



Faculty Council Vision for 2024–2025:
Building Community, Supporting Each Other

Faculty Council Report to the Temple College Board of Trustees

April 21, 2025

***Small Teach* (Lang, 2016) Faculty Book Club, Co-sponsored by Faculty Council
and the Center for Teaching and Learning, Spring 2025**

A poster for the Faculty Book Club. The top half is dark grey with white text. It says "FACULTY BOOK CLUB" in large letters, followed by "SPONSORED BY FACULTY COUNCIL AND THE CTL". Meeting details: "10:00-11:00 a.m. on Zoom", "Meeting ID: 892 3761 9688", "Passcode: 867504". A list of sessions: "Jan. 31—Part 1, 'Knowledge,' Led by Ray Stockstad and Erica Perrine", "Feb. 28—Part 2, 'Understanding,' Led by Geoffrey Lewis, Martha Hartt, and Sandra Melendez", "April 25—Part 3, 'Inspiration,' Led by Michelle McCullough and Chad Cryer". The bottom half has a red and white 3D box graphic with the text "SMALL TEACHING, BY JAMES M. LANG". Below the box, it says "Participants who attend all three sessions and complete an evaluation are eligible for a \$100.00 stipend from the CTL." The Temple College logo is in the top right corner of the poster.

FACILITATOR

Dr. Reid Echols (English) serves as Assistant Professor of English at Temple College, where he is based on the EWCHEC Hutto Campus. He is currently chair of the Satellite and ISD Campuses Committee, a member of the Course Quality Champions initiative, and part of the Distance Learning Artificial Intelligence task force. His recent projects have included several OER curriculum development grants, assisting with the successful Meta AI Community grant, and leading faculty trainings on alternative assessment strategies and collaborative annotation platforms for enhancing student engagement. He currently lives in Austin, Texas, where he received his doctorate from the University of Texas in 2019.

"Having been involved with the Small Teaching both as a participant in the Spring 2024 PLC and now as a facilitator for the Faculty Council book club, I can confidently say that Lang's book has had a tangible impact on both my teaching and on the culture of teaching within my department.

Personally, I've found that implementing the small, evidence-based changes that Lang recommends has significantly improved student engagement in my literature courses. For instance, I now begin each class with quick retrieval activities where students recall key concepts

from previous sessions, which has noticeably improved both the level of student discussions and their performance on assessments. I also have moved to cumulative exams and worked to build stronger connections between readings at different points of the semester (to better follow Lang's principle of interleaving).

At a community level, the faculty book club has helped create a space for cross-disciplinary dialogue, allowing us to share problems and offer solutions (or sympathy, at the very least). Using Lang's principles, we've discussed common issues like how to manage content-heavy survey courses, navigate student use of AI tools, and balance faculty workloads with assessment strategies. The discussions have led to practical solutions for faculty, such as using skeleton outlines instead of complete notes for better long-term retention, and have generally taken pressure off busy faculty by focusing on implementing small, manageable interventions rather than major overhauls.

The reading groups have helped foster a college-wide community of practice where we can share successes, address challenges, and continuously improve our teaching methods across different disciplines. I have no doubt that the experience will have a positive impact, not only on individual faculty members' teaching practices, but also on student success and retention."

SECTION LEADERS

Chad Cryer (Biology) is an Assistant Professor of Biology who graduated from Texas State University–San Marcos in 2006. He has been teaching at Temple College since the Fall 2020.

“*Small Teaching* gives practical examples of ways in which you can harness the power of intrinsic motivation to enhance student engagement with the course material. Students will feel more motivated to succeed if they feel they are doing it for their own reasons, rather than putting in the hard work to succeed for someone else’s reasons. Intrinsic motivation can be turbo charged by adding in emotional connections, as this can help foster a sense of transcendent purpose within the student, knowing that what they are learning can make a difference in the world around them.”

Martha Hartt (Math) is an Assistant Professor of Math who graduated from George Mason University in 2023 with an MS in Mathematics. She has been teaching at Temple College since Fall 2023.

“The book club has helped me put a bigger emphasis on student engagement in the classroom. I have been attempting to have more pauses in my lectures where students are asked to make predictions about what is to come next, I have offered more time for students to work on practice problems in class, with me circulating and correcting, and I have even had the opportunity to integrate a few short student presentations into the class time, so that the students can learn from each other.”

Dr. Geoffrey Lewis (History) is an Assistant Professor of History who earned his Ph.D. from Texas Tech University and has been teaching at Temple College since Fall 2023 on the Hutto and Taylor campuses.

