

NCTL Newsletter - Spring '23, No. 3

From the Jane B. Nord Center for Teaching + Learning

End of the Year Reflections

In this newsletter, I share my reflections from the inaugural academic year of the NCTL along with Canvas updates and reading suggestions.

BFA Thoughts



"In the word question, there is a beautiful word - quest. I love that word. We are all partners in a quest. The essential questions have no answers. You are my question, and I am yours - and then there is dialogue. The moment we have answers, there is no dialogue. Questions unite people."

-Elie Wiesel

It was a unique pleasure to attend the presentations of graduating students during this year's BFA week. I was deeply impressed by the work as well as the ability of students to articulate their purpose, decisions, and how they navigated challenges. This is such a testament to what we all do at CIA to nurture and develop confident and capable individuals. Similarly impressive was the way committee members framed the events ("this is a celebration, not a 'gotcha'"), socializing newer students and affirming those who were about to present. What struck me the most, however, was the way questions were posed to the student presenters. Questions in this kind of format can easily feel like a floodlight shined into one's eyes, causing the presenter to sweat and go blank. But these questions were gifts, acting as spotlights on the work and the artist, illuminating multiple facets and allowing the presenter to reflect on their journey and demonstrate their effortful skill and thinking.

This experience was helpful for me as I continue to formulate a research project around critique that is led by these curiosities: What are we doing when we are operating at our most effective in critique, in developing creative, professional, collaborative, and resilient individuals? What could we become if we understand, share, and increase these practices?

I will share more about this project as we close in upon our next academic year. For now, I ask that you take a moment to sit with this question and allow yourself to answer it with wonder and possibility.

Canvas Updates



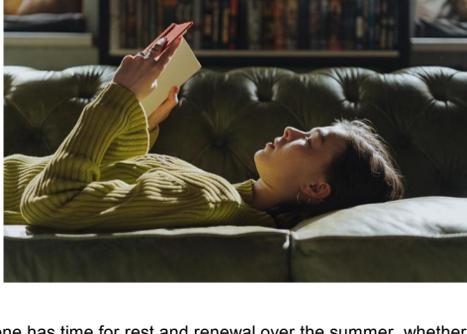
canvas

Moving to a new Learning Management System (LMS) is a major undertaking, and I commend all who were involved in doing and supporting this work. Our migration to Canvas has been very positive, with both students and faculty commenting on their improved experiences with this LMS.

Two quick notes:

- Please remember that Canvas, like any LMS, should not serve as a storage site. While courses will remain available in Canvas, faculty should regularly download a course cartridge for each of their courses at the end of every semester.
- Course shells for Fall '23 will be available later this summer. In the meantime, faculty can create their own courses or adjust existing courses. These can be easily copied into the Fall course shells once they are available. A description of this process will be available on [myCIA](#).

Reading and Care



I hope that everyone has time for rest and renewal over the summer, whether you are spending that time at CIA or elsewhere. This could be an ideal time to dig into a book in preparation for our '23-24 reading groups. The book choices for next academic year can help us explore issues of mental wellness and neurodiversity.

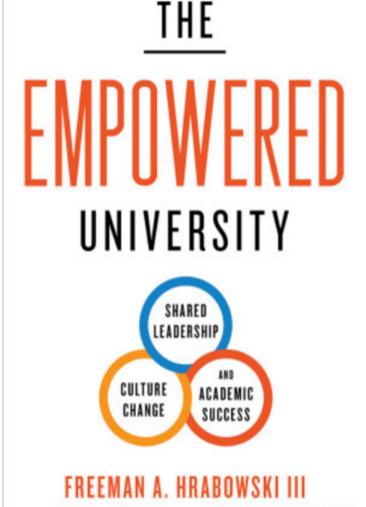
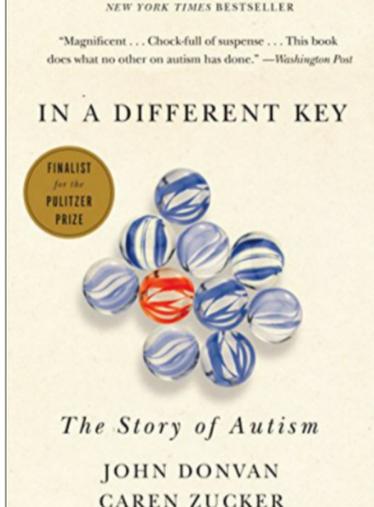
The first book, [Visual Thinking: The hidden gifts of people who think in pictures, patterns, and abstractions](#) (2022) is written by Temple Grandin. Dr. Grandin has authored several books illuminating her own experiences as a person with autism and investigating the ever-expanding research on autism and differences in cognition. In this book, Dr. Grandin's focus on visual thinkers "makes us understand how a world increasingly geared to the verbal tends to sideline visual thinkers, screening them out at school and passing over them in the workplace. Rather than continuing to waste their singular gifts, driving a collective loss in productivity and innovation, Grandin proposes new approaches to educating, parenting, employing, and collaborating with visual thinkers."

