

The Temple University

# Faculty Herald

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## What Do We Do About Crime?

Can Temple work with the community to help stem the tide of violence in the city, asks **George W. Miller III**? It's a difficult problem, and the solutions are complex.

**K**en Giunta understands the challenges of being a large university in the middle of a city that is seeing a surge in crime and violence. His daughter is a junior advertising major, and he is active in the Temple University Parent and Family Council.

"Some parents are asking, 'Why aren't they doing more?'" he said, referring to the university

leadership. "I know that Temple is doing a lot, like constantly recruiting officers and offering grants to landlords to install cameras and lighting."

Many parents, he noted, want immediate action - more police, cameras everywhere, extra security in buildings and near residential areas.

"A lot of parents want guarantees," said Giunta, who also serves as one of two parents on the university's Violence Reduction Task Force. "But crime is random. We're talking about people - and too often teenagers, with automatic weapons. You can't only police your way out of this."

Instead, the longtime nonprofit and public

policy advocate believes there needs to be immediate, intermediate and long-term strategies all at once.

"You have crime happening on the street corner near campus and that needs to be addressed," he explained. "But you also have the long-term issues that lead these teenagers to commit crimes."

There are issues with education and employment, and general disinvestment of areas near campus. That has allowed for trash to pile up, graffiti to expand, public amenities to be shuttered and general deterioration of some neighborhoods.

"It shouldn't just be a campus safety issue," Giunta admitted. "Strategies should involve a lot of people across the university."

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One campus safety expert told Giunta during a Task Force interview that urban universities must invest in the well-being of the communities that they are in. Universities cannot wall themselves off or become armed camps. These are issues facing many cities across the country these days, he added. The fix isn't easy and perceptions of urban safety won't likely evolve anytime soon.

He gets that. He talks to his daughter about being smart whenever she leaves her apartment.

"I worry about my daughter from the time I drop her off," he said, "until the time I pick her up for the summer."

**K**eeping the university community safe in a time when the city is dealing with unprecedented crime is a major undertaking, and the stakes are massive.

Through September, there were 403 murders in Philadelphia. That is 2 percent lower than record-setting 2021, when there were 412 murders by the end of September. Both years are way ahead of pre-pandemic levels – 348 murders through September in 2020 and 256 in 2019. The 2022 total through September is more than double the number at the same time in 2015, when 201 people had been murdered.

More than 1,789 people were shot in Philadelphia through September this year, averaging around 6.5 people per day. The city is on pace to reach around 2,390 shooting victims, surpassing the 2,329 people shot in 2021.

It's rare for such violence to happen on campus or even in the immediate vicinity. But Temple students are moving farther and farther into neighborhoods, away from campus, and many venture around the city for internships, jobs and entertainment, amongst other reasons.

There was already a looming decline in the number of traditional college age students set to hit in the coming years because of steadily declining birth rates. The Northeast United States has some of the steepest drops in the country.

In addition, the perception of Philadelphia as a violent city could dissuade potential students, and likely already has.

What has historically been one of the greatest strengths of the university – the city as a laboratory, is now one of its biggest issues.

The two big questions that stand out are: What is driving this crisis and what is the university's role in helping resolve these issues?

**J**ennifer Wood, the chair of the Criminal Justice department, asked a more pointed question: "What is it about how we live that has led people to solve their problems with violence?"

The answer usually revolves around issues of health – physical, mental and societal.

"People can thrive if we invest in our communities," she explained, "especially in the health and social systems."

But that is often not politically viable, she said. The problems are systemic, requiring restructuring that could take decades, whereas election cycles create needs for short-term fixes.

Increased policing is often the response.

"Police are tools to deal with issues right now, in this moment," Wood said. "Policing now is triage."

Officers tend to individual situations but they aren't always best equipped to deal with the root problems, the societal issues that fostered the current state.

"How do you prevent people, communities from being sick?" Wood asked.

Universities have the intellectual capital that could help with these issues.

"We should be able to put our heads together to imagine what we could put together," she added. "What can we build that doesn't rely upon crisis response?"

**O**ne of the ways that universities can support their surrounding residential communities is by building community partnerships, said Jake Winfield, a doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Development.

"Universities should be supporting after-school programs," he said, "and supporting community leaders to build the community that they want."

Winfield, who has been researching the intersection of community-university partnerships and college access, believes that many universities are doing micro things that are good for communities, like helping to improve education and creating pathways for local students to attend their neighboring higher education institutions. But at the macro level, universities are often doing things that divest from cities and neighborhoods.

He cited the research of Davarian Baldwin, whose 2021 book, *In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower*, details the wide-ranging impact that nonprofit, tax-exempt higher education institutions have on cities, and the outsized influence they have on their immediate neighborhoods.

Winfield referenced the Temple football stadium that was proposed to be built near Broad and Norris streets. The stadium was to be built on land the university already owns and occupies, and the height of the structure was to be equal to the surrounding rowhomes. But the perceived lack of communication brought about lingering fears from the urban renewal era, when Temple demolished older private homes and erected new campus structures.

Neighborhood and university activists came together to rally against the 35,000-seat facility, which would have closed a section of 15th Street. At public events in 2018, protestors shouted down university leaders so much that notions of a new stadium have seemingly disappeared.

"What were the lessons learned?" Winfield asked. "We should be centering community at the beginning, being proactive, letting them tell us what is the best direction. Help provide more longstanding community partnerships. Instead of telling them what we are doing, we should tell them what we can do and ask them what they need."

The residents live here 365 days per year, he added, not just the four years that students spend in North Philadelphia. Actions should be centered around the residents' needs, as that will



make stronger communities, which will be better for students and the university community.

"To meaningfully address this," Winfield said, "the university needs to be proactive, talking to the community, not just doing what is easy and expedient."

**F**or many people in North Philadelphia, Monica Hankins-Padilla is the face of Temple University. She's been doing community relations work for the university for two decades now.

The Overbrook High School grad earned her bachelor's degree in environmental engineering at Temple. She was a student worker with the Temple police.

"I saw a lot of the good work the police were doing," she recalled. "I can be that person. I can be a good cop."

A few years after graduating, she returned as





a police officer for the university. After three years on patrol, she was elevated to sergeant and assigned to be a victims' services liaison and community complaint officer. Since 2010, Hankins-Padilla has served as the external relations coordinator in the Campus Safety office.

"Through the acts and work of our police and safety officers, over the years, we've been able to expand into the community, working with them and developing relationships," she said. "I carry that torch of furthering our interaction with the community."

