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**To:** [ProvostNotes](#)  
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Good morning !

Sure doesn't feel very much like spring outside, does it? Regardless, we have officially arrived at the Spring 2024 semester! I want to welcome all of you who are new to OTC and send a warm "welcome back" to the old-timers. A couple of items to share:

**Don't Sleep on Service Learning:** Are you are looking for ways your students can connect classroom learning with real-world experiences? **Consider incorporating Service-Learning.** OTC's Service-Learning program requires a minimal time commitment from you while providing valuable benefits to your students. Your students will be connected with a community partner whose mission aligns with the content of your course. Once they have completed 15 hours of service and a reflection summarizing their experience, their transcript is updated to reflect this achievement in connection with your course. To learn more, visit the [Service-Learning Canvas course](#) or contact Erin Dooley at [servicelearning@otc.edu](mailto:servicelearning@otc.edu) or 417-447-8936. Students in 16-week courses should be connected to Erin by **January 31**.

**Trailblazer Awards:** Full-time employees, don't **forget to vote for your favorite OTC Trailblazer**. All full-time employees received a link to the voting form last week, so check your email. Voting ends on **January 19**.

**A Big Thank You:** While many of us were enjoying a long weekend inside, our Facilities and Grounds crew was out in frigid weather working to clear sidewalks and parking lots so we could start the Spring semester on schedule. Some of them even had to deal with a busted main water line at the Lebanon Education Center, which created a huge mess over the weekend. A special thanks to Gene Hogue, Jared Starnes, Dr. Dusty Childress, and all the Lebanon employees who worked extra hard to make sure it's business-as-usual at the Lebanon Center this week.

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Last Wednesday during our faculty "welcome back" session, I asked our full-time faculty to try to identify several high achievers: the five richest people in the world, the last five Heisman Trophy winners, and the last five Academy Award winning Best Pictures. As you might imagine, many of them struggled to come up with those names. But when I asked them to list three teachers who had been pivotal in their lives, it was a much easier task. The point, of course, is that we often forget those who the world celebrates most, but we always remember those who invest their time, energy, and love into us. I went on to say that I would bet good money that OTC teachers are on that list for *at least* one person – and probably on that list for many.

The foundation of any good learning experience is building trust and community with students, something that we do in spades. Our Center for Academic Innovation staff [shared an article](#) in the January newsletter that gives five questions to ask yourself at the beginning of a semester. It gives good advice for building community and getting your students excited about learning, but it also includes advice for defining healthy boundaries with your students. If you haven't read it, I encourage you to do so.

Wishing you all a fantastic first week!

**Tracy M. McGrady, Ed.D**

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