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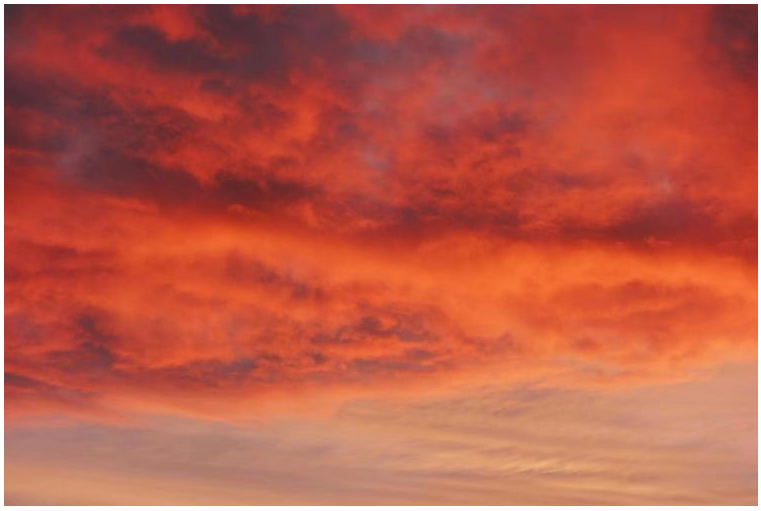
NCTL Newsletter - Fall '25, No. 1

From the Jane B. Nord Center for Teaching + Learning

In this newsletter:

- A reflection on this summer, including thoughts about **busyness, avoidance, slowness,** and **embodiment** in teaching and learning
- Updates on **AI activities and opportunities**
- Tip for **integrating OneDrive in Canvas**
- New **books**
- Upcoming **opportunities**

Welcome



Prologue

This summer, I met up with a lifelong friend who teaches first-year writing courses at a large public university. He declared an intention for the upcoming semester: "I will not read anything written by AI." This launched a long conversation about how he might achieve this goal through course planning and grading, along with questions about his stance against reading algorithm-generated language. While the latter took us into eddies of critical and poststructural theory (what exactly is the ***Derridean trace*** *again?), his desire to read only those words written by his students was clearly rooted in how much he valued their unique voices and his role in facilicating their learning. I share this story so that I can reassure readers of this newsletter that these are*

written by a human, for my fellow humans, because I trust that you can overlook my grammatical slips and verbosity.

-Kari Weaver, Director

Time and Being

Image: Screenshot from the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity's (NCFDD) **recent report on faculty retention**

Over the summer, many colleagues in higher education shared feeling overwhelmed by a surge of tasks and responsibilities. Some asked, “Is this different? It feels different.” Their uncertainty resonated with me, not just because I felt similarly buried under to-do lists across my roles (parent, researcher, educational developer), but because few could name the source of this pressure.

This led me to reflect on a question through the lens of teaching and learning:
Why is it hard to connect a feeling to the experience of being overly busy?

Neuroscientist Anne-Laure Le Cuff suggests **busyness can be a form of avoidance**—a way to sidestep deeper questions about what we want from life. She encourages us to prioritize quality over quantity, especially in how our work impacts wellbeing. Le Cuff offers questions we might ask ourselves and our students when life feels overrun:

- **Did the work feel intellectually stimulating?**
- **Did I learn something new?**
- **Did the work help me cultivate my curiosity?**
- **Did the work give me the opportunity to connect with interesting people?**

I also invite us to consider what we might be avoiding. Ongoing social, economic, and political challenges continue to disrupt stability, trust, and community—including in education. Sarah Rose Cavanaugh, author of **Mind Over Monsters: Supporting Youth Mental Health With Compassionate Challenge**, offers **four ways to nurture academic wellbeing**:

- **Rekindle your love of teaching and scholarship**
- **Set boundaries**
- **Don't get overly fixated on AI**

- **Imagine outward**

As the semester unfolds and inboxes fill, I hope this advice supports you and your students. **Here are some ways to activate these ideas in your work and classroom:**

Discourage Avoidance

Avoidance is often driven by anxiety, a fear-based reaction about potential future threats and your ability to respond to them. By avoiding anxiety-provoking experiences, we can find ourselves in a **negative reinforcement loop**, where the temporary relief of avoidance causes us to see it as a positive coping strategy, making it likely that we will use that strategy again and again.

Here's how this could look for a student:

- **Anxiety-provoking situation**: The student has not completed their work for class, and is worried about feeling embarassed and unprepared.
- **Avoidance behavior**: The student decides to skip class.
- **Temporary relief and reinforcement:** By deciding to skip class, the student is instantly relieved of potential embarassment and stress. Their decision worked!
- **Increased anxiety:** The student feels worried and overwhelmed by missing more work, and may skip class again.

