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Graduate Connections



University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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

April 2012

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Navigating Graduate School

Advice and strategies to help you succeed in Graduate School at UNL

SELF-PROMOTION AND THE JOB SEARCH

Whether you've just begun your graduate school career or are in your final semester coursework, odds are you've been thinking about your professional future and the impending job search. Your first step in preparing for the job market (and promoting yourself) should be to view every seminar you attend, every class that you teach, and every project you undertake as an opportunity for professional advancement. Sandra L. Barnes, author of *On the Market: Strategies for a Successful Academic Job Search*, writes, "This means that activities such as courses, qualifying exams, research projects, and presentations should be considered building blocks toward a successful dissertation, vita, and, ultimately, employment search rather than merely hoops through which you must jump" (p 12). You are no longer just a student, but also, as Barnes puts it, a "burgeoning scholar," with new priorities and motivations. Keeping this insight in mind will prepare you to make the most of each opportunity that becomes available throughout your time at UNL.

Once fully immersed in graduate school, consider the following ways to continue your self-promotion:

Build your professional network. Interacting with faculty members, including those outside your department, is key to expanding your professional network. Seek advice from and develop relationships with both senior and junior faculty and take advantage of any existing networks your professors may have.

Gain teaching experience and improve your teaching skills. If you are preparing for a teaching career, taking advantage of opportunities to teach and hone your skills now will increase your competitiveness on the job market. Build a teaching portfolio to showcase your experiences and skills, and consider taking advantage of the [Teaching Documentation Program](#), one of the professional development services offered through the Office of Graduate Studies.

Attend professional conferences and deliver papers. Don't hesitate to view yourself as a true member of your profession. Though you may not be ready to deliver a paper in your first

semester of graduate school, you can still join the professional organization(s) in your field and attend as many meetings (national or regional) as possible. When you receive positive feedback on a paper, consult with faculty and get advice on revising the paper for presentation and submission to a journal.

Apply for fellowships, grants, awards, and recognitions. In Karen Kelsey's March 27 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, she writes, "Do not forget the law of increasing returns: Success breeds success and large follows small. A \$500 book scholarship makes you more competitive for a \$1,000 conference grant, which situates you for a \$3,000 summer-research fellowship, which puts you in the running for a \$10,000 fieldwork grant, which then makes you competitive for a \$30,000 dissertation writing grant."

On that note, we encourage you to seek nomination for the annual Graduate Recognition Awards and Folsom Distinguished Master's Thesis and Doctoral Awards offered by the Office of Graduate Studies. The nomination deadlines traditionally fall in October, so take advantage of the coming summer to organize and

prepare the materials required by nominees. You can view all the nominee requirements on our [website](#) now to give you an idea of the materials that will be expected.

Whether you plan to continue your career in academia or elsewhere, learning how to be your own best advocate and how to promote your work will prove invaluable. Self-promotion throughout graduate school will provide you with the confidence, skills, and experience that you'll need to succeed in the ever-competitive job market.

References

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TITLES IN ACADEMIA

The academy uses titles to clarify how far up the academic ladder an individual has climbed; these titles help you understand which faculty you can work with. It's also helpful to know academic rankings when you are interviewing for jobs.

A **TA** or **Teaching Assistant** is a graduate student who leads a recitation, or who teaches a course or lab. A TA will generally receive a stipend in addition to waived tuition in exchange for these services.

An **instructor** usually works for the university on a semester-by-semester basis. Instructors almost always have a master's degree, and most have a PhD or are working on finishing their dissertations. Instructors are not eligible for tenure because they work for the university on a part-time basis.

The **assistant professor** is eligible for tenure (we say they are on the 'tenure track'). Usually, this position is held after completion of the PhD; some assistant professors have also completed a post-doctoral fellowship. At most universities, an assistant professor is evaluated for tenure during their sixth year. Should an assistant professor not receive tenure, he or she

usually applies to assistant professor positions at other universities.

An **associate professor** has usually been granted tenure. Because tenured professors infrequently leave one university for another, you run a lower risk of having your adviser leave the university while you finish your degree if you choose to work with an associate or full professor.

A **professor** holds a senior-level position in the department and also has tenure.

