

# Graduate Connections



University of Nebraska–Lincoln

A Newsletter for UNL Graduate Students published by the Office of Graduate Studies

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## Navigating Graduate School

*Events, advice and strategies to help you succeed in Graduate School at UNL*

### DEVELOPING MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS THAT LAST: GETTING THE MENTORING YOU NEED

AN EFFECTIVE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP passes through phases of development. Early on, your mentor will recognize your unique qualities and your need for special coaching. In turn, this recognition should inspire you to seek out your mentor's support, skills and wisdom. Later, both of you will explore and deepen your working relationship, perhaps collaborating on projects while you develop into a junior colleague. At some point, you may grow in ways that require separation from your mentor, to test your own ideas. This distancing is a sign that the mentoring relationship is maturing and providing you with the skills you need to function independently. Finally, both you and your mentor may redefine your relationship as one of equals, characterized over time by informal contact.

Your faculty mentor can help you:

- become a contributing member of your discipline, helping you understand how your discipline has evolved in relation to other fields.
- develop a variety of intellectual and professional skills, including those related to teaching and research, but also those required for leadership and collaboration.
- understand job market realities and find ways to help you link your graduate work with other potential mentors beyond your department or field.

Matt Giovanni, a UNL doctoral student in agronomy, has developed a valuable relationship with his mentors and offers some sound advice for all graduate students to follow in developing mentoring relationships.

Matt suggests thinking about mentors who are a good match for you in terms of the skills, attitudes, knowledge and background they bring to the relationship. For Matt, those qualities are “a personable disposition, effective communication skills and ENTHUSIASM – because it's contagious!”

Matt's current mentors at UNL (as well as past advisers) have all “achieved a well-balanced professional and personal relationship with me. This is important since grad students should undergo not only professional growth but also personal transformation and progress.”

Good mentoring isn't easy to measure in objective terms, because each mentor and protégée need to develop ways of working together that suit their needs and expectations. Matt believes his mentors have best helped his academic and professional development by “providing encouragement and recognition of success when appropriate, but not in excess or too seldom,” and creating “a receptive and non-intimidating atmosphere for communication.”

Matt advises new graduate students, to meet frequently with mentors and learn how to “optimize your communications. Stay on the same page always, and don't underestimate the value of discussion, because it's critical.”

A successful mentoring arrangement at this stage of your academic career also can teach you a great deal about your future role as a faculty member or professional and how to prepare yourself as a potential mentor.

Jordan Soliz, assistant professor of communication studies, emphasizes the value of developing your philosophy of advising and mentoring graduate students. “Considering that many academic appointments will include graduate mentoring,” he says, your approach to this aspect of your job is something you “want to consider as part of your graduate education.” He encourages graduate students to reflect on three key questions to help them shape a mentoring philosophy:

- All of us have (or know colleagues who have had) extremely positive and not-so-positive experiences working with advisors. Learn from these experiences – what approaches and perspectives do you want to emulate or even disregard?
- Based on your experiences, what are the benefits and drawbacks of graduate student-faculty research collaborations? Reflecting on these experiences, how might you want to approach collaborative research and research teams?
- In your opinion, what is the role of a graduate adviser? There are a variety of mentoring roles an adviser can embrace ranging from enhancing a student's knowledge of

## **Eight Points for Developing a Positive Working Relationship with Your Faculty Mentor**

1. Talk to your faculty mentor early in your relationship about expectations and working arrangements: How frequently will you meet face to face? How closely will you work with a graduate student or postdoctoral fellow in addition to the faculty mentor? What blocks of time, hours of the day, or hours per week, consecutive weeks or semesters will you work? How will you be trained? Will you attend lab or research group meetings, and, if so, will you need to prepare something for them? Will you work in the lab or research area, or is there work you may take home to complete? What kind of final product will you produce?
2. Be active and responsible in initiating and organizing one-on-one communication: set meeting agendas, prioritize issues you want to discuss, be a leader in discussions.
3. Work with your faculty mentor to set short- and long-term goals and deadlines for the different stages of your project.
4. Learn your faculty mentor's communication habits: when does e-mail suffice, when must you meet face to face, and when – if ever – may you call her or him at home?
5. Consider sending your mentor summaries of meetings (agreements, assignments, work outlines), restating tasks and the division of labor.
6. Always read books or articles your faculty mentor recommends to you, and share your responses. Take suggestions seriously and let your mentor know that his or her time with you is well-spent.
7. Be curious and share your knowledge. The more you do so, the more seriously your work and aspirations will be regarded.
8. Always express your thanks after the faculty mentor has taken the time to meet with you. Send a thank you note or an e-mail stating what you gained from the interaction and how it will help you move ahead in your plans.

subject matter to advising about major – often non-academic – life decisions. What role are you comfortable with and how will this influence your approach to mentoring?

