



**NORTHERN ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY**

Teaching at NIU: A Handbook for Teaching Assistants

This handbook developed by the Office of Teaching Assistant Training and Development (TATD) at NIU in 1999 is being distributed with minor revisions by the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center with permission from the Office of TATD

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Introduction

Welcome to teaching at NIU. Northern Illinois University values excellence in teaching, and, as a result, values its teaching assistants, who contribute significantly to the mission of the University. The specific duties of each teaching assistant are decided by individual departments but as a teaching assistant you will find yourself playing a number of roles varying from instructor to occasional advisor. Your role as a teaching assistant and graduate student is an important part of your training as a scholar in this and future academic settings.

Teaching has many dimensions and your experiences as a TA will help you to learn more about good teaching practices. This handbook is not meant to be a comprehensive guide to teaching and learning practices but is an introduction to the multiple facets of teaching. It is meant to assist you in getting to know aspects about the teaching profession. Section I of this handbook deals with suggestions about preparing to teach and tips on handling the first day of class. Section II discusses some common teaching practices. Section III discusses evaluation of student performances. Section IV provides suggestions for evaluating your own teaching. Section V lists the instructional support services on campus. Section VI touches briefly on some important university policy and procedures. Section VII includes a list of University support services.

There is no "best" way of teaching. Your experiences in the classroom will give you insights into your teaching and enable you to enhance your own teaching. This handbook is designed to aid you in the process of developing your teaching style. All of the services at the Office of Teaching Assistant Training and Development are free and we look forward to assisting you in your efforts to enhance teaching. Participate in the ongoing workshops, Internet discussion groups, and informal Friday afternoon get-togethers at the TATD Cubby-Hole and experience full partnership in teaching with graduate colleagues and faculty mentors. Best wishes for a productive year!

J. Elizabeth Miller-Norrell, Ph.D.
Coordinator, TATD

I. Preparing to Teach

Beginnings are important. Course preparation should begin well before the first day of class. Whether instructing, or conducting a laboratory session, or grading assignments, you must plan well in advance of the class. *Planning is the key to success.* If this is the first time you are teaching, spend some time talking to colleagues or your supervisor and clarify all your questions. Preview textbooks on the topic of your course to get a general sense of themes and issues you might address. If you have previously taught the course, gather all the materials related to the course.

Establish goals for the course, determining exactly what you would wish your students to know. What skills should they gain? While it is unlikely that you will have all of your notes for the entire semester before class begins, it is helpful to plan objectives for each of the major sections/components of the course before you begin. Emphasize core content and be willing to limit issues. Too much information and detail may work against students' ability to learn the more important points.

It is sometimes helpful to think in terms of "threes." What three things are most important for my students to retain after they have completed this course? What three things do I want them to learn about each major component? What three things do I want them to get from today's lecture?

Course Syllabus

The syllabus is essentially a contract between you and your students. It will help the students to know what is expected throughout the semester as well as help them plan their work. If your department requires you to follow the syllabus prepared by the course supervisor, take the time to familiarize yourself with it. Discuss the syllabus with your supervisor to make sure you are clear with regard to its expectations.

If you are designing your own syllabus, give yourself plenty of time to develop it. Make sure the language is clear and precise. The students should be able to easily find the information that they need. Spend some time thinking about what it is that you want students to accomplish during the semester.

The following are a few items that should be included in the syllabus:

- Course name, number and section
- Class dates, times, room and building
- Instructor's name, title, office location, office hours, phone numbers, and email address
- Prerequisites and NIU catalog course description as well as brief goals and objectives for the course
- Required textbooks and supplemental reading materials
- Attendance and tardiness policies
- Course requirements including readings, assignments, exams and expectations for participation
- Grading criteria
- Specifications regarding format of assignments
- Policy regarding late assignments, make-up exams and extra credit
- Plagiarism policy and other pertinent university policies.
- Course calendar or schedule reiterating assignments and tests and their due dates.
- Accommodations for students with special needs

Bring extra copies for the first several days of class for students who add the class late.

Office Hours

Office hours are an important way to provide access for your students. Most departments require that TAs hold office hours at least 1-2 hours per week. At the beginning of the semester, ask your supervisor about department requirements for office hours. You might be assigned a specific place near the department office or elsewhere. You should specify the exact location of your office on the syllabus. You must also mention the office hours and the office phone number. Vary the times so that students find it convenient to meet with you. Let students know that you can also meet with them at other times by appointment. Some TAs prefer holding office hours just before or after class hours.

