CR: Welcome to Professors Talk Pedagogy, a podcast from the Academy for Teaching and Learning University. I'm your host, Christopher Richmann. Professors Talk Pedagogy presents discussions with great professors about pedagogy, curriculum and learning in order to propel the virtuous cycle of teaching. As we frankly and critically investigate our teaching, we opened new lines of inquiry. We engage in conversation with colleagues and we attune to students experiences, all of which not only improves our teaching, but enriches and motivates ongoing investigation. And so the cycle continues.

Today, our guest is Dr. Nicole Kenley lecturer and Director of first-year writing in English department at Baylor University. Dr. Kenley researches detective fiction, contemporary American fiction, gender studies, and the literature of globalization. Recently awarded a university teaching exploration Grant, Dr. Kenley is piloting and researching the effectiveness of portfolio assessment for first-year writing courses. We are delighted to have Dr. Kenley on the show to discuss the pedagogy of writing training, writing instructors, grading, and assessment of student writing, and much more.

Nicole Kenley, thank you for joining the show.

NK: Christopher, thank you for having me. It's a pleasure to be here.

CR: Our listeners will have heard in the introduction that you are Director of first-year writing here at Baylor. Tell us what that is. What is a first-year writing director? I'm not sure that All institutions have such a position.

NK: What is a first-year writing director? It's a great question. A first-year writing director is a writing program administrator or WPA. And many if not, most universities do have a position like this in some capacity. Because many if not, most universities have a first-year composition sequence that they ask their students to take. And so my role as first-year writing director entails administering all the facets of this first-year writing program. So in some ways, this is about curriculum and curriculum development and working with our Professional Writing and Rhetoric faculty to make sure we're delivering the best educational content to our students. In some ways, this is about training our teachers. So I work very closely with our new graduate student instructors and provide them with a nine months sequence of training to make sure they're ready to enter the writing classroom for the first time. I work with our contingent faculty and offer them support and programming to help them and all of our writing instructors think about what are best practices in the field and how can we incorporate those into our classrooms? So it's sort of a one-stop shop for all things first-year writing at Baylor.

CR: What do graduate student instructors especially need support with?

NK: Graduate student instructors need many kinds of support. Because for most of our grad student instructors, it's their first time in the classroom. Some of our grad student instructors come to us with a master's degree or with some time as contingent faculty. Some of them come to us having worked as consultants in the University Writing Center. But primarily it's their first time having their own classroom. So, so many things go into that. Thinking about what is their teaching persona going to be like? How are they going to manage the classroom? What kinds of strategies are they going to use to engage and connect with their students? Many of our grad students too are here studying literature rather than professional writing.

CR: right

NK: And so helping them think about how to translate their interests and passions for literature, a research writing classroom is one of the things that we work on together. I think developing their

confidence as instructors is a big part of what I do also because we as veteran teachers know, stepping into the classroom can be an anxiety provoking experience. And all the more so when you're a new teacher, we remember what it's like in front of our first classrooms and those worries and those sleepless nights and those teaching nightmares before you go into class for the first day. So helping our instructors build confidence through being really thoroughly prepared to teach is a big part of what I do.

CR: I think a lot of disciplines have and analogy to this, but we have our specializations or even our subfields. But we're going to be asked to teach these kind of general courses like in my discipline. I'm a historian of Christianity. But when I was a graduate student, I was asked to teach the Christian scriptures. Yes. And I'm like, I think I took a course in seminary, on Christian Scripture.... And it's a similar kind of thing, I think for the literature folks who are the bread and butter courses are the rhetoric or the composition. So it's good, I suppose, preparation for the teaching career in higher ed in general.

NK: you've hit the nail on the head because so many of our jobs that are out there in the field of literature do ask us to teach composition as well. I would say that's the norm rather than the exception. And so thinking about ways that we can translate our disciplinary expertise into something that's related but not perhaps as specific to our own interests as we would like or as we feel prepared for, I guess I should say, is an exciting and challenging aspect of what I do. And I think it's neat to help our grad students think about the ways in which what they study can be applied in the research writing classroom. Because they're graduate students in literature, they're research writers to write just in the disciplines.