Matt has “learned the importance of serving as a mentor and teacher to undergraduates in a professional but personable and mutually respectful manner, which has really benefited our classroom and research relationships.”

For more information on mentoring, see UNL’s *Graduate Student Mentoring Guidebook* online at <http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/gsapd/resources/mentoring/>.

## Good Practices in Graduate Education

*Advice and strategies to strengthen ethics in graduate education*

### THE RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

OVER THE LAST DECADE, THE RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH (RCR) has received increasing attention from the academic research community, due, in no small part, to the changing scale of research and the potential rewards that can be garnered from innovation.

Added to this has been a social sea change in which some of the traditional checks on advancement and growth, such as religious and community influence, are not as sufficiently forceful and effective as in the past.

And researchers may be engaging in more self reflection out of an idealistic desire to attain a higher ethical standard while practicing what many perceive to be humanity’s best hope for advancement to a more supportive and fulfilling existence – the scientific enterprise.

However, there is a practical side to this reflection also. As the recent National Academies publication “Integrity in Scientific Research” succinctly put it: “The public will support science only if it can trust the scientists and institutions that conduct research.” And the academic endeavor of research has increasingly come to depend on public support.

With these notions in mind, the University of Nebraska–Lincoln has made a concerted university-wide effort to affirm and expand its commitment to the responsible conduct of research in a number of different ways, including development of the Office of Research Responsibility.

The ORR provides leadership in supporting a culture of integrity within the university, in which participants in the UNL research enterprise internalize and pursue the goal of self-directed responsible conduct of research.

ORR is overseen by the vice chancellor for research and economic development, Dr. Prem Paul, and guided by the associate vice chancellor for research, Dr. Kim Espy.

## How’s Your Connection?

You can read **Graduate Connections** on the Office of Graduate Studies web page, receive notification of the latest issue from your department, or have issues delivered directly to you via e-mail. To subscribe, send a message to [gsapd2@unl.edu](mailto:gsapd2@unl.edu) with [subscribe GC] in the subject line and your name and e-mail address in the body of the message.

We invite your feedback and comments about **Graduate Connections**. Can you use the kinds of information you find in this issue? What else can we include to help you make the right connections in the course of your graduate career? Are you engaged in research or other scholarly activity that you want to share with readers of **Graduate Connections**?

Please share your thoughts with us so we can bring you a relevant, lively and useful quarterly publication. Send e-mail to [gsapd2@unl.edu](mailto:gsapd2@unl.edu).

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## Teaching Tip

### End-of-Semester Reflection

The rhythms of the academic calendar offer frequent opportunities to begin anew. Fortunately, even the roughest semester eventually ends, affording a chance to look forward to a fresh start next time. The period between the end of one semester and the beginning of the next is a good time to think about what you've done well and what you want to change and improve.

Engaging consciously in reflection brings a sense of closure to the current semester and helps you focus on areas of concern for the next. Good teaching isn't just a matter of having a big "bag of tricks." Not all suggestions, strategies or "teaching tips" can be directly and mechanically applied to all situations. Reflecting on your classroom experiences will lead you to weigh choices and construct a more unified strategy and a solid pedagogy for practice.

Student evaluations of teaching provide one source of input for reflection. But there are many other rich possibilities. [Stephen Brookfield](#) has suggested four "critical lenses" for reflection: 1) personal experiences as teachers and learners, 2) students' input, 3) conversations with colleagues, and 4) interaction with the scholarship about teaching and learning. Some of Brookfield's strategies make good exercises for an end-of-the-semester reflection. Here are two suggestions:

#### **Conduct a Teacher Learning Audit.**

One way to track your development as a teacher is to conduct periodic "audits." Ask yourself a series of questions beginning with "Compared with this time last year, I am now able to. . ." Then ask yourself what led to your development (that is, to your learning).

**Write a Survival Advice Memo.** Write a "survival advice memo" to a new colleague. Identify the most important piece of advice you have to offer, and consider how you know that it is good. What is the best example you can provide of its effectiveness? Meet with colleagues to conduct this exercise and discuss your findings.

Source: [Center for Instruction, Research and Technology](#)  
Indiana State University

The range of responsibilities and issues covered by the office is comprehensive, including human and animal research protections, the ethical conduct of research, conflicts of interest in research, responsible authorship, collaborative science and mentor/ trainee responsibilities.