Some days she is in the neighborhood giving toys or school supplies to children. Other days, she works with her team to handle complaints about trash near student residences. She regularly partners with community organizations on special projects, like the Urban Bike Team based out of the Norris Homes. She sends officers to nearby elementary schools to provide reading

programs and to work with children on garden projects.

"My goal is to reduce the detention rate of youth in Philadelphia," she said. "We're not dropping off supplies and saying, 'See you later.' We want to come back and talk to parents of these children. We'll drop off books, talk about how we respond."

The idea is to build relationships and trust, she said, especially with children. Catch them when they are young and show them that police aren't bad, and that the university cares about them. She wants to show the youths that they can have a bright future.

"We ask them to speak their truth and be a part of the solution, not just be talked at," Hankins-Padilla said. "Once people trust you, it's easy. If you can build that relationship, there are some beautiful gems that come from that."

Few universities have as many community outreach efforts as Temple but it's often difficult to feel because there is no centralized place that highlights the work being done. Hankins-Padilla's team is very small, as is the Office of Community Affairs and Engagement, the university's primary community portal. They have only five staffers.

And while many faculty members, students, staff and administrators work closely with members of the surrounding residential communities, the institution is still often perceived as being a bad neighbor.

"A lot of what we hear from individual community members is that there is a disconnect with Temple and the individual community members," said Temple police officer Alec Shaffer, who is also

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the president of the Temple University Police Association. "We're trying to mend that."

Shaffer discussed a recent incident when Temple police responded to a break-in at 2 am near 16th and Norris. The homeowner was there and he spoke with her at length.

"Now she is comfortable with me," he said. "She knows my face. She doesn't hesitate to call."

She showed up at a clean-up event that Shaffer and the Temple police department participated in at 20th and Susquehanna two weeks later.

This is a new approach for the university police force, said Shaffer, who joined the force 4 years ago. His brother is also an officer at Temple. Temple police officers now partner with community organizations and local houses of faith. Shaffer recently served as a CPR instructor at Bright Hope Baptist, which sits across Cecil B. Moore Avenue from Temple.

"It used to be that you showed up at crime scenes, fixed the problem to the best of your ability and you were gone," Shaffer said. "We're doing our best to have folks stick around, talk to the people and develop a little rapport."

The main goal is to develop stronger connections to the local community members.

"We need to be trusted by the community," he added.

He said that the union's members are stressed, as they need more officers to cover the year-round, 24-hour, seven-day schedule. Many people are putting in extra overtime. Retaining talent has been difficult.

Shaffer enjoys the work though. It's rewarding to build relationships and help change the perception of the university and the neighborhood. The Temple police officers are trying to make the area safer for everyone, including the local residents.

"No one wants to feel like that can't sit on the front steps or go grocery shopping or go to the pharmacy to pick up their stuff," he said.

**T**he causes of crime are complex, and problems can easily compound.

Even with new policies implemented by controversial Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, more than 11,000 Philadelphians were convicted and sentenced to prison terms in 2019.

Around 26 percent of the people imprisoned in Pennsylvania come from Philadelphia, with the city's highest rates of incarceration resting in the two zip codes immediately above Temple's main campus – 19132 and 19133.

Many of the people imprisoned are parents, and that can have a lasting impact on their children.

"No longer having a parent present can lead to issues of mental health, low education performance and high rates of dropping out of school," said Melissa Noel, an assistant professor in the Criminal Justice department who started at Temple this fall. "There's so much I want to unpack in the Philadelphia region. How can you break the inter-generational cycle of crime?"

In researching the impact of having incarcerated parents, Noel found that the children face numerous barriers to success, like social

exclusion, financial difficulties and lack of trust in institutions.

Rather than asking for help, it's common that a culture of silence develops. Children hide that they have a parent incarcerated. They avoid the stigma by not disclosing the fact.

"They are often told, 'You are more likely to be like your parents,'" Noel said. "Statistics are not helpful for them. That just adds to the stigma they already face."

She suggests avoiding deficit-based perspectives. Move away from negative connotations. Rather, focus on the young people's strengths. How can they take this bad situation and use this as a strength?

"Having a parent incarcerated as a child is not the end of the story," she added.

Comprehensive solutions are needed, and some universities are helping reentering parents plan for the next step in their lives. They offer sessions that help with the reunification process.

"What happens when they are released?" Noel asked. "The glass is till half full for these individuals. They are so resilient."

**T**he people who reenter often struggle, said Ajima Olaghere, who was an assistant professor in the Criminal Justice department until she left the university over the summer.

Places like Down North, the Strawberry Mansion restaurant that features Detroit-style pizza, offer opportunities. The business exclusively employs formerly incarcerated people.

"They don't have anything without community buy-in," said Olaghere, who has studied the business and partnered with the restaurant on projects.

Temple could play a similar role, she said, becoming an opportunity zone for nearby residential communities. The university could help fill gaps in housing assistance, legal support and other areas where people have difficulties.

"The faculty expertise is there," she added. "Investing doesn't always have to be money."

The goal would be to be a positive anchor, a place that can provide for people rather than be seen as a place that continues to spur gentrification.

"People in the community remember," she said. "They have a long memory. And there is no corresponding investment from the university."

How do we do things different, she asked. How do we lead?

"We're not innovating as we should," she offered. "We ignore because we can."

In the end, she said her decision to leave was informed by many things. She felt that Temple did not serve the residential community members well, and the bureaucracy and "research industrial complex" would ensure that little would change.

"Would I have received tenure if I had stayed?" Olaghere stated. "My work doesn't always translate to publication. And between teaching, researching and performing service, where do you find the time to build relationships?"

Building trust with nearby community members can take weeks, months sometimes. Meanwhile, the tenure clock is ticking.

"The way academia is structured is incompatible

with doing this work," said Olaghere, who is now a user experience researcher for Amazon. "And that is going to leave us increasingly behind. Temple is not investing time in talent or resources. What did I get in return? They look at you like you are crazy."

With the surge in crime and the global demographic issues, now is the time for Temple to think differently, to be a model for other universities in cities in the United States and around the world.

"Use the social capital to move the needle here," she suggested. "Chart academia on a new path."

**P**hiladelphia is in deep distress right now, said Maia Cucchiara, an associate professor in the College of Education and Human Development. It's more than Temple alone can handle.

"We need to think less about what specific institutions could do and more about bringing groups together to see what can be done together," she said.