CR: Exactly. Well, what have you learned about effective writing pedagogy in your time as Director of first-year writing?

NK: I have learned that it's critical to find a way to tie your own interests as an academic, as a researcher into your writing pedagogy, this is what gets students excited to be in your classroom, to see you as someone who's doing the same processes that they are doing to see you as a research writer, just like they are, so you're learning and developing those skills simultaneously. It helps students see writing as a process, not a product. It's not like today. I'm a professor, therefore, I'm a perfect writer and I'm done and I never have to work on it anymore. So I learned how important it is to share my interests and my enthusiasms with our students. Being in the administrative role too, I've been able to see all the different ways that we can connect our interests to first-year writing. It's such a versatile course. As you know, we have a lot of different programs at Baylor that are tied into first-year writing. So we have our civic engagement, e.g., which helps students work in the Waco community and tie that work that they're doing into the research questions that they're developing. So they're seeing firsthand the impact that their research can have outside of the classroom as well as inside those four walls of the classroom, which is so exciting. We have all kinds of ways to tie in students and faculty interests in terms of environmental humanities is a big direction that we're going in. We are trying to make connections to digital humanities as well, which is one of my interests. And there are ways to build that into the writing classroom. We can think about our pedagogical interests as well. Active learning is something you and I have spent a good deal of time together talking about and thinking about how can we incorporate that into the writing classroom. I'm a scholar of detective fiction. So it's like how do I take that and make it something that I'm working on with my students and our research writing contexts that isn't having them read lots of detective novels. Great fun as that might be. For me. A big part of it is just letting my students know that that's who we are as research writers, we're detectives. We are formulating the questions, we are looking for the answers we are chasing down leads. We are exploring different avenues of thought. We are being surprised by the results that we find. And putting on that mindset helps my students. It helps

me as well to get excited about what we're doing. So I've learned how many different approaches and avenues there are to incorporate ourselves as teachers into the first-year writing classroom.

CR: I'm assuming that you, like me have gotten a rejection or revise and resubmit at some point in your career, do you share with your students your struggles that we all have?

NK: First of all, I don't know why you would assume...Of course, I've had revise and resubmit, I've had rejections from peer reviewed journals in my field. I bring these into the writing classroom. I do, I slap them up on the screen and I let the students see the kind of feedback that I as a professional receive so that they know that this is part of the writing process. And getting feedback is designed to make us better and stronger writers. It helps them understand the peer review process a little bit as well. I peer review for some journals and I'll sometimes talk with the students about what my work as a reader involves. So they get to see both sides of the process. They understand the academic peer review process and credibility more, but I think most importantly, they understand me in that role as a writer as well. Going through those same struggles, I talk with them about how it hurts to receive criticism that I feel like is more pointed than it needs to be. Yeah, this helps us become more charitable peer reviewers ourselves. We think about that mindset of the person receiving the feedback and not just the mindset of the person giving the feedback. So this is one of my favorite, Well, this is something that I do in class, that I think students really enjoy and benefits them quite a bit. I don't know that it feels great for me to see my peer review feedback up on the screen. All the time, but the students are really supportive as well. And it feels nice to be part of that writing community with them.

CR: So I ask this question for listeners out there who may be thinking about this. Does this, do you ever worry that this might affect your credibility with students that you're so open about the comments and feedback that you've received. I think it bolsters my credibility with the students. Students, when they come into the writing classroom. I think often see themselves as writers who have a lot of work to do. There's a lot of anxiety behind writing and the act of writing and putting your thoughts out there on a piece of paper for the world to see. This can be stressful. I have so many students come into my office first thing in the semester and expressed to me how anxious they are to be in the writing classroom. I think for students to see that I am part of that process as well. And to see how I get through it bolsters my credibility with them because they know that I'm they're Sherpa, right? I know how to get them from point a to point B, from doing the research, to getting the feedback, to doing the revision and then having it successfully published. This is a process that I go through. And so I know the way I've been down there before.

