



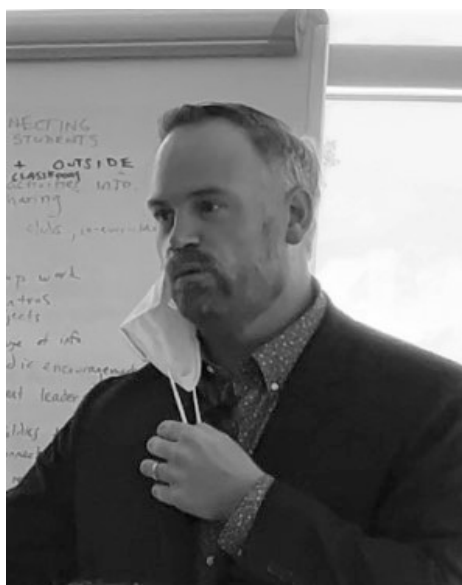
Center for Teaching Excellence Hampton University Teaching Matters

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An Interview with the Provost's Innovative Teaching Award Recipient for 2022 – Dr. Scott Challener

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Each year, Hampton University honors and recognizes outstanding faculty who serve as models of excellence for their profession and exemplary mentors for their students. For this issue of the CTE Newsletter, I had the pleasure of interviewing the 2022 Provost's Teaching Innovation Award recipient, Dr. Scott Challener, Assistant Professor and Chair, Department of English & Foreign Languages.

1. Briefly describe your teaching philosophy.

In two words: Students First. My philosophy is to engage, involve, and prioritize student knowledge and experience. I walk into the classroom with the assumption that our students are the bearers of great knowledge, skills, intelligence, and capabilities that are borne of their experiences. In other words, I work against the kind of “deficit stance” that operates in much of the educational system, and which many of our students have experienced. I do this

first and foremost through a philosophy built on questions. I believe our students need to learn skills—writing skills, language skills, interpersonal skills, and above all, the interpretive skills of critical thinking, and I work to demystify these skills. They are not an elite or esoteric form of knowledge; they are learnable, transferable, and usable.

In the course that I submitted for the 2022 Chancellor and Provost's Teaching Innovation Award, I invited students to produce, design, make, and edit the *Hampton Renaissance*, our digital and print Journal of the Arts. Through this collaborative process, students became the arbiters of their knowledge, images, and work. It was - and is - challenging and messy work. But by making something like the *Hampton Renaissance* together, I witnessed first-hand how students gained skills that enabled them to flourish. They began to think critically about what it means to know and to learn, to share knowledge, and to collaborate toward producing the alternative visions we all need to make our digitally mediated pasts, presents, and futures more sustainable.

2. How do you recognize creativity and innovation both within and outside of the classroom setting?

To me, the recognition of creativity and innovation within and outside of the classroom setting begins with questions: What is knowledge? Where does it come from? Where does it go? What is it for? Who is it for? As these questions imply, to recognize creativity and innovation, one first has to ask what those words mean. How do we know what we know? I believe creativity and innovation abound on Hampton's campus – are abundant, omnipresent, in evidence everywhere, among students, faculty, and staff. I recognize creativity and innovation within and outside of the classroom by naming it, incorporating it, and using it to guide my discussions and assignments. I use examples of student work and examples from Hampton's rich history to showcase what, to me, creativity and innovation look, sound, and feel like, and I invite students to think and talk with me about what it means to create and to innovate. Finally, I involve students in the creation and innovation of my assignments. They often make assignments more dynamic.

3. In what way does technology help you to stimulate self-growth and professional development among your students?

I use our Promethean Boards in every class. I use the whiteboard feature to write down student observations and annotate texts in real-time. I use video and sound recordings of performances and draw on digital archives and the *Digital Humanities* to accompany every lecture. I use *Google Docs* to increase peer-to-peer collaboration, workshops, and group assignments. While it is important to use the classroom as a space where we can take a break from our devices, I also try to take advantage of the knowledge students have gained from social media platforms (for example) to conduct real-time, rhetorical analyses of websites,

TikToks, and Instagram posts. I also invite students to cite, use, and share their work on these sites as a practice of public engagement and professional development. I believe these kinds of assignments help to stimulate self-growth by inviting students to be creative and critical about the power and the perils of social media.

4. What strategies do you use to facilitate reflection, professional learning, and enhanced student accomplishment through technology?

Reflection is another cornerstone of my teaching philosophy. Without reflection, what do we learn? What do we remember? How do we understand what our knowledge and experiences mean?

I designed the course I submitted for the 2022 Chancellor and Provost's Teaching Innovation Award to motivate and empower students to reflect on and participate in every stage and phase of their learning, including assessment. A pedagogy focused on *metacognitive* practices, or assignments that get students "thinking about thinking," led students to produce a collective midterm reflection, executed through *Google* Forms, that assessed their work to date and set new goals for the second half of the semester. The midterm reflection became a benchmark for growth, accountability, and the articulation of new goals and horizons.

As the *Hampton Renaissance* is set to enter its third year, it has outgrown the course's model. But this spirit of reflection, collaboration, and accountability, alongside the ethos around the sharing of knowledge, continues to enhance student accomplishment. As Managing Editor, I am a lucky and privileged witness to this accomplishment as it continues to take shape in a variety of ways - through a group messaging platform, through reflections on in-person editorial meetings, through Open Mic celebrations, and most recently, through a new collaborative project with University archivists and librarians to create a digital archive of back issues of *The Saracen* held in the Peabody Collection.

As a last note, I want to express my gratitude to the many members of the Hampton community, including our senior outgoing editor, Zoe Treadwell, and our new editors, Erin Townsend and Arielle Thomas, our librarians, my wise assistant, Mrs. Phyllis Harrigan, and Dean Malone-Colon and her team. There are many, many people who have helped to make the *Hampton Renaissance*, and therefore this award, possible.