

Recognition of Excellence for Graduate Teaching Assistants—Revised 12/08/04

In recent years many research universities have developed programs to recognize graduate teaching assistants are outstanding instructors, i.e., teaching assistants have been especially effectively in promoting student learning in higher education. This is a proposal to implement a Certificate of Excellence in College Teaching at Georgia State University. This proposal is to establish a common framework through which graduate teaching assistants might move **beyond basic competence** and **document their excellent** work in teaching and promoting student learning. Recognition of excellence would be noted on the official university transcript.

The proposed program is not a teaching assistant certification program. At Georgia State University, there are already 25 or more programs to prepare graduate students to teach in higher education. Setting standards for TAs and offering appropriate programs in discipline-specific pedagogy and the related mentoring and supervision should continue within the various colleges and schools at Georgia State University. The proposal is designed to respect the work that continues in numerous departments throughout the University. Determining the preparation level for teaching assistants is, and should be, determined by individual colleges and schools.

It is proposed that the Center for Teaching and Learning, working with the faculty who prepare graduate students to teach in higher education, grant recognition of **Excellence in Teaching in Higher Education**.

Assumptions:

1. A well-planned program can prepare graduate students to become competent university instructors.
2. The development of effective instructors in higher education requires the commitment of experience faculty who teach and mentor teacher candidates.
3. There is a body of literature on promoting student learning in higher education that informs our practice.
4. A generic set of content and skills exists regarding preparing new faculty to promote student learning through effective instructional management procedures (e.g., development of course syllabi and course engagement strategies).
5. A unique set of pedagogical knowledge and skills exists that are informed by discipline-specific practices.

Components of Excellence

The elements of a program to prepare graduate students to teach in higher education would include:

1. Applying the body of information and professional literature about enhancing student learning in higher education.
2. Planning a course in higher education, including writing course syllabi, planning lessons, and developing assessment instruments.
3. Developing skills and strategies in techniques that promote student engagement—leading discussions, cooperative/collaborative groups.
4. Implementing strategies that respect and accommodate diversity.
5. Using technology appropriate for promoting student engagement and learning.
6. Demonstrating strategies to assess multiple levels of student learning, skills, and dispositions.
7. Applying strategies that foster reflection and course revision (including portfolio development, peer review strategies, etc).
8. Independently demonstrating the integration and application of appropriate practices and skills to promote student learning (including effective communication skills in speaking and writing and the role of writing to enhance student learning).
9. Demonstration of the application of ethical and professional conduct.

Procedure:

Individuals who wish to apply for the Certificate of Excellence will submit recommendations from the department chair and faculty mentor and a teaching portfolio which includes the following documentation:

1. Earning an A in a **three semester hour course** on teaching and learning in higher education and related experiences that incorporates the areas listed above related to how instructors can promote student learning in higher education. Candidates are requested to submit a copy of the syllabus of the course on pedagogy in higher education and description of other experiences, e.g., conferences and workshops related to teaching in higher education.

2. A description of the **teaching internship/ mentoring experience** that is cosigned by the full-time Georgia State faculty member who served as the mentor and supervisor.
3. A statement of the candidate's philosophy of teaching and learning.
4. Evidence of **course materials** that have been developed, including syllabi, instructional materials, assessment materials and technology resources.
5. Evidence of successful **demonstration of instructional skills** that have been monitored and for which feedback is provided, e.g., mentoring or peer review to support improvement.
6. Evidence of being the instructor of record of a course and interpretation of surveys of Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEIs) ratings.
7. Demonstration of the use of strategies to **promote reflection and improvement** (e.g., Group Instructional Feedback Technique).
8. Documentation **student learning**, especially assessment of learning, written feedback given to students, and products of students' writing as appropriate to the discipline.

Process:

Teaching portfolios (four copies) of candidates, along with letters of recommendation for the chair and faculty mentor, should be submitted to the Center for Teaching and Learning during the first two weeks of each fall and spring semester. Portfolios will be evaluated by a committee composed of two members of the Center's Advisory Committee and a faculty member who teaches a pedagogy course. Within three weeks of receiving the portfolios, the committee will make one of three recommendations: Recommend the recognition of Excellence, deny the recognition, or request additional documentation, e.g., additional evidence of student learning.

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10. A unique set of pedagogical knowledge and skills exists that are informed by discipline-specific practices.

Components of Excellence

The elements of a program to prepare graduate students to teach in higher education would include:

10. Applying the body of information and professional literature about enhancing student learning in higher education.

11. Planning a course in higher education, including writing course syllabi, planning lessons, and developing assessment instruments.
12. Developing skills and strategies in techniques that promote student engagement—leading discussions, cooperative/collaborative groups.
13. Implementing strategies that respect and accommodate diversity.
14. Using technology appropriate for promoting student engagement and learning.
15. Demonstrating strategies to assess multiple levels of student learning, skills, and dispositions.
16. Applying strategies that foster reflection and course revision (including portfolio development, peer review strategies, etc).
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Procedure:

Individuals who wish to apply for the Certificate of Excellence will submit recommendations from the department chair and faculty mentor and a teaching portfolio which includes the following documentation:

9. Earning an A in a **three semester hour course** on teaching and learning in higher education and related experiences that incorporates the areas listed above related to how instructors can promote student learning in higher education. Candidates are requested to submit a copy of the syllabus of the course on pedagogy in higher education and description of other experiences, e.g., conferences and workshops related to teaching in higher education.
10. A description of the **teaching internship/ mentoring experience** that is cosigned by the full-time Georgia State faculty member who served as the mentor and supervisor.
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