CR: We're gonna be doing a seminar for excellence in teaching later this semester that we've entitled Metaphors We Teach By. I think that's the first time I've heard Sherpa. Really appreciate that. I just love thinking about how metaphors can enliven our, our teaching. So your own professional peer review, practice and experience, does that then feed into their own peer review? Are they doing peer review too in most of your classes?

NK: Yes, we do peer review in all of our classes multiple times throughout the semester for multiple different projects. And we talk about when we look at my feedback that I get from my peer reviewers or when we get ready to do peer review, we spend time talking about what kind of feedback is helpful to receive? What kind of feedback is formative? What kind of feedback is valuable? What kind of feedback is not that helpful? And students uniformly will say, You know, what I don't like is when somebody writes in the margins, oh, this doesn't flow. Ah, oh, this is awkward; because there's no substantive way to change it. Students don't like receiving vague feedback and they don't like receiving, I think, like most of us, they don't like receiving nitpicky feedback, but that's the easiest feedback to give. So we have to start from this place of saying, Well, what kind of feedback do we

like it when we get, and how can we build that in? So part of this comes from the hierarchy of concerns, thinking about what are the assignment goals and starting there. And then how can we talk about organization? How can we talk about effectively using sources? And then way down at the bottom of the hierarchy of concerns, style and mechanics. If students are doing a revision on their work as an integral part of English 1310 and a research writing. They're gonna change the sentences around. They're not keeping those same sentence structures. They're not keeping those same mechanics that they've slaved over to perfect. We want to work on big picture higher-order concerns first and teaching them how to give that feedback is so important so that we understand our goals as a community of peer reviewers.

CR: Well, I'm so glad you used the word community because that's exactly where I was going with this--you're teaching the students, not only how to, how to be better writers through this process, but you're teaching them how to be a community of learners together, where part of their responsibility is not just to improve their own learning, but to help one another improve as well. So is that something that you make explicit like that community kind of framework for students?

NK: We do talk quite a bit about the English 1310 writing community, what it means to be part of that community. And how being part of that community helps make us better writers. Learning to identify issues in another peer's paper helps us understand what we need to do in our own writing. Listening to your peer explain a problem that he's having with his writing can help us think about how do we unlock those same problems in our own regard, learning how to discuss in a charitable and listening way helps us listen to our sources and do our feedback better and you incorporate that into our writing. So I tried to make it very explicit and intentional for the students. I like to try to elicit that from them, of course, rather than me telling them we're a community now,

CR: Presto

NK: Exactly.

CR: Yeah. Well, this might be a more technical question, but what are specific issues that first-year college writers really struggle with or really need help with compared to when they're in year 2, 3, 4 in their college career.

NK: As Students progress through university. I think they get more and more practice with some of these fundamental skills. As we know, they're never done, right? So we want writing to transfer from one course to the next, from one discipline to the next. So when I say that first-year writers struggle with this issue, please understand me to mean as well that writers continued to re-learn how to do this throughout their time at the university. One of the big things though, that we work on the most is information literacy. Oh, yeah.

CR: Oh yeah.

NK: Because it's so important to be able to look at a source, to be able to evaluate it for credibility, to be able to know how to find credible sources, and to be empowered to say, I have the tools to assess whether something is credible. I can figure out for myself if a source is worth listening to.

CR: Yeah.

NK: So we start by simply finding the sources. Students are very familiar with how to Google things or even how to use Google Scholar, but they're not familiar with how to find resources in a university library. How to use databases, how to find peer-reviewed journals, how to tell what books

are credible and what books are not credible, how to access all this wealth and materials that we have. So we partnered with the Baylor libraries to do this and they do a fantastic job. And we also spent a lot of time thinking about how do we decide if a source is credible or not to develop that information literacy? So we use this metric called the crap test. I think I've heard of it. Yes. It's an acronym for currency recently, the authority, accuracy, and purpose. When was this published? Is this new research? Is this old research? How is that going to affect its credibility? How relevant is this to the research question that the student is asking? Is it interesting but not related? Is super targeted and focused. What authority do these authors have to be writing? Has their work been subject to peer review? Do they have degrees in this field or do they have field experience? What accuracy is there? How do we know that this information is true if they're bringing in data, are they doing studies? Are interviews being conducted? What accuracy is there? And then lastly, purpose I find this is the one that students struggle with perhaps the most. Is it written to inform or explain or to educate? Isn't written to persuade? Is it written to sell you something? And these purposes really impact their credibility as well. So spending time with students to think about this information literacy development, how to assess the sources credibility. Then thinking through, hey, this is something I can do outside the classroom as well. I think is one of the most empowering things that we can do for first-year writers and something that carries throughout their time at university and beyond.