Office hours allow you and your students to address concerns that cannot be discussed in class. Students will come to meet you for a variety of reasons. They may wish to review materials that they did not understand clearly in class or seek help while writing an assignment for class. Some students might also come for personal reasons. If students feel comfortable with you and wish to confide in you, be an attentive listener. But remember you are not expected to handle personal problems. Refer troubled students to the counseling and other support services on campus.

Encourage students to come and meet during office hours. For example, during the first few weeks of the semester, you might make at least one office visit a requirement. You can use this meeting to discuss students' expectations from class and get/give feedback on class assignments.

Give undivided attention to your students when they first come during office hours. Put aside all paperwork and avoid answering the phone. Make the students feel relaxed. Keep the door open at all times.

It is important to maintain regular office hours. Be on time, especially if you have a scheduled appointment. If for some reason you are unable to come during your scheduled office hours, notify the department and ask the department secretary to post a note on the office door, and call the student to reschedule as soon as possible.

The First Day

The first day of class sets the tone for the rest of the semester. The first day of class provides the opportunity for you to meet your students and for them to get to know you. Remember that first impressions are important. What you say, how you say it, how you dress, whether you smile or not -- all these factors influence your students' perception of you and of the class. Trying to incorporate aspects of your favorite undergraduate class or professor often helps new instructors set a positive tone in their classes.

Arrive early on the first day of class. Make sure there are sufficient chairs in the classroom and it is well lit and ventilated. Greet the students as they enter the classroom. Write the course number, name and section number on the board so that the students who are in the wrong classroom can leave before the class begins.

Building rapport with your students on the first day is important. Enthusiasm about your subject can motivate students about the course. Start the class by giving the students a brief introduction about yourself. Tell the students how you wish to be addressed. Sometimes students are keen to know about your educational background and areas of interest. Allow the students to introduce themselves. Have students put their name, phone number, and current address on an index card in case you need to contact them. Taking the effort to know their names is an indication that you are interested in them as individuals. It also helps to create a classroom atmosphere that supports student interaction. Some

instructors devise icebreakers to get students started. Be certain to be sensitive to students with special needs and diverse perspectives.

Concentrate on giving the students the "big picture" of the course. Hand out the syllabus to the students and go over the important points. Explain the course objectives and policies regarding attendance, assignments and plagiarism. Define clearly your expectations for student participation. Briefly describe how you propose to conduct class sessions and what opportunity there will be for class participation.

Since the manner in which the first class is conducted sets the tone for the rest of the semester, utilize the whole class time. Start with an activity related to the first lesson that you will be teaching. Give a short assignment for the next class session.

Take a couple of minutes at the end of the class session to address whatever questions students might have about the course.

Expect to feel a bit nervous or awkward. Try to channel your apprehension into excitement. And remember, the more prepared you are the more confident you feel.

First Day Checklist

- √ Check the classroom which has been assigned for the course
- √ Check out all the equipment that you might need including chalk, eraser, overhead projectors, and pens
- √ Write the course number and your name clearly on the chalkboard
- √ Have the syllabus ready to hand out to students. Bring extra copies for the next several class periods
- √ Introduce yourself to the class and have them introduce themselves
- √ Inform students about your office location and office hours
- √ Take attendance and have students turn in cards with their names and phone numbers
- √ Spend the class time effectively explaining the goals of the course and your expectations regarding student participation and class work

II. Common Teaching Practices

There are numerous ways to teach a course. Some courses require lecturing while others combine elements of both lecturing and discussions involving the students. The teaching method you choose should depend on the subject matter and the material available. But no matter what method you choose, it is important to make the learning experience stimulating. Whether you lecture or lead a class discussion, the challenge lies in making the class session as interesting as possible.

Lecturing

Lecturing is the most traditional form of disseminating information and the most widely used mode of teaching in U.S. educational institutions. Although most subjects are suited to the lecture mode, the lecture format is most effective in the following cases:

- You wish to impart information or knowledge that is not readily available to the student
- Many sources of information exist on the topic
- You wish to present the information in a certain way for a specific purpose
- The class size is not suitable for student-led discussions
- Material presented is mostly factual

Lecturing puts the student in a passive role and research indicates that passive learning is not as effective for retention as active learning. It is, however, possible to involve your students in the learning process even when you are lecturing. It is possible to promote active thinking if your lecture is well planned, by giving students questions to consider or asking them to apply points to specific situations.

