



The University of Georgia

GTA

Teaching Assistant Newsletter

The Center for Teaching and Learning

Vol. 17, No. 2, Spring 2007

2006-2007 TA Mentors



The TA Mentors are award-winning TAs preparing for careers in higher education. This year, they were selected to participate in a preparing future faculty program, The TA Mentor Program, which is coordinated by the Center for Teaching and Learning in cooperation with the Graduate School. They are spending the year learning about the expectations for an academic career, enhancing their teaching credentials and sharing their successes in the classroom with each other and new teaching assistants.

Front Row (left to right): Anita Melo, Romance Languages; Kristy Maddux, Speech Communications; Bridg'ette Israel, Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Science; Lara Jones, Psychology; Lisa Renzi, Psychology; Stacy Wright, English. Middle Row (left to right): Danielle Webster, Cellular Biology; Jun Taek Kwon, International Affairs; Valerie Hower, Mathematics; Mayukh Dass, Marketing and Distribution; Barton Myers, History. Back Row: Robby Lockett, History; Matthew First, Marine Sciences; Brad Vickers, Kinesiology; Chris Bennett, Computer Science

Important Deadlines:

Outstanding and Excellence in Teaching Awards Nominations

Due January 19, 2007 (http://wwwctl.uga.edu/teaching_assistant/outstanding_teacher_award.htm)

Graduate School Teaching Portfolio Nominations

Due March 9, 2007 (http://wwwctl.uga.edu/teach_asst/pdf/PortfoliodeadlinesSpring07.pdf)

GRSC 7770 Teaching Seminar Assistantship Nominations

Due March 21, 2007 (http://wwwctl.uga.edu/teach_asst/pdf/GSSEMINR.pdf)

First Recipient of the Graduate School Interdisciplinary Certificate In University Teaching

Graduate students have many opportunities to choose graduate experiences to prepare for future careers. One of those opportunities became available in 2006 when The Graduate School began offering an Interdisciplinary Certificate in University Teaching. The first certificate was awarded in summer 2006 to Tracy Lambert from Psychology. Tracy visited the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and talked to Dr.



Paul Quick, TAProgram Co-Director, before her graduation in August of 2006. Below are excerpts from their conversation that pertain to her teaching experience at The University of Georgia.

Dr. Tracy Lambert, earned an M.S. in 2003 and a Ph.D in 2006 in Psychology from the University of Georgia. She is presently an Assistant Professor of Management at the University of North

Carolina-Asheville. Tracy's work focuses on Industrial-Organizational (I-O) Psychology, a field that studies human behavior in the workplace. While at UGA, Tracy won an array of awards including the Excellence in Teaching Award, the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, and a number of awards in the Psychology Department, notably the A.S. Edwards Award which recognized Tracy for her scholarship, meritorious conduct, service to the department, and promise as a scholar. Visit her ePortfolio at:

www.arches.uga.edu/~lamberta/ePortfolio.htm.

How did teaching fit into your graduate career?

Teaching and research fit equally, and I knew from the beginning that it was just as important to be trained as a teacher as it was to be trained as a researcher. Teaching became a real passion for me, and I never missed an opportunity for development in this area. When I did, I always picked up something new that I could apply to the classroom. Teaching was important for other reasons too. Research can be a solitary endeavor, and many of the teaching opportunities, both in the classroom and out, provided a positive diversion from the stress and monotony of graduate school. Student feedback is almost always immediate, and if you're lucky, it's generally positive. There were times that being in the classroom really improved my self-confidence and helped to center

me. Being involved in professional teaching development activities also gave me the chance to be around other people who shared my same professional interests. I think that it's important that while you're going through one of the toughest experiences of your life, you spend some time around people who like the same things you like.

What was the biggest challenge for you as a TA?