CR: Purpose seems to be probably the trickiest one of that as you were mentioning there, because so much of the information that's out there sort of gets its power from hiding its purpose, shall I say, disguising it in clever ways. So what looks like a news story is really trying to sell you something. And yeah, so I can understand why students would have difficulties with that. I think I have difficulties with that after I read something, I go wait a second. I feel funny.

NK: Yead, wait a second. Why did I just click Add to Cart?

CR: Yes. Exactly. I don't know what just happened there. So this is probably related here. But if you're, if you're speaking to instructors and other disciplines, what would you want them to know about first-year students when it comes to writing and what are reasonable expectations for writing in their own disciplinary settings?

NK: This is such a great question. I find that instructors and other disciplines, and I'm speaking to myself here too, as the literature scholar. We want the work of writing to already be done. We want the students to have the toolkit perfect and shining and ready to go. We want them to come to class and say, oh, they know how to write. This is not a realistic expectation, of course, because we're all continuing to learn how to write throughout our academic careers and lives. And also disciplines have very specific generic expectations. Yeah, I think instructors across the curriculum would be well-served to know that they need to make the expectations of what they want students to produce clear to the students. I teach first-year writing all the time. And yet somehow in my American literature classes, I struggled to put the pieces together. I would give students an essay prompt and expect them to write to the question in the perfect format that I had envisioned, using the sources the way that I had hoped that they would entering the critical conversation and being part of it and they they weren't doing it. Yeah, Not to my expectations and I couldn't figure out why. And I talked to some of my colleagues and professional writing. They said, Nicole, what have you done to prepare them to be able to do this, right. How have you scaffold this for them? How have you worked with the sources to show them how these critical moves are being made? What intermediate steps of the assignment have you had them produce? Have you had them do peer review? Have you had them do multiple drafts? Have you given them a sense of what the structure might look like? Have you talked to them about what does the thesis look like for an American literature paper? Yeah, The answer to all of these questions was now we saw like I mean, yeah, who could've foreseen. And so the more I

started to incorporate these tools into my classroom, the better quality work students started to produce. I don't know if you remember, Christopher, but we had a writing across the curriculum seminar for excellence in teaching, maybe last year.

CR: Yeah.

NK: You were kind enough to not only attend because you were facilitating it, but also you brought one of your assignments with you? Yes. To let us look at it and say like, what's the disconnect between this prompt and what the students are producing. And I remember it really keenly because you showed us this beautiful prompt and you said something along the lines of, I don't really want them to be writing essays, but they keep producing these essays. What do I do to fix it? Yeah, and my colleague, Daniel Williams looked at it and she said, what is the assignment called?

CR: I'm getting embarrassed now.

NK: I bring it up because you are an expert in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. I'm an expert in American literature. It stands to reason that we should be able to get our students to produce the kind of work that we're doing. Yeah, but these assumptions about what they should and should not be able to do are so ingrained in us that it can be really hard for us to see our own work. I think the, I think the the prompt you brought in was called something something essay.

CR: Yes. It was.

NK: Just like, Oh, if we take this word out and what does it open up? Or the students about the expectations? And I know that this is something that I struggled with personally, and I see it all the time. And I think it's important for us to let ourselves and our students off the hook yet and not expect them to be perfect writers. And look at what we're giving them to try to teach them to write in the disciplines and work with them to help establish those expectations for good writing.