“As a result of my reading of *Small Teaching*, I am incorporating more low-stakes assessments and weaving brief retrieval exercises into my lectures to help students see the deeper connections between different chapters of a historical narrative.”

Dr. Michelle McCullough (Psychology) is an Assistant Professor in Psychology. She is also a U.S. Army Veteran with a background in psychology, neuroscience, and educational psychology.

“In the third unit, the focus is ‘inspiration,’ and the three chapters include, ‘belonging,’ ‘motivating,’ and ‘learning.’ While I agree that motivation and ‘lifelong learning’ are very important, I personally believe that the chapter on belonging is one of the most (if not THE most) important chapters in the book. Education as a whole is in such transition that students’ sense of belonging in school is more important than ever before. All of us can probably think back to at least one professor or teacher that made us feel like we belonged in education, in psychology, in the sciences, or whatever field we ultimately chose. Knowledge, understanding, and learning are very important. I would argue, however, that students will become lifelong learners automatically if they feel seen, if they feel as though they fit, and if they come to understand that education matters to them in a deeply personal way.”

Dr. Sandra Melendez (Engineering Technology) earned her doctoral degree in Educational Administration with a focus on curriculum development from The University of the Pacific. She also holds an M.S. in Engineering Management and Systems Engineering, an M.S. in Educational Technology and a M.Ed. in Education from National University. Dr. Melendez serves as the Department Chair of Engineering Technology at Temple College. She also has 13 years of experience working as a STEM coordinator and head coach for FRC, VEX, BEST, MATE Robotics, and TSA.

“The *Small Teaching* book recommends the use of retrieval practices to help students better retain and recall information. Instead of just reviewing notes, students should actively recall what they've learned. This information provided me ideas for adjusting my curriculum, by adding weekly prompts, which require students to recall and summarize key concepts they've learned from prior lessons, readings, or project tasks. These

requirements were added to each section of the students' digital notebooks, where they reflect on the learning objectives and their project work. This impacts the effectiveness of the digital notebook tool, as students now regularly review and reflect on previous content and project development, which enhances retention. Implementing this activity encourages students to think more critically about how they approach their projects and learning."

Erica Perrine, MSN, RN (Nursing) serves as Clinical Coordinator for the Temple College Nursing Department. She has been with Temple College for 10 years. She is currently chair of the Faculty Council Ways and Means, Barnhart, and Elections Committees and serves on the Temple College Policy Committee. Erica is a member of the Texas Nurses Association (TNA) and serves as Vice President of TNA District 7.

"Through the book and faculty meetings, I have learned new approaches to classwork and student engagement, but one benefit I did not anticipate, is getting to know other faculty better and building deeper connections with them. Studying *Small Teaching* with my TC colleagues has been energizing and educational."

Ray Stockstad (English) is an Assistant Professor of English at Temple College. His academic journey began after 20 years of military service in the Marine Corps Reserve and Navy, where he served as a COBOL programmer and Electronics Technician in the nuclear field aboard vessels including the USS Enterprise and Abraham Lincoln. In 2010, he transitioned to formal education, culminating in a master's degree in literature. Stockstad identifies meaningful parallels between his military and academic careers, noting that both domains demand strategic thinking, adaptability, and navigation of complex environments. This unique background informs his scholarly approach, combining analytical rigor with practical problem-solving skills developed during his years of technical military service.

"*Small Teaching* has reassured me that I am already doing many of the things that effective professors do in the way I present my classes, and it has reminded me to take time to reinforce key concepts throughout the semester through formal and informal quizzing, emphasizing interleaving to build long term memory, and assisting students in making connections across the course and curriculum."

Additional Comments from Select Participants

Yvette Davis (AEL Coordinator of C&I)—"[The book study] has helped me to be a more creative administrator for my instructors when coaching and developing their teaching repertoire."

Libby Barton (Program Director, CMA & Clinical Coordinator for WCE)—"Understanding that humans do not possess infinite short-term memory has helped me realize how important it is to provide strategies for students to utilize recall by connecting the new information to existing knowledge. Answering questions before studying (pre-testing) and after (post-testing) is a strategy that enhances learning by forcing the learner to actively retrieve information from memory."

Kim George (Chair, English and Foreign Languages)—"Book clubs like these support faculty who are wanting to hone their own growth as teachers and as employees. These book clubs affirm the strategic goal of professional development in a practical way."

Jodi Kemp, RVT, RDMS (Lab Coordinator, DMSO Program)—In *Small Teaching*, James M. Lang presents simple strategies for educators to enhance student learning through small, incremental changes. He draws on cognitive science to offer practical techniques to help improve information retention. By focusing on minor adjustments rather than complete overhauls, the book provides an accessible approach to enhancing classroom instruction.