Natural Resources

TAs who are aware of the many resources available at Rutgers are in a good position to help their students make the most out of their years at the university; TAs who do not know where to recommend students to overcome academic problems or broaden their understanding of a subject will be shortchanging their students. Especially in these lean times (budgetwise), when teachers may face even larger classes than usual, such “extras” may make the difference between a student who merely takes a course and one who really gains insight into a subject.

Most TAs already know what remedial programs exist in their own department for the students, i.e., learning centers, peer tutoring, formal study groups, etc. If such support does not yet exist in the department, TAs may wish to help students set up more informal groups or even match up willing students as study partners, for one-on-one tutoring. All students have a right to receive at least enough support to see them through the course.

Once the students’ basic academic needs are met, the TA can look beyond the classroom and the printed text to try to find other means of increasing student learning. Students appreciate being offered the opportunity to become “real” scholars—to learn how to do research, to go out into the field, to seek out connections between two or three different fields—and TAs can help their students take the first steps towards realizing this goal by providing them with the inspiration and the tools to do so.

Sending students to the library to do a research paper is the most practical way to get students involved in research. However, it is not enough just to assign a paper leaving the students to sink or swim. It is necessary to introduce them to the proper methods and procedures, making sure they feel at home in the library. Many TAs feel insecure about their own library-literacy and worry about passing on to their students their own unsophisticated skills; this need not be a problem, however, for the library offers many types of introductory instruction for students. Even better, TAs can take advantage of the library staff’s willingness to train teachers to be competent library instructors so that they can design, plan, and carry out an effective introduction themselves.

Course goals and objectives, of course, determine what and how material is presented, but imagination is also important when designing a course. Be aware of the various programs being offered throughout the university. Assigning students to participate in an on-campus event—a lecture, a concert or play, a tour or lecture at the Zimmerli Art Gallery—can intro-

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Summer Orientation Planned

Planning is now underway for the August Teaching Assistant Orientation for newly-appointed TAs. The aim of the orientation is to introduce TAs to Rutgers and to teaching. The orientation for new international TAs will be held on August 28, 1991, and the general orientation for all new TAs will be held on August 29th.

TAP staff members are currently reviewing and evaluating past orientations to see if any changes should be made. The conference evaluations from the past orientations are useful in this planning, but the input of experienced TAs would also be extremely helpful. Therefore, we would like to urge graduate students who are now or who ever have been TAs to contact us with their suggestions on how this orientation could be improved. What do you wish you had been told before you began to teach? What kind of information would have helped you to survive the first semester as a TA more easily? What specific topics could have been stressed more forcefully?

Anyone with suggestions for improving the TA orientation may call the TAP office, 932-7034, and speak to Beth Griech or Carol Hartman, or write to TAP, Office of the Dean, The Graduate School-New Brunswick, 25 Bishop Place, College Avenue Campus. Your assistance with this important project will be gratefully appreciated.
Museum Workshop Offered

The Jane Vorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, located at George and Hamilton Streets on the College Avenue Campus, is a significant educational resource. In addition to a fine permanent collection, the museum offers changing exhibitions every three months. Among the events of interest during this spring semester will be an exhibit of prints by African-American artists, the annual exhibition of painting, sculpture, photography, and work in other media by Mason Gross School of the Arts students who will receive the Master of Fine Arts degree, and an exhibition documenting the achievements of Czechoslovak animated film called "Krakty Film: The Art of Czechoslovak Animation."

For TAs who would like to use the museum resources but are unsure how to integrate an art component into their course, Laura Fattal, Curator of Education, will be offering a workshop, "The Museum as an Educational Resource," on February 28, 1991, at 10:00 a.m. at the Zimmerli. During this workshop TAs will receive a tour and hear about the catalog and educational possibilities of the museum. To register, call Laura Fattal, 932-7237.

Writing Centers

TAs will soon discover that Rutgers undergraduates possess a wide range of writing skills: some students will be fairly good writers, others competent ones, and still others less than competent. Writing well, however, is one of the most necessary basic skills, so all students must be encouraged to find ways to develop the highest possible level of competency in written English. Although TAs may wish to assist their students in improving their writing skills, given the demands of teaching and graduate work, they will probably not be able to offer more than cursory assistance with these problems.

Teachers should not be satisfied with ignoring what they can't directly change; recommending students to one of the campus Writing Centers is a way of insuring that they will receive the help they need. Filling out a referral form to the Writing Center will signal to the student the importance you place on improving writing skills and will provide the tutors with the information they need to help the students with their most immediate and serious problem. Referral forms are available from the English Department.

There are writing centers on College Avenue, Douglass, and Livingston campuses. If you have any questions about the program or about a student referral, contact Ken Smith, 308 Murray Hall, CAC (932-7428), Maxine Susman, Adams 107, Language Building, Douglass (932-9212), and Darcy Gioia, LSH B104D, Livingston (932-4048).