CR: I don't know if you've ever gotten this formal with it, but I know there's a whole set of research and tools out there under the heading of transparent assignments. And it's basically exactly what you're describing there, but in a more formalized setting where you can use a template to answer all these questions like, am I telling the students what learning objectives we are trying to focus on here? Am I telling students how they're actually going to, the step-by-step, how they're going to accomplish this? Am I going to end by telling students how they're going to be graded? Am I giving them more, at least one but preferably two or three examples of this, of this work as well. If you give them one though, they'll copy it, right? They'll, they'll, they'll, they'll cue to it too closely. So that's why you give two or three, but I'll put a link in the show notes to that because I think there's some good just widely available resources on transparent assignments. And it just reminds us over and over again that we've got all of these assumptions that we carry with us, About, about students abilities to, to understand, basically to read our mind. When you get down to it, like to be able to translate what we're asking in a, in a prompt into what we're actually going to grade them on. One of the things I was really excited to talk to you about was the portfolio grading project that you are that you are working on in the English Department. Tell us about this. What's the inspiration for it?

NK: Portfolio assessment is a system that is near and dear to my heart. There are two big inspirations for it. The first big inspiration is that it's something that helps students produce better writing and better writing habits. And the second inspiration is that it changes the student-teacher relationship and dramatic and rewarding ways. In portfolio assessment, students do not follow a standard assessment model, wherein they would write their first essay, maybe do some drafts, maybe do some peer review, get some feedback from the instructor, and then have a letter grade assigned to

the essay. Under that model, students frequently take the letter grade. And then they never look at the essay again because they don't have a reason to not really, even if the feedback the instructor has given is designed to help the student improve. In the subsequent essay, the student got with the student came for the student got a letter grade and can check that box off and move on to the next assignment. In the real-world, writing takes much more revision and is a much more involved process rather than a product. So in portfolio assessment, students do all those same steps they draft, they get peer review, they get feedback from their instructor, and then they continue to revise and work on the essay throughout the course of this semester. Then, at the end of the term, all of their essays for English 1310, that's three. All of their essays go into a summative final portfolio. This portfolio is then assessed based on a rubric by two instructors who are not the student's classroom instructor.

CR: That seems to be the key.

NK: That's the key, yes. and this gets back to our conversation we've been having about expectations for students. We as individual writing instructors, as teachers in whatever field we have our idiosyncrasies, we have our ideas about exactly what we want the students to do. But students and people in the real-world very rarely write for an audience of one. It is extremely rare to say, oh yes, I did this massive project for one person's eyeballs to be done to exactly one person's specification. Instead, we're writing for broader audiences who may not know who we are at all. They don't see our trajectory over the course of the semester. They don't see how much work we've put in. Instead, what they see is this final version of whatever we need them to be looking at. Students are practicing for that by preparing a final portfolio that's then holistically evaluated.

CR: Yeah.

NK: it's exciting too, because the students submit the work with their names removed. So the portfolio scores don't get to bring any assumptions in about who the student is. The student's gender might be what the students racial or ethnic background might be, whether the student is an English language learner or a native speaker of English. So many of those biases that we take into evaluation consciously or unconsciously that are not fair to students, are removed. So the students have a fair shot.

CR: Yeah.

NK: But it really, really, really emphasizes writing as a process. Students continue to work throughout the semester and they produce something that they're really proud of. So students, I strongly believe become better writers through this process of revision and fine tuning and thinking through the assembling of a final portfolio. For instructors. It's the game changer too, because it really changes the dynamic of your relationship with your students. You are not giving them a grade and so they are not coming to you hoping for that grade or begging for that grade or wanting that grade out of you. Instead, I use that Sherpa analogy earlier. You're the Sherpa or you're the coach. You're the one who's trying to help them produce their best work. It can become this beautiful partnership between you and the student, a collaborative effort to help the students produce the best possible work, rather than having that sword of the grade hanging over your head? Yeah, by a thread, I've found it to be transformational for my relationship with my students and I enjoy being in the classroom much more because it feels more authentic.

CR: Yeah, that's fantastic. I was just having a meeting with a student yesterday and I said something to the effect of there's this thing that's always in the middle of our relationship

NK: yes.

CR: Called grades. And I wish it were not here. This bright eyed freshmen who's like, what does this say? I have no understanding. Hopefully by the end of the semester you will appreciate this more. But in so many ways it complicates and even sours that relationship. And it's nobody's fault. It's about, it's a bad system, this system, it's a bad system. So what do you have to do to prepare the students for this new way of thinking about assessment is, is there a learning curve for them?

