology department.

When she's not teaching, Emily enjoys baking/cooking, reading, gardening, spending time with friends, family, and her dogs, exercising, listening to ABBA, and watching 80's horror movies.

## **Michi Tobler, Department of Biology**





Michi recently joined the Department of Biology and will be collaborating closely with the St. Louis Zoo. He received his doctorate from the University of Zurich in Switzerland but has spent most of his career in the US—first as a postdoctoral researcher at Texas A&M University and then as a faculty member at Oklahoma State University and at Kansas State University. Michi is an evolutionary biologist interested in the origins of biodiversity. Together with undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers, he studies adaptation and speciation in fishes that inhabit extreme environments, like caves and toxic springs rich in hydrogen sulfide.

Over the past 10 years, Michi has taught a variety of courses in the realm of evolutionary biology, fish and animal diversity, and data visualization and science communication. He strives to create active and experiential learning experiences and has authored an open-source textbook that teaches students evolution by exploring and visualizing data using R programming. When not conducting research or teaching, Michi is also passionate about engaging the public about science and research.

After work, Michi likes to spend time outside with his wife, daughters, and dogs. He loves to cook (and eat) and is always game for swapping recipes. And yes, of course, he also keeps a bunch of fish tanks in his basement at home.

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## **Meet New CTL Team Members**

*We are lucky to have Emily Little and Sarah Butler join the Center for Teaching and Learning as our new and expanded learning analytics team partnering with and supporting faculty and academic units on assessment of student learning and collection and understanding of student feedback.*





Emily Litle is a new addition to the Center for Teaching and Learning and is excited to be in St. Louis. She comes to us from Otero College in La Junta, Colorado where she taught English, developmental English, and introduction to film courses and served as department chair for the last seven years. In this role, Emily supervised faculty in the arts and humanities disciplines and led assessment redesign efforts, which involved piloting a new, streamlined assessment process that is now the standard at Otero, redesigning curriculum and learning spaces around Universal Design for Learning principles, and providing insights into student experiences that increase engagement and participation. Prior to her accomplishments at Otero, Emily served as an adjunct faculty member at Western Illinois University and community outreach worker for the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. This part of her career was instrumental in reinforcing her belief that higher education is a change agent for real people and real communities.

Emily is from a fourth-generation farming family in West-Central Illinois. A proud first-generation student who directly benefitted from student aid programs, she continues to advocate for them and break stereotypes. Emily's academic journey began at Spoon River College in Canton, Illinois, and she went on to earn a B.A. in English Literature from Illinois College and an M.A. in English Composition from Western Illinois University. In addition to continuing to advocate social justice for marginalized communities, she enjoys crochet, cooking/baking, heavy metal, and video games. Emily and her husband, Cassidy, just celebrated their ninth anniversary and have two boys, Seth and Benjamin, who are both lights of their lives and take them on big adventures every day. Her favorite Star Trek captain is Benjamin Sisko.

**Sarah Butler, Learning Analytics Specialist**



Sarah Butler is a new addition to the Center for Teaching and Learning, but is far from new to UMSL. You may recognize her from her work in Campus Testing Center. During her time as Testing Center Coordinator, Sarah restructured the university's testing services to meet national standards, expanded professional credentialing options for students and community members by adding external testing programs such as Pearson VUE and Measure Learning, and implemented a state-of-the-art scheduling system that integrates with UMSL's Canvas LMS and database for student accommodations. Her efforts to streamline, capture and analyze usage, and modernize the University's testing services policies and procedures have been recognized at the institutional level, having received the UMSL Hero Award in 2021 and the Chancellor's Award for Staff Excellence as a Creator in 2023. Although she will miss interacting with students every day and listening to their stories, she is excited to take on the challenges of her new role as the CTL Learning Analytics Specialist.

Born and raised in St. Louis and southeast Missouri, Sarah is also a two-time UMSL alumnus, having earned a B.A. in History and an M.Ed. in Adult and Higher Education. Before serving as Testing Center Coordinator at UMSL, she was a Testing Supervisor at Jefferson College in Hillsboro, Missouri. She lives in Florissant with her partner, Michael, and their cats. In her free time, she enjoys fitness, reading fantasy novels, gardening, video games, and watching pro wrestling. Her favorite Star Trek captain is Katherine Janeway.

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## Reminder - Testing Center Relocation and Policies

As a reminder, as part of the renovation of the JC Penney Conference Center to the Richter Welcome and Alumni Center, the Testing Center has moved to a temporary location as of January 2023. The temporary Testing Center location is on UMSL South Campus in the **South Campus Computer Building (SCB) Room 200**. The physical address for the temporary location is 2961 South Dr. if your students are using Google Maps GPS to find the new location. The South Campus Computer Building is located behind Marillac Hall and Provincial House near the former Child Development Center. We expect this temporary location to be the Testing Center home for at least the full Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 semesters.

### Testing Center Fall 2023 Hours of Operation:

Monday - Thursday 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

### Testing Center Policy Reminders:

- **Testing is by appointment only.** All students are required to schedule a testing appointment a minimum of 24 hours in advance of the desired date and time. Walk-ins and same-day requests are not accepted. Please encourage your students who may need to utilize Testing Center Services this semester to consult the final exam schedule to book a time slot in advance—particularly as we enter the second half of the Fall semester.
- **No whole-class testing.** The Testing Center does not have the capacity to support whole-class testing or large groups of students from the same class. Testing Center Services are intended for individual students who have a disability accommodation or miss exams given during class time due to illness, university-sanctioned event, or other unforeseen circumstance that prevents the exam from being proctored in the classroom or with SmarterProctoring online proctoring. See [sample syllabus statement](#) if using SmarterProctoring or review the [training materials](#) by Missouri Online.
- **24-Hour Requirement for Faculty to Send Test Instructions.** Faculty are responsible for providing the Testing Center with exam administration directions for each exam that a student is scheduled to take in the Center at least 24 hours in advance of the scheduled appointment.

Review more online for [additional policies and procedures](#) for using this campus resource.

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### **Upcoming Dates, Deadlines and Reminders for Faculty**

**Friday, October 13:** Applications for NTT Teaching Leaves due (Non-tenure Track Associate and full Professors with 6 years of service and teaching responsibilities eligible to apply; NTT Teaching Leaves Application)

**Monday, October 16:** Last day a student in a 16-week session can drop a course or withdraw without instructor approval - an EX is assigned

**Thursday, October 19 - Sunday, October 22:** Fall Break for Students

**Monday, November 13:** Deadline to submit annual conflict of interest disclosures.

**Saturday, November 18 - Sunday, November 27:** Thanksgiving Break

# About the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), a division of the Office of Academic Affairs, supports the professional development of those who teach and learn at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Our goals - to promote engagement in courses, on campus, and in the community - enhance the University as we align our activities, services, and consultations with the campus goals to promote excellence in teaching, research, and service.

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