The second book, [Mind over monsters: Supporting youth mental health with compassion challenge](#) (2023) is written by psychologist and professor Sarah Rose Cavanagh. Increases in anxiety and depression prompt Dr. Cavanagh to offer a "an invigorating tour of pedagogical, neuroscientific, and psychological research on mental health" that seeks solutions through interviews with "a roster of experts across the country who are dedicating their lives to working with young people to help them actualize their goals, and highlights voices of college students from a range of diverse backgrounds.

---Please contact keweaver@cia.edu if you would like to receive a personal copy of either of these books.---

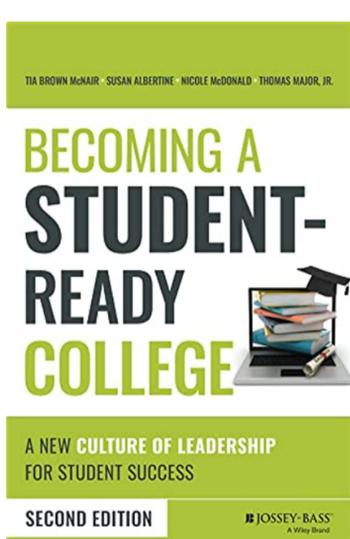
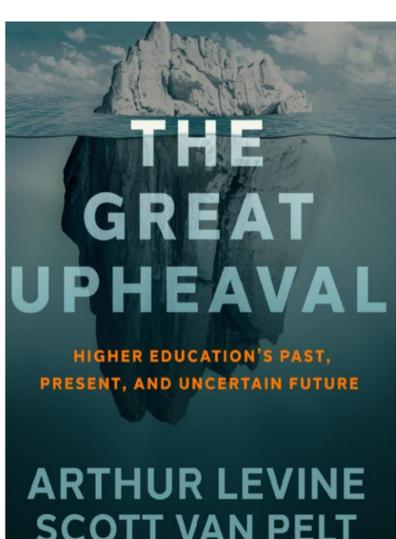
While we can often look to resources like these due to our desire to care for others, we can also gain a better understanding of how to care for ourselves. Professor Sarah Kabot recently shared another piece by Dr. Cavanagh highlighting the importance of this issue. ['They need us to be well'](#) reiterates the importance of rest, renewal, and joy for faculty, and how this contributes to student success. Another great resource for all of us who are in the position of caring for others is the book, [Trauma stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others](#) (van Dernoot Lipsky & Burk, 2009). The website for the Trauma Stewardship Institute also includes several [free resources](#), including a Tiny Survival Guide, a guide to overwhelm and decision fatigue, and links to their [podcast](#).

What I'm Exploring This Summer



[In a different key: The story of autism](#) (Donvan & Zucker, 2017). This is an excellent tour of the history of autism, including civil rights challenges and changes in how autism is understood and defined.

[The empowered university: Shared leadership, culture change, and academic success](#) (Hrabowski III, 2019). Culture change in higher education is one of my favorite topics, and I am excited to read this renowned leader's explanation of a way "senior leaders, administrators, staff, faculty, and students facilitate academic success by cultivating an empowering institutional culture and broad leadership for innovation".



[The great upheaval: Higher education's past, present, and uncertain future](#) (Levine & Van Pelt, 2021). This book addresses the crucial question, "How will America's colleges and universities adapt to remarkable technological, economic, and demographic change?"

[Becoming a student-ready college: A new culture of leadership for student success](#) (McNair et al., 2022). This second edition of the popular guide to student-centered actions to support success outlines "responsive and redesigned practices and policies."



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