

“Developing Leadership Skills through Participation in the Graduate Teaching Academy Steering Committee (GTASC): The GTASC Model”

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As a continuation of the Graduate Teaching Academy (GTA) Certificate of Completion Program (GTA Fellows program), the Graduate Teaching Academy Steering Committee (GTASC) offers unique opportunities for graduate students to experience activities such as leadership development, budget planning, event management, practicing interpersonal skills and much more.

The GTA Steering Committee is a volunteer graduate student-led organization which is made up of graduate students from many different disciplines as well as many different cultural perspectives. GTASC members consist of a director, an associate director, assistant directors and/or group leaders. A faculty advisor from the Center for Teaching Excellence supports the Steering Committee members in fulfilling their leadership role as it relates to GTA and its implementation.

The Director position requires at least one year of prior involvement with the GTA steering committee. Expectations of the Director are: (1) to develop and submit the budget request to the Office of Graduate Studies and the Center for Teaching Excellence prior to the program year (August/September - May), (2) to ensure the smooth running of all GTA activities, (3) to maintain the GTA e-mail account (gta@tamu.edu), (4) to be a primary contact person for the GTA, and (5) to publicize GTA to the university.

Expectations of the Associate Director are: (1) to reserve seminar rooms and to place orders for food (pizza), (2) to contact seminar speakers and provide handout assistance and technical support before and during the seminars (e.g. projector with a laptop, wireless lapel microphone, wireless presenter), (3) to arrange seminar rooms (using colored balloons to designate groups), (4) to maintain a master attendance file for all GTA participants, (5) to distribute give-away items (such as GTA t-shirts) to the participants at each seminar, and (6) to prepare thank-you cards and small gifts (usually GTA t-shirts) for the seminar speakers.

The Assistant Director of Technology videotapes each seminar and converts it to DVD format. (S)he delivers the DVD to the Educational Media Services Department (EdMS), located in the library, so that the DVDs can be streamed and posted on the library web-page (<http://mediamatrix.tamu.edu>).

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Expectations of Group Leaders are to: (1) guide group members throughout the Certificate of Completion program (to send out frequent group e-mails on upcoming seminars and to answer group members' e-mails regarding the program requirements), (2) collect all assignment submissions, and (3) help the Associate Director manage the central file of assignment submissions (by frequent update on their group members' status). The group leaders are the front people and key components of the GTA's success.

Occasionally, adhoc committees are formed to serve a special need, for example, the banquet committee which plans and oversees the banquet. The tasks of the banquet committee include: (1) send out Save-the-Date cards to potential banquet speakers, GTA mentors and guests, (2) find and reserve a banquet place, (3) decide on and contact the banquet caterer/menu, (4) send out RSVP e-mails to all guests (banquet speaker, mentors, as well as GTA participants), (5) allocate all seating arrangements, (6) coordinate the banquet room decorations (centerpieces and background music), (7) coordinate with the Center for Teaching Excellence and the Office of Graduate Studies to prepare the GTA Fellow certificates, (8) place the GTA advertisement (with the names of new GTA Fellows) in the campus newspaper (*The Battalion*), and (9) send out thank-you letters to all GTA mentors and seminar speakers, along with formal invitations to the banquet.

Most of the communications among the GTASC members and the faculty advisor are made through e-mails. Five group or face-to-face meetings were held during the academic year 2007-2008, but the number of meetings may vary according to the discretion of the committee.

The benefits of being GTASC members are: (1) GTASC members are given priority in the selection process for opportunities open to GTA members (such as Wakonse and Wakonse South conferences), (2) training opportunities exist exclusively for GTASC members (such as Strength Finder sessions), (3) opportunities exist to get to know seminar speakers and other faculty members better, (4) opportunities to develop leadership skills and good communication skills, (5) the ability to develop and enhance interpersonal skills, (6) to learn more about teaching and learning through access to teaching resources, such as the Center for Teaching Excellence and CIRTL, and (7) recognition as a Senior Fellow after serving on the Steering Committee.

The GTASC model is a proven example of leadership skills development for graduate students, with multiple years of demonstrated success. Multiple years of experience with it have helped to optimize this model and support future opportunities of possible implementation in graduate-led organizations at other institutions.

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