Some of the ORR's objectives are to:

- increase knowledge of and sensitivity to issues surrounding the responsible conduct of research.
- improve the ability of all members of a research team to make ethical and legal choices in the face of dilemmas they may encounter in the course of conducting scientific research.
- provide information about and advocate adherence to the regulations, policies, statutes and guidelines that govern the conduct of all research.
- develop positive attitudes toward life-long learning about the responsible conduct of research.
- assure the availability of quality educational resources necessary to fulfill the RCR mission.
- examine and evaluate the institutional environment supporting RCR and promote continuous improvement.

An example of an area that the office promotes in its education outreach is mentoring. This is the place that the relationship between student and faculty is set. Many would argue that the mentor/trainee dynamic is critical in the development of an environment that promotes the responsible conduct of research. ORR is certainly aware that good mentoring includes the responsibilities of adviser, teacher, role model, friend and advocate, but the primary concern is how these various roles fold into the process of positive socialization.

At UNL the general consensus is that appropriate and contributory mentoring is the crux of an inspiring and supportive environment and a respect for all who are involved in the research process. ORR recognizes that important ethical concerns are tied to the relationship linking mentors and advisees. Therefore, it takes seriously its role in helping graduate students and mentors grasp the nature of their separate responsibilities and facilitating any conversation that will help advisers and advisees map out their ethical obligations.

One educational tool the ORR developed is a series of video vignettes designed to illustrate typical ethical dilemmas graduate students may face and guided discussion questions on the issues raised and means of resolving them. You can view the vignettes and the discussion questions at <http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/facstaff/rcr>.

For more information about UNL's RCR initiatives, contact Dr. Daniel Vasgird at [dvasgird2@unl.edu](mailto:dvasgird2@unl.edu) or visit the ORR Web site at: <http://research.unl.edu/orr>.

# Essential Connections

Critical information about the fundamentals of graduate study at UNL

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## AVAILABLE GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS POSTED ON THE WEB

THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES has started collecting open graduate assistantships from across campus and posting them on the funding Web page at [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/prospective/assistantships\\_current.shtml](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/prospective/assistantships_current.shtml). Some of the current listings have

application deadlines, but many are open until filled. Although we will try to keep these listings current, your best source of information on any position listed is the office or department offering it.

## Professional Development Network

Events, workshops, tips and strategies to give graduate students a leg up in launching a professional career

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### HOW TO WRITE A TEACHING STATEMENT THAT STANDS OUT IN AWARD, FELLOWSHIP AND JOB SEARCH APPLICATIONS

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING? If you're preparing an award nomination or seeking a faculty position, it's something you need to be able to do, both in writing and out loud.

Why? First, because you'll most likely be asked to provide a statement of your teaching interests or discuss your philosophy of teaching as part of the job search process. Excellence in teaching is increasingly considered in academic job searches; in turn, an increasing number of institutions are requesting that applicants submit a statement of teaching philosophy or teaching statement as part of their applications.

Second, because it's good for you. Understanding why you teach the way you teach will make you a better teacher and benefit your students. The more explicit you are about your teaching, the better students are able to learn: they know what you value, your goals for their learning and what you expect from them. And documenting your teaching by writing about it can help you chart changes as you grow in your academic career; in other words, thoughtful, reflective examination of your teaching can foster professional growth.

While it may be true that your teaching statement won't guarantee you a coveted teaching award, fellowship or job, it most certainly will improve your ability to discuss your teaching coherently. Simply put, writing a teaching statement will help you more persuasively articulate your goals, beliefs and values about teaching and student learning.

If you're thinking about applying for a graduate fellowship or being nominated for UNL's Outstanding Teaching Assistant award, or if you're preparing to enter the job market next fall, summer is a good time to start writing your teaching statement. Here, several members of UNL's teaching faculty offer information and tips about preparing a dynamic teaching statement. As always, however, faculty members in your own department are the best source of advice about your job search, including writing the teaching statement. We encourage you to discuss every step of the job search process with your adviser.

#### What to Say

Amy Goodburn, associate dean for the College of Arts and Sciences, and professor of English, notes that the content of a teaching statement will vary depending upon the audience for which you are writing.

"If a graduate student is submitting a teaching statement for a job search," she explains, "it might be appropriate to cite pedagogical theorists who are valued in the field and situate one's teaching within that disciplinary conversation. On the other hand, if the student is submitting a teaching statement for a university teaching award, disciplinary references are usually unnecessary and can sometimes seem off-putting or inappropriate. In those cases, focusing on one's contributions to the teaching mission of the university would be more appropriate than situating one's teaching within a particular discipline."

Your teaching statement should make clear why, how, and what you teach. It is *not* an article on teaching and

learning but rather a statement that describes your teaching experiences and explains your teaching practices. Dr. Goodburn recommends that you keep in mind potential readers and the questions they're likely to have as they read your statement.

