May 11, 2011

Dr. Peter Hoff
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of West Georgia

Dear Peter:

I write to ask your approval to establish teaching assistantships in English and History—our two largest MA programs. Attached you will see the plan drafted by each program. Both meet my stipulations for an emphasis on careful selection and thorough preparation of candidates and adherence to any and all accreditation standards.

My own thinking is that this proposal is both fiscally and pedagogically responsible. With implementation, we will be better equipping our MA students for future teaching positions and/or entry into Ph.D. programs. I can also think of no better example of a way to address an important point stressed in the University’s Strategic Plan: the integration of graduate and undergraduate learning.

The proposal would require a waiver of current University policy, but perhaps as Colleges assume full responsibility for their own programs in the wake of the dissolution of the Graduate School, such University policies will have less bearing.

My colleagues in English and History and I will of course be happy to discuss the proposal with you in any amount of detail you wish. Meanwhile, thank you for considering the proposal. We look forward to your response.

Regards,

[Signature]

Randy Hendricks
Interim Dean

cc: Denise Overfield
    David Newton
    Steve Goodson
    Josh Masters
    Keith Pacholl
    Nadeyda Popov-Reynolds
Proposal for Graduate Teaching Assistantships

Purpose: Our goal is to integrate top performing Graduate Research Assistants in the English MA program into the first-year writing classroom. Qualified graduate assistants will teach one section of English 1101, with the possibility of teaching two sections in subsequent semesters.

Rationale: The vast majority of our Graduate Assistants either plan to pursue a PhD or seek permanent employment as writing and composition instructors at the college level. By integrating these students into the first-year writing classroom, they would gain invaluable teaching experience and greatly enhance their CVs, and thus their marketability. The prospect of gaining such experience as a UWG graduate student would likewise enhance the visibility of our program and attract the very best students to apply. Graduate Teaching Assistants would also reduce the English department’s need to hire part-time faculty unfamiliar with the practices, policies, and pedagogical goals our first-year writing program.

Criteria: In order for a graduate student to teach his or her own section of an introductory class, the following requirements must be met:

- The student must complete eighteen hours of graduate-level coursework *within the discipline* as required by SACS.

- The student must take a pedagogically-oriented seminar that provides instruction on the practice of teaching in the discipline, the critical methodologies necessary for that practice, and the current pedagogical issues facing the discipline. These 6000-level courses will be designated as “pedagogy-based” in their course descriptions.

- Prospective Graduate Teaching Assistants must show evidence of active teacher-training and apprenticeship. They will assist an experienced first-year writing instructor for at least one full semester before being assigned a class of their own. They will attend all classes, assist in the creation and evaluation of assignments, and develop a portfolio of pedagogical materials during this time. Additionally, prospective teaching assistants must tutor in the writing center for at least two semesters prior to being assigned an 1101 class.

- During the week before classes begin in the fall, prospective teaching assistants—whether they begin teaching in the fall or spring—are required to participate in the first-year writing program’s orientation practicums.

- Once assigned an ENGL 1101 class, teaching assistants must have a mentor who oversees and supervises their work in the classroom.
Teaching Assistant Proposals

Teaching Instructor position
This position would be contingent on having an advanced graduate student who has significant training in the specific content field (minimum of 18 units to be considered) and had displayed excellence as a graduate student. Graduate students appointed to this position would need to be approved by the graduate committee and department chair.

Description:
1. Approved graduate students would be assigned to teach a one-section survey class based on their area of expertise.
2. One faculty member from the department would be assigned as a mentor to the student (hereafter referred to as TA). The department chair will appoint the faculty member. Faculty serving as a TA mentor would receive similar credit as those overseeing student projects or serving as advisors on thesis committees.
3. The TA would teach the class as a normal instructor would: create lectures and discussions for each class; create assessment assignments (including those mandated by the department); grade the various assignments; hold office hours. They will not be expected to participate in service to the university (ex: sit on department/university committees). They will also be evaluated throughout the semester by the mentor. In order to receive additional appointments, they must receive a satisfactory evaluation by the mentor and approval by the graduate committee and department chair.
4. The faculty mentor would meet with the TA on a regular basis. Supervision would include a review of the TA's syllabus and assignments. The mentor would also review samples of grading. The mentor will observe at least two class periods taught by the TA. The mentor will offer constructive comments when necessary, and at the end of the semester, the mentor will write up an evaluation of the TA’s performance and make any necessary recommendations, along with a positive or negative recommendation for future appointments.
5. Upon completion of the semester, the graduate committee and department chair will assess the mentor’s evaluation and make a recommendation about future appointments for the TA.
6. All TAs must undergo the above outlined process for each semester they teach. This ensures a rigorous supervision of the TA that will contribute to the university’s goal of excellence in the classroom.

Teaching Assistant position
**This position would require less experience than the Teaching Instructor position since graduate students would be assisting faculty rather than teaching their own classes. This would also allow more graduate students to gain experience since the requirements to participate would be less than the Teaching Instructor position (and thus we can appoint a greater number of graduate students to this position). In addition, this model would generate additional revenue for the department and college.
Faculty would receive ½ credit for the size of the course since the TA would handle the grading and discussion of the course. By receiving less credit, faculty would teach an additional course or section to reach the normal teaching load. For example, a faculty who normally teaches one survey section (35-40 students) will now teach two sections (87 students) which doubles tuition dollars. This model is the traditional model that most History graduate programs use across the nation, including doctoral programs. Graduate students appointed to this position would need to be approved by the graduate committee and department chair and should have completed at least one year in the graduate program (first-year graduate students most likely will not have the necessary experience to be a TA).

**Description:**

1. Approved graduate students would be assigned 1-2 survey sections, depending on the size of the class:
   - one-section (35-40 students) class: a TA would be assigned two one-section classes.
   - double-section (87 students) class: one TA would be assigned for the double-section class.
   - triple-section (200 students) class: a minimum of two TAs would be assigned.

2. Teaching Assistants would grade all assignments (quizzes/exams/papers) for the course. They would also lead discussions if assigned by faculty. It is also expected that they give at least one lecture/presentation to the class during the semester. The TA would also handle any other administrative task assigned by the faculty (ex: taking attendance, recording grades, etc.). The TA will attend each class and should hold at least one weekly office hour (if office space exists).

3. The faculty member teaching a class with Teaching Assistants should meet with them in advance to notify them of their responsibilities. Faculty should also review the grading of written assignments and provide feedback to the TAs. They should also supervise at least one TA discussion and provide proper feedback. Feedback should also be provided for any lectures/presentation given by the TA. At the end of the semester, the faculty will complete a written evaluation of the TA’s performance and make a positive or negative recommendation for future appointments.

4. Upon completion of the semester, the graduate committee and department chair will assess faculty evaluations and make a recommendation about future appointments for each TA.

**Benefits of both Teaching Assistant positions:**

- provides additional revenue to the department/college by offering additional survey courses
- provides valuable experience to graduate students who want to teach
- contributes to the values of the university:
  * Faculty-directed student research and professional activities that complement classroom learning through learning by doing and reflection on doing.
  * Systematic investigation of teaching and student learning that fosters innovation in teacher, professional, and pre-professional preparation.