

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATIONS

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT TEACHING ASSISTANT GUIDELINES

COMM 494

Full-time faculty in the College of Communications may recruit undergraduate students who excelled in a particular undergraduate course to serve as teaching assistants (TAs) in subsequent offerings of that course.

The undergraduate TA experience should be more than providing a service to the faculty member and the Department. It should also be a valuable, mentored learning experience for the student. Working under the close supervision of the faculty member, undergraduate TAs have the opportunity to gain teaching experience, develop mentoring and leadership skills, and build an understanding of how others learn, while helping other students to learn more effectively.

To facilitate the mentoring process, undergraduate students serving as TAs are required to apply for and enroll in at least one, and no more than three, credits of Comm 494 for the semester in which the teaching assistant work will be done. The credits cannot be given after the course has been completed.

Undergraduate student TA responsibilities typically include administrative work, leading discussion groups, helping the course instructor prepare class lessons and materials, and holding office hours to assist as peer tutors. TAs should not be asked to run a class in the faculty member's absence. Under no circumstances should undergraduate students serving as TAs be involved in grading or other forms of assessment that comprise any portion of a student's grade in the course.

Undergraduate TAs are expected to treat all students with dignity and respect, practice personal responsibility and uphold high standards for academic integrity. Undergraduate TAs must also be aware of the College of Communications Student Honor Code and Penn State's written policies on sexual harassment.

Undergraduate students serving as TAs must have met all of the following criteria:

- Completed the course with a grade of A- or better
- Have an overall GPA of 3.2 or higher
- Attained at least 5th semester standing

Additionally, there are other important aspects of the undergraduate TA responsibility that students in this role should keep in mind:

1. Meeting Course Instructor Expectations

Prior to the starting date of the course, student TAs need to have a clear understanding of the faculty member's expectations about the nature of the work to be done, TA attendance in class, holding office hours, etc. As the semester unfolds, TAs should maintain close contact with the faculty member instructing the course.

2. Student Privacy and Confidentiality

Undergraduate TAs may have access to information about student performance in the class. It is imperative that TAs keep this information strictly confidential. Any information relating to a student's grade, class attendance, class performance or any other academic or personal issues should not be discussed with anyone except for the faculty member instructing the class.

3. Processes for Dealing with Student Complaints

Students, on occasion, may turn to an undergraduate TA with grade or other complaints. It is important that TAs understand the process of the faculty members, department and college for addressing grade complaints, and refer students appropriately.