I didn't struggle with being in front of a group or presenting the information. I think my biggest challenge was striking the balance between caring about my students and becoming their friend. My motto for successful teaching is pretty simple: be prepared and care. Being organized and prepared for each class is critical to your students' learning experience. Students have the right to expect that from you. Caring involves a general concern for your students as people, but more importantly a concern with whether they are learning. If you stay focused on whether students are learning, everything else will fall into place. You'll find yourself doing whatever your students need in order to learn: extra help, feedback, review sessions, whatever. Early on, I worried too much about what students thought of me. Over time, though, I've learned that they respect you most when you simply care about whether they have learned. I've learned how to be more objective in my approach to students so that I can head off excuses that lead to awkward situations. That's why my syllabus has become so detailed and specific over the years. My students know exactly what I expect from them and what they can expect from me. The more I taught, the more I learned how to strike that balance.

What didn't you know about teaching at the beginning that you wish you had known?

I had no idea how much time it takes! Especially the first time I'd prep a class. In addition to being a perfectionist, I found prepping kind of fun, but sometimes I'd spend hours and hours preparing for a class—posting materials on WebCT, preparing lecture notes and class activities, etc. It actually became easy to rely on teaching as a procrastination tool for other work! However, I'm more efficient now with most aspects of my teaching such as responding to student e-mails, grading, designing assignments and tests etc. Changes to my syllabus and the format for my tests and assignments over the years are a direct reflection of this increased efficiency. I have covered every possible scenario in my syllabus and I've become more and more clear with respect to my expectations for assignments and test answers. I attach a grading rubric to almost every assignment so that students know what I expect. This also makes grading so much more time-efficient.

What aspects of your teaching do you still want to improve and develop?

So many things. I'm fairly confident with how I present the material, but I really wish that I could think on my feet faster with

examples! After class, I'll always think of a better example or a better way of explaining things. Also, I tend to get so involved in my examples that I sometimes diverge from the topic onto tangents. Some students appreciate the examples. Others can find it confusing. To help with this, I always try to begin class by telling my students where we've been, and where we're going. And, at the end of class, I try to do a quick recap of the major points. This big picture outline can really help students who got "off track" along the way.

What was the most important part of your professional training ?

Without training, I wouldn't be able to conduct research or teach as a professional psychologist. My major professor and faculty mentors deserve a lot of credit for helping me to develop as a researcher, but there are also a variety of programs and outlets that I could thank for helping me to develop as a teacher. The TA Mentor program had a major impact on me, mainly by introducing me to people in different fields who shared my interest in teaching. Through my interactions in the TA Mentor program, I solidified my interest in teaching and started looking at institutions that fit my interests. I also participated in the Preparing Future Faculty Program, sponsored by the Department of Psychology. During this program, I had the opportunity to teach as an instructor at a smaller state institution (Kennesaw State), which gave me an idea about what I did and didn't like about different types of schools and students.

Besides the TA Mentor Program, I was able to reflect upon my teaching experiences through other forms of professional development. I took an extra GRSC 7770 class with Michele Simpson and Jodi Holschuh through the Division of Academic Enhancement on helping students learn. I also took Katherine Kipp's class on teaching with technology and Pat Miller's course on professional development in the academe. All of these extra-courses helped prepare me for my new job.

How important do you think technology is to the classroom?

I can't tell you how important technology training is. Through the TA Mentor Program, I earned a Certificate in Online Teaching that taught me a lot about computer-based teaching and learning and about myself as a teacher. I discovered that I am the kind of teacher who prefers the hybrid classroom—mostly face-to-face contact with some internet-based learning tools as well, like WebCT. I came to realize that online teaching takes certain kinds of teachers and certain kinds of students. Students in online courses, for instance, need to be a lot more self-motivated. And I believe that I'm most effective as a teacher when I'm in a physical classroom with students. It's more interactive and I think that I can facilitate discussion better.

What other teaching-related things did you do ?

Besides the TA Mentor program, the extra classes, and the PFF program, I got involved with the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP). This fabulous organization holds a conference

every February in Atlanta, where members are always willing to share their course ideas, materials and activities. The conference was a great place to network. It helped clarify in my mind that I wanted to work at a school where teaching was appreciated and rewarded. One of my faculty mentors told me about STP. It's just like anything else in life: you hear about something, you get involved, then you start meeting people. It may even lead to opportunities to teach at other institutions, such as my chance to teach at Kennesaw State, which helped refine my job search.

