

# Graduate Connections

Welcome to *Graduate Connections*, an electronic newsletter for graduate students at UNL (and for faculty and staff interested in issues important to graduate students). This quarterly publication provides information to help you make your way through your graduate school career, links you with news about events planned and organized just for you, provides timely information about deadlines and funding, and connects you with other graduate students at UNL.

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## Professional Development Network

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

### WORKSHOP FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS ON PREPARING NSF FELLOWSHIP APPLICATIONS

During the annual UNL Research Fair, the Graduate Studies Office will sponsor a workshop for graduate students on preparing NSF graduate research fellowship applications. The workshop will be offered twice on Wednesday, April 11, 2007 – from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. and again from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. – in the City Campus Union.

The workshop presenter will be Tim Turner of the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship Operations Center.

NSF's Graduate Research Fellowship Program offers a \$30,000 annual stipend and a \$10,500 cost-of-education allowance for three years. Participants in this workshop will learn how to put together an NSF graduate research fellowship package and receive valuable suggestions for writing a competitive fellowship application. (See page 4 of this newsletter for more tips on writing a successful fellowship application.)

NSF supports the following fields: chemistry, computer science, engineering, geosciences, life sciences, mathematical sciences, physics and astronomy, psychology, and social sciences.

### TEACHING DOCUMENTATION PROGRAM

The Office of Graduate Studies began offering its Teaching Documentation Program in fall 2006 for TAs at all levels. The program provides TAs with a variety of tools to analyze and document their classroom experiences – both to help them continuously improve their teaching and to get them started on a process for documenting their work.

If you are interested in the program, Dr. Rick Lombardo is available to meet with you to discuss questions related to teaching; visit your classroom and observe you as you teach; record a class session on videotape for you to review; hold discussion sessions with students to

## Teaching Tip

### Leading Discussions Effectively

*Classroom discussions can lead to important student learning. To most effectively use discussion as a teaching and learning tool in your course, consider these suggestions.*

- Identify your objectives for the discussion and share them with students at the outset.
- Provide clear guidelines for participation. Discuss them beforehand, stick to them, and enforce them during the discussion.
- Maintain an atmosphere of safety and respect.
- Use open-ended questions, ask students for clarification, examples, definitions.
- Summarize student responses without taking a clear stand one way or another.
- Invite students to address one another and not always "go through" you.
- Pause to give students time to reflect on your summaries or others' comments.
- Deal openly with conflicts – don't ignore them; listen to your students—attempt to learn from them.
- Control the "talkers" and call on the "non-talkers." But if a "non-talker" isn't ready to contribute, don't persist.
- Consider taking notes of main points on a chalkboard or overhead, but if you do, write everyone's ideas down.
- Toward the end of the discussion, review the main ideas, the thread of the discussion, and conclusions.
- Ask students about their reactions to the discussion session.

Source: Stanford University  
<http://ctl.stanford.edu/handbook.pdf>

identify your teaching strengths and areas that could be improved; or administer a mid-semester student assessment called TABS (Teaching Analysis By Students) to help you capitalize on strategies that are working and change things that aren't. In addition, he and other consultants can help you plan and develop a teaching portfolio and craft your teaching philosophy statement for academic job applications.

Physics and Astronomy Professor Gregory Snow is working with five graduate students, all first-time TAs, who participated in the Teaching Documentation Program during the fall semester 2006. He had the opportunity to witness a follow-up discussion Dr. Rick Lombardo held with one of the TAs after Rick had observed the TA teaching and had analyzed responses from questionnaires the students had filled out.

Dr. Snow says, "I was impressed by Rick's ability to distill the collected information and focus the TA's attention on a small number of areas where improvement or fine-tuning to his teaching methods was needed. Rick provides both oral and written feedback to the TAs in the program and to their supervisors. I am encouraging more of our department's graduate TAs to participate in Rick's program, since a small investment of their time results in noticeable enhancements in their teaching skills."

If you want to know more about the ways the Office of Graduate Studies can support your teaching, contact Dr. Richard Lombardo, 402/472-5334 or [rlombardo2@unl.edu](mailto:rlombardo2@unl.edu).

### STILL TIME TO APPLY FOR PREPARING FUTURE FACULTY

The Office of Graduate Studies is accepting applications to the Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) program, a national initiative to help advanced Ph.D. students increase their competitive edge in the academic job market. PFF supplements departmental efforts to help advanced graduate students better prepare for faculty careers, through a combination of seminars and structured mentoring experiences.

PFF fellows are **advanced doctoral students** selected by procedures internal to each participating department. Students should contact their department graduate chairs to express interest in the PFF program.

What will you gain from participating in PFF?

- Additional information about faculty roles and activities
- Better awareness of institutions in which graduates may work and the expectations those institutions have for their faculty
- Mentoring by a faculty member at a partner institution
- A network of professional colleagues
- Increased confidence as academic professionals

Perhaps most important, PFF's widely favorable reputation among academic institutions gives participating graduate students a valuable credential in the academic marketplace. In short, PFF can help students get faculty positions that fit their professional goals.