And finally, a **distinguished professor** or an **endowed chair** (these positions are usually named after someone, like the Adele Hall Distinguished Professor of English here at UNL) has full-professor status, and also receives additional salary through an endowment.

In addition to these levels of professorship, your department will also have a **chair**, usually a full professor who heads up the department and is responsible for administrative duties. Some departments have a single chair, while others nominate chairs for two- or three-year appointments.

PLANNING A PROGRAM OF STUDIES

As you move through your program towards commencement, there are many aids to help you manage and track your progress. Syllabi help you stay on track in class, regular meetings with your advisor

can help you stay on task with writing and research, an [Individual Professional Development Plan](#) keeps the big picture for your professional development in focus and the [forms and deadlines page](#) is key to staying on

top of important paperwork required by the Office of Graduate Studies.

The first form graduate students complete outlines the courses that will complete the degree. This paperwork can be found on the forms and deadlines page. For master's students, this form is called the Memorandum of Courses. Terri Eastin, Master's Specialist, and Eva Bachman, Doctoral Specialist, offered a few tips for first year students to keep in mind when completing the MOC and POS.

Memorandum of Courses

Make an appointment with your adviser in your first semester to discuss the courses that will go on your MOC. It's important to work with your adviser to ensure all the courses on your MOC will count towards your degree.

The MOC has to be turned in to our office prior to completing half of the course work toward your degree.

Be sure to include all of the credit hours needed for your degree. If a change needs to be made

later in your program, your advisor can amend the MOC by sending an email to Terri Eastin at teastin1@unl.edu.

Program of Studies

Think about your POS earlier rather than later. The sooner it is complete, the more focused your course selection will be.

When you discuss the POS with your adviser or committee, be sure to bring documentation for graduate courses you want to apply towards your degree. You may transfer up to half of the total credits from a previous degree.

The POS starts the "clock" on the doctoral program. Once it is approved, you have eight years to complete your degree.

Your advisor can approve changes to your POS by sending an email to Eva Bachman at ebachman1@unl.edu.

The Memorandum of Courses and Program of Studies forms are important tools that will help you stay focused and on target with your course work.

FIVE REASONS TO ATTEND THE CAMPUSWIDE WORKSHOP FOR GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS, AUGUST 14

Every August, Graduate Teaching Assistants from across the University of Nebraska–Lincoln attend a day long workshop on teaching. Here are a few reasons you should consider attending this year:

5. Advance your knowledge of teaching. Whether you're new to teaching or a seasoned veteran, a variety of skill development sessions cater to TAs at every level of their teaching careers.

4. Make connections across the university. Workshops and breakout sessions are led by professors from a variety of disciplines. Attend a workshop on mapping an effective lecture, or visit a breakout session led by a professor from your discipline.

3. Share your experience with other TAs. The disciplinary breakout sessions and the wrap up session, *Metaphors, Messages & Morals to the Story*, offer opportunities for you to exchange ideas with other TAs and faculty.

2. Prepare for the job market. The Skill Development Session *Constructing a Learner-Centered Syllabus* will help advanced TAs begin work on constructing their own syllabi, valuable support materials for the job market.

1. Get ready for the coming semester. After a summer spent focusing on your research, gear up for the fall by immersing yourself in discussions about teaching.

Good Practices in Graduate Education

Advice and strategies to strengthen ethics in graduate education

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY WEEK

As students, writers, researchers, teachers, and professionals, academic integrity is always an important and timely topic. The Office of Graduate Studies is excited to announce that Academic Integrity Week will take place from September 10-14, 2012. This event will promote conducting research, writing, and academic pursuits with integrity and honesty. We will kick off the

series with a session addressing ethical dilemmas. Events continuing through the week include panel discussions and brown bag sessions on topics such as why academic integrity matters and understanding plagiarism.

Please check the [Academic Integrity Week](#) page periodically for updates on sessions and topics.

Professional Development Network

Tips and strategies to give graduate students a leg up in launching a professional career

CHOOSING A RESEARCH TOPIC

The first step to completing a research paper is finding the right topic. But sometimes that can also be the most difficult step. We gathered a few hints to help you in finding and developing a good research topic.

