

Two Hundred TAs Attend Second Annual Conference

Workshops Planned for October

Two hundred newly appointed TAs attended the second annual teaching assistant orientation conference, on August 31 at the Rutgers College Student Center, and spent a full day exploring what it means to be a TA at Rutgers University. TAs were exposed to a number of viewpoints--from provosts and deans to faculty and staff to fellow graduate students and even undergraduates--on the expectations for a TA at the university.

Catharine R. Stimpson, University Professor, Dean of the Graduate School-New Brunswick, and Vice Provost for Graduate Education, welcomed the new TAs and emphasized their importance to the university. "You are our valued students who will guide other valued students. You are our important and crucial link between graduate and undergraduate education." Paul Leath, Provost, also stressed the importance of the link between graduate and undergraduate education in his welcoming remarks. "For the last couple of years . . . one of the things we've been doing is turning additional attention to what has been a traditional strength of the university, by finding things that we could do to improve our undergraduate program . . . one of them is the TA Training Program . . . we're giving quite a bit of attention to our undergraduates and you, as TAs, are an important part of that emphasis."

G. Reginald Bishop, Professor of French, and Jack Creeden, Associate Provost, followed with cogent, amusing summaries of Rutgers history, structure, and student life. Also commenting on student life was Mary Hartman, Dean, Douglass College, who spoke about the rich diversity of student life at Rutgers and cautioned the new TAs: "Whoever you are, whatever your sex, your ethnic, racial, or religious background, be aware of what you say and how you act . . . [this] can either reinforce or work to destroy harmful prejudices or stereotypes." David Oshinsky, Professor of History, gave a brief but illuminating and entertaining talk on the first day of teaching--what to anticipate, how to plan, how to survive.

A panel chaired by Barbara Bender (Assistant Dean for Academic Development and Student Services, The Graduate School and Director, TA Training Project) featured an undergraduate dean

Registration is now underway for the first two workshops presented by the Teaching Assistant Project (TAP) for the fall 1989 semester. The goal of these workshops is to offer TAs the ongoing support they need over the semester to improve their teaching skills.

Professor Linda Lederman, an expert in communication skills, will offer a workshop, "Teaching as Performance: Public Speaking for TAs," giving TAs advice on speaking before groups: how to overcome stage fright, how to interest an audience and then hold that interest. This workshop is a must for anyone who would like tips on how to improve lecture skills. This workshop will be held on Wednesday, October 11, from 1:00 - 2:30, at the SCILS Faculty Lounge, College Avenue Campus.

On October 12th, Ms. Stephanie Donato, Associate Director of Graduate Career Services, will present a workshop on "Time Management for TAs" at the Busch Campus Student Center, Room 122, from 4:30-6:00. Attending this workshop now and learning how to better organize your time may prevent disaster later in the semester.

Sociology Program Moves Ahead with TA Training

The Sociology Department presented its first all-day "Teaching Workshop for Sociologists" on Friday, September 15th, at the Livingston College Student Center. As a result of the strong support from the entire Sociology Department--staff, faculty, new and experienced TAs--and the careful planning of the organizers, the program, by all accounts, was a great success.

The day began with four brief lectures, 15 to 20 minutes each, that raised some important pedagogical issues for consideration: Dealing with Difference: Prejudice Reduction Techniques (Cheryl Clark); Evaluating Students: Testing and Grading (Jeff Smith); Developing Writing Skills: Techniques and Tasks (Marilyn Rye); and Getting Students Involved: Simulation and Group Exercises (Shirley Smoyak). After these presentations, the large group divided into smaller roundtable sections to continue the discussions on a more intimate level.

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

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 08903
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Following an informal box lunch, at which TAs and faculty members had a chance to relax and get acquainted, was a series of small group discussions on substantive issues in sociology. Each discussion was led by a faculty member and an experienced TA. The individual sessions lasted for one hour, and over the course of the afternoon, TAs were able to attend three different sessions. The discussions focused on issues raised by particular courses, e.g. Research Methods, Gender, Theory.

The final session for the day was a panel discussion designed to generate ideas on alternate ways of approaching the Introduction to Sociology course. The group was divided into several small groups, each of which tried to determine what topics should be discussed in the introductory course and how they should be taught. One member of each group reported the group's conclusions to the larger group, thus promoting a useful discussion of the value of these alternate approaches.

A reception and dinner were the final events of the day.

The conference was organized by students and faculty from the Sociology Department--JR Bjerkle, Professor Lee Clarke, Lori Davies, Sue Rovi, Sandy White, and Nancy Wonders--but, as Lori Davies pointed out,

its success was a result of the cooperation and good will of all members of the department.