PFF recognizes that participants have a wide range of needs and skills. For this reason, the program is designed to be flexible. Students

participate in a seminar during the second five-week summer session and, during the following fall semester, a mentoring experience at a partner institution.

Throughout the entire PFF Program, we focus on such topics as hiring and tenure procedures, professional development, preparing for the job market, constructing research and teaching portfolios, new faculty experiences, the meaning of scholarship at various academic campuses, and challenges and opportunities for the university in the 21st century. In addition, the structured mentoring experience gives students an opportunity to discuss issues of faculty life as they build new professional relationships.

For more information about the PFF program, please visit our website <http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/gsapd/pff/> or contact Dr. Laurie Bellows, [lbellows1@unl.edu](mailto:lbellows1@unl.edu) or 402/472-9764.

## Calendar

*Keep connected with the Grad Studies Calendar – important deadlines, dates and dealings you need to know about. Click on the links for more information.*

### WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

- March 9 [Grant Writing Seminar](#)
- April 10-12 [Research Fair](#)
- April 11 Fellowship Application Workshop
- April 11 [Graduate Student Poster Competition](#)

### DEGREE DEADLINES

[Doctoral Degrees](#) to be conferred May 2007

- Jan 26 Application for Advanced Degree
- Mar 29 Application for Final Oral Exam (or Waiver); Preliminary Copy of Dissertation/Abstract; Incomplete Grades Removed
- Apr 19 Oral Examination
- Apr 20 Dissertation Deposit; Dissertation Grades; Final Fees; Final Forms
- May 4 Doctoral Hooding Ceremony
- May 5 Commencement

[Masters Degrees](#) to be conferred May 2007

- Jan 26 Application for Advanced Degree
- Mar 22 Final Examination Report Form
- Apr 5 Preliminary Copy of Thesis
- Apr 19 Oral Examination
- Apr 20 Incomplete Grades Removed
- Apr 20 Results of Written Comprehensive Exam and/or Option II Paper
- Apr 20 Thesis Deposit; Final Examination Report Form; Payment of Binding Fee
- May 5 Commencement

## 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 email 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 email to [gsapd2@unl.edu](mailto:gsapd2@unl.edu).

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# Announcements

News of note for graduate students

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## UNL GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE FEBRUARY 5!!

UNL graduate student fellowship applications for funding in the 2007-2008 academic year are due Feb. 5. See <http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/funding-fellowships.shtml> for more information. If you have

questions about the application or the selection process, contact Jane Schneider, [jschneid@unlnotes.unl.edu](mailto:jschneid@unlnotes.unl.edu) or 402/472-8670.

## FORMER MCNAIR SCHOLARS: WHO ARE YOU?

UNL's McNair Scholars Project would like to create a database of McNair alums on campus to showcase the success of the Department of Education's Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program. Any graduate student who is a McNair alumnus, from

UNL or another university, is invited to contact Carol Boehler, [cboehler2@unl.edu](mailto:cboehler2@unl.edu) or 402/472-5062. Please let her know your name, the university at which you were part of the McNair Program, your current department, e-mail address, and phone number.

## WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY SUMMER DOCTORAL FELLOWS PROGRAM INVITATION

Washington State University invites doctoral candidates to apply for its six-week Summer Doctoral Fellows Program (June 18 to July 27). The program gives selected doctoral students the opportunity to work closely with faculty mentors at Washington State University in preparing for academic careers as future faculty members.

During the program, fellows will work on completing dissertations; participate in seminars on topics related to faculty roles and expectations in higher education; and design individual programs to enhance their teaching, research, and other scholarship.

Interested candidates should submit a curriculum vitae, graduate school transcript, three letters of

recommendation, and a 3-5 page career goals and research interest statement to:

Dr. Howard D. Grimes, Dean, Graduate School  
Attn: Summer Doctoral Fellows Program  
P.O. Box 641030  
Washington State University  
Pullman, WA 99164-1030

The program is designed primarily for U.S. citizens from diverse backgrounds.

For additional information, about the program, go to <http://www.gradsch.wsu.edu/summerfellow.htm>, or contact Joe Merrill, 509/335-6412 ([joem@wsu.edu](mailto:joem@wsu.edu)) or Steve Burkett, 509/335-6424 ([sburkett@wsu.edu](mailto:sburkett@wsu.edu)).

## MENTORING GUIDEBOOKS AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Reminder: The guidebook, "How to Get the Mentoring You Need: A Guide for Graduate Students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln," is available for all

graduate students at the Graduate Studies front desk in Seaton Hall. Stop by and pick one up, or send e-mail to [abergeon1@unl.edu](mailto:abergeon1@unl.edu) and ask us to send one to you.

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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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