Brainstorm to choose a topic that interests you. The following questions and suggestions may help you generate some ideas:

Do you have a strong opinion on current affairs?

Have you read a news article, or watched a TV program recently that made you curious, angry, or anxious?

Is there a subject you'd like to learn more about?

Is there something in one of your courses you would like to research in greater detail?

Make the most of your resources. The internet has expanded the number of resources available to students. When looking online to find ideas for a research topic, be sure to stick to reputable sources. If you aren't sure about the reliability of a source, check with your adviser. Here are examples of some reputable sources:

Consult UNL libraries: <http://libraries.unl.edu>.

If you want to focus on current events, governments, or politics, check out news sources such as the [New York Times](#), [CNN](#) or [BBC](#).

If you want to find something in a very specific field you are interested in, try looking at the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#). It has a comprehensive list of journals in a wide variety of topics that could generate an idea for you. You can browse by title and subject, such as arts, humanities, social sciences, health sciences, business, or physical sciences.

Try other sources such as [Encyclopedia Britannica Online](#), [Google](#), [Yahoo](#), or other search engines.

Narrow the topic. Avoid topics that are too broad. Here are some ways to approach narrowing the topic:

Write or type any key words or phrases that may be of interest to you. Could any of these be the basis for an interesting paper?

Would your topic involve a particular population or age group? For example, try and limit the subject to small children, teens, adults, or senior citizens.

Focus on a particular issue involving schools, housing, the work place, community, local or national government, or the environment.

Research a particular ethnic background.

Limit the methods - only use field experiments, or research studies or observations, and then limit to those theories or approaches involved in your field of study.

Finish your topic. To test if your topic is ready, try stating it as a question. For example, "*How did revitalization of the Old City of Jerusalem affect the living conditions of the current residents and protect the Arab identity of the area?*" Or write it as a statement in a sentence or two: "*Improving the living conditions through housing renewal preserved the historical elements in the buildings in the Old City of Jerusalem.*" If either test produces awkward or confusing results, you may need to refine the topic a little more.

References

Peabody Library. (2004). Retrieved March 3, 2012 from <http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/peabody/research/reshelp/topic.html>

Stewart Library. (2009). Retrieved March 3, 2012 from <http://library.weber.edu/ref/guides/howto/topicselection.cfm>

Thompson Library. (2007). Retrieved March 3, 2012 from <http://www.umflint.edu/library/research/selecttopic.htm>

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LEARNER-CENTERED SYLLABUS

How can a course syllabus help students learn, facilitate the development of higher-level thinking abilities, and prepare them for continued studies in the field? A learner-centered syllabus moves away from the traditional syllabus that is just a list of texts and concepts, and provides a document that supports learning throughout the semester. Here are a few tips to help you transform a traditional syllabus into a learner-centered one:

Prime Students for Success

Let students know how to find help outside of class hours. Any good syllabus includes the instructor name, email address and/or phone number, office location, and office hours. Also include information about making appointments outside of office hours and set a policy for how quickly you will respond to email.

Teaching Tip

MUDDIEST POINT

The Muddiest Point efficiently provides instructors with timely student feedback. While students may shy from raising their hands and to ask questions, they tend to see the Muddiest Point as unobtrusive. Students are given one or two minutes to answer the question, “What was the muddiest point in _____?” You can ask this question about virtually anything: a lecture, presentation, or even an assigned reading.

Such a short question gives instructors insight into which topics need more attention, and how much time should be allotted to these topics. An added benefit to the exercise is that students learn to identify and articulate quickly what they do not understand. As a result, students engage in critical thinking, rather than simply repeating what they perceived to be a key point in the lecture.

You can use the Muddiest Point in almost any setting, but it tends to be most useful in large, lower-level courses where large quantities of information are being shared quickly with students.

Clearly indicate what you’d like feedback on: a whole class? Part of a lecture? A video you showed in class? Reserve a few minutes at the end of the class and let students know how much time is left so that they don’t feel rushed. Provide students with paper to write on, and collect the papers before or as students leave. Read through the responses once class is over, and use a few minutes at the beginning of the next class to address their comments.

Consider adding the Muddiest Point to your teaching resources. Used every now and again, or as a regular part of lecture, the Muddiest Point will help you gain insight into what your student have learned and how effective your teaching methods have been.