Does the city have the right people at the table to talk about problems? Will they put aside their interests and agendas to come together to find solutions?

"I hope the conversations are happening," she said. "But it feels like there is an absence of leadership in the city, a vacuum."

**A**fter the near-campus murder of Samuel Collington, the 21-year-old Temple political science major, in November last year, online parents' groups became full of rage and cries for help.

"After Sam's death, we all had fears," said Ken Giunta, the parent of a current student.


But he knows that this is not just a Philadelphia problem.

"I don't know if my daughter would be any safer if she were in Boston, Chicago, Baltimore or DC," he said. "This is a US problem at its worst."

That doesn't mean that the university doesn't have a role to play in these long-term strategies, he added.

"We have to do it all at the same time," Giunta said. "These issues of urban crime and violence in the US are rooted in poverty and systemic racism. It's a mess and it's coming home to roost. I think universities can be part of the solution but they must engage beyond campus safety and involve other departments such as urban studies, behavioral sciences, criminology, etc."

Give credit to students for volunteering in the community, he suggested. Reward faculty and staff who help build better relationships with the residential community members.

"This is an all-hands-on-deck crisis," Giunta said. "Parents, teachers, students, campus safety, other universities, city government, law enforcement, NGOs, businesses, etc. It needs to be everyone." 

**George W. Miller III**, Ed.D., is an associate professor of Journalism at the Klein College of Media and Communication. He is the editor of the Faculty Herald.



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## EDITOR'S NOTE



Photo by George W. Miller III.

## The University & The Community

**George W. Miller III** talked to people who live near universities in Philadelphia, looking for ways to overcome the historic mistrust.

Before I begin, let me apologize for this issue being published so late. It was due out at the start of the fall semester but I caught COVID19 and I was out of commission for a week or three. It's all a blur, and it's taken forever to get caught up on, well, everything. Sorry!

I was already behind schedule, to be honest. I was on sabbatical for the 2021-2022 academic year and I took that time to finish up my doctoral dissertation at Wilmington University. I finally submitted the final draft on August 17, just days before the fall semester began.

I looked at the relationships between Philadelphia universities and their surrounding residential communities. I interviewed 28 community leaders from North and West Philadelphia, as well as organizers who live near La Salle University, St. Joseph's and other city schools. The goal was to learn about their experiences - past and present, and develop a path for the two communities - the university and the residential, to work together in mutually beneficial ways.

I had a series of questions to ask everyone but most people wanted to open with their very specific issues. They wanted to tell me about their neighborhoods - the evolution of people and places, and how they had been treated over the years. It was brutal. And illuminating.

I think most folks know that there are residents near Temple who have problems with the school. Some of that stems from historic issues - the urban renewal days, when the university grew and grew, and older buildings and longstanding communities were demolished.

That historic mistrust appears whenever questions arise, like when Temple proposed an on-campus football stadium a few years ago. The new structure was to be built on land the university

already owns and uses, and the height was to be equal to the surrounding residential buildings. It wasn't an obtrusive structure and there was no land grab. But since the residents weren't involved in the early stages of the planning, they felt that they were being deceived.

It's unfortunate. Similar tales popped up from around the city. Universities get blamed for things they have nothing to do with.

How do you get past that skepticism? How can the two communities come together to resolve the social ills of the city? Are there ways universities can serve the nearby residential communities while adhering to the universities' mission to do research and educate students?

Absolutely. And the 28 people I interviewed offered simple suggestions, as did the 12 university leaders I interviewed.

So much of the relationship-building starts with good communication. Rather than approaching each other when one or the other side has needs, we should be communicating regularly - at the student, faculty, staff and administrative levels.

There are numerous people at Temple doing amazing work in this realm already. The difficulty is that the residential community members don't always know what exists. They don't know who to contact when they need help. We don't have a centralized community outreach office that also involves the academic side of the institution.

Having a well-staffed center for community engagement that bridges academic as well as non-academic services would be a huge step. I'd love to see the Burk Mansion, at Broad and Jefferson, repurposed for such an endeavor.

The fate of urban universities are tied to their cities. We have resources and students who could benefit greatly from amazing interactions with residential community members. The residential community members have an expertise in things researchers and students usually only read about.

We can and should prosper together.







## Open Heart, Mind & Ears

**George W. Miller III** talks to **Jennifer Griffin**, Ph.D., who became the Temple's first vice president for public safety in August. The longtime Delaware State Trooper was also an adjunct professor at the University of Delaware.

**You've been in Delaware for such a long time, and you seem to have made a home for yourself at the University of Delaware. What made you interested in this position at Temple?**

I have made a home in Delaware for the last 24 years, but I was born and raised in Pennsylvania and attended Millersville University for my undergraduate degree. I am leaving the University of Delaware and the Delaware State Police with a full heart of love and admiration. Still, I wanted to join my love of the university environment with my passion for public service, and the Vice President of Public Safety position was the perfect fit. Temple is a highly regarded, large university with a diverse population and many cultural influences. The campus has energy and a vibrant feel, while there's also an undercurrent of resilience and grit. I am genuinely excited to join the Temple University family and look forward to connecting with all unique communities within and outside the campus.

**What do you think will be the biggest challenges in this new role?**

Honestly, I don't see any challenges, as I prefer to see opportunities. One of the things that attracted me to this position was the university's leadership and the feeling I got when speaking to campus safety employees, faculty, staff, and students. Before applying and throughout the hiring process, I extensively researched the opportunities and the obstacles, and I see overwhelming positive opportunities in this new role. I took a very thoughtful approach to applying for this position because I wanted to ensure that it was a good fit for me personally and professionally and that I was a good fit for the university. I created a SWOT chart (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) for numerous areas within this position's roles and responsibilities, and overall, I kept returning to the potential. Every job and situation has

## Mission: Strengthen Our Community

Things will never be the same as they were, and that is OK, writes **Gregory Mandel**. There is great benefit to thinking about what Temple can be--and will be--moving forward.

I first came to Temple University in the summer of 2007 as a professor of law. Attracted by Temple's stellar faculty and collective commitment to its mission of creating access and opportunity for our students, I quickly became enamored with this institution and its community, the Temple family.


Throughout the past 15 years, I have seen Temple grow, strengthen, and create impact in the lives of our students, while maintaining our core values. Our legacy is and continues to be one of a community of passionate and dedicated learners, scholars, and active citizens.

