



Perspectives of Teaching from a LGU's College of Agriculture & Life Sciences

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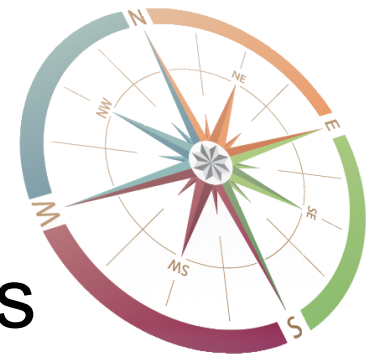
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What is the GTS?

Graduate Teaching Scholars (GTS)
in the College of Agriculture and
Life Sciences to train science PhDs
in pedagogical instruction.





GTS Components

- Annual student cohorts (6 students ea)
- Weekly Classes
- 3 Year Progressive Teaching Plan
- Future Professoriate Certificate
- Educational Research Component
- Mentor



GTS Scholars Summary

- 30 Scholars have participated in the program
- Scholars represent all departments in CALS (12)



Evaluation Need

- *Program completed five (5) years.
Est. 2012*
- *Scholars were graduating*
- *Program Improvement*





Evaluation Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative evaluation is to explore the characteristics and recognition of the program components that are supporting teaching improvements in GTS Scholars and Virginia Tech CALS more broadly.



Evaluation Questions

- Determine what aspects of GTS are having an impact on Scholars.
- Identify impacts that the GTS program has had on Scholars teaching.
- Identify attitudes and perceptions held by Virginia Tech's CALS faculty and Department Heads.



Theoretical Framework

- Experiential Learning
 - learning from doing
- Situated Learning Theory
 - direct embodied experience
- Communities of Practice
 - vicarious experience, through relationships, around shared desire for skill development



Methods and Data Analysis

- Design
 - Qualitative
 - Triangulation
(Department Heads, Mentors, Participants)
 - Focus Groups & Interviews
- Analysis
 - Audit Trail
 - Open Codes
 - Multiple coding

Participants: Employees (n=8)

Given Name	Type	Gender	Age	Ethnicity
David	Mentor	Male	56	Caucasian
Shannon	Mentor	Female	35	Caucasian
Karen	Mentor	Female	52	Caucasian
Max	Mentor & Department Head	Male	64	Caucasian
Tim	Department Head	Male	55	Caucasian
Daniel	Department Head (Interim)	Male	No response	Caucasian
Charlotte	Department Head	Female	55	Caucasian
Laura	Administrator	Female	No response	Caucasian



Participants: Scholars (n=10)

Given Name	Type	Gender	Age	Ethnicity
Samantha	Alumni	Female	36	Chinese
Kristin	Alumni	Female	29	Caucasian
Molly	Alumni	Female	No response	Caucasian
Sarah	Alumni	Female	29	Caucasian
Grant	Alumni	Male	27	Caucasian
Pam	Current Scholar	Female	30	Chinese
Brad	Current Scholar	Male	26	Native American
Peter	Current Scholar	Male	31	Caucasian
Samuel	Current Scholar	Male	40	Caucasian
Jose	Current Scholar	Male	27	Hispanic



Themes Developed

- Recruitment & Finding Successful Scholars
- Three year program is beneficial
- Weekly session
- Experience of Teaching
- Mentors
- Development of Community of Practice
- Preparation for a Career in Academia
- Perspectives on teaching



Faculty and Administrators' Perspectives of the Role and Importance of Teaching

- Teaching Has Not Been Historically Valued
- Good Teaching is a Fundamental Mission
- Faculty Felt Ill Prepared for Teaching Responsibilities
- Acknowledgement that Bad Teaching is a Detriment
- Experience of Teaching Will Differentiate PhD Graduates
- Teaching will be important for the University to set it apart from peer Institutions



Teaching Has Not Been Historically Valued

“I think in higher ed for years we have just kinda like, oh yeah yeah yeah everybody just figures it out, it’s like, eh, yeah, well, you can only figure out so much on your own.”

Karen, a mentor

“paper is the currency so they kinda spend all of their time in research, so even among the students, some have these vague feeling about teaching, that maybe teaching is not that good of a way to invest your time”

Pam, a Scholar



Good Teaching is a Fundamental Mission

“I have always valued, and I think all departments has to, value teaching. Teaching is important”

Max, Department Head

“they have only been trained in research, and there is a whole range of appointments, percentages. There is a whole other dimension that we need to be training students in”

Shannon, Department Head



Faculty Felt Ill Prepared for Teaching Responsibilities

“I helped with teaching some but I had never really received mentoring, it was really the experience that I would gather [in the classroom]..., certainly no, I didn’t even know what the word pedagogy meant.”

Max

“I am struck by the fact that nobody ever engaged me and taught me things in that way, yeah, I was pretty much just left to my own devices”

Charlotte



Acknowledgement that Bad Teaching is a Detriment

“given my age, I’m more from the kinda lecture format which is pretty stale and boring, for the current generation, probably any generation (laughter)”

David



Experience of Teaching Will Differentiate PhD Graduates

- “I still think that the majority of the students who go through Science field, like ours, come out with little in the way of formal training and education in Pedagogy, and so that certainly could set these students apart if their science skills and accomplishments are good, I think if someone is interested in an academic career I think that this really could be a differentiating factor for them.”

Tim



Teaching Is Important For The University To Set It Apart From Peer Institutions

“teaching is becoming more and more important. I mean, it’s always been important, ok, but it is being perceived as more and more important by administrators and ya know we went through this period where it was all research, research, research but now, given the competition for students,, the teaching mission is becoming more and more valued by administrators.”

Daniel

“in my mind, ya know, the teachers are bringing in more money than anybody, because their the ones the students are paying, they are taking their classes, and they are paying tuition dollars for”

Max, Dep’t Head



Limitations

- Emergent Theme
- Specific questions were not asked about teaching
- Non-teaching faculty were not included in the population



Implications

- More teaching preparation is required of PhD students, because...
- In a competitive academic job-market a demonstrated ability to teach is marketable
- Indication that research institutions are turning towards improving undergrad teaching as a marketing tool.



Recommendations

- Preparation needs to be more than just being a TA.
- A named-program to help students market themselves
- Long-term involvement, not just one-time seminar or class.



Questions?





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