To help discourage avoidance, **talk with students about their fears and concerns** that might contribute to avoidance. What might happen if they come to class unprepared? What might happen if they skip class? **Discuss alternative coping strategies that support their ultimate goals for being in college**, such as blocking off time for coursework and rest. **Encourage the use of CIA resources**, such as the **Writing and Learning Center**, **Library**, Academic Advising, and the **new workshop series for college success**.

Encourage Slowness

Over the past year, I've been inspired by Cal Newport, Professor of Computer Science at Georgetown University, **whose work** explores focus, boundaries, and intentionality in both professional and personal life. I've recently adopted his **time-blocking method** and found his concept of slow productivity especially grounding—offering a counterbalance to burnout and the pressures of AI-driven efficiency. In **Slow Productivity**, Newport writes: "We've become so used to the idea that the only reward for getting better is moving toward higher income and increased responsibilities that we forget that the fruits of pursuing quality can also be harvested in the form of a more sustainable lifestyle."

This theme resonates with a recent piece in **Prompt: A Journal of Academic Writing Assignments**, where Megan Murtha (NYU) shares an **exercise that helps students articulate their embodied values and complex relationships with the world**. Murtha's approach embraces emotional and physical aspects of the self, challenging internalized ideas of productivity and economic worth. By engaging the holistic self—cognitive, emotional, and embodied—her work aligns with **trauma-based approaches to college student development** and **embodied pedagogy**.

AI Opportunities and Updates

AI Course Policies

Starting this semester, faculty were included **policy language on AI** use for each class. This is an important move towards learning and transparency. The NCTL offered a workshop to assist faculty in writing a strong policy. You can find those resources, including the **slide deck**, on the myCIA page for **Educational Technology**. Other resources faculty have found useful:

- **Writing Instruction in the Age of AI**: Outlines key writing skills and describes how AI can be used in different stages of the writing process. While the focus is on writing, many aspects are easily transferrable to other creative processes.
- **AI Assessment Scale:** This tool for designing learning tasks is a "flexible framework for incorporating GenAI into educational assessments...enabling educators to design assessments that focus on areas requiring human input and critical thinking" (**Furze et al., 2024**)

AICAD Cross-Institutional Dialogue Series on AI

This summer, I partnered with **AICAD** leadership to launch a dialogue series exploring the impact of AI on art and design education. The series will feature webinars, a digital platform, and topic-based virtual meetings. **Sign up for updates**, and contact NCTL Director Kari Weaver (keweaver@cia.edu) if you're interested in a leadership role.

Resources for in-class conversations about AI

Looking to engage your students in dialogue about AI? I have offered guides for discussion in my **worksheet for designing AI course policy** language (pps. 6-7) and my slide deck from the Spring 2025 session on **AI + Ethics** (slide 23). You could also discuss recent publications, such as the **2025 Educause AI Landscape Study**, the **2024 Digital Education Council Global AI Student Survey**, or a recent study on **Transparency, Ownership, and Fairness in AI Generative Art** (Lovato et al., 2024) using survey responses from over 400 artists. For more resources, check out our library's guide on **AI in Research: Ethics, Concerns, and Limitations**.

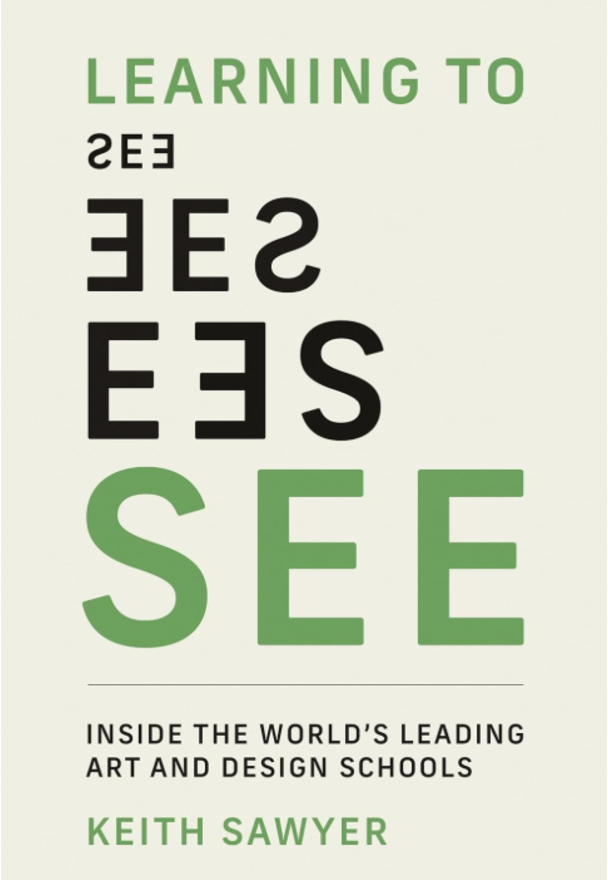
Save the Date: AI + Ethics Panel - Thursday, December 4, 6-8 PM

