

EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT ON THE TRAINING, MONITORING, AND EVALUATION OF GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS (GTAs): ACADEMIC YEAR 2001-2002

PREFACE

This eighth annual report responds to the Board's Policy and Guidelines on *Training, Monitoring, and Evaluation of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)*. (See Section 400.3.5 and 400.3.5.1[G], *UNC Policy Manual*.) The report describes GTA training, monitoring, and evaluation, especially at the nine UNC institutions employing significant numbers of GTAs during the 2001-2002 academic year. The report's emphasis is on those GTAs who are assigned full responsibility, under faculty supervision, to teach courses in a lecture or laboratory setting.

The effective use of GTAs, particularly in research extensive universities, is essential to meeting the demands for both undergraduate instruction and graduate education. Many universities have no other way to meet undergraduate instructional needs with available resources while also providing opportunities for graduate student support and for faculty contributions to research and service. Although use of GTAs as undergraduate classroom instructors has raised some concern, the GTA experience has a positive impact on the teaching mission of the University and on the professional development of graduate students, who will be the next generation of the professoriate.

In their impact on the teaching mission of the University, GTAs allow faculty to increase the time spent on course development and design, improve the University's ability to teach more undergraduate students in smaller classes (e.g., recitation, laboratory, or tutorial assignments), and help ensure that undergraduate students receive more one-on-one, specialized attention, particularly in large lecture sections taught by faculty. In addition, GTAs can be effective role models for undergraduates, encouraging them to consider pursuing an advanced degree.

GTA appointments are also essential to the professional development of graduate students and their preparation for positions in academia, industry, and the public sector. Through their appointments as GTAs, graduate students enhance their personal learning and develop important interpersonal, organizational, and leadership skills, as they manage and communicate in a classroom environment. They develop a deeper understanding of the field in which they teach as well as of the mission and operations of their department and the University. Perhaps most importantly, GTAs receive essential preparation for assuming their own positions as university faculty members.

However, the effective use of GTAs requires that they receive adequate training, supervision, and evaluation by faculty mentors. This report demonstrates that UNC institutions take this responsibility seriously and have put in place appropriate policies and procedures to comply with University guidelines. The report includes quantitative data in sections I and II on the use of

GTAs by UNC institutions and provides an update to previous reports on the ways in which institutions ensure the competency of GTAs, promote communications with and about GTAs, and recognize their accomplishments. Section V provides examples of effective practices and recent initiatives.

I. INSTITUTIONAL USE OF GTAs

A. Number of GTA Positions. Table 1 combines the number of GTA positions, by institution and type of position, for the fall 2001 and spring 2002 semesters. The figures refer to positions, rather than to individual GTAs. For example, the same person holding a GTA position in both the fall and spring semesters is counted as two positions for purposes of reporting. Table 1 includes all graduate positions that support the teaching mission, such as graduate assistants and graduate laboratory assistants, but it does not include graduate research assistants. The institutions are listed in descending order based on the total number of GTAs employed. Data is included for the number of GTA positions involving full responsibility (under faculty supervision) to teach sections of lecture or laboratory courses.

Also included are the proportions of these assignments to the total graduate teaching assistant positions. For example, UNC-CH reported that 40% of the GTA positions related to the instructional mission were used to teach lecture sections with full course responsibility; less than 1% of the GTA positions were used to teach laboratory sections, and the remaining 60% of GTA positions at UNC-CH were used for assignments not involving full course responsibility, such as laboratory preparation, tutoring, grading, or course development.

Including all graduate teaching assistant assignments related to the instructional mission of the University, UNC institutions reported using a total of 4,728 GTA positions during the 2001-2002 academic year (Table 1). Five UNC institutions (ECSU, FSU, NCCU, UNCA, WSSU) did not employ any GTAs. One institution, UNCP, used only a small number (10) of GTAs, while NCSA used GTAs on a very limited basis (38 GTAs). The remaining nine institutions (UNC-CH, NCSU, NCA&T, UNCG, UNCC, UNCW, ECU, ASU, WCU) made more extensive use of GTAs, each with over 100 GTA positions. The research extensive universities (UNC-CH, NCSU) accounted for 63% percent of all GTA positions within UNC.