Four main questions should be addressed in any teaching statement:

1. How do you view your role as teacher – in a range of teaching situations and in general?
2. What are your goals for instruction, both for individual courses and in general? What do you want students to be able to learn (or do)? What are your objectives as a teacher? Do you want students to learn the fundamental concepts, develop life-long learning skills or problem-solving strategies?
3. How do the teaching methods you typically use reflect that interpretation of the teacher's role or the goals you've identified? You should be able to connect learning theory and curriculum design, give examples of specific strategies or learning exercises, discuss group work or collaborative learning techniques, and propose new ideas you have for teaching in your area. You might discuss how different learning environments or students' learning styles influence your teaching.
4. How have you modified your teaching methods in response to changes in students, course materials, curricular changes, advances in disciplinary knowledge and/or other mitigating factors?
5. Why is teaching important to you? What do you get out of it? What are your plans for improving your teaching? How do you assess your teaching?

Dr. Goodburn suggests the following strategies for writing effective teaching statements:

- Provide concrete classroom examples of how you act on your beliefs as a teacher.
- Show rather than tell the reader what your teaching looks like and what the resulting student learning/performance looks like (give concrete examples of what students do, learn, etc.).
- Provide enough context about the teaching environment so that the reader can understand how your goals/practices fulfill the larger university mission.

Steven Dunbar, professor of mathematics, notes that the best teaching statements are “clearly practice-based and evidence-based.” He says “it seems like a

lot of the teaching statements I read are collections of platitudes, mixed with clichés and conventional wisdom.” Instead, the best teaching statements include “some element of best educational practice” and evidence of how you have at least tried to implement the practice in your teaching.

### How to Say It

All the best ideas in the world mean very little if you don't communicate them clearly. Dr. Judy Walker, professor of mathematics, emphasizes the importance of good writing: The teaching statement “must be well-written. Teaching is all about communication and a candidate must communicate clearly. Moreover, the teaching statement is the one item in the file that every potential evaluator of the file should be able to read and understand. It's crucial that the candidate take the opportunity to put his/her best foot forward here.”

As you begin to develop and write your teaching statement, keep these additional tips in mind:

- Keep it short. Philosophy of teaching statements are usually brief, one or two pages long. Search committees read hundreds of applications for most tenure-track positions, so your goal is a concise 1-2 page statement organized around at most 1-2 main ideas. The challenge is to be specific and vivid enough to say something important about your teaching in that small space.
- Don't make empty statements – those broad philosophical declarations that aren't anchored in concrete examples. If you include brief examples of how your approach plays out in your courses, you help readers to visualize your teaching style and see the depth of your convictions. If you say you encourage discussion and collaboration in the classroom, explain how you do that. Remember, it's about student learning. Present a picture of you in the classroom with students learning: What are they doing? Why? How do you know it works?
- Don't rehash your CV. “As a TA at UNL, I've taught six semesters of Political Science 101” – We can see that on your CV; instead tell us what you've learned about effective teaching (based on your experiences in the classroom) and how you implement it.

- To ensure that your message is properly conveyed in your writing, don't write it once and stop. Carefully craft it. Just like the rest of the application, your teaching statement is a writing sample. Check for spelling, grammar and punctuation. Get feedback. Have your adviser/mentor(s) read it. Share it with your peers. (Also see the next article for more advice on effective writing.)
- Do your research; know the institution you're applying to and its mission; address the mission in your statement (yes, you may have to write several different statements, although the core stays the same).
- Adopt a tone of humility; remember that good teaching, like anything else, takes a lot of work. Be careful about making claims you can't back up; instead of claiming that students say you're the best teacher in the world, say that you get consistently high student ratings.

Dr. Walker's perspective on this issue is more direct: The statement "shouldn't be preachy. There are many different successful teaching styles, and what works for one person almost surely won't work for someone else. I find it incredibly presumptuous to read a teaching statement, written by someone with far less teaching experience than I have, which says something like 'Every good teacher must...'. More often than not, that sentence concludes with something I don't do!"

### Summary

Remember that teaching is about the students. New teachers often devote their statements to showing that they can be innovative or that they can incorporate sophisticated concepts in a classroom, but they seldom mention how students react to those innovations and concepts. The best teaching statements are organized around one's goals for student learning, are concrete and specific, and demonstrate a sincere commitment to teaching.