Now, as the provost, the significance of my charge to lead our academic mission is not lost on me. We have faced generation-altering world events in the past few years, and it is our responsibility to use these experiences as an opportunity to continue to grow and strengthen our university community, while remaining committed to the mission and values we hold dear.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the social and political unrest of the last few years have had a profound impact on all of us and on this university. Things will never be the same as they were, and that is OK. There is great benefit to thinking about what Temple can be--and will be--moving forward. The university has seen a substantial change in leadership, faculty, and the makeup of its student body. Despite the changes, we still hold the same values that have defined this institution long before I ever stepped onto

campus. The university still strives to foster and develop leaders of the future, both inside and outside of the classroom, in a way that only Temple can. This is the core of what makes us who we are. As we return to campus this fall, I encourage each of us to think about what we can do to renew and strengthen our community as we move forward.

The role of Temple University reaches beyond our students, faculty, and staff. Our community also includes our North Philadelphia neighbors. Temple's commitment to providing opportunities to those without the same access to education as others is a hallmark of this institution. Engaging with our neighbors is a key priority for Temple and is evident through our educational programs, scholarships, job training programs and development initiatives. Of course, we must also always seek new ways to reach new audiences.

In closing, I want to take a moment to express my gratitude to all Temple faculty. For those who have been here for years, your dedication to the university is appreciated and I look forward to collaborating with you as we strengthen our community and plan for our future. To our new faculty, I welcome you to the Temple family and know that you will bring your skills and experience to enrich our university and help us reach our goals. To all faculty, if you see me on campus, please stop me and say hello—I look forward to getting to know you better. 

**Gregory Mandel**, J.D., is the provost of Temple University. He was previously the Dean of Temple's Beasley School of Law, where he is the Laura H. Carnell Professor of Law.





challenges and obstacles, but I'm coming into this position with an open heart, mind, and ears to find solutions.

**What strategies will you employ to keep the university community safe at a time when crime and violence are at high levels in the city, especially in the areas near campus?**

Campus and community safety is a primary concern and focus of my position and one that I do not take lightly. Unfortunately, no one strategy will solve the crime and violence issues. Still, there are strategies that, in conjunction, can work to create safer environments while engaging the community to be a partner. As a police officer and operations commander, I have used various strategies depending on the issues, such as stratified policing, data-informed, community-focused policing, and problem-oriented policing with an emphasis on procedural justice and building trust-based relationships within the community. I am committed to employing strategies that keep our officers and communities safe while working to open the lines of communication and engage in collaboration to prevent and solve crimes. Overall, I want our students, faculty, staff, and communities to feel safe in an environment where public safety and communities communicate and work together towards joint crime prevention strategies, so that we are meeting their needs while sharing with them the shared ownership and outcomes.

**How will you work with the non-university residents in the communities that surround the campus?**

Our non-university residents are essential to campus safety, and building this relationship is a key focus. I look forward to engaging our communities to continue developing and building

stronger university and community partnerships. I'm most interested in personally hearing their perspectives and experiences and working to collaborate and engage them on problem-oriented solutions. Most times, police aren't called until there is a crisis of sorts; however, the conditions that created the situation have existed for some time. We will research and employ numerous techniques to serve our university and non-university communities by utilizing our resources while engaging other non-university resources to support all of our communities.

**Do you intend to teach at Temple? Is that something that is important to you?**

Currently, my full attention is getting to know my campus safety team and the communities we serve, including students, faculty, staff, and our surrounding neighborhoods. I loved teaching and coaching at the University of Delaware (UD) and working with students is one of my passions that brought me to this point, but I will serve Temple in a different capacity now. However, my experience at UD has informed my approach to building relationships and my sincere interest in student development and success. I hope to get into the classroom at Temple to guest lecture and connect with students. I have already had incredible connections with the Temple Student Government to meet and hear student perspectives.

**You have worked with the field hockey team at the University of Delaware, and you played basketball at Millersville. Will you get involved with the sports programs at Temple?**


Absolutely, working with student-athletes is an excellent opportunity to connect with some of our student body and is a prime opportunity to create positive relationships between law enforcement

and students, as well as to recruit. Student-athletes are a significant population due to:

- The diversity of athletes,
- Their understanding of teamwork and commitment,
- Their problem-solving and communication skills,
- Their fitness levels.

They also understand time management, collaboration, managing multiple commitments, and service to others, all qualities that a well-rounded police officer need. I look forward to connecting with Temple's sports and club programs.

**Working in law enforcement can be stressful. How do you stay focused and positive?**

My dissertation to complete my doctorate was on law enforcement stress, resiliency, and work-family conflict. As a police officer, I have known the stressors for the last 23 years, especially as a supervisor. Ensuring I am taking proper care of myself through various self-care strategies is extremely important because I know I cannot help others if I don't take care of myself. I ensure I get adequate rest, work out daily, take nightly walks with my husband after dinner, eat healthy foods, and use meditation and yoga to reconnect with myself. I have also been teaching for the FBI National Academy Associates Comprehensive Officer Resiliency Program for several years, and I use many of the strategies I teach personally. We must ensure mental health and safety/wellness resources for individuals working in public safety to ensure they can show up their best to assist and support our communities and return home to their families physically, emotionally, and mentally healthy. 



# Changing the Way We Talk About Gun Violence

**Jennifer Midberry** and a team of scholars, including several Temple researchers, are studying media coverage of gun violence and learning about the impact it has on the audience and community at-large.

This fall brings a feeling of normalcy to campus after so many semesters upended by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, Temple community members have returned in the midst of another epidemic plaguing our nation and city: gun violence. It's an issue that feels personal after the murder of political science major Samuel Collington during a robbery close to campus last year.

With notifications about shootings sent out regularly through TUALerts, new safety measures being implemented across the university, and headlines about firearm incidents continually leading news reports, this is something that will inevitably be on students' minds this year. Like many pressing social issues, the rising rates of national and local gun violence will be relevant to class discussions in various disciplines. It is also a topic faculty members may want to check in with their students about in advising sessions and other out-of-class interactions. But what is the best way to frame those conversations?

My colleagues, Jessica Beard, Jim MacMillan, Sara Jacoby, Laura Partain, Iman Afif, Patrick Walters, Jason Peifer, Danielle Brown, and I are working on multiple projects about how news outlets report on gun violence and how that coverage impacts victims and communities most affected by this crisis. We compiled an extensive database of news stories about gun violence broadcast daily by the four major Philadelphia television news stations in 2021 and are currently analyzing that data quantitatively and qualitatively to identify trends in our local reporting. We have also interviewed city residents who have been touched by gun violence and firearm-injured patients to understand how news coverage on this issue has affected them personally.