Math/Science Learning Center

A Math/Science Learning Center has opened branches on the Busch and Douglass campuses to provide support services to students in introductory math and science courses. Brian Holton is the Director of the Center. Among the services offered by the centers are: free tutors, review sessions, and a file of course materials, including old texts and exams. In addition, the center has microcomputers and study space available. The center is meant to function not only as a tutorial center but as a central meeting place for students in mathematics and the sciences.

The Busch Center (932-3123) is open from 9:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Friday, and 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday. The Douglass Center (932-8991) is open from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and on Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

TapTalk is a monthly newsletter produced by TAP, the Teaching Assistant Project, The Graduate School-New Brunswick. Letters and suggestions for articles should be directed to the editor:

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25 Bishop Place, CAC
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08903
(201) 932-7034

TA Handbooks Available

Any TA newly-appointed in January who does not have a copy of the TA Handbook may pick one up at the TAP offices, Office of the Dean, the Graduate School-New Brunswick, 25 Bishop Place, 2nd floor, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.
Library Services

Over the past few years the university libraries have made enormous improvements, particularly in the area of computer-assisted services, that have transformed the way that research is done. A number of electronic information sources are now available: online databases (Dialog, BRS, StN, Wilsonline), CD-Rom databases (ERIC, Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications, Social Science Index, Humanities Index, MLA International Bibliography, Dissertation Abstracts, InfoTrac), IRIS (catalog and circulation information), RLIN (shared database with holdings information on major research libraries) and other special databases. It is not enough, however, for the university to have such equipment: students and faculty must be library-literate, knowing what to use for a specific project and how to use it efficiently and effectively.

Because the rate of change has been so rapid, people may find it difficult to keep pace with all the changes or feel intimidated by the many new systems. Although it may seem simpler just to continue with tried and true research methods rather than learning how to use the new equipment, most people agree that the small investment of time needed to master the system richly rewards the user. TAs can arrange to have their students given an introduction to the library, or, what can be much more useful in the long run, a member of the library staff can teach a TA how to organize and run a workshop session. In either case, the tutorial is focused directly at the sort of materials that the students will need for their research projects. A teacher who is aware of the available information resources can make assignments that utilize these sources fully, enabling students to write papers with an increased number and improved level of sources.

For more information, or to schedule a program, contact the following Coordinators at the libraries: Stan Nash, Alexander (7014), Mimi King, Douglass (9407), Ben Beede, Livingston (5733), Marty Kesselman, LSM (4728).

Media Services

Incorporating audio/visual materials into a class is one of the surest ways to enliven a class because students always enjoy a break from the routine. It is also an important way to get students involved in difficult subject matter. When the audio/visual materials are well chosen, they can effectively deepen the students’ understanding of difficult issues and present alternate ways of looking at conventional materials.

If you need a tape recorder, projector—slide, overhead, or opaque—or any other equipment call the campus media center to have the equipment delivered to your classroom. The telephone numbers are: College Avenue Campus (932-7360), Livingston Campus (932-3612), Douglass/Cook Campus (932-9023, 932-9268). To make arrangements to show a film to a class, call the main Media Center on the Livingston Campus (932-4685). All films are stored here, in addition to more than 500 videos (mostly classic and foreign films), and some slides, tapes, and records. The center has several screening rooms—six small, one medium, and one large—which can be reserved for group viewings, or the film and equipment can be brought to the classroom, set up, and picked up and returned by a member of the media staff. A catalog of available videos and films is kept in the Livingston (Kilmer) Media Center. Students and faculty can also borrow videos overnight for personal use. There is no charge, but an ID card must be left as security.

| TA Helpline | 932-1182 |
| Dial 11TA for answers, assistance, and support. |

Videtaping Services Available

TAs who would like to make an appointment to have their class, recitation, or lab videotaped during the spring semester should contact Beth Greich or Jim Orsini, 25 Bishop Place, CAC (932-7034) as early in the semester as possible.
Resources
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duce students to something entirely new or help them to see old things in a fresh way. Don’t overlook the use of films and videotapes. A well-chosen film can supplement coursework in both the sciences and the humanities. For example, a critical examination of a science-fiction film could begin a conversation on the limits and the possibilities of science or raise important ethical issues in a way that will certainly elicit student interest and response. Arrange for screenings at a few different times so that all can participate.

This issue of TapTalk will focus on a few of the resources available to students and faculty at the university. There are many others, some of which may surprise both you and your students; go out of your way to find out about these programs, and consider how they can help you become a better teacher by helping your students become better learners.

TA Workshop
"The Museum as an Educational Resource"
Thursday, February 28, 1991
10:00 a.m.
Zimmerli Art Museum
Call 932-7237 to register.

DATES TO REMEMBER

1 TA ENGINEERING FORUM
12 LINCOLN’S BIRTHDAY
13 ASH WEDNESDAY
14 VALENTINE’S DAY
18 WASHINGTON’S BIRTHDAY
( OBSERVED)
28 “THE MUSEUM AS AN
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE
ZIMMERLI MUSEUM-10:00 A.M.

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