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## SIX PRINCIPLES FOR CLEAR WRITING

1. *Use short, familiar words.* Vocabulary is a tool – a means to an end. It is not an end in itself. Although a large vocabulary may be an asset, don't "show off" with it. Why use a large word when a small one does just as well?
2. *Keep most sentences short and simple.* Your sentences should average less than 20 words. It is better to express a thought in several short sentences than in one long one. Don't worry about sounding choppy. Much worse than being choppy is trying to pack too many ideas into one sentence.
3. *Use active verbs; avoid passives.* Nothing adds more dullness to writing than the passive voice. Write "The fullback *hit* the line" rather than "The line *was hit* by the fullback."
4. *Listen to your ear.* Write what you want to say the way you would explain it to someone else in a less formal situation. Ask yourself, "Does any of it sound phony, stilted or slangy?" If so, it probably is phony, stilted or slangy. Try reading your writing aloud. You'll be surprised how well it works in helping you find problem areas. Then ask yourself, "Does this sound like me?"
5. *Get people into your sentences.* The impersonal style, so traditional in both school and the workplace, is hard to justify except that "it's always been done that way." Times are changing. "We decided" is usually better than "It was decided." Your reports will be more accurate, more interesting and easier to write.
6. *Know your subject before you start.* Vague statements are the result of not knowing what you're talking about. The best way to be a good writer is to know the subject you're writing about. However, you don't have to know *exactly* what you're going to say or *exactly* how you're going to say it before you begin; sometimes you'll discover how you want to say something, and even generate a new idea or two, during the act of writing the first, exploratory draft. If you know your subject, your assurance and self-confidence will show through your writing. And don't try to tell everything you know about the subject; instead, say only what your reader needs to know or is interested in.

Source: Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Illinois at Springfield, <http://www.uis.edu/ctl/writing/handouts.html#writing>

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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Fall campus-wide workshops for TAs  
Institute for International Teaching Assistants  
Preparing Future Faculty Program

Professional development workshops  
Professional development courses  
Teaching Documentation Program  
Individual consultation on teaching, careers, job searches

Assistance gathering student feedback  
Advice on creating an academic career portfolio  
Teaching resource library

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## Interactions

*Personal achievements of graduate students, research reports, teaching successes, calls for collaboration, and student-to-student interaction*

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### KASEY FOWLER-FINN AND HOLLY PRENDEVILLE RECEIVE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION IMPROVEMENT GRANTS FROM NSF

TWO DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES have been awarded prestigious Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grants from the National Science Foundation. Kasey Fowler-Finn in Eileen Hebets' lab and Holly Prendeville in Diana

Pilson's lab are the first SBS grad students in at least the last 12 years to be accorded this honor, according to Dr. Guillermo Orti, SBS graduate chair. Kudos to Kasey and Holly.

### CONGRATULATIONS TO 2008 GRADUATE POSTER COMPETITION WINNERS

All departments were well-represented at the Graduate Student Poster Competition at UNL's annual Research Fair on April 2. Nineteen students earned awards for outstanding posters.

#### Biological and Agricultural Sciences

Chandreyee Mitra  
Manjusha Kasinadhuni  
Mark Corrigan  
Teresa Donze  
Corineah Godsey  
Virgil Bremer

#### Education, Business, and Journalism

Ryan Downing

#### Social Sciences

Jamie Wilkinson  
Courtney LeClair

#### Physical and Material Science

Zhen Li  
Andrew Baruth  
Abhijit Mardana  
Nina Hong  
Jacob Friest

#### Computer Science and Engineering

Sandro Plamp  
Xiaoli Zhang

#### Humanities and Fine Arts

Jesse McConnell  
Stacey Hageman  
Matt Roque  
Chris Stara  
Justin Okimi

### GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION NEWS

#### Come Out and Play

DON'T MISS THE LAST GSA SOCIAL OF THE YEAR! We will have free pizza at Yia Yia's on Thursday, April 24 from 5:00-7:30 PM. To find us, look for the people with the stylish yellow GSA shirts.

#### Graduate Student Appreciation Week (GSAW)

GSAW was from Monday, March 31 – Saturday, April 5. Thanks to all grad students who participated. We

hope you enjoyed comedian Jorge Cham on "The Power of Procrastination."

#### Initiatives that Affect YOU

GSA has been working on several initiatives that will affect all graduate students at UNL

- Requesting a task force to investigate campus-level travel and research grants

- Delaying the billing cycle for GTAs at the beginning of each semester
- Working with administrators on family-leave, insurance and childcare policies
- Collecting books at the end of the semester for the Better World Books philanthropy

### Speak Up

GSA wants to hear from you. What would make being a graduate student at UNL better? Interdisciplinary research? Mixers? Speakers? Workshops? E-mail us with comments, suggestions, concerns & questions: [gsa@unl.edu](mailto:gsa@unl.edu).

For more information about your GSA, go to: <http://www.unl.edu/gsa>.

