The University of Georgia’s Preparation of Future Faculty: A Graduate Student Perspective*

What UGA is doing well:

- GTA’s are receiving adequate training before entering the classroom.
- GTA’s are given numerous opportunities to teach, if they so desire—even in large lecture sections.
- GTA’s are rewarded and recognized by the University for teaching excellence. (The TA Mentor program is especially commendable)
- GTA’s have access to important teaching resources through the Office of Instructional Support and Development.
- International GTA’s are advised and trained in language and instructional methods before conducting undergraduate labs and classes.
- GTA’s are given opportunities to practice mentoring undergraduates and younger students.
- The University is amenable to considering opportunities for new projects (e.g. journals for/by students).
- GTA’s are given opportunities to perform “real life” tasks of a professor (e.g. editing journal(s) and organizing symposia).

What UGA can improve:

- The quality of GTA teaching is not assessed often enough by faculty or peers once TA’s have completed their initial training.
- Faculty and administrators consistently convey the attitude and advise their students that excellence in research is valued much more highly than excellence in teaching, which may cause graduate students to seek research assistantships (which pay more) or may even cause their classroom teaching to suffer.
- Most graduate programs do not include formal systems for faculty mentoring in teaching and other professional roles.
- Graduate students who are Teachers of Record are not given official recognition as such, but are still considered “Teaching Assistants.”
- Although international graduate students comprise a large part of the graduate population at the university, they are not adequately recognized for their contributions to the campus culture.
- As the nature of undergraduate education shifts to incorporate important interdisciplinary perspectives, graduate education does not seem to reflect those connections.
- As teaching and scholarly work begin to blend with the activities of civic engagement and service to the larger community, GTA’s are not well prepared to meet these new commitments.
- The Graduate School does not have one location where all current opportunities for graduate students are listed (including awards and fellowships along with assistantships).
- Most graduate students are not informed of the need for volunteers at facilities like Student Disability Services. Many students who are interested in teaching are also interested in working with disabled students, or just generally in helping/serving the school, and they should be made more aware of these opportunities.

*The views expressed here are based on the experiences of the Academic Affairs Symposium graduate student panel participants and may not necessarily reflect the experiences of other graduate students at UGA.