Formulating a good lecture requires careful planning. Don't overload your students with information. One of the techniques for preparing a lecture is to develop an outline. An outline provides you and your students with an overview of all the points. Generally, in an hour's lecture, students can only absorb 8-10 major points. So plan outlines accordingly. Begin and end your lecture with summary statements.

Delivering a lecture is as important as preparing it. It is a good idea to let your students know exactly what you intend to cover during the class session. Let them know whether you want them to interrupt you if they have questions or if they should reserve their questions for the end of the class. Plan an introduction that holds the attention of the listeners. Go through the material step by step, but avoid reading verbatim from your lecture notes. Use visual aids wherever possible to capture students' attention. Maintaining students' interest and attention during a lecture is perhaps the greatest challenge. The average attention span is about 15 minutes; call for a break at some point and take the opportunity to summarize what has already been covered. Move around the classroom and avoid lecturing only to the first row in the class.

Maintain eye contact with your students to make them feel involved. Use language that is clear and easy to understand. Budget time for questions at the end of the session or while summarizing the main sections of the lecture.

Conclude your lecture by summarizing the main points. Repeat the points that you wish to emphasize as important. End the lecture with a reference to what is to come in the next lecture. This gives students a chance to link the previous body of knowledge to new ones. If you have finished early, take the time to answer students' questions or pose a problem and have the students work out the answer. If you run out of time, omit those sections that are not as important. Advance planning will help you to take into account such omissions. Write down examples in your notes. You may not remember them if you get nervous or distracted.

Leading Discussions

Instructors who wish to promote active learning in class might consider discussions to increase student involvement. Discussion promotes active learning and helps the students develop problem-solving strategies and critical thinking skills. The teacher moves from the role of being the primary "information giver" to that of group leader and moderator of discussion. Discussions allow students to become active participants in their learning.

Early in the semester students may not be very comfortable voicing their opinions and may need encouragement to contribute to discussions. It is a good idea to start with questions on assigned reading so that every student feels familiar with the subject being discussed. Giving students the discussion questions in advance also encourages participation and preparation. Dividing the class into smaller groups ensures that even shy students have a chance to talk. Discussions can be instructor-led or student-directed. Establish a set of objectives for yourself while planning discussion strategies. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you wish students to recall information?
- Do you want students to apply newly learned skills?
- Do you wish to have students recognize previously learned materials?

- Do you want students to analyze problems?

Discussion needs to be planned. It is a good idea to keep an outline in mind so that you can cover topics that need to be discussed but have not surfaced in student-directed discussion. There will be minutes of silence but allow for sufficient "wait time" before repeating your question or rephrasing it. Avoid asking questions that require a simple "yes" or "no" for an answer.

The enthusiasm of the students affects the way the discussion runs in class. To make students feel comfortable speaking to the class, learn their names and allow them to know each other in class. Speaking in front of a familiar audience is less daunting. If you have access to group email for your class, encourage the students to use email to discuss readings done for class.

Tips on Leading Discussions

- Bring written plans with you
- Vary format of discussion from class to class
- Start with short, factual questions that are easy to answer
- Address the questions to the entire class
- Reinforce students for talking and give encouragement to quiet students
- Always summarize the discussion
- Use nonverbal cues to maintain the flow of the discussion
- Divide the class into smaller groups
- Develop class "ground rules" about how discussions will occur, so that students learn to listen and value others' participation

Laboratory Sessions

Laboratory sessions are an important part of teaching in some disciplines. But whether you work in a science laboratory or a computer lab, there are some general tips that you need to keep in mind.

The most important issue to keep in mind is that of safety, particularly if you are working in a lab equipped with hazardous materials. Familiarize yourself with all the safety equipment and procedures *before* beginning the semester. At the beginning of the semester, tell your students about safety regulations in the lab.

Spend some time planning your lab sessions. The best way to prepare for a lab session is to perform the exercise in advance. By going through the exercise yourself, you will be able to anticipate how much time it will take, and what problems students might encounter. If the exercise involves new equipment, get to know the piece of equipment and demonstrate how it works at the beginning of the lab session.