Adapted from Angelo, T. and K. Cross. (1993). “Muddiest Point”. In: Classroom Assessment Techniques. A Handbook for College Teachers. 154-158.

Consider including a letter to the students that explains how to use the syllabus and how the various parts relate to one another, and how this will support their learning over the course of the semester. Some students might miss the first day of class and the introduction to the course (and your oral explanation of the syllabus); others may not have realized the importance of specific items you brought up in class. The letter helps keep those students on track, and supports those students who return to your syllabus for guidance.

Provide Students with Goals and Criteria

Before you begin rewriting your syllabus, think about the goals specific to your course which you can include in a “Course Goals” section. What should students be capable of when they finish a particular unit or an individual class? Is there a particular skill students should acquire in your class, like writing an argumentative paper, or learning how to design an experiment? How will your course fit in with other courses in your discipline? Answers to these questions can be addressed in a “course goals” section. Course goals (an extension of learning goals) help you set the tone and expectations for the semester.

While “Grading Criteria” appears on most syllabi, the learner-centered syllabus frames evaluation criteria in terms of skills the student uses to produce an assignment, and to what degree those skills are used. Consider including a grading rubric so students see how they will be evaluated, and they will have a sense of expectations for the course.

Choose and Frame Course Content

As you assess material you’ve already used and new material for the syllabus, sort it into three groups: one set of material will be studied by all of the students, another set helps students researching specific topics for projects, and a third set might be geared toward advanced students who are contemplating graduate school. You may choose to group the latter two sets for projects and advanced students in a “resources section” or keep them in the body of the syllabus.

Of course, the content you choose to include is only as good as how the content is framed. Students are new to the subject, and don’t have a map of how the various ideas fit together. As the expert in the classroom, become the navigator for the students and help them make these new connections. Use the syllabus to show how and why topics are grouped together, and provide contrasting viewpoints, if possible. You can do this by grouping texts (textbooks, articles, primary sources, etc.) in a way that encourages students to see how one thinker might agree with or challenge another.

Match topics with appropriate assignments. Consider how well assignments will develop students’ ability to think and work independently, or how to effectively work in groups. Will assignments help students learn tools of the discipline? Will class activities foster critical thinking? Develop these assignments with your course goals and grading criteria in mind; all three of these sections, individual assignments, class activities, and course goals and grading criteria, should support one another.

Prepare Students for Class and Exams

The learner-centered syllabus is a tool for teaching students how to learn. Help students acquire critical reading skills by highlighting how to prepare readings ahead of class time. Consider including questions to guide their interaction with the text, or ask students to

bring questions from their assigned reading to class. These expectations can be outlined in a “Learning Contract,” a section in the syllabus where expectations and rules of conduct are outlined, or, even better, discuss these on the first day of class and agree on them together.

The syllabus can also help students prepare for exams. For example, in a history class, students might prepare for an exam by creating a timeline that reflects general trends, biographical dates for the most prominent figures, and also crucial dates like battles and revolutions. Couple this assignment with an explanation—seeing how these fit together would help students answer a short essay exam question about what

technological and political events that lead to the Pentrich Rising.

With a little planning, your syllabus can be one of the most important tools in your course, minimize confusion, and prepare students for success.

References

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- Prégent, R. (1994). Detailed Course Planning. In: *Charting your Course: How to Prepare to Teach More Effectively*. Madison: Magna. 115-147.
- Rotenberg, R. (2010). Constructing the Syllabus. In: *The Art & Craft of College Teaching*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast. 88-122.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Fall Campuswide Workshop for Graduate Teaching Assistants
Institute for International Teaching Assistants
Preparing Future Faculty Program

Professional Development Workshops
Professional Development Courses
Teaching Documentation Program
Assistance Gathering Student Feedback

Individual Consultation on Teaching, Careers, Job Searches
Advice on Creating an Academic Career Portfolio

The Graduate Student Writer

Tips to make the writing process work for you

THINGS YOU ALREADY KNOW (BUT IT CAN'T HURT TO REVIEW)

A lot vs. Alot

A lot is two words, not one. The word *lot* means *set* or *group*. Just as you wouldn't say “*agroup* of us went to the lecture,” you shouldn't write “*alot* of people make this grammar mistake.” *A lot* of writers do get it right.