Much of our research points to the necessity of changing the narrative around gun violence in our local and national discourse. Our best practice recommendations are geared toward journalists, but it is important for all of us to adjust the way we think and talk about gun violence if we hope to put an end to it. In this sense, faculty at Temple can play an important role in shifting this dialogue on campus.

## Problematic Language

Those of us without direct experience of firearm violence likely learn about this topic through media. This is problematic because U.S. news has long presented violence in a superficial manner that perpetuates racial stereotypes and induces fear in audiences. In media studies, we use the term framing to describe how the choices about what events are included in the news and which aspects are emphasized in stories can influence people's interpretations. For example, the framing of a given social issue can affect things like who we attribute blame and responsibility to, how important we think the problem is, and the extent to which we are willing to invest in a solution.

There are several deficiencies with the way stories about gun violence are typically framed in U.S. media. News outlets try to report on shooting incidents as immediately as possible. This breaking news approach usually leads to stories that are very brief, lacking in detail, and based almost



exclusively on information from law enforcement. Such coverage does not contextualize these individual shootings by connecting them to the root causes of gun violence. By relying on police as primary sources, many journalists exclude the perspectives of the people bearing the brunt of this epidemic. News reports talk about firearm violence almost exclusively as an issue of crime, as opposed to one of public health. Solutions to gun violence are rarely investigated in depth. Most egregiously, reporting on this issue is racialized, with Black victims receiving less attention and less humanized coverage compared to white victims. News outlets also run stories involving Black suspects at a volume that is disproportionate to actual rates of crime.

This framing can lead to detrimental misconceptions among audiences and can harm the people being reported on. When stories about violence are not situated in proper context, media consumers are more likely to blame individuals for crime than to attribute it to systemic deficiencies. With little





investigation into what is perpetuating this epidemic and what can be done to combat it, audiences can be left feeling fearful and hopeless. Circumscribing language about gun violence to that of criminal justice limits the scope of imagined solutions to punitive measures. News that racializes this issue perpetuates pernicious stereotypes about Black men being inherently aggressive and stigmatizes communities of color as being dangerous. My team's research has found that this framing also leaves residents plagued by this crisis feeling commodified by news organizations and can adversely affect the recovery of shooting victims.

If we replicate the dominant news narratives about gun violence, we will be complicit in perpetuating these associated harms. Instead, below are some suggestions for framing conversations about this topic in a more accurate and productive way in our classrooms.

### **Complicate the Narrative**

To have more generative discussions with students, seek out ways to fill in the gaps left in most reporting on gun violence. Don't just talk about a specific occurrence in isolation, but connect it to the social forces surrounding it. For example, we know that the surge in gun violence is correlated to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the matter of causation is unclear. Asking students to research and hypothesize about the relationship between these two epidemics might help them understand firearm violence as a public health matter. One way to challenge the notion that people in certain neighborhoods are simply more prone to violence is to direct students to look at which

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Philadelphia communities were historically hit with redlining and see how that maps onto geographic areas with current high rates of firearm incidents. This exercise will draw attention to the fact that disparities in gun violence are inextricably linked to systemic racism. If you want to demonstrate how skewed most news is toward a law enforcement perspective, have your class analyze who is quoted most often across stories from several outlets. In all likelihood, the majority of the sources will be police. Invite students to think about whose voices are not included in these stories and to imagine how the framing might be different if those perspectives had been highlighted.

Thankfully, there are organizations out there doing an excellent job of producing reporting that does situate gun violence within its larger context. These are invaluable resources to use as a starting point for nuanced conversations about this issue. The Philadelphia Center for Gun Violence Reporting provides a list of several resources for improving the discourse around firearm violence. You might consider using some of the center's Credible Messenger projects, which are stories produced by Philadelphians directly impacted by gun violence in conjunction with local professional journalists. The Trace is a publication that exclusively generates coverage of gun violence in the United States. The stories from The Trace examine root causes, incorporate multiple perspectives, provide follow-up coverage, and explore solutions. Using articles from this outlet would be ideal for classroom discussions.

### Focus on Solutions

A crucial function of U.S. journalism is to call attention to social problems that need to be addressed. Yet, one of the unintended consequences of this tradition is that much of daily news content is negative, which can leave audiences feeling numb or hopeless. Many journalists have recently adopted a Solutions Journalism approach to covering social issues. Put simply, this type of reporting not only highlights problems but investigates potential ways to ameliorate them. It also calls for reporters to rely on more non-official sources and to examine the structural underpinnings of problems. A solutions journalism approach to gun violence can therefore be a corrective to many of the weaknesses in how the issue is typically framed. When choosing a story for an assignment or as a discussion prompt about gun violence, consider one that is produced in the solutions journalism model. You can search for examples of such pieces using the Solutions Story Tracker or make use of The Guardian's Guns and Lies series.

One important finding that came out of interviews my colleagues and I conducted with firearm-injured patients and other people affected by gun violence was that they were upset that local news outlets rarely cover community efforts to combat this crisis. They wished that journalists would produce stories that highlight the various grass roots outreach, activism, and support services in their neighborhoods. These participants also pointed


out the absence of follow-up stories that focus on how people recover and build back from shootings. The status quo reporting made many of these interviewees feel like news stories on this topic were exploitative of their pain and had no value for their communities. Additionally, preliminary analyses of our data from local television news coverage of gun violence shows that when stories do include solutions to gun violence, they rarely present in-depth explorations of programs, policies, or interventions. Taken together, these findings point to the importance of ensuring that discussions of gun violence center on the priorities of the people most directly impacted by the crisis and that they explore solutions in a substantial manner.

### Talk About Public Health

Our research team is also advocating for media outlets to frame gun violence as a public health issue instead of exclusively one of crime. Organizations such as the American Public Health Association and the American Medical Association conceptualize firearm violence as a matter of public health. In April of 2021, President Biden also declared gun violence a public health epidemic. Although there have been calls since the 1990s for journalists to report on this issue in terms of public health, news frames have largely continued to emphasize the criminal justice perspective.