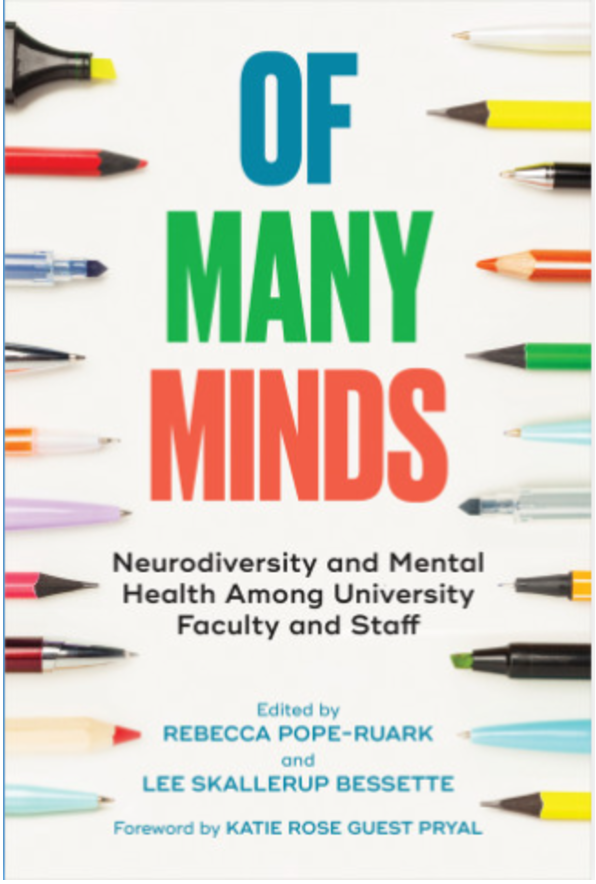
This panel will be facilitated by CIA Liberal Arts Division Chair and Professor, Zach Savich. Panelists will include an industry leader in entertainment, a Director of Academic Planning, and faculty in ethics, multimedia and photojournalism. Details forthcoming.

Microsoft Office One Drive Canvas Integration

In our move to Microsoft One Drive integration with Canvas, the most common question I get is: **How can I set up a submission folder for assignments?** While I thought this was not possible, our faculty and IT staff have worked together to find a solution! Here are clear step-by-step directions: **How to Use OneDrive Storage for a Canvas Assignment**. For other resources on MS 365 integration with Canvas, check out our **myCIA Canvas page** or **Instructure's Canvas Instructor Guide**.

New Books at the Gund Library





The Library recently added two new exciting resources:

Learning to see: Inside the world's leading art and design schools (Sawyer, 2025). From the publisher: this book "is an engaging and profound account of **how professional artists and designers create and how they teach others to do it**. Keith Sawyer, a leading creativity researcher, spent over ten years interviewing a hundred professors who've taught in 50 different colleges, universities, and institutes. He also **interviewed students to learn about the personal transformation they go through** as they learn to see and think like successful creative professionals. Learning to See **describes project assignments and studio class sessions** in over 20 different disciplines, revealing the shared essence of art and design."

Of many minds: Neurodiversity and mental health among university faculty and staff (Pope-Ruark & Skallerup Bessett, eds., 2025). As a passionate advocate and researcher on neurodivergence, I often hear that while higher education offers a lot of support and resources for students, we need similar care and accessibility for our neurodivergent staff and faculty. That's why I was so thrilled by this book, featuring chapters on **masking, stigma,** and **higher education structures** and edited by the co-host of **All The Things ADHD podcast** and the author of **Unraveling faculty burnout: Pathways to reckoning and renewal** (2022).

Upcoming Opportunities

- **Virtual Forum: What Today's Students Can Teach Colleges. Tuesday, October 7, 2 PM.** *Free*. Presented by The Chronicle of Higher Education. **Information and registration here**.
- **AI Symposium - AI and Creative Innovation: Advocating for Artists and Designers. October 10-11** at the Ringling College of Art and Design.
- **Teaching Summit: Tuesday, October 21.** Please keep an eye out for forthcoming information on this year's event. You can see examples of **past Summit events on our myCIA page**.
- **2025 AICAD Symposium: "Engaging Values." November 12-14** at the Pratt Institute. **Information and registration here.**
- **Futureland AI Forward Summit: Thursday, November 20** (all day) at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland. **Information and registration here.**

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