Teaching Counselors for Graduate TAs
TA Scholar: Kathleen Smyth
Faculty Mentor: Maureen Mathison
Director of The Writing Program

BACKGROUND

Teaching Assistants need:
- More feedback on their teaching
- Time to engage in conversations on pedagogy
- Knowledge of new teaching practices in their disciplines

In order to:
- Improve undergraduate learning
- Prepare teaching assistants for teaching jobs
- Encourage teacher-research & reflection

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Initial Questions to Consider for Directors of Graduate Studies: What does the department want graduate TAs to focus on, improve, modify or reinvent? What is a teaching and learning need in your department that should be addressed more fully? Are there certain teaching concerns within the department that new graduate TAs should be aware of?

Initial Questions to Consider for New Graduate TAs: What is the most difficult or worrisome aspect of teaching in your department (or a specific curriculum, with a specific professor, etc.)? What would this new graduate TA want to try out, explore or develop in terms of teaching? What should this new graduate TA know about others in their field/discipline in relationship to pedagogy?

Schedule Meetings: Ideally, these meetings should occur once a month and in person. They should be around 30min-60min in length. They should begin with open-ended questions about new graduate TA’s teaching. In between these meetings, emails, g-chats, etc., might also be a way to answer immediate questions/concerns.

Review Feedback: In one meeting, focus on reviewing the feedback new graduate TAs are giving to students. How are students performing? How are you grading students? Would students benefit from other forms of assessments?

HOW DO I BECOME A TEACHING COUNSELOR?

Required Skills and Specifications
- The person desiring to be a teaching counselor must have an interest in teaching and learning within their specific department/program of study.
- The person should be a second or third year graduate TA with experience teaching at the University.
- The person desiring to be a teaching counselor must have an interest in teaching and learning within their specific department/program of study.
- The person needs to have a minimum of one full year teaching as a graduate student at the University and successful completion of all departmental training practices and courses.

Application Process
The person needs to be able to articulate their desire to work as a teaching counselor for graduate student TAs in a statement of intent (no more than 500 words) to the Director of Graduate Studies.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability: Program description will benefit future teaching counselors in the University Writing Program

Transferability: More teaching counselors across departments will promote university teaching & undergraduate learning.

Take a copy of a job description & program description back to your Director of Graduate Studies!

REFERENCES


Images taken from:
http://ccweb.ucdavis.edu/graduates/pds/
http://www.usi.edu/science/teachered/ncate.asp
http://education.utl.edu/center-school-improvement/about-teacher-inquiry/