## Funding Opportunities

*A sampling of information on fellowships, scholarships, competitions, and other funding prospects*

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### GRAD STUDIES WEB SITE NOW INCLUDES LINKS TO EXTERNAL FELLOWSHIPS

THE GRADUATE STUDIES WEB SITE now includes a page with information about more than 600 different external fellowships. The files are organized in table format with fellowship titles, descriptions, deadline dates and Web addresses. You can search subject areas

or view the entire collection in one file. Go to <http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/funding-external.shtml>. For additional fellowship assistance, contact Jane Schneider at [jschneid@unlnotes.unl.edu](mailto:jschneid@unlnotes.unl.edu).

### ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION / LUMINA FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATION FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The key objective is to promote innovative scholarship by creating an intergenerational community of scholars who will examine social, institutional and policy barriers to opportunity and student success.

**Deadline:** 5/10/08

**Award amount:** \$14,000 for three years

<http://www.ashe.ws/fellowship/aboutfellowship.htm>

### AQUILA ENERGY SCIENCES FELLOWSHIP

The Nebraska Center for Energy Sciences Research is accepting applications for the Aquila Energy Sciences Fellowship for UNL graduate students who have the potential for making an impact in the energy sciences (including all science and engineering disciplines, economics, policy and architecture) through their

graduate research projects and coursework to fulfill requirements for either an M.S. or Ph.D.

**Deadline:** 5/16/08

**Amount:** \$2500

<http://ncesr.unl.edu>

### NATIONAL INVENTORS HALL OF FAME

For 17 years, the Collegiate Inventors Competition (sponsored by the Abbott Fund and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office) has encouraged undergraduate and graduate students – either individuals or teams – on their quest to change the world around them. With over \$75,000 in prizes awarded to top inventors and their academic advisers each year, the competition is one of the most prestigious honors available to college and university innovators.

**Deadline:** 5/16/08

**Award amount:** One undergraduate and one graduate winner or team will each receive \$15,000. One grand prize winner or team will receive \$25,000. Academic advisers of the graduate and undergraduate winners will each receive \$5,000 and the adviser to the grand prize student will receive \$15,000.

<http://www.invent.org/collegiate/>

## WOMEN'S RESEARCH AND EDUCATION INSTITUTE

The WREI awards annual fellowships to a select number of graduate students with a proven commitment to equity for women. WREI fellows gain practical policymaking experience and graduate credit as they work from January to August as congressional legislative aides in Washington, D.C. Fellows receive stipends for tuition and living expenses.

Fellows are selected on the basis of academic competence as well as their demonstrated interest in the public policy process. They are expected to be articulate, adaptable and to have strong writing skills. Only students who are currently in, or have recently

completed, a graduate or professional-degree program at an accredited institution in the United States are eligible.

**Deadline:** 5/16/08

**Award amount:** stipend of \$1450 per month (plus \$500 for purchase of health insurance); maximum of \$1500 for tuition reimbursement (up to 3 credit hours per semester). Fellows are responsible for transportation to and from Washington and for finding their own living arrangements.

<http://www.wrei.org/>

## AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION DISSERTATION GRANTS

AERA invites education policy- and practice-related dissertation proposals using [NCES](#), [NSF](#), and other national data bases. Dissertation grants are available for advanced doctoral students and are intended to support students while they write the doctoral dissertation. Applications are encouraged from a variety of disciplines, such as (but not limited to) education,

sociology, economics, psychology, demography, statistics and psychometrics.

**Deadline:** 8/29/08 to be reviewed in September

**Award amounts:** up to \$15,000 for one-year projects.

[http://www.aera.net/grantsprogram/res\\_training/diss\\_grants/DGFly.html](http://www.aera.net/grantsprogram/res_training/diss_grants/DGFly.html)

## AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF HISPANICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION OUTSTANDING DISSERTATIONS COMPETITION

The competition is open to anyone who has completed a dissertation that focuses on Hispanics in higher education **or** to any Hispanic who has completed a dissertation in the social sciences between June 1, 2006 and August 1, 2008. Dissertations are eligible if they are in domains related to the Educational Testing Services (ETS) corporate mission, including education, linguistics, psychology, statistics, testing, and so forth.

Dissertations in the humanities, sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics are **not** eligible.

**Deadline:** 09/8/08

**Award amounts:** \$5,000, \$2,000, and \$1,000

<http://www.aahhe.org/OutstandingDissertationsCompetition2008.aspx>

## THE CENTER FOR CRAFT, CREATIVITY & DESIGN, CRAFT RESEARCH FUND: GRADUATE RESEARCH GRANTS

Grants support research for a thesis or dissertation relating to United States craft by students enrolled in graduate programs in any accredited college or university. No capital equipment purchases are eligible for support. Travel expenses may be included if justified by the research.