B. Scope of GTA Activities. As indicated in Table 1, for the 16 UNC institutions combined, 56% percent of GTAs had full responsibility to teach sections of either lecture or laboratory courses, while the remaining 44% percent served in other positions. Courses employing GTAs typically are introductory-level courses within the general education program, such as freshman English, basic mathematics courses, introductory science laboratories, and physical education activity classes. Instructional duties for GTAs include a wide range of activities: classroom lecturing or laboratory responsibilities under faculty supervision; assistance in laboratory, recitation, performance, and discussion sections; and individual and small-group tutoring assignments.

Even at smaller institutions, GTAs provide limited but important contributions to the teaching mission. At UNCP, half of the ten GTAs served as instructors in physical education activity

courses. NCSA employed its 38 GTAs as assistants to faculty members in laboratory sections within the School of Design and Production and the School of Music.

Non-instructional graduate assistant positions contributing to the instructional mission include activities such as laboratory preparations, equipment and computer maintenance, drafting examination questions, grading exams and papers, providing audio-visual support, or working in academic support units such as the Advising Center or ADA Office.

**Table 1. GTA Positions by Institution and Type of Position
(2001-02 Academic Year)**

Institution	GTAs in Lecture Sections		GTAs in Laboratory Sections		GTAs in Other Positions		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Total	Percent
UNC-CH	648	40%	5	0%	965	60%	1,618	34%
NCSU	277	20%	514	38%	568	42%	1,359	29%
UNCG	230	56%	179	44%	0	0%	409	9%
UNCW	26	8%	148	47%	140	45%	314	7%
UNCC	33	11%	72	24%	189	64%	294	6%
NCA&T	30	14%	98	47%	79	38%	207	4%
ECU	86	44%	74	38%	37	19%	197	4%
WCU	30	21%	31	22%	83	58%	144	3%
ASU	59	43%	74	54%	5	4%	138	3%
NCSA	0	0%	27	71%	11	29%	38	1%
UNCP	10	100%	0	0%	0	0%	10	0%
ECSU	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
FSU	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
NCCU	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
UNCA	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
WSSU	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	1,429	30%	1,222	26%	2,077	44%	4,728	100%

Note: Laboratory sections are those primarily involving experimentation, testing, or practice.

II. PROCEDURES TO ASSURE THE COMPETENCY OF GTAs

A. Teaching Contracts. Each of the nine UNC institutions making appreciable use of GTAs provides formal contracts or letters of appointment for GTAs, usually through the Graduate School. These documents outline the basic requirements, policies, and procedures pertaining to GTAs. In addition, many departments provide more detailed statements outlining the specific course responsibilities for each GTA.

B. Training Programs. UNC institutions employing GTAs offer pedagogy courses or workshops either prior to or concurrent with the GTA appointment. A general orientation typically is provided to acquaint new GTAs with campus-wide resources (e.g., teaching centers, teaching consultants, writing centers, academic computing centers), as well as policies and practices regarding undergraduate instruction (e.g., academic and honor codes, grading, prevention of sexual harassment and discrimination, health and safety practices, and effective teaching techniques). The campus teaching and learning center is typically involved in these orientations, as well as in continuing seminars or courses in effective teaching.

Frequently, individual departments provide additional GTA training, tailoring their approaches to the discipline, the nature of the courses to be taught, and the specific needs of their students. For example, at UNC-CH, in addition to the Fall Orientation offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Graduate School offers a course in effective teaching open to students from all fields. The following departments also offer their own courses in effective teaching within the discipline: Computer Science, Economics, English, German, History, Mathematics, Political Science, Psychology, Romance Languages, Russian, Sociology, Information and Library Science, and Journalism and Mass Communication.

