

So You Want to be a Faculty Member?

Preparing Doctoral Students to Lead Graduate Courses

*Gladys Walter, M.S. & Lacey Roberts, M.S.
Doctoral Students
Texas A&M University*

*Dr. Tracy Rutherford
Professor and Department Head
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University*



ALEC Ph.D. Program at TAMU

- Program goal: prepare doctoral students for future faculty positions
- Program length: 3 years (with a masters degree)
- Dual role assistantship: teaching and research responsibilities
 - Research expectations: partner with faculty on research beyond thesis/dissertation work
 - **Teaching expectations: transition from teaching assistant to instructor of record**



Current Teaching Experience

- The teaching experience and training for doctoral students is undergraduate focused.
 - State mandates and university policies prevent doctoral students from teaching graduate courses.
- The Problem:
 - Doctoral students are not adequately prepared for the aspect of faculty life that involves teaching and mentoring graduate students.
 - Limited opportunities for mentoring and teaching graduate students.



Our Innovative Idea

- Pair senior level doctoral students with tenured faculty in courses serving new or junior graduate students.
 - Senior doctoral student role: facilitator
 - Tenured faculty role: Instructor of record



How we did it

- Required seminar course for graduate students.
 - Goals: Continued training and mentorship
- A senior doctoral student led the seminar with tenured faculty supervision.
- Faculty member observes and reviews seminars while in session and approves all assignments and materials.
- Experiences gained: graduate level course prep, graduate level course materials prep, and providing feedback to graduate students.



Our Experiences

- Gladys: Spring 2018 - Initial implementation of idea
 - Course structure: Weekly seminar sessions every Friday through the entire semester
 - Attendance: 12
 - Class Demographics: Masters and Doctoral Students
 - Assignments: Teaching Philosophy, Lesson Planning, and Microteaching
 - Guest Lectures: University system resources and department leadership
- Lacey: Spring 2019
 - Course structure: 3 consecutive, 4-hour long meetings the week before classes began; Three hour long meetings once-a-month during the semester
 - Attendance: 12
 - Class Demographics: Masters and Doctoral Students
 - Assignments: Preflection, 3 classroom reflections, and teaching philosophy
 - Guest Lectures: University system resources, departmental leadership, award-winning teaching examples



Observations

- Willingness to be flexible and level of interaction and trust differs from undergraduate to graduate students.
- Adjustment to understanding our positional authority and the role it plays in our teaching style, expectations, and outcomes.
- Mutual understanding and experiences outside of classroom lend to enhanced in-class experiences and discussions.
- Graduate student facilitation allowed for a structured yet judgement free environment



Recommendations

- Consider how your department prepares doctoral students for the aspect of faculty expectations that involves graduate teaching and mentorship.
- Provide opportunities within your program that place senior doctoral students in positions to lead and train junior graduate students.
- Attempt to recreate a similar immersive training experience.
- Develop tools to test and measure the training experience.



Questions?

Thank you!

*Gladys Walter, Lacey Roberts and Dr. Tracy Rutherford
Texas A&M and Virginia Tech*