**Deadline:** 7/1/08

**Award amount:** \$10,000

<http://www.craftcreativitydesign.org/>

## W. E. UPJOHN INSTITUTE FOR EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH DISSERTATION AWARD

The W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research invites submissions for its annual prize for the best Ph.D. dissertation on employment-related issues. The institute supports and conducts policy-relevant research on employment, unemployment and social insurance programs. The dissertation award further pursues this mission. The dissertation may come from

any academic discipline, but it must have a substantial policy thrust.

**Deadline:** 7/7/08

**Award amount:** \$2000 first prize; up to two honorable mention prizes of \$750

<http://www.upjohninst.org/dissert.html>

## NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION PAUL P. FIDLER RESEARCH GRANT

The competition is open to faculty, staff and graduate students who plan to conduct research on issues of college student transitions. Cross-institutional research teams are encouraged to apply.

**Deadline:** 7/1/08

**Award amount:** \$5000 stipend and travel to the 2008 and 2009 conferences

<http://www.sc.edu/fye/research/grant/proposal/>

***NOTE:** UNL's Office of Research sends out weekly announcements of funding opportunities, several of which relate to fellowships in a wide variety of fields of study. If you are interested in receiving these announcements, you can subscribe to the listserv by sending an email to Nathan Meier at [nmeier2@unl.edu](mailto:nmeier2@unl.edu). Funding announcements archives also are available at: <http://research.unl.edu/sp1/oldfa.shtml>.*

## Resources for Researchers

*Research tips and other information for graduate researchers*

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### NURAMP WORKSHOPS OFFERED IN APRIL AND MAY

THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH is offering a second round of workshops for researchers, postdocs, graduate students and research administration staff members on topics ranging from proposal preparation to research

responsibility to managing financial awards. Workshops are scheduled weekly (or bi-weekly) from April 15 through May 15. For more information or to register, go to <http://research.unl.edu/nuramp>.

## Announcements

*News of note for graduate students*

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### SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS: JULY 28-AUGUST 12

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS AT UNL who expect to receive instructional assignments and whose native language is not English must successfully complete the Institute for International Teaching Assistants (ITAs). The Institute, established in summer 1988, is a multi-purpose program designed to prepare international graduate students from various university departments to teach American undergraduates.

Objectives of the program are to help ITAs develop an

understanding of the teaching role in American university classrooms, provide intensive training in English pronunciation and intonation, create opportunities to practice classroom communication skills and instructional strategies, and help ITAs during their first semester teaching with follow-up observations.

The Summer 2008 ITA Institute runs from July 28 through August 12, 2008, with final panels scheduled

for August 13 and 14. The application deadline is Friday, July 6, 2008. Applications for the Institute must be completed online by a department representative. Department staff can e-mail Dr. Laurie Bellows

([lbellows1@unl.edu](mailto:lbellows1@unl.edu)) for the password and instructions on how to submit the application.

For more information about the ITA Institute, go to the Graduate Studies website.

## SPEAK TEST DATES

TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS, students must score a 26 or higher on the speaking section of the iBT TOEFL or achieve a minimum score of 45 on the TSE or SPEAK Test.

- International graduate students with a score of 26 or higher on the speaking section of the iBT TOEFL are not required to take the SPEAK Test and are eligible to enroll in the Institute for International Teaching Assistants.
- International graduate students with a score of 25 or lower on the speaking section of the iBT TOEFL

must take the SPEAK Test and receive a score of 45 or higher to be eligible to enroll in the Institute for International Teaching Assistants.

To register for the SPEAK test, go to Nebraska Hall, room E513. The registration fee is \$40.00. Sample test materials are available online at [www.unl.edu/pies/testing.shtml](http://www.unl.edu/pies/testing.shtml).

### Scheduled test dates:

Thursday, June 5            3:30 p.m.

Thursday, July 10        3:30 p.m.

## 18<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL FALL CAMPUS-WIDE WORKSHOPS FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS TO BE OFFERED AUGUST 19

THE FALL CAMPUS-WIDE TA WORKSHOPS FOR GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS, sponsored by the Office of Graduate Studies, are scheduled for August 19. This year we're pleased to have as our keynote speaker Dr. James Eison, professor of adult, career and higher education at the University of South Florida.

Both new and experienced graduate teaching assistants will find sessions planned especially for their instructional and professional development, with a

large selection of roundtable discussions designed to encourage small group discussions around important teaching and learning topics. The workshop day features a free lunch, too, so be sure to pre-register!

The preliminary schedule, session descriptions and online pre-registration form are available on the Graduate Studies website at

<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/gsapd/programs/ta/>

## COMMENCEMENT CHANGES

IN MAY, UNL WILL INITIATE A NEW DOCTORAL COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY that will include both hooding and diploma distribution for doctoral students. Doctoral students will not participate in the Saturday commencement at the Devaney Center.