How important do you think your teaching experience and your success at teaching was as you went on the job market?

I truly believe that it helped set me apart! It wasn't just that I had taught before, but that I was dedicated enough to teaching that I looked for avenues for development. I spoke with the dean during my visit to one school, and I found myself talking about things like assessment, distance learning and service learning—all things that I'd learned about during my courses on teaching! These are, of course, buzz words in the field of academia right now, but it felt really good to be able to speak knowledgeably about them during an interview.

Why were you interested in earning the Interdisciplinary Certificate in University Teaching?

I didn't do it for the credentials as much as for my own professional development. However, when I saw that the certificate was being offered, I thought it provided a wonderful opportunity for graduate students who want to show prospective employers that they are prepared to teach at the college level. You will almost never have this opportunity again.

Besides the Graduate School's recognition, what do you think you got out of completing the Certificate?

There are so many things I took from the certificate courses, but they can be summed up into these three things. (1) An appreciation for the concerns of and issues facing higher education (including the successful integration of technology with learning, an increase in civic engagement and service-based learning, the increasingly important role of assessment of learning outcomes, etc.) (2) Many, many, new tips and tools for teaching in the classroom (including assignments, activities and general advice on handling different classroom situations) and (3) Relationships with other graduate students and teachers from within and outside of my own department who appreciate teaching and can share and learn from one other. I developed some of my closest friendships with students from the certificate courses. No matter how busy I was, I'd definitely do it all over again!

**For more information on
The Graduate School Interdisciplinary
Certificate in University Teaching
go to:**

http://www.uga.edu/gradschool/academics/certificate_teaching.html

Teaching Support Seminars Spring 07 GRSC 7770 & ELAN 7768/69

University policy requires that all TAs receive support for their teaching. If you have never taught at university level in the United States, you must sign up for one of the GRSC 7770 teaching support seminars or a departmental course specifically to help you develop your teaching.

If you are an international student who has not taken or achieved a score of 50 on the TSE/ SPEAK test or a 26 on the TOEFL/TAST, you must sign up for ELAN 7768 where you will be given a language evaluation and placed in the appropriate teaching support seminar. You may review the full TA Policy Statement at: http://www.cfl.uga.edu/teaching_assistant/ta-policy.html

ELAN 7768-level 1 (72-705)
Tuesday/Thursday 11:00A-12:15P

ELAN 7769-level 2 (42-709)
Tuesday/Thursday (11:00-12:15P)

(ELAN contact Dr. Karen Braxley
kbraxley@uga.edu)

GRSC 7770-level 3 (09-339)
Tuesday (9:30-11:30)

GRSC 7770-level 4 (59-605)
Tuesday (2:00-4:00)
Advanced session on student learning. For those students who have already taken a GRSC 7770-level 3

(POD contact Dr. Kathleen Smith
ktsmith@uga.edu)

The Center for Teaching and Learning

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is a support unit of the Office of the Vice President for Instruction. It is devoted to the advancement of instruction and faculty development at The University of Georgia. CTL sponsors a range of services and enrichment activities designed to assist faculty and teaching assistants with instructional matters. *Dr. Nelson Hilton* is the Director of CTL and *Dr. Jay Harriman* is the Associate Director. *Dr. Paul Quick* and *Dr. Kathleen Smith* are TA Program Co-Directors.

- * **Fall Orientation for TAs and LAs**
- * **GRSC 7770 - teaching seminar**
- * **TA Handbook**
- * **TA Newsletter**
- * **Teaching Resource File**
- * **Individual Consultation**
- * **University Awards for Outstanding Teaching**

- * **TA Mentor Program for Future Faculty**
- * **Instructional Technology Resources**
- * **Teaching Seminars**
- * **Web Resources on Teaching (<http://www.cfl.uga.edu/>)**
- * **Teaching Portfolio Samples and Consultation**
- * **University Teaching Certificate Support**

GTA Newsletter is a publication of the Center for Teaching and Learning. Teaching Assistants are encouraged to submit articles for publication in this newsletter. Submissions should be forwarded to Kathleen Smith or Paul Quick.

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Teaching Support
<http://www.cfl.uga.edu/>

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