Then vs. Than

Then indicates a progression of time. *Than* indicates comparison.

Time sequence: “We asked subjects to taste sample A, then taste sample B.”

Comparison: “More people preferred the taste of sample A than the taste of sample B.”

There, Their, and They're

There refers to a place: “We moved the plate under the light source and placed the sample there.”

Another note about *there*: avoid using *there* as an “empty” noun to begin a sentence: “There was no evidence that supported the theory.” Instead, choose a stronger noun-verb combination: “No evidence supported the theory.” While the first example is

grammatically correct, the second is stronger and more economical, word wise.

Their means belonging to them: “The clients expressed their opinions in an online survey.”

Remember that *their* is a plural form, not singular. Avoid the easy tendency to use *their* if you aren't sure of the gender of an antecedent singular noun.

WRONG: “The customer wanted me to refund *their* money.” Also WRONG: “Each student should buy *their* own guidebook.”

You may have to rewrite a bit to avoid these grammatical errors: “The customer wanted a refund.”

“All students should buy their own guidebooks.”

They're is a contraction for *they are*. “They're (they are) going to the baseball game.”

Amount vs. Number

The word *amount* refers to the quantity of something that is measured as a whole—not by its individual contents—while *number*, as the name suggests, refers to something that has a clearly defined count associated with it.

Detergent comes in amounts. People come in *numbers*. We don't talk about a large *amount* of people, or books, or pencils, or anything else that can be counted. If something is measured rather than counted, then it comes in amounts.

“A large amount of snow fell last night, but a large number of trees are growing in the forest.”

While a definite number of salt grains can be counted in any batch of salt, to do so would be an exhausting and pointless task. Instead, we refer to the overall amount of salt, measured by weight or volume.

In addition, different words are used depending on whether one is describing amounts or numbers of things. Amounts should be described as being little, much, more, or less. Things that are numbered should be described as being few, many, more, or fewer.

Some examples:

The **amount** of food wasted in the United States each day is appalling.

The **number** of pounds of food wasted in the United States each day is appalling.

You offered me **little** recourse.

You offered me **few** alternatives.

Americans spend **less** money each year on foreign aid than on diet products.

Americans spend **fewer** dollars each year on foreign aid than on diet products.

He has too **much** free time on his hands.

He has too **many** hours of free time on his hands.

Affect/Effect

Generally speaking, *affect* is a verb and *effect* is a noun. When you *affect* something, you produce an *effect* on it.

If you are unsure if you've used the correct word, try the substitution test.

Instead of *affect*, determine whether the sentence would mean the same thing if you substituted the verb phrase *have an influence on*: “Inflation affects (has an influence on) the buying power of the dollar.”

Instead of *effect*, try to substitute the noun *consequence*: “The effect (consequence) of inflation is a reduction in buying power.”

There are certain situations where *effect* is used as a verb and *affect* is used as a noun. As a verb, *effect* means to execute, produce, or accomplish something: “The new policy will effect (or bring about) change in our school systems.” As a noun, *affect* is used primarily by psychologists to refer to feelings and desires as factors in thought or conduct. Unless you are already confident of your ability to use these words correctly, just treat *effect* as a noun and *affect* as a verb.

Funding Opportunities

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

NOTE: UNL's Office of Research and Economic Development sends out weekly announcements of funding opportunities, several of which relate to fellowships in a wide variety of fields of study. You can subscribe to the listserv by sending an email to Tisha Gilreath Mullen at tgilreathmullen2@unl.edu. You also can search funding opportunities at <http://research.unl.edu/sp1/oldfa.shtml>.

HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH EXPERIENCES AT OAK RIDGE NATIONAL LABORATORY

THIS PROGRAM ENABLES qualified graduate students in the physical, life, social and environmental sciences, engineering and mathematics to conduct their master's thesis or PhD dissertation research in residence at the DOE's Oak Ridge National Laboratory facility.

Deadline: 6/1/12 for fall residency

Award amount: \$525 per week; \$125/week housing allowance.