Similar to a solutions journalism approach, public health framing expands story sources beyond law enforcement and emphasizes root causes. In particular, public health officials and medical personnel are sought out as expert sources. Reporting with a public health frame would include relevant epidemiologic information such as individual and community level consequences, risk factors for violence, and, perhaps most crucially, prevention methods. In fact, one of the most compelling reasons to adopt a public health frame is that it assumes there are effective ways to actually prevent gun violence as opposed to accepting it as an inevitable part of our society. Additionally, discussing this crisis as one that

affects us as an entire population, instead of as select individuals, encourages people to seek collective responses. Presenting firearm violence to students as a matter of public health, similar to the COVID-19 pandemic or the opioid crises, will give them a more complete understanding of the issue and might enable them to envision an end to the epidemic.

I offer these suggestions with the hope that gun violence rates in our city and nation will abate, but also with the knowledge that we all need to help shift the narrative in order for that to come to fruition. 

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# A Proactive Plan for Students

Like many faculty members across campus, **Christopher Malo** and **Brian Creech** send their students around the city for course work. How to do that during the crime surge has been a challenge. They spoke to people around campus and built strategies, which they present here.

It wasn't that long ago you could tell a bad reporter because they always answered the phone at their desk, meaning they were always at their desk. They weren't out reporting, talking to people, developing relationships, finding story ideas, gaining understanding and familiarity with the folks on whom they reported. In that spirit—and in preparation for a career in journalism—the journalism department's capstone program, Philadelphia Neighborhoods (PN), has embraced that ethos.

Since 2008, PN students have been engaging with the people living in Philadelphia who are traditionally ignored by most news organizations unless something sensational or violent occurs. Our students report both on and in underserved and under-resourced communities across the city. They spend time walking the streets in Philadelphia neighborhoods, attending community meetings, talking to small business owners, attending street festivals, and generally getting to know the people who live in Philadelphia.

Recently, as crime has increased in the city and safety has become a more pressing concern for everyone, we have had to revisit how we do this.

## In the Field

Getting students out of the classrooms and into the neighborhoods has become more challenging in recent years. The COVID-19 pivot forced us to reconsider face-to-face reporting. We developed tools to work around quarantines, but still connect to people, knowing at the time that some COVID practices would be shed, others adopted, and even more adapted.

As fall 2021 began, many instructors and students alike hoped to settle into some new sense of normalcy. We were all excited about returning to in-person classes, especially for those that required students to learn from doing. But from the first assignments of the semester, our students and instructors sensed a shift when visiting neighborhoods. The city changed during the pandemic. Household and city resources are

strained, and there's more desperation on the streets. There are also fewer eyes outside to see what is going on, less foot and vehicle traffic along blocks that were once vibrant and busy. And, unfortunately, the city has seen more crimes of opportunity.

We quickly realized that common sense and cultural sensitivities around safety could not be taken for granted. As a department that relies on experiential learning and sending students off-campus as core to our pedagogy, we needed to revisit the topic of safety from both administrative and instructional perspectives.

To adequately respond to the changing conditions our students were facing in a changing city, we realized we needed to define what "safety" meant in this context. Prioritizing physical safety while reporting in the field was foundational to our class model. But, in other contexts, mitigating emotional and mental harm are equally important to plan for. At the same time, as a diverse faculty with diverse students on a diverse campus in a diverse city, we quickly learned that different student populations faced different kinds of vulnerabilities.

## Revisiting practices

There's a tension between the responsibilities

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of a reporter and our obligation as educators. For instance, when we ask students to produce journalism as working professionals, that puts a tacit pressure on students that may push them to take unnecessary risks that compromise their personal safety. Real or perceived pressures that we have all encouraged include deadline pressure, financial penalties for stolen equipment (we suggest students get renters insurance), and telling students, “Be close to the action.”

Our goal, though, was not to keep students on campus; that would be a disservice to their development as journalists, and also as students and residents of Philadelphia. Safety, then, is also an issue of cultural sensitivity and common sense. Essentially, we needed to revisit how we are teaching students to carry themselves while reporting around the city and engaging with the people who live here.

We reached out to various people within the Temple community to seek counsel and see what others were doing, seeing, and hearing in order to develop a set of best practices. At the same time, a group of journalism department faculty began to meet periodically to brainstorm and figure out how to implement best practices. Ideas included safety training from Campus Safety Services and cultural sensitivity training from IDEAL early on in our core classes, with key lessons reinforced throughout the journalism program—especially in any class that sends students out to report.

In the case of an incident, we realized we needed an emergency phone system/tree/chain with the department office, chair, assistant chair, professor and any group partner/classmate. We also learned we needed to communicate and reiterate some best habits to students, such as communicating the timing of their reporting trips to classmates and/or instructors so that everyone knows when students are reporting. This could be as simple as email notifications, just to keep track, but instructors and students also needed to develop a habit of checking-in after a reporting trip as well.

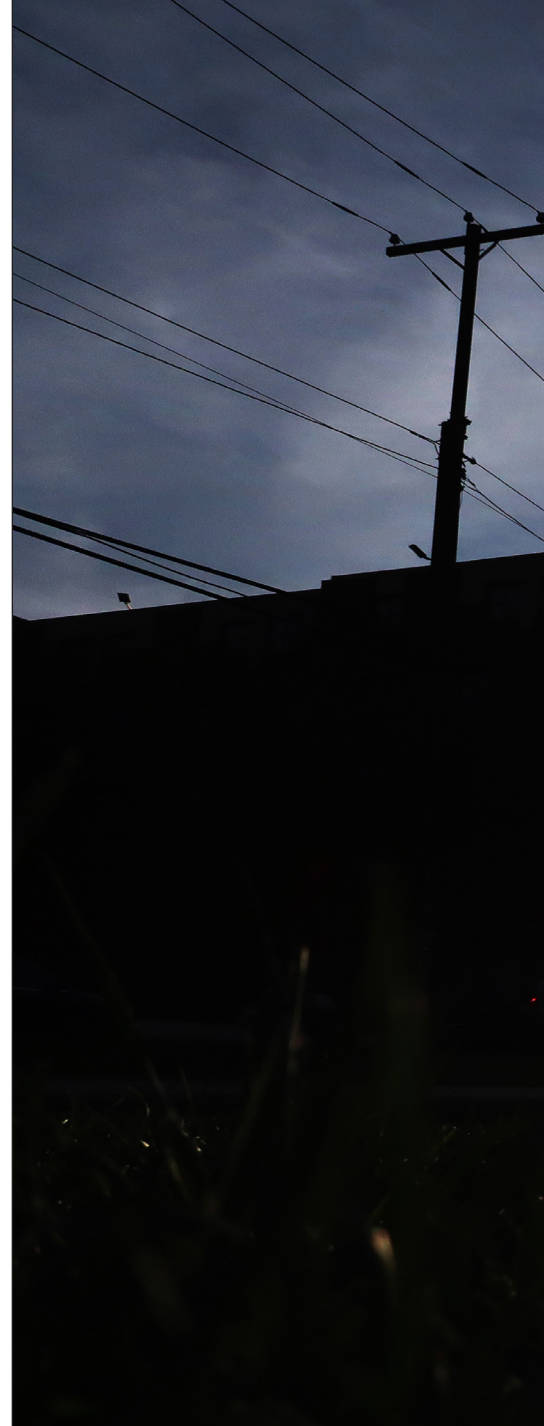
We then looked toward other universities to