NK: There's a steep learning curve for students because for better, for worse, they're comfortable with receiving a grade on their work. And it can confirm assumptions about themselves as writers, they get that A it confirms, Oh, I'm a good writer. And I don't really have very much work to do, right? If they get a C, it confirms their assumption. I'm a bad writer and I always will be. Breaking them out of this mindset can be challenging and difficult, so we have to work on it consistently. Part of this is looking at the rubric and saying, how are we going to be assessing this work? I want students to know how their work is being assessed, of course, but the rubric is organized according to the hierarchy of concerns, helping students understand that really the most important thing is, have you met the assignment goals and how sophisticated were you in meeting those goals? And then moving through that hierarchy of concerns. So letting the students understand the way in which their work is going to be assessed as directly linked to the attributes of what we think of as good writing. Yeah, so I have the students brainstorm if they were going to come up with a portfolio rubric, what would be in the rubric? And inevitably they come up with these attributes of what we think of as good writing. Then we put them in order and then it magically seems to line up really well with the actual rubric. So they have buy-in to understand how they're reading is being assessed and why. We also look at many examples and say if we were the portfolio scores, what rubric would we give to this portfolio? Which helps the students recognize the qualities that We're looking for and assessing their work and emulate those qualities.

CR: Are you far enough along in this project to see how it has affected grades on any kind of like data level.

NK: I don't want to give away too much. But this system is designed to privilege the process, not the product. So students are submitting their final portfolio, they receive a rubric on the portfolio and that translates to a percentage of their final grade. They're also doing all the traditional first-year writing things, daily work, annotated bibliographies, drafts, peer review. Those things are assessed on a completion based system. So if the student does the work and makes a good faith effort, the student gets 100% of the available points under the portfolio system. And this has been a very popular point with students as long as they complete all of their required work for the course, If they get a meritorious on their portfolio or satisfactory on their portfolio, they can still earn an A or A minus in English 1310. The system is designed to value the process of becoming a better writer, not to penalize them for not being fantastic writers when they arrive in the classroom. Grades are up. In English 1310. As a result of the portfolio system, I'm getting more A's than I have ever been able to give in the past. Fewer B's, fewer Cs. And it feels really great to reward the students for the hard work that they're putting in and what they've achieved at the end of the day, rather than having to dock them for things throughout the semester.

CR: The trolls who worry about grade inflation just do not like you.

NK: No they do not. And I think we've talked a little bit about the ways in which the system of letter grading might be improved. This is something that we talk a lot about with our first-year writing instructors too. Because it's natural to want to say, well, students X is writing at a higher level earlier in the semester, then student Y? Students should receive a higher grade than student Y. But if we think about writing as a process and our job is writing instructors as to help students improve then

we care so much more about what they're able to achieve at the end of the day, yeah. And we allow students to shake off some of these ideas and notions of themselves as bad writers who can never succeed. We give them the space to learn how to develop as writers. And we still have mechanisms to say, oh, if students are not prepared to move on from the course then they do not and they take it again. But at the end of the day, we want to reward the *process*, the work, the effort that students are putting into become better writers and their portfolios reflect that. So these, these A's are earned by the students.

CR: Yeah. I've found that one of the most difficult things that I've done in faculty development is training instructors on a rubric. And I hate the word training, but in this case it was, it was training partly because they, the instructors themselves had not composed the rubric. So there was all sorts of obstacles there. How, how has this experience been for you to get the, get the instructor's buy-in with the rubric, I guess their scores or their assessors at that at that stage to get them. So they're all on the same page. Do you have interrelate inter-rater reliability issues? How do you handle all that?