Lab sessions offer the students hands-on experience. Your primary role as a TA, then, is that of a guide. It is a good practice to begin each lab session with a review of the purposes and procedures for conducting the experiment. Circulate among the students to make sure they are handling the equipment correctly. Handouts can work as effective aids in lab classes. If you are in charge of a computer lab, for example, you can prepare handouts that outline the logon procedures and steps for starting or shutting the computer. If you are a science lab TA, you can have handouts that explain certain standard procedures or complex equations and calculations.

Evaluation of lab sessions is important. Check with your supervisor about grading lab reports. Explain the grading criteria to your students when discussing the assignment.

Finally, make sure the students clear their workplace before leaving the labs. Turn off all the equipment and put away all the chemicals or other hazardous materials in their proper place before leaving the lab.

Diversity Issues

The NIU student body is composed of widely differing ethnic, religious, cultural, gender, sexual, age, cognitive and social backgrounds. Teaching to a diverse student body implies that the instructor is sensitive to the individual needs of the students. The greatest challenge lies in making your teaching strategies meet the needs of the diverse student body.

It is important to know your students. Make the most of the first day in class and let the students introduce themselves. The atmosphere you establish in the classroom is important. Let students know they are free to voice their opinion, but establish ground rules so that students are protected from personal attacks and discussions are productive.

Your classes will include students with a wide range of competencies in academics. Some departments require instructors to administer a diagnostic test to determine whether or not the students' skills and knowledge conform to the entry-level knowledge requirements for the course. Identify students who do not perform well and carefully observe their progress through the semester. Individual consultations with students periodically will help both you and the student to discuss class assignments and your expectations from the student.

The following are some guidelines for inclusive teaching:

- Get to know your students as individuals and not as members of a group
- Encourage students to get to know their classmates
- Develop a syllabus that explores multiple perspectives
- Plan a variety of assignments that cater to different learning styles
- Use office hours to discuss problems with students
- Listen carefully when students voice their opinions
- Respect others' beliefs even if they differ from yours
- Avoid making negative remarks

Working with Faculty

A teaching assistantship gives you a chance to work closely with faculty in your department. Whether you have primary teaching responsibility or are assisting a faculty member in teaching a class, it is important for you to maintain a close working relationship with your supervisor.

At the beginning of the semester, meet with your supervisor and discuss your role as a TA in detail and clarify all your questions regarding your duties and responsibilities. Keep some of the following questions in mind:

- How much autonomy does the TA have in conducting the class?
- Who designs the syllabus?
- Who prepares the tests and assignments?
- How many office hours are required?
- Who evaluates the TAs work?
- When do I refer issues/problems to the supervisor?

Your appointment as a teaching assistant gives you a chance to experience academic life and this learning experience prepares you for your future careers both in academic and non-academic environments. Your supervisor can serve as a mentor and guide you through the process of learning during your term as a teaching assistant here at NIU.

Using Instructional Media

Instruction can be enhanced by the help of various print and electronic media. The most important medium available in classrooms is the chalkboard. Make ample use of the chalkboard. Besides being an organizing device, the chalkboard can be used to record students' observations or as a message board for important class announcements.

Audiovisual aids such as overhead transparencies, filmstrips, and slides also provide good visual reinforcement. However, such materials require careful planning. Use such materials only if appropriate to the subject matter being dealt in class. Careful selection of these aids is of prime importance. If your class requires you to have students work with computers, make yourself familiar with the computer lab and the workstations where the students will be working. Some textbooks now come with films and computer aids to use in class. Check with the publisher for copies of these supplemental materials.

NIU has designated some classrooms as "smart classrooms" which enable instructors to use computer-aided instruction such as PowerPoint™ presentations in the class.

Email and Internet discussion lists can be powerful tools of communication for students and faculty. Check <http://its.support.niu.edu/its/csupport/csupport.shtml> for information on email and other electronic resources available at NIU or contact your department or college computing staff for more information.

Blackboard is a web-based course management system available at NIU for online course delivery. Blackboard offers instructors and students flexibility in course design and information delivery. Instructors can decide which Blackboard tools and features to use. Students can access course information anytime from anywhere using a computer and internet connection. Blackboard includes tools to manage documents, exchange communication, and assess student learning. Blackboard offers an academic interface that allows students and faculty to login, using one username and one password, and receive access to all their courses that have a Blackboard component. The system is web browser-based and is easy to learn. It allows faculty to manage their course materials in one, easy-to-navigate site online. Blackboard accommodates most common file formats and provides a valuable storage resource for course materials. The majority of courses offered on Blackboard are blended courses, or classes that meet regularly in the traditional classroom but offer materials for online access. For more information on Blackboard check http://www.helpdesk.niu.edu/its/helpdesk/blackboard_support.shtml or contact Information Technology Services at 753-8100.

