

## **CET Workshop on Professor/Student Collaborations in Development of Teaching Led by Professor Catherine Caldwell-Harris, CAS Psychology**

*Overview.* Two forms of professor/student collaborations are well known to most faculty: graduate students as graders and as discussion leaders for sections that accompany large lecture classes. This workshop will discuss a range of other ways for faculty members to benefit from collaborations with students. For example, teaching interns can help with new ideas for course development for a course that is to be given for the first time or revamped. Interns can search for graphics and videos for powerpoint presentations and can provide a student-eye view on course materials. We will discuss cases where a teaching intern is likely to be most helpful vs. less helpful, and how to benefit from teaching interns when students can be paid vs. when they volunteer or receive course credit.

**My main conception for the teaching intern: not just an assistant, but a co-strategist**

*Summer/Fall 007 intern experiences*

- Heather Caunt-Nulton, a graduate student in Applied Linguistics, taught Language Development with me, PS 504 Fall 06. Met weekly starting in Late July 06 to brainstorm about how to design the class.
- Natasha Ramanayake, a CAS junior, assisted in creating powerpoint presentations for Developmental Psychology, summer-fall 06.

### **Workshop discussion topics**

*The cost/benefit ratio: Is there a net benefit to the instructor, or is the intern yet one more student to teach?*

*Best use of teaching intern: Specific goal to achieve. Examples*

- Teaching a course for the first time or revamping course
- Switching from overhead transparencies to powerpoint
- Collecting student feedback about the lecture powerpoint and incorporating these

*Benefits to the intern (other than having a useful learning experience)?*

- Paid internships: Probably ideal; we can discuss how to justify; workstudy opportunity for both graduate and undergraduates
- Volunteer: Problem of student commitment; volunteers frequently over commit themselves
- Course credit: For graduate students, not-optimal if they have to pay to get course credit

*More details on my summer-fall 06 interns (See details on next sheet)*

- Were the internships beneficial to me, to the students, were the classes better? (I think yes to all)
- What would I do differently: For designing a new class, need more than 5 weeks in the summer.

*Making a teaching internship available as a paid job for graduate students at Boston University*

Faculty could write competitive application requesting graduate student intern. Priority for awards could be given to

- New faculty
- Faculty teaching a new course
- Faculty taking on a service class (e.g., taking over a course from a faculty member who retired)
- Graduate students who have a work-study award. faculty member
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## **Report on teaching internship with graduate student Heather Caunt-Nulton *Language Development PS 504, Fall 06.***

A key goal was to design a curriculum that would include student activities during class time

### *Activities we implemented*

- *Students explained articles to each other.* Two short journal articles were on the syllabus for a class day. In class, students divided into groups of 3-4 and each group was assigned one section of one article. The groups spent 15 minutes reviewing the articles together. When groups reconvened, we had a group member come to front of the class and explain their group's article while a second group member wrote notes on the board. Outcome: students understood these articles better than any others in the class, and drew on the articles to answer test questions later in the semester.
- Showing *short video clips* (e.g., chimp language) and discussing after each has proved engaging for students
- Tying in *students knowledge of other languages / cultural practices* in class discussion has lead to interesting and fruitful discussion (especially re: child-directed speech /motherese!)
- *Aphasia diagnosis quiz* was fun and lead to interesting discussion while reinforcing important basic concepts
- Brought in *transcripts for calculating MLU* (mean-length-of-utterance). A different transcript was given to each student or pair of students. Students could then see how difficult it is to calculate, compare across languages, discuss usefulness
- Brought in *transcripts of African-American English*, look at adult vs. child language, see what differences from Standard English are features of AAE, vs. developmentally motivated across all English speakers (1 transcript per pair of students)
- Brought in *mp3s of someone speaking another language*. Provided transcripts at different stages of segmentation (unsegmented, phrases, words) and have students try to segment each of these themselves. This gave students a sense of what the child's task is like when trying to segment language.

### *Basic lecture plan*

Used a combination of detailed powerpoints vs. ppts that contained just the graphs from the assigned journal articles.

## **The intern/prof/class relationship**

### *Summary*

- Prof gets feedback from students via their interaction w/ intern
- Intern sees how course development happens, which she can apply to her own teaching later on
- During class, intern can help with technological difficulties while prof keeps students engaged, rather than having dead air
- Intern can briefly lead discussion when necessary
- Intern keeps careful watch for usually quiet students who seem to have an idea to share, calls on them or draws prof's attention to them -> more students involved in classroom discussion
- Intern gathers a few articles and prof selects the most appropriate from these -> broader knowledge base for intern, more time for prof
- Powerpoint presentations are a collaborative effort - intern can create new instructional materials but benefit from prof's experience during revisions

### *General teaching assistance provided by intern during the semester*

- Intern taught class 1 day when instructor was unable to (jury duty)
- Intern served as point of contact for students who had minor concerns (about the website, basic questions about the readings, etc.)
- Intern helped in grading tests
- Intern created test questions, which were then discussed with instructor (some revised, new ones written, some excluded)... allows for both development of intern and a bit of time-saving for prof
- Intern discussed debate topics with the students, to see which are most interesting for them, which they have the best ideas about, etc.... this aids in ultimate selection of topics for end-of-class debate
- Intern made class seem a bit less hierarchically organized... adds to feeling of everyone sharing knowledge rather than prof disseminating... prof frequently mentions consultations w/ intern, draws her in as a source of knowledge when appropriate

### *Collaborating on class design during summer 06*

Met once a week for 2 to 2.5 hours. Prof had already selected a textbook and decided to spend one class week (2 meetings) per chapter.

Prof and intern concentrated on:

1. Choosing journal articles to compliment the textbook chapter (usually 2 articles)
2. Creating a lesson plan for each class, including discussion topics and activities (see below).

*Process:* We brainstormed, used the instructor's manual that came with the textbook.

(Alternative methods, not used this time: consult the prior prof who had taught this class; google for online examples of similar courses.)

Discussed papers we knew that fit the topic. Discussed activities we'd seen in other courses or activities suggested in the instructor's manual. For articles, Prof would often suggest names, intern would take notes and then look up papers or research activities (outside of meeting).

3. Intern also created the courseinfo website so that eventually all articles would be in separate folders labeled by week of class. She created a folder on the courseinfo website called Instructor materials. This is where we would deposit articles or lesson plans (rather than emailing each other).

*Benefits:* Intern had never built a courseinfo site and appreciated that experience, from the ground up. Later, during the semester, it was helpful for Prof to be able to count on someone else for postings and updates to the courseinfo site.

Brainstorming creative activities: Prof wouldn't have done it on her own, appreciated the chance to bounce ideas around. "Heather would bring me down to earth, remind me that a particular idea wasn't realistic."

### *Prof's experience of the internship during the class*

I counted on Heather to run the activities during class. I would then walk around the classroom and help individual students as needed. I also counted on Heather to be in charge of computer technology; connecting laptop to internet in order to show video clips or audio files.

How were the activities received? Really really well received. Students were overall engaged, more than in other classes.

Heather was a separate, additional resource for all kinds of questions. Helped create tests and helped with grading like a traditional TF.