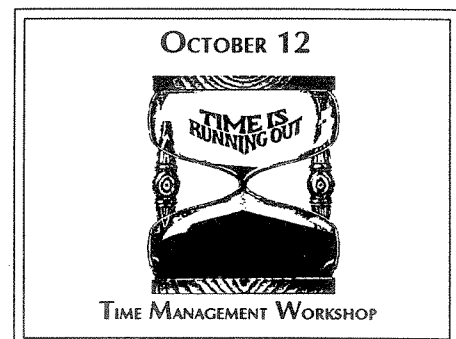
Students from other departments who would like assistance in organizing a similar program in their own department can contact Dean Barbara Bender, Office of the Dean-The Graduate School, 25 Bishop Place (7034).



Workshops

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The number of students permitted in each session will be limited. Please call Valerie LePere at 932-7034 before October 6th or stop by at 25 Bishop Place to register for either of these workshops.



Working with Non-Traditional Students

The non-traditional student, often an older student with a career and/or a family, has become a strong presence on American university campuses over the past twenty years. At Rutgers, many of the students in University College (school 61) are such non-traditional students. These students must meet the same standards as students in other schools, but often, since they are only attending part-time, will take more time to complete their degree requirements.

Unlike the lives of many "traditional" Rutgers students, the lives of University College students will probably not be centered around the university. Their schoolwork is important to them, and they are serious about learning, but they are also serious about their jobs and families and have made commitments to them as well as to school. This is not to suggest that they are less interested in their education; for the most part, they are serious and demanding students, often more actively involved in their education than other students. In many ways, they are closer to graduate students--and TAs--in their dedication and commitment than to undergraduates.

You will find that many of these students have responsible jobs that have accustomed them to carrying out work assignments independently.

This experience may make them more demanding as students, less tolerant of wasted class-time, ill-prepared lectures, imprecise assignments, and careless grading than other students. Changing course requirements or policies mid-semester may cause severe hardships for many of these students whose time is very carefully budgeted. Be clear at the beginning of the semester about all requirements, and whether work is voluntary or required, extra credit or no credit.

Your policies on deadlines and attendance may have to be more flexible than is usual. One student may have to travel occasionally for his or her job. A sick child may prevent another from completing a paper. All the work, of course, must be completed, but deadlines should not be totally inflexible.

Because University College students often have a much wider range of experience than traditional students, classes with these students are often much livelier and more challenging to you as a teacher than those with only traditional undergraduates.

If you have questions about grading and registration requirements for students enrolled in University College, you may wish to contact the Office of the Dean, University College, 35 College Avenue, ext. 7681.

Notes From the Field

Three of the speakers on the TA panel at the August 31 orientation conference were experienced TAs who shared some personal observations and advice with the conferees. Below are some fundamental rules they suggested.

I can give three main rules for being a good TA: first, be prepared; second, be prepared; and third, be prepared.

Tim Vaughan
Physics

Teaching is really a fulfilling experience, but if you do have a problem, please complain . . . don't be shy. Talk to other people; that's my key piece of advice.

Anita Chaudhuri
Economics

It's important to open a dialogue that students feel they can participate in. . . showing the students that you respect the diversity of the class--a lot of people in the class will notice the assumptions you make.

Ron Nieberding
Political Science

**The 1989 edition of the
TA Handbook is now
available.**

**If you would like a copy,
you may pick one up at
the Office of the Dean,
the Graduate School-
New Brunswick,
2nd floor.**

Second Annual TA Conference

(cont'd from page 1)

(Seth Gopin), experienced TAs (Anita Chaudhuri, Economics, Ron Nieberding, Political Science, Tim Vaughan, Physics), and undergraduates (Michelle Gordon, Carl Peterson) discussing the roles, rights and responsibilities of TAs. Each panelist focused on a different aspect of the TA experience, offering advice and support to those in the audience.

After lunch, which gave TAs a chance to relax and socialize with other TAs and with faculty and staff, the TAs regrouped into smaller sessions. TAs were free to attend the workshop that seemed most useful. Among the topics presented were: Time Management; Problems in the Classroom: Video and Discussion; Public Speaking: Teaching as Perform-

ance; Computers as a Teaching Resource; Teaching Writing in Every Discipline; Choosing and Working with a Faculty Advisor.

Following the workshops, TAs attended master classes led by an instructor from a discipline in a field closely related to their own, to receive firsthand advice from experienced teachers and to have an opportunity to ask specific questions about teaching in that field. Master teachers were Rutgers faculty members chosen for their excellent reputations as teachers.

The day ended with a reception in the main lounge of the Student Center, attended by administrators, faculty, staff, and, of course, TAs.

DATES TO REMEMBER



OCTOBER

9	YOM KIPPUR
11	PUBLIC SPEAKING WORKSHOP
12	TIME MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP
14	SUKKOT
22	SIMCHAT TORAH
31	HALLOWEEN

Teaching Assistant Project

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