Research extensive campuses in particular have taken targeted and innovative approaches to the training and preparation of graduate students. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at UNC-CH offers mini-grants through a competitive process to assist departments in developing their GTA training programs; the funds have been used to support regular seminars on teaching, GTA training materials, and the purchase of video cameras for use in evaluating GTA's instruction. The CTL also maintains a network of departmental GTA coordinators and liaisons, which facilitates planning and communication related to GTA preparation. NCSU has developed a special program, "Preparing for the Professoriate," which pairs fellowship recipients and other graduate students with faculty mentors; mentors work with GTAs to develop their teaching philosophies, refine teaching materials, and develop teaching portfolios, which not only can be used in the evaluation of GTAs but also provide a record of the graduate student's teaching experience for prospective employers.

C. English Proficiency for International Teaching Assistants. The English language competency of international students who serve as GTAs is an important concern at institutions which have substantial foreign graduate student enrollments. Extensive procedures are in place, consistent with the best practices nationally, to ensure the adequate English language proficiency of international teaching assistants (ITAs) involved in classroom, recitation, or laboratory instruction.

At NCSU, for example, ITAs must pass two levels of screening for language competency by scoring a minimum of 550 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and by passing an oral English proficiency screening interview. Based on the results of the screenings, ITAs are placed in one of four categories: 1) clearance for any teaching responsibility; 2) assignment only to those teaching responsibilities that require relatively limited verbal interaction with students; 3) provisional clearance for teaching responsibilities that require relatively limited verbal interaction with students; and 4) assignment to teaching support responsibilities that require no verbal interaction with students (e.g., grading, lab set-up). Prior to clearance for an instructional role involving increased verbal interaction with undergraduates,

ITAs in the second category are required to be re-screened and receive an acceptable score for full clearance; ITAs in the latter two categories are required to take one or more English as a Second Language (ESL) courses and to pass a re-screening to receive an appointment involving significant verbal interaction with students.

Similar screening and evaluation practices for ITAs for whom English is a second language are in place at UNC-CH. ITAs who will have significant contact with students (i.e.. those with full-course responsibility, recitation and lab leaders) must demonstrate oral proficiency in English before their appointment. Currently, determining the oral English proficiency of graduate students is the responsibility of departments. If graduate students do not have sufficient command of spoken English, the department either refers them to a course offered by the Graduate School, “Communicating in the American Classroom,” or assigns them as teaching assistants with limited student contact or as research assistants.

UNC Charlotte’s English Language Training Institute has developed an extensive program of support for ITAs, including videotaping to assess English language competence and a two-semester non-credit communications course taught three hours a week, required of all ITAs who need to improve their English competency. These students are assigned to non-teaching duties until their language assessments meet the required level. The other UNC institutions using ITAs have similar screening and evaluation practices for ITAs.

Table 2 compares ITA positions to total GTA positions at the nine UNC institutions giving ITAs primary responsibility for lecture or laboratory sessions. No other UNC institutions employed International Teaching Assistants.

Table 2. ITA Positions* Compared to Total GTA Positions by Institution (2001-02 Academic Year)

Institution	ITAs	Total GTAs	Percent
NCSU	257	1,359	19%
UNCC	27	294	9%
UNCCH	128	1,618	8%
UNCG	28	409	7%
ASU	5	138	4%
UNCW	10	314	3%
NCA&T	6	207	3%
WCU	5	144	3%
ECU	4	197	2%
Total	470	4,680	10%

*with full or primary responsibility for classroom instruction

D. Evaluation. Each of the nine UNC institutions making appreciable use of GTAs has established procedures for the evaluation of GTAs. Classroom observation with feedback to the GTA is an integral part of training and evaluation. Written records from mentor observations and undergraduate student evaluations are maintained, usually becoming a part of the GTA's personnel file. Faculty members are involved in one-on-one mentoring with many GTAs. In addition, each institution ascertains that GTAs are in good academic standing in their programs.