NK: These are good questions and there are things we've spent a long time developing and that we continue to work to improve. Our instructors are trained on the rubric. We have portfolio norming and scoring sessions. We spend a lot of time going over the rubric and understanding what it means to apply the rubric holistically to a set of students papers as a portfolio, We also have exemplars that we have agreed are meritorious examples. Satisfactory example is unsatisfactory examples and we use those to develop inter-rater reliability to say, the satisfactory given by scorer a is going to line up with the satisfactory given by scorer b. And also, as with any holistic system, there will be discrepancies. That's why if there is a discrepancy in the way the portfolio is scored, Let's imagine that Christopher gives the portfolio an M and Nicole gives the portfolio and S. So a meritorious versus a satisfactory. Then we have a third reader come in and read the portfolio as well to provide that safety net for the students to make sure the portfolio is being assessed fairly and effectively. This is a process that we're continuing to work to improve. And it's a process that our instructors are giving us a lot of feedback on to make sure that it's a process that works for everybody and is fair for students and instructors as well. So it's a work in progress, but it's been a lot of fun to hear from all of our instructors and get their feedback and try to move forward with it.

CR: So just technically speaking, are you after a consensus between the two so every portfolio gets assessed by two?

NK: Yes.

CR: So if there's any discrepancy, a third, a third comes in, and so then how does that actually get resolved?

NK: So if you gave it a meritorious and I gave it a satisfactory and the third reader gives it a meritorious. That portfolio is a meritorious. So it's the preponderance of the scores. And we have had great success with this when there are discrepancies, they are few, and they are resolvable. It's not like one score gives the portfolio meritorious and the other gives it an unsatisfactory yes. Not a thing that happens. Yeah. And then of course, as Director of first-year writing, I'm always there to consult as well with our instructors if they need help as they score. Yeah. So we have a lot of checks and balances to make sure that the students are getting their portfolio assessed fairly.

CR: How does this change the instructor's workflow when it comes to how they're thinking about court time devoted to course because part of that is grading for all of our courses. Does it, does it just redistribute it?

NK: It redistributes it in interesting ways. So when we give feedback on student work, which we do for each major assignment that students receive. Instead of telling the student, you earned a B on this paper And here's why, we get to tell the student. Here the things that the paper is doing well currently, here are the things to improve to bump that paper up to the next level and we can divorce it from that like justifying of the grade piece, which can be, if not time-consuming, incredibly emotionally taxing for us as graders and instructors were also freed from the students coming to our offices and saying this is a B minus and I'm not going to medical school, How dare you. Then at the end of the semester, instead of frantically trying to get through all of our grading, we have a portfolio scoring day where we all come together. We sit in a room, we score together, we eat together, we consult with each other and get as many of the portfolios done as we possibly can. So there is a big crunch at the end of the semester. It's just that it's more communal.

CR: Yeah.

NK: Instead of you at your computer screen at 11 59 in bear web trying to get your grades entered.

CR: Well, that's not nothing. That can be a significant psychological shift on how that works, especially at the end of the semester. So what are the next steps in this project? Do you have plans to improve it or to tweak something or to scale it?

NK: Yes, our next steps are to continue to hear feedback from our portfolio scores, as well as from our students to get their feedback on what they would like to see improved. We are in our third semester of portfolio pilot and we've had a whole range of instructors try the portfolio system out from tenure-track faculty to lectures and senior lecturers, to contingent faculty to graduate student instructors. And we're trying to hear from all those different voices. And then we're trying to continue to scale it up. So right now students have the option to take English 1310 with standard assessment or portfolio assessment. And instructors volunteer to be part of the portfolio pilot. As we move forward, my vision for this project is to have all English 1310 assessed under the portfolio system. I have learned as a writing program administrator that this takes time. And I had thought that perhaps it would take less time than it has.

CR: Welcome to the A in administrator,

NK: That's right. If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well, I want to build a sustainable system that's going to foster excellent student writing across English 1310, That's going to take time, that's going to take input, that's going to take community. And we're getting there. Yeah, One step at a time.

CR: Well, you're doing so many great things, so I really appreciate hearing about it. So thank you so much Nicole Kenley for joining the show.

NK: Thank you, Christopher. It's been great to be here.

CR: Our thanks again to Dr. Nicole Kenley for speaking with us today. In this episode, show notes. You'll find links to the crap test for information literacy and transparent assignments. That's our show. Thanks for listening and join us next time for Professors Talk Pedagogy.
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