<http://www.ornl.gov/hereatornl/>

KENNEDY CENTER ARTS MANAGEMENT INTERNSHIPS

THE DEVOS INSTITUTE AT the Kennedy Center selects over 20 college juniors, seniors, graduate students and recent graduates each semester for full-time internship placements in such areas as advertising, development, education, press, programming, production, technology and the National Symphony Orchestra.

Deadline: 5/1/12 for fall 2012 internship (9/5-12/7/12)

Award amount: weekly stipend of \$225

<http://www.kennedy-center.org/education/artsmanagement/internships/>

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 PhD 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: 7/12/12

Award amount: \$2,500 first prize; up to two honorable mention prizes of \$1,000

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

AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION DISSERTATION GRANTS

AERA INVITES education policy- and practice-related dissertation proposals using [NCES](#), [NSF](#), and other national databases. 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: 9/1/12, to be reviewed in October

Award amounts: up to \$20,000 for one-year projects.

www.aera.net/grantsprogram/res_training/diss_grants/DGFly.html

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB FELDMAN FELLOWSHIP FOR GRADUATE STUDIES IN JOURNALISM

Winners will receive a onetime stipend of \$5,000 to help defray post-graduate tuition costs. Applicants must be enrolled in, or in the process of applying for, admission to an accredited graduate program in Journalism.

Deadline: 5/1/12

Award amount: \$5,000

<http://press.org/about/scholarships/feldman>

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES, GALE CENGAGE LEARNING MORRIS L. COHEN STUDENT ESSAY COMPETITION

Students currently enrolled in accredited graduate programs in library science, law, history, or related fields are eligible to enter the competition. Both full- and part-time students are eligible. Membership in the AALL is not required.

Deadline: 4/15/12

Award amount: \$500 plus \$1,000 to attend AALL annual meeting

<http://www.aallnet.org/sis/lhrb/cohen.html>.

Events

Campus activities and other events of interest to graduate students

SPRING 2012 NUGRANT TRAINING SESSIONS

The Office of Research and Economic Development is offering spring training sessions beginning in February. The NUgrant Proposal Routing Module allows users to see information about multiple projects on one site, and the NUgrant IRB module is for faculty, students, and researchers who use human subjects in research and teaching.

For more information and to register, please visit:

<http://research.unl.edu/nuramp/nugrant.shtml>.

NUgrant Proposal Routing Module

Dates: April 25 and May 30

Time: 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Location: 201 Alexander West

NUgrant IRB Module

Dates: April 25 and May 30

Time: 2:30-3:30 p.m.

Location: 201 Alexander West

LAB SAFETY COLLOQUIUM, APRIL 18

THE NEXT LABORATORY SAFETY INITIATIVE colloquium, "Safe Handling: Unstable, Reactive & Energetic Chemicals," will be offered April 18 on both of UNL's campuses.

East Campus

East Campus Union, 12:30-1:30 p.m.

City Campus

102 Hamilton Hall, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

The colloquium will be presented by Dan Olsen and Dr. Patrick Dussault. Attendance is recommended if your laboratory uses chemicals such as: azides, picric acid, nitrocellulose, peroxide-formers (e.g., ethyl ether, THF, styrene), metal hydrides, low-molecular weight alkynes, reactive organometallics, or any other energetic materials. Registration is not required.

Please contact Elizabeth (Betsy) Howe, Environmental Health & Safety, at 402-472-5488 or ehowe2@unl.edu with any questions.

INTERNATIONAL WATER FOR FOOD CONFERENCE, MAY 30 - JUNE 1

UNL IS HOSTING Water for Food: Blue Water, Green Water and the Future of Agriculture, an international conference addressing issues of water and agriculture, May 30 – June 1 at the Cornhusker Marriott Hotel in Lincoln. The conference is sponsored by the University of Nebraska and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The conference is designed to foster dialogue among experts from around the world on key issues related to

the use of water for agriculture. The [conference schedule](#) will feature presentations by leading international experts and a juried poster session and reception. Awards will be given for the best poster presentations.

Graduate students in all fields are encouraged to register. For more information, visit the [Water for Food Web site](#).

SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS, JULY 23 -AUGUST 3

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 (ITA). 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.