E. Supervision. GTAs typically report to a designated department or college GTA coordinator who is responsible for their general supervision and assignment of duties. Faculty mentors are used to ensure that GTAs are given ongoing training to develop teaching skills and techniques. Some are involved in team-teaching with GTAs. Mentors also review course materials (e.g., syllabi, lectures, exercises, examinations) prior to their use in the class. In some units, supervision is extensive, with a faculty member assigned full-time to the development and monitoring of GTAs. In others, teaching contracts incorporate expectations for faculty supervision, indicating specific times the faculty member will meet with the GTA to review course planning and work and to observe teaching.

III. COMMUNICATIONS WITH AND ABOUT GTAs

A. Representation of GTAs on Committees. Participation of GTAs in University committees is encouraged to facilitate communication and graduate student input into policy making. In many departments, GTAs serve on curriculum committees that review course curricula and decide on classroom resources such as textbooks. Besides frequent appointments to departmental- and school-level committees, GTAs often serve on University-wide groups involved in aspects such as academic policies, planning, graduate education issues, and research. Most institutions have campus-wide Graduate Student Associations, as do many departments. GTAs also occasionally serve on regional professional association committees associated with their disciplines. Involvement in these committees is part of the professional development of GTAs, preparing them for institutional, departmental, and disciplinary service that will be expected of them as faculty members.

B. Institutional Brochures on GTAs. Brochures and handbooks are widely available to educate GTAs about their responsibilities and duties, counseling services, disabled student services, University policies, and University resources available for teaching and learning. Many of these handbooks are available on the World Wide Web. Examples at selected institutions include the following:

NCSU

Graduate Teaching Assistant Guidelines, the Graduate Student Brochure, Resources for Graduate Students, the International Teaching Assistant Policy Statement, and other relevant publications

<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/grad>

Preparing the Professoriate

<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/grad/ptp/>

Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning GTA Development Programs
http://www.ncsu.edu/fctl/Graduate_Students

UNC-CH

Center for Teaching and Learning: Teaching Assistant Development
<http://ctl.unc.edu/tad.html>

UNCC

Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook
<http://www.uncc.edu/gradmiss/students/handbook/gta.htm>

UNCG

Teaching Assistant Handbook
http://www.uncg.edu/teaching_assistant_handbook.html

In addition, many departments provide department-specific handbooks. There is also an increasing effort to inform undergraduate or prospective students and their parents about the role of GTAs, including the distribution of brochures and discussions at freshman orientation programs.

C. Administrative Office Responsible for GTAs. At most UNC institutions, the graduate school is responsible for general oversight of GTA activities, including aspects of appointment contracts, provision of information and guidelines, and general training and evaluation guidelines. At UNC-CH, the Office of the Provost administers the University's program for GTAs primarily through the resources of the Center for Teaching and Learning. The Center oversees the implementation process associated with the revised GTA *Guidelines* released by the Provost's office in September 1996. At NCSU, the Graduate School staff includes a Director of Graduate Student Teaching Programs and administers the "Preparing the Professoriate" program.

IV. RECOGNITION OF GTAs

A. Awards. UNC institutions making appreciable use of GTAs reward and recognize their contributions to the teaching mission of the University. Although most have awards at the departmental level or higher, many institutions also have expanded the college or campus-wide awards that are presented annually at a formal ceremony or convocation. Typically, GTAs are nominated by their departments and/or by students, and an awards committee makes the final selections based on student and faculty evaluations as well as a review of syllabi and course materials. Honors may include financial awards, plaques, certificates, and letters of appreciation. Several institutions reported the establishment of new GTA awards, some funded by alumni.

B. Honors. Some institutions use means other than awards to recognize GTA contributions to teaching. For example, UNC-CH makes special appointments in teaching positions and invites

outstanding GTAs to participate or collaborate in a mini grant funded the Center for Teaching and Learning. The Center for Teaching and Learning annually selects four to six Graduate Teaching Consultants through a competitive departmental selection process. After intensive pre-service training, the Consultants lead orientation sessions for new GTAs, assist with the facilitation of an annual planning retreat for unit liaisons, offer workshops throughout the year, and organize a spring colloquium on teaching for GTAs.

V. EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICES AND RECENT INITIATIVES

Effective practices common to the nine UNC institutions making appreciable use of GTAs are highlighted in earlier sections of this report. Additional examples and new initiatives are provided below.

UNC-CH

- The Department of Computer Science offers a new award for GTAs, funded by an alumnus.
- The Developmental Psychology Program published a book on teaching, “Talking about Developmental Psychology,” co-authored by faculty and GTAs in the program.
- The Center for Teaching and Learning is developing ways to assist graduate students in balancing varied responsibilities such as research, teaching, integration and application, including time management, and in integrating technology into their teaching.
- The Center for Teaching and Learning continues to work with the Parents’ Association and the Graduate School to explore strategies for improving the perceptions of the English proficiency and classroom management of International Teaching Assistants.

NCSU

- The Graduate School presented a new workshop for International Teaching Assistants, “Great Tips for International TAs,” encompassing cultural, language, and pedagogical issues.
- The Sociology Department developed a “Preparing Future Faculty Certificate” for students who want extra training and credentials as excellent teachers as well as researchers.
- The Psychology and English Departments raised GTA stipends.
- The English Department instituted a new semester-long apprenticeship in the second graduate semester for new TAs training to teach composition.

UNCG

- The Departments of Communication and Dance have new guidelines for GTAs.
- The Department of Psychology has instituted mandatory class visitation of GTAs by senior faculty members.
- The Department of Chemistry has instituted a new policy for direct supervision of GTAs.
- In the Department of English, all GTAs have peer mentors.
- The Department of Human Development and Family Studies videotapes their GTAs for evaluation.
- The Department of Counseling and Human Development requires all GTAs to develop a teaching portfolio.

UNCW

- The initiation of mid-term formative evaluations in the Department of Chemistry was found to be very effective in helping GTAs better understand the department's expectations for their teaching performance.
- The Psychology Department has developed a new initiative to involve GTAs in web-based courses offered for undergraduates; GTAs help develop the courses and assist undergraduates unfamiliar with the technology used in the courses.
- The new Ph. D. program in Marine Biology includes a "Practicum in College Biology Teaching."

UNCC

- In the English Department, graduate students are required to tutor in the Writing Resources Center in their first year. All GTAs are required to attend a departmental orientation, weekly staff meetings, and complete practicum and internship courses. The Director of University Writing Programs meets with GTAs regularly and visits their classrooms at least three times a semester.
- The Center for Teaching is developing more opportunities for GTAs to become involved in existing programs as well as developing offerings specific to the needs of GTAs.
- Fifteen departments have developed their own graduate student associations under the umbrella of the Graduate and Professional Student Government. Funding for GPSA was increased to support this expanded involvement by graduate students.

NC A&T

- The School of Graduate Studies employed an external expert in teacher training to conduct its annual GTA workshop.
- The Academy for Teaching and Learning has joined the School of Graduate Studies to create a continuous training program for GTAs.
- The Department of Electrical Engineering has developed a nomination procedure, award, and an incentive policy to recognize outstanding GTA performance.

ECU

- The Graduate and Doctoral Student Funding Board has helped increase support for the professional development of graduate students by providing funding to numerous students attending professional training conferences.
- The Graduate School plans to collect student opinion surveys of all GTAs, to provide campus-wide measures of performance.

WCU

- GTAs in the English Department must complete several steps to be assigned a freshman composition course. For example, GTAs must have completed at least one semester's work as a tutor in the Writing Center, taken English 514 (Methods of Teaching Composition), and assisted with an English 101 course in the fall and an English 102 course in the spring of their first year of graduate study before becoming responsible for their own sections of the course.

ASU

- Two new workshops have been added to the annual GTA Conference: “GTAs and Their Role as University Employees” and “Human Subjects Research and Informed Consent.”
- GTAs have begun to participate as instructors in the Freshman Seminar program, going through the same training as faculty preparing to teach the course.
- In the Department of Psychology, prospective GTAs enroll in a year-long training program, including a graduate-level pedagogy course, teaching internships, short apprenticeships, peer observation, and faculty observation.

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