see what similar safety resources or protocols are available online. We quickly learned that Temple’s journalism program is unique among its peers, in that our program features a production capstone that regularly expects students to report from underserved and under-resourced neighborhoods in an urban setting. In our research, it seemed that a significant number of journalism programs directed students toward external resources in the event of an emergency, and do not require formalized training or a response plan for either instructors or students.

### Responses

While the faculty researched and developed an organized response to student safety, the fact that students continued to report in neighborhoods around Philadelphia meant we had to plan and act at the same time. We began distributing department chair David Mindich’s phone number to students and faculty in the case of an incident; we also provided instructors with phone numbers for Klein College’s senior vice dean, vice dean of student success and director of finance; Prof. Brian Creech performed an initial, but not final, update to our safety policies; our manager of multimedia Neil Ortiz produced a video (covering planning and risk assessment, awareness of own and community identities, setting up a contact person, photo, reporting, situational awareness, respect for subjects, video and audio acquisition, training); Profs. Sarah Landwehr, Linn Washington, and Chris Malo created instructional resources with an accompanying slide deck available for instructors to use to talk about safety issues in their classes and for students to keep as a semester-long reference. Finally, we redesigned our assignments, creating a specific place in the reporting process for students and instructors to discuss students’ safety plans before they go into the field to report.

In the classroom, we needed to clearly communicate to students that their safety was the priority, not any equipment or valuables. Not the story. Not the grade on the assignment. We have



found this to be both clarifying and reassuring to students when articulating priorities, and created opportunities to reiterate to them that if they are ever uncomfortable with an assignment, to discuss it with an instructor and plan an alternative.

### Takeaways

At the core of our plan, we developed a list of common sense safety pips, some basic precautions for students to take when navigating the city:

#### Planning

- Meet with people in public, during business hours
- Know ways in and out of neighborhoods, sticking to highly trafficked routes





- Know who you are going to talk to, where you will be going, and what you will focus on

#### *Buddy system*

- Don't carry items that make you a target, hand over equipment if an assailant demands it
- Treat people with deference and respect
- Be aware, show awareness

#### *Buddy system*

- Go out with a friend
- Tell someone where you are going and when you will return
- Set up check-in times with a friend

While these protocols do not have any specific language around this topic yet, it is important for any department focused on safety to realize certain student populations may be more

vulnerable, in general and when reporting or interacting with certain communities. Because of that, there is a need to offer advice, guidelines, and resources that take specific students' identities into account while also allowing them to be empowered in the classroom.

While the work of the last year has been a good start, developing more resources and continuing to monitor both safety in Philadelphia and how students are moving through the city are, and will continue to be, of paramount concern. We have also had to learn how to balance practical concerns with idealism around safety. For instance, we know many of our students may be cautious about involving the police, especially if an encounter may lead to escalation. Because of our focus on preserving students' bodily safety, we still suggest they call 9-1-1 and contact police, fire, or EMS first in the event of an emergency.

More than developing policies and processes, though, we developed a departmental and pedagogical culture where thinking practically about student safety becomes part of preparing for a new semester, every semester.

All of which means our faculty are on the lookout for ways to think about safety without letting it deride our focus on training students to produce quality journalism. We would be open to hearing how any other school, department, or class addresses the topic as we continue to refine best practices.



**Christopher Malo** is an assistant professor in the Journalism Department. **Brian Creech**, Ph.D., is the associate dean for research and graduate studies at Klein College.





Photo by George W. Miller III.

## A Community Anchor

There is already a lot of community engagement happening at Temple, writes **Hillary Kane**. If you want to get involved, she has ideas for you.

Inscribed on the grave of Karl Marx is the quote, “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it.”

To put it another way, the real purpose of education is to not merely learn about the world, but to actively engage in it, combining scholarship with action, theory with practice.

This is the underlying philosophy of service-learning, and more broadly, campus-community partnership. For many years, Temple University has offered students and faculty the chance to do just this – deeply engage with the world, or more specifically the communities of North Philadelphia in which the university (and its health system) is primarily situated.

Temple boasts several distinguished community-engagement projects and initiatives and, at the risk of missing one, let’s name some: University Community Collaborative of Philadelphia, which promotes youth voice and engages young people directly in the issues affecting their lives; the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, now replicated by other institutions across the country and around the world; the various outreach programs of the Center for Community Partnerships; Upward Bound and other college access initiatives from the College of Education; B4USoar (also college access) from the Fox School of Business; the Pan-African Studies Community Education Program; and myriad partnerships from the Center for Urban Bioethics in the Katz School of Medicine.

Interestingly, Temple has also been active in helping other campuses in the region develop similar initiatives. In 1987, four institutions – Penn, La Salle, Swarthmore and Temple, came together to found PHENND, the Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development.

PHENND now boasts 25 institutional members from across the greater Philadelphia area. PHENND works to build the capacity of its member institutions to develop mutually beneficial, sustained, and democratic

community-based service-learning partnerships. The consortium actively seeks to revitalize local communities and schools and foster civic responsibility among the region’s colleges and universities.

PHENND believes that higher educational institutions can function as permanent anchors and partners for community improvement. Moreover, it is deeply in their interests to do so – their futures are intertwined with that of their neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, sometimes this work is invisible and known only to those directly participating in the programs.

Temple does not have a central coordinating office to help support faculty and student engagement in the community, which would also help add visibility and credibility to the work. That said, there are hundreds of Owls who are interested and active in some form of community engagement whether through coursework and research, volunteer programs, and even Community Service Federal Work-Study, which allows students to work off-campus in nonprofits and schools. At one count, there were more than 500 Temple affiliates on PHENND’s mailing list, which shows the depth and breadth of the interest in community partnership.