Prospective graduate teaching assistants who do not speak English as a native language and who are not graduates of a U.S. college or university must successfully complete the Institute and demonstrate before a panel of faculty and undergraduate students their ability to comprehend and convey the information necessary to be an effective teacher (unless granted a waiver from the Institute) before they can be appointed as graduate teaching assistants.

SPEAK TEST DATES: APRIL 19, JUNE 28, AND JULY 12

International graduate students who score 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.

Scheduled test dates and times are Thursday, April 19, Thursday, June 28 and Thursday, July 12. The test begins at 5:00 p.m. on all days.

To register for the SPEAK test, go to Nebraska Hall, room E513. The registration fee is \$40. Sample test materials are available online at the Programs in English as a Second Language webpage.

The Summer 2012 ITA Institute runs from July 23 through August 3, 2012, with final panels scheduled Monday, August 6 and Tuesday, August 7.

Find more information about the ITA Institute on the [Graduate Studies Web site](#).

22ND ANNUAL FALL CAMPUSWIDE WORKSHOP FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS, AUGUST 14

The 22nd annual Fall Campuswide Workshop for Graduate Teaching Assistants is scheduled for August 14. This year we're pleased to have as our keynote speaker Dr. James Lang, Associate Professor of English at Assumption College and author of *On Course: A Week-by-Week Guide to Your First Semester of College Teaching*.

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

with disciplinary breakout sessions designed to encourage small group discussions around specific teaching tasks.

Participants who pre-register will receive a copy of Dr. Lang's book, t-shirt, and more!

The daylong workshop features a free lunch, so be sure to pre-register! The preliminary schedule, session descriptions and online pre-registration form will be available soon on the [Graduate Studies Web site](#).

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/degrees.

DEADLINES FOR DEGREES TO BE CONFERRED MAY 2012

Date	Master's Degrees	Doctoral Degrees
April 12	Incomplete grades must be removed. File results of written comprehensive exam and/or option II paper.	
April 19	Final day for oral examination.	Final day for oral examination.
April 20	Deposit thesis and final examination report form.	Deposit dissertation. Dissertation grades submitted. Final fees and final forms due.
May 4	Graduate College Commencement.	Doctoral Hooding and Commencement.

EVENTS

April 18	Lab Safety Colloquium
April 25	NUgrant Proposal Routing and IRB Training Sessions
May 30	NUgrant Proposal Routing and IRB Training Sessions
May 30 – June 1	Water for Food Conference
July 23 – August 3	Institute for International Teaching Assistants
August 14	Campuswide Workshops for Graduate Teaching Assistants

Readers' Corner

Interesting reading for graduate students

ON COURSE: A WEEK-BY-WEEK GUIDE TO YOUR FIRST SEMESTER OF COLLEGE TEACHING

James Lang, PhD



Dr. James Lang, author of *On Course: A Week-by-Week Guide to Your First Semester of College Teaching* began his full-time teaching career after three years as the assistant director of the Northwestern University Searle Center for Teaching Excellence, where he spent a portion of each day reading and thinking about post-secondary teaching. When

Lang began his tenure track teaching position, he found that, “While in general the teaching and learning theory I had studied provided a solid foundation for my teaching practices, I also discovered that in the crucible of my first year I had to jettison some of my more extravagant pedagogical ambitions and practice a more modest and realistic teaching plan” (p xi). Lang discovered that managing his teaching, grading and other responsibilities left little time for innovation in his lesson plans. Lang wrote *On Course* based on what would have helped him during that first year.

On Course is written in a week by week format, giving an overview of and advice about topics teachers will encounter throughout the semester, such as teaching with technology, grading, academic honesty, and finding balance outside the classroom. Lang recommends reading the entire books before the semester begins as topics covered in later weeks, including common problems and re-energizing the classroom will come in handy throughout the semester. Revisit the corresponding chapter for each week to give you a fresh perspective as the semester progresses. Whether you’re teaching for the first time or looking for ways to restructure your teaching approach, *On Course* will prove to be a helpful tool.

Please join us at the 2012 Fall Campuswide Workshops for Graduate Teaching Assistants on Tuesday, August 14, where Dr. James Lang will serve as the keynote speaker. Follow Dr. Lang on [Twitter](#) or check out his [blog](#).

