

Tips for Meeting TA Challenges As generated by Returning TA's at Symposium

Challenge: Students Who Do Not Know the Prerequisite Material

- Ask the students if they know already the basic things.
- Don't continue if they don't.
- Ask some students to help the ones who don't know yet Excel, Word, etc.
- Ask for synchronization of LABS, LECTURES, etc.
- Care about students!
- Have web page links to "Missing" information/background

Challenge: Academic Dishonesty

- Harsher Punishment - Zeros that stick
- Take papers away & make them leave!!
- Embarrass them
- Stand by them (next to them)
- Involve all profs (of cheating students)
- Permanent removal from class
- No hats during tests
- No palm pilots/calculators/cell phones
- Make clear what is and is not allowed in this class (e.g. can they do homework together? Look at solution sets? Look at a friend's previous term's homework?)

Challenge: Student Attitudes

- Talk to students individually
- Separate self from material to encourage personal interaction
- Exhibit good attitude
- Humor
- Show material on a different level ex: Take a day and do something different yet related
- Teach to the students level
- Interact on their level
- Respond positively to criticism & neg. attitudes
- Find out why students are taking the course & what they want to know

Challenge: Poor Student Attendance

- Include in syllabus (% of grade)
- Take attendance in the first half of class, then stop
- Have class ground-rules; make attendance part of them
- Make part of grade
- Quizzes
- Incentives (give good test/quiz info)
- Return homework in recitations
- Strict no make-up policies
- Make learning FUN (candy helps)
- Listen to feedback
- Teach something useful/important in class time

Challenge: Grade disputes

- Don't back down if you are right
- Ask third party to double check
- Hear student out
- Clear grading criteria in writing
- Have clarified expectations to student
- Ask professor
- Encourage professor to send student to you first
- Ask student with questions to come to office hours
- Don't take it personally.
- Use a dispute to assess a student
- Start with 100% and take off points from there
- Hand out samples of "A" work other student have done, so everyone sees what the ideal looks like

Challenge: Working with professors

- Develop a good working relationship
- Ask for schedule
- Ask for material weeks ahead of time
- Ask to meet on regular basis
- Ask a lot of organisational questions. Give suggestions on how to proceed

Challenge: Student don't participate in class

- Ask them questions
- Crack a joke
- Reward them for participation
- Give a problem and leave the room
- Start an essay question and apply
- Wait it out
- Prepare discussion question to provoke the talking
- Ask a question, have them write down answers, then call on them to reply

Challenge: Problems with technical equipment

- Try it before hand
- Have another method of presentation
- Know where extra equipment is
- Dont abuse it and it wont break

Challenge: Student talking not related to material

- Say "this is going to be on test"
- Mention points off for talking
- Walk around - "Snoop"
- Simply change the topic
- Ask them to the board
- Ask them questions - keep them on their toes
- Give bonus points for good questions
- Give "lots" of quizzes
- Be quiet until they stop
- Ask them "Can you share it with rest of the class?"