For those wanting to get involved with the local community, there are a few places to turn to for support. In addition to all of the Temple programs and Centers mentioned before, there is also the Office of Community Affairs and Engagement which can provide contacts with local neighborhood groups, community leaders, and service opportunities.

And PHENND can help too! We always welcome the opportunity to support our member campuses in their quest to do more and do it more thoughtfully. For example, last year, we advised Bryn Mawr on a site placement for an MSW student, we helped a Penn faculty member navigate the bureaucracy at the School District of Philadelphia, and we served as a reviewer at PCOM for faculty proposals for new community-based projects, just to name a few.

One only need visit [phennd.org](http://phennd.org) to sign up for our newsletter or reach out directly.



**Hillary Kane** is the director of the Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development. Contact her at [hillarya@phennd.org](mailto:hillarya@phennd.org).



# The Mutual Benefits of CBL

Developing reciprocal relationships with community partners can be beneficial to students as well as the community partners, writes **H. Naomie Nyanungo**.

During my undergraduate studies at a small liberal arts college in a suburb of Chicago, a professor for one of my courses organized a trip for the class to do a community project at a public housing complex in Chicago. When we arrived at the complex, we were met by people who had coordinated the project with our professor but who were not residents of that community. In their informal welcome speech, they thanked our class for coming to help and advised us to be careful because of the high level of crime and violence in the neighborhood. They did not tell us much else about the community we were in and so all we knew was that this was a dangerous place where we had to be careful.



We were then split up into a couple of teams and each team was given the task of painting a vacant unit for an incoming family. There were no community members on the respective teams; it was just us, college students and their professor, painting vacant apartment units. As we painted, we would occasionally see a community resident walk by but did not interact with them. When our time was up (I don't think we completed the task), we got into our school bus and left. That was the end of our one and only visit to this community.

On our way back to campus, we stopped at a restaurant where we debriefed on our experiences. I distinctly remember how uncomfortable and disconcerting this experience was for me. We showed up in a community setting and proceeded to 'help' a community that we knew very little about, and who knew even less about us. By virtue of our being college students, we were the 'helpers' and the community residents were the 'people in need.' But how could we really help people we never met and knew nothing about?

As I think back on this, I am certain that my professor intended for this to be a community-based learning experience for the class. I share this memory to provide an example of



Photo by George W. Miller III.

a learning experience in a community that is not community-based learning as I have come to understand it. There was no reciprocity or meaningful engagement with the community in this learning experience. The community and its residents were subjects for our learning, not active partners contributing to our learning and mutually benefitting from the experience. Community-based learning (CBL) goes beyond exposing students to experiences in a community, or doing things for a community. It involves learning from and with a community.

Defining community-based learning is not straightforward because there are numerous approaches, forms and strategies. To complicate things further, there are closely-related or synonymous terms used to refer to this pedagogy, such as service-learning and community-engaged pedagogy. Shying away from providing one uniform definition of community-engaged pedagogy, Welch and Plaxton-Moore (2019) identify three core dimensions of community-based learning:


1. Course purpose and goals are framed to balance benefits for students and community partners,
2. Issues of social justice, personal values development, and positive social change are considered in design, implementation and assessment processes, and
3. Reciprocal relationships with community partners that honor their role as co-educators in students' learning experience are cultivated.

Taking these three dimensions into consideration, community-based learning can be described as a pedagogical approach that seeks to provide students with real-world authentic learning experiences in which they engage with community partners while supporting community goals for positive change. Students, however, are not the only ones who should benefit from these experiences. Community-based learning, in its ideal form, involves a reciprocal mutually beneficial relationship between the

university and community where community partners benefit from the engagement as much as the university. Advancing their own goals for positive social change is the ultimate benefit for community partners engaged in CBL initiatives.

Any faculty member who does community-based learning will tell you that to do this effectively, you have to be willing to put in the time and effort. While not for the faint-hearted, there are compelling reasons to take on the challenge of adopting community-based learning as a pedagogical approach. Faculty choose this pedagogy for reasons that include the desire to connect students to real-world situations, help students see the relevance and significance of what they are learning, and to prepare students to be responsible citizens in their professional and personal communities.

As Fink (2018) writes, "putting students in an authentic social situation, where they work with and contribute to an organization or group of people, many of whom may be different from them, takes the power of a rich learning experience to a whole new level" (p. xviii). These types of learning experiences stay with students way after the course ends. They influence how students perceive their place in the world and the contributions they can make to make the world a better place.

Designing and implementing CBL courses requires careful planning and strategizing. The Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) can help. If you are interested in exploring CBL for a course, we invite you to visit <https://catbooking.temple.edu/> to schedule a teaching consultation. You will also be able to view and register for upcoming CAT workshops and events. 

**H. Naomie Nyanungo**, Ph.D., is the director of educational technology at the Center for the Advancement of Teaching. She earned her doctorate in adult education at the Pennsylvania State University.





## The Center for the Advancement of Teaching

Join us for a CAT Workshop this semester!

### Book Group: Teaching With Your Mouth Shut by Donald L. Finkel (A 3-part workshop)

Wednesday, October 26, November 2 & 9 | 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM | In-Person

### Can We Really Talk? Introduction The Center for Anti-Racism Research (co-sponsored by IDEAL)

Wednesday, October 26 | 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM | In-Person

### Zines in the Classroom

Thursday, November 3 | 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM | In-Person

### Cultivating Connection with Canvas Collaborations (and Groups Too!)

Monday, November 7 | 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM | Virtual

### First to Fly: A Conversation About First Gen Student Success

Wednesday, November 9 | 3:00 – 4:30 PM | In-Person

Check out [teaching.temple.edu](https://teaching.temple.edu) for CAT's full menu of teaching and educational technology resources and services, including individual consultations, walk-in and virtual EdTech labs, classroom observations, and so much more!

Visit [catbooking.temple.edu](https://catbooking.temple.edu) to register and for more programs!

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Contact editor George W. Miller III at [gwm3@temple.edu](mailto:gwm3@temple.edu) with questions or comments.

Here is the editorial calendar for 2022–2023:

*December 2022 issue: Celebrating research.*

Submission deadline: November 18.

Issue goes live the week of December 12.

*March 2023 issue: Generation Next.*

Submission deadline: February 24.

Issue goes live the week of March 20.

*May 2023 issue: Year-end wrap-up.*

Submission deadline: April 28.

Issue goes live the week of May 22.

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