Find more information at

<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/hooding.shtml>.

Masters degree students will continue to participate in the Saturday commencement held in the Devaney Center. For more information, go to

<http://www.unl.edu/regrec/graduation/ceremony.shtml>

# Calendar

Keep connected with the Grad Studies Calendar – important deadlines, dates and dealings you need to know about. For other deadlines related to graduation and degree completion, go to [www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current).

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## MASTER'S DEGREE DEADLINES

### [Master's Degrees](#) to be conferred May 2008

- Apr 24 Final Day for Oral Examination
- Apr 18 Incomplete Grades Must Be Removed; File Results of Written Comprehensive Exam and/or Option II Paper
- Apr 25 Deposit Thesis and Final Examination Report Form; Pay Binding Fee
- May 10 Commencement

### [Master's Degrees](#) to be conferred August 2008

- June 27 Deadline to Apply for Advanced Degree
- July 10 Submit Final Exam Report (or 3 weeks prior to oral)
- July 18 Incomplete Grades Must Be Removed; File Results of Written Comprehensive Exam and/or Option II Paper
- July 18 Submit Preliminary Copy of Thesis (or 1 week prior to oral)
- July 31 Final Day for Oral Examination
- Aug 1 Deposit Thesis and Final Examination Report Form; Pay Binding Fee
- Aug 16 Commencement

## DOCTORAL DEGREE DEADLINES

### [Doctoral Degrees](#) to be conferred May 2008

- April 24 Oral examination
- April 25 Dissertation deposit; dissertation grades; final fees; final forms
- May 9 Doctoral hooding and commencement ceremony

### [Doctoral Degrees](#) to be conferred August 2008

- June 27 Application for Advanced Degree
- July 10 Application for Final Exam Report; Incomplete Grades Must Be Removed
- July 31 Oral Examination
- Aug. 1 Dissertation deposit; dissertation grades; final fees; final forms
- Aug. 15 Doctoral hooding and commencement ceremony

## Word to the Wise

*Tips for graduate students on a miscellany of topics*

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Naomi Rockler-Gladen, feature writer for the [Campus Life](#) section at Suite101.com, offers advice for students on academic issues and other aspects of higher education. Here she offers some brief tips on developing the professional side of your graduate school experience:

Sometimes classes feel so overwhelming you forget about doing the other things you need to do as a grad student to develop yourself professionally. Here are some suggestions related to accomplishing academic goals outside of the classroom.

- Submit at least one paper – and preferably more – to the next major conference.
- Make a strong effort to network at the next conference.
- Skim the contents of the important journals in your field when they come out, and read the articles most relevant to your research.
- Fix up a paper and submit it to an academic journal.
- Fix up a paper that's been rejected by an academic journal and submit it somewhere else.
- Discuss with a professor the possibility of collaboration.
- Read *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and other pertinent publications regularly.

# Readers' Corner

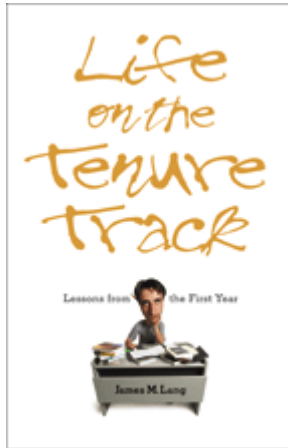
Interesting reading for graduate students

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## LIFE ON THE TENURE TRACK

James M Lang (2005)

[Johns Hopkins University Press](#)



In this fast-paced and lively account, Jim Lang asks – and mostly answers – the questions that confront every new faculty member as well as those who dream of becoming new faculty members: Will my students like me? Will my teaching schedule allow me time to do research and write? Do I really want to spend the

rest of my life in this profession? Is anyone awake in the back row?

Lang narrates the story of his first year on the tenure track with wit and wisdom, detailing his moments of confusion, frustration, and even elation – in the classroom, at his writing desk, during his office hours, in departmental meetings – as well as his insights into the lives and working conditions of faculty in higher education today.

Each chapter chronicles a different month of the academic school year, describing his new life as an academic, both in and out of the classroom. He realizes with a shock that he has an abundance of unstructured time and soon concludes that this is both a blessing and a curse. He is surprised to see that he's been chosen to serve on countless committees. He is disheartened to discover the reticence of his first-year students, and makes concerted efforts to bring interesting new teaching methods to his classroom.

With two young daughters (he and his wife have had three more children since), he understands the need to strike a balance between work and family time. He also details a concern especially important for English teachers: making time for personal writing projects. Lang pens regular first-person columns for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, detailing his experiences as a tenure-track professor.

Engaging and accessible, *Life on the Tenure Track* will delight and enlighten faculty, graduate students and administrators alike.