These are exciting classroom innovations, but remember that these possibilities often take more time and planning.

III. Evaluating Student Performance

Evaluation is perhaps the toughest aspect of teaching. Grading practices are often questioned, but the reality is that we cannot rule out the importance of evaluating students' performance. Grades are a means of measuring students' progress and a reflection of your educational philosophy. Some TAs are responsible for grading weekly assignments or quizzes. Some have sole responsibility for awarding grades. Evaluation methods will differ from one TA to another, and from one course to another, but there are a few issues that you should bear in mind.

Determining and Explaining Criteria

Students place a lot of emphasis on grades, and because of this importance on grades, you must establish clear guidelines for assessing performance. Plan the grading criteria while designing the syllabus. Some TAs will be required to follow grading procedures established by a supervisor. Explain the assessment criteria in detail to your students, indicating your policies regarding late submission of papers and missed quizzes. Include the grading criteria in your syllabus. Be consistent with your policies to avoid confusion and displeased students at the end of the semester. If you do encounter students who question their grades, set up a private meeting time to discuss the grades. Gather all relevant information so that you can explain the grades to the student. Keep a record of all communication with the student and, if required, consult with your supervisor or course coordinator.

Keeping Records

Remember: All student records are confidential. Maintain accurate records of each student's performance throughout the semester. NIU requires that these records be kept at least one regular semester after the current semester. Students may come back later to question their final grade, finish an incomplete, or request a recommendation. If you are using software to maintain your grade book, make sure the entries are made correctly. Keep a hard copy at all times! You may also choose to keep records of student contact, particularly phone calls, emails, and office visits. Keeping these records can prevent many problems later in the semester.

Cheating or Plagiarism

As indicated in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs, Northern Illinois University considers cheating and plagiarism a serious offense. Underline the importance of academic integrity to all your students at the beginning of the semester. There are many ways to prevent cheating; select ones that suit your style. The following are some suggestions to keep in mind:

- When administering exams, proctor all exams
- Assign alternate seats if possible
- Alter the order of questions if you are administering the same tests for different sections of the class or use different forms in large classes
- Collect all answer sheets and other materials from all students before they leave class

Plagiarism is often unintentional. Often students are not aware of when they are in the danger of plagiarizing from an original work. Familiarize your students with the correct and incorrect ways of taking material from other sources. Give them plenty of practice to make them aware of how to prevent plagiarized work.

If you do encounter instances of cheating or plagiarizing, contact the student immediately. Dealing with students who have cheated or plagiarized is always a difficult task but do not avoid confronting the student. Seek the advice of your supervisor to determine the course of action to be taken.

Evaluation Methods

Evaluation methods vary from one department to another. Some TAs prefer open-ended questions while others prepare multiple-choice question types. Choose question types that suit your course and are the best way of determining the students' grasp over the subject matter. Instructors' manuals and test banks are frequently overlooked resources for choosing test materials. Be sure to have your department order all the supplemental materials that correspond to your text.

Multiple-choice tests have the advantage of being easy to grade but are frequently more cumbersome to create. Some texts come with computerized test banks to assist in the printing of tests, but they often require some effort and time to set-up.

Discussion-questions tests are easier to design but take longer to grade. Keep these points in mind as you plan the semester.

IV. Evaluating Your Teaching

Student Evaluations

Anonymous student evaluations are the most commonly used method of teaching assessment at NIU. Some TAs conduct mid-term evaluations and make changes to their teaching methods or offer clarifications based on the comments that the students offer. The NIU evaluations are done at the end of the semester and are in the form of either questionnaires or open-ended essays. The results of these evaluations are made available at the beginning of the following semester. These evaluations allow you to assess your teaching methods. Remember these are not an assessment of how much you know about the subject but a reflection of what you have been able to communicate to the students.

Note favorable comments, and try to build on those points when you teach again. Reading through unfavorable comments may be difficult, but they provide important information as well. If you have modeled appropriate constructive criticism as an instructor, you can hope that your students will provide feedback in an equally productive manner.

Peer Observation

Peer observation is not a common practice but it is helpful to have a colleague observe your class or review your syllabus and other materials. Plan to share this task with other trusted TAs and learn about teaching by observing others.

Faculty Observation

Some departments require all TA-led classes to be observed at least once by a faculty member. Observation by a faculty member can be very useful. The faculty member who observes your class can provide you with helpful hints about aspects of your teaching. If you intend to pursue teaching as a career, have faculty members observe your classes a few times. Faculty who have observed your classes may include their comments about your teaching in recommendation letters and such comments would be valuable if you plan to apply for teaching positions.

Journaling

Journaling is a way to keep private thoughts about class and teaching in a written form -- much like a diary. Journaling provides a safe place to consider honestly how classes have been going, aspects about which you are uncomfortable, frustrations, as well as successes and positive classroom moments. Keeping a journal also helps instructors keep notes about ideas to incorporate into class, points to cover, and aspects of professional development one can forget in the midst of the semester. Journal entries can also be used as beginnings of discussions with faculty supervisors and graduate colleagues, as well as a place to begin formulation of one's educational philosophy.

Teaching Portfolios

The teaching portfolio is increasingly becoming important to instructors who are interested in the discourse about teaching. The teaching portfolio offers a means to reflect upon classroom practices and evaluate teaching effectiveness. Teaching portfolios are developed over time, emphasizing one's philosophy and providing evidence of one's teaching performance.

In most cases the teaching portfolio is compiled for personal use, so the format of the document will vary from person to person. But essentially the teaching portfolio comprises two sections: reflection about teaching and the evidence of performance.

Teaching Portfolio Checklist

The following are some of the items that should be included in a teaching portfolio:

- √ Self-reflective statement of teaching philosophy
- √ Personal material
 - Course syllabi
 - Course descriptions
 - Copies of examinations and other assignments
 - Lecture outlines
 - Handouts
 - Grading and other assessment criteria
- √ Material from others
 - Student evaluations
 - Peer observation statements
 - Faculty observation statements
- √ Videotapes of lectures
- √ Teaching Awards

V. Instructional Support Services

Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center

The Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center offers a variety of program and resources to faculty and academic support staff. The central mission of the Faculty Development and Instructional Center is to support faculty and academic supportive professional staff through a variety of programs, activities, and resources that support the university's mission on teaching, research, and scholarly activities.

The Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center envisions an enriched academic environment at Northern Illinois University that facilitates and promotes effective teaching, supports professional development, stimulates research and scholarly activities and encourages the integration of instructional technologies.

The major functions of the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center are as follows:

- Provide opportunities for improving teaching effectiveness.
- Promote research and scholarly activities.
- Facilitate the integration of instructional technologies.
- Provide professional development opportunities.
- Serve as a referral service and as a resource unit for faculty.

From fall 2003, the Center will offer teaching-related programs and services to graduate teaching assistants. The Center maintains a Website at <http://www.niu.edu/facdev> that contains online resources on teaching and related topics, and the Center has a number of videos on teaching and other topics that faculty, staff, and teaching assistants can check out for instructional use.

For more information on the Center's programs and services, contact 753-0595 or facdev@niu.edu or visit Center staff at 240 Gilbert Hall.

Information Technology Services

The Information Technology Services (ITS) offers support for instructional and individual use of computers to faculty, staff and students. ITS provides assistance with a number of software products and supports a variety of computing environments. The ITS Customer Support Center is staffed by people who are familiar with a variety of computing software packages and assist with troubleshooting. The ITS Customer Support Center can be reached at 753-8100. For more information about services available, contact ITS or visit Swen Parson 120 or visit the website at www.its.niu.edu/its/helpdesk/helpdesk.shtml.

Media Services

The Division of Media Services at NIU assists with the production of media and provides technical support for the presentation of media. The office is staffed with experienced photographers, graphic designers, and video producers/directors who can assist with the planning and presentation of media for instructional purposes. Media Services can also arrange for media equipment to be delivered to your classroom if your department does not have the equipment you need. For more information, call 753-6661 or visit their web site at www.media.niu.edu/.

Instructional Library Resources

The NIU libraries provide a range of library instructional support including specialized instruction in library research methods for upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses; training for the libraries online catalog system and other electronic resources. The library routinely conducts tours and TAs can schedule a tour for their classes during the first few weeks of the semester. Information about tours and other workshops is available at the Information Desk in the main lobby of the library (753-1995). The library's homepage can be accessed at www.niulib.niu.edu/.

VI. Some Important Policies & Procedures

Policies pertaining to Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistantships are awarded by administrative units and are subject to the policies outlined in the Academic Policies and Procedures Manual (APPM).

Graduate assistantships are intended to support graduate students pursuing graduate studies at NIU. The appointments could be full, three-quarters, or half time. The employing unit determines the duties to be performed by the graduate assistants.

Each year the Graduate Council determines the range of stipends to be awarded to the graduate students holding assistantships. Graduate students holding a full-, three-quarters, or half-time assistantships receive a full tuition-waiver scholarship during the period of their appointment. Further details regarding

the policies covering graduate assistantships can be obtained from the APPM manual at www3.niu.edu/provost2/facpers/appm/IV1.htm or from the Graduate School at 753-0395.

Academic Integrity

The University has adopted policies and procedures regarding instances of cheating or plagiarism. The attempt of any student to present his or her work as original when it is not is considered a serious offense. Students suspected of cheating or plagiarism may receive an F grade for the course and may get suspended or dismissed from the university. More information can be obtained from the undergraduate and graduate catalogs, department offices, the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School, and the NIU Judicial Office.

Standards of Student Conduct

A student can lose the privilege of attending or getting a grade from a class if his or her conduct in the classroom or lab is such that it violates the rights of the other students enrolled in the class. The chair of the department may investigate the incident and recommend to the dean that the student be suspended. For more information check the undergraduate or graduate catalog.

Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources

Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources (AADR) provides assistance to members of the university community who believe they have been treated differently, discriminated against, or harassed because of their race, color, sex, age, disability, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status or political affiliation. AADR offers advice to individuals who believe they have been discriminated against, conducts confidential investigations, and assists with conflict resolution. AADR enforces the NIU policies that seek to monitor sexual harassment and eliminate all forms of discrimination. For more information, contact AADR at the AADR Building or 753-1118. All policies may be found at www.hr.niu.edu/departments/affirmative_action/.

Sexual Harassment Policy

The University prohibits sexual harassment both in employment and in educational settings and relationships. Sexual harassment is unwanted, deliberate or repeated sexual behavior. Sexually suggestive objects, signs, magazines, or pictures may be sexual harassment as well. Sexual harassment can also be a form of unlawful sex discrimination if there is a subtle or direct threat that a sexual or social relationship is part of your job or your higher educational performance. The threat can be about any part of your job; wages, promotions, references, working conditions or your educational performance, including grades, honors, course work, or scholarships.

Unwanted, offensive behavior of a sexual nature is one way that a person can attempt to exercise power and status over another. Whether in the classroom, in the work place, or in campus activities, sexual harassment can threaten the victim's educational or economic opportunities.

Sexual harassment is a breach of the relationship of trust that normally exists within the University community. Boundaries between the professional role and the personal relationship blur because the offender introduces an unwelcome sexual element into what should be a sex-neutral situation.

Any student or employee who experiences sexual harassment or retaliation is encouraged to consult with the Office of Affirmative Action and Equity for information about the University's sexual harassment prevention policy, or how to make a report or seek resolution of a harassment situation.

Consensual Relationships, Conflicts of Interest and Assumption of Risk

Adult romantic and sexual relations between supervisors and employees and between faculty and students, athletic coaches and athletes, and residence hall staff and residents do not necessarily involve sexual harassment. However, the trust accorded to instructors by students and the powers instructors exercise in evaluating students' work, awarding grades, providing recommendations and the like will generally constrain a student's actual freedom to choose whether to enter into a romantic or sexual relationship with an instructor or faculty member. An employee likewise may not feel fully free to reject or end a romantic or sexual relationship with his or her supervisor.

Even genuinely consensual relationships between faculty and students, supervisors and employees and other interrelated campus associations may be problematic. For example, they may result in conflicts of interest, improper favoritism, bias, or perceptions of conflict of interest, favoritism or bias that adversely affect the learning or work environment. If a sexual relationship exists, effective steps must be taken to ensure unbiased evaluation or supervision of either students or employees. Consensual relationships involving a power differential, therefore, may violate University policy and equal opportunity law. Consensual relationships, whether or not a power differential is involved, that affect or result in the perception of interference with the working or learning environment, may be treated as a job performance issue. *Individuals who enter these relationships unavoidably do so at their own personal hazard and assume all related personal risks.*

Non-Discrimination Policies

Northern Illinois University is committed to the promotion of a positive, supportive environment for all of its employees and students, and, thus, has policies in place that prohibit discrimination based on disability, age, and sexual orientation. Employees who believe their situation is affected by discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion or veteran status are entitled to the services of the Affirmative Action & Diversity Resources (753-1118). Many complaints can be resolved quickly and in an informal manner.

VII. University Support Services

Each college and department has an **Academic Advising** system designed to help students throughout their academic careers. Faculty or professional staff advise students within their majors. Refer students to the appropriate advisors. Check the NIU phone directory for college and departmental phone numbers of your major.

ACCESS (Access to Courses and Careers through Educational Support Services) is a division of Educational Services and Programs (ESP) and offers tutoring and academic support to students. The program includes the Diversified Resource Learning Center (DRLC), Peer Assisted Learning (PAL), Supplemental Instruction (SI), Lincoln Academic Resource Center (LARC), and Chi Alpha Epsilon National Honor Society (XAE). ACCESS works in partnership with the academic departments that provide developmental coursework for CHANCE-admitted students. These courses include English, mathematics, reading and communications. For more information about ACCESS call 753-1141, visit the office in Williston Hall 100 or check their website at www.esp.niu.edu/access/index.htm.

The **Career Planning and Placement Center** (CPPC) helps both graduate and undergraduate students to identify, research, and secure employment in a variety of occupations. The CPPC is located in the

Campus Life building, Room 220. For more information call 753-1641 or visit their Web site at www.stuaff.niu.edu/cppc.

The **Center for AccessAbility Resources (CAAR)** has been established to ensure that NIU's academic and campus facilities are available to qualified students with disabilities. CAAR's mission is to create a universally accessible environment where individuals are viewed on the basis of *ability*, not disability. The CAAR office works closely with instructors to ensure that students with disabilities have appropriate support for testing and classroom instruction. Classroom accommodations may include sign language interpreters, note-takers, guide dogs, and tape recordings. Test materials must be made available in advance to the CAAR office at least two working days prior to the actual test date. This ensures that students who need their tests converted to audiotape, large print, or Braille can be accommodated. Students with disabilities are also permitted to take their tests at the CAAR offices without penalty. These tests are closely supervised by CAAR staff, and tests will be returned to the instructor only by CAAR staff. Students needing accommodation should submit a form to the instructor at least a week in advance, but last-minute requests sometimes occur. If you have any questions regarding accommodations, please feel free to call the CAAR office staff to discuss your concerns. For more information call 753-1303 or check www.stuaff.niu.edu/uhs/caar/index.asp.

The **Counseling and Student Development Center** supports the mission of the university to develop the whole person - - intellectually, personally, socially, and culturally. Services include crisis intervention, individual and group therapy, handling test anxiety, career counseling and a wide range of outreach programs. For more information call 753-1206, go to Campus Life Building 200, or visit the website at www.stuaff.niu.edu/csdc/csdchome.htm.

The **Employee Wellness and Assistance Program** is designed to assist all university employees with personal problems such as stress, drug or alcohol abuse, smoking, finances, weight control and psychiatric problems that affect work performance. The program is available to the employee's family, retirees, state employees outside the university's employment, and other individuals who are covered by the Quality Care insurance plan. All records are kept confidential. EWAP is located Suite 709 of the Holmes Student Center. For more information, call 753-9191 or check www.hr.niu.edu/departments/employee_wellness/.

The **English as a Second Language (ESL) Center** is part of the Freshman Program in the Department of English. The Center provides individual tutoring in written and spoken English and test preparation aid for all international students, faculty, and staff. Special scheduled workshops are conducted periodically. The Center is located in 306B Reavis. For more information call 753-6637 or visit the website at www.engl.niu.edu/esl/.

The **Family Center** of NIU provides premarital, marital, family, couple, and individual therapy for residents of the greater northern Illinois area. Therapy is conducted by graduate students in the Specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy under the guidance of approved supervisors of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). The center is open to all, including graduate and undergraduate students, on a sliding fee scale based upon family income. The Family Center is located at 429 Garden Road. Call 753-1684 for more information or visit the website at www.fcns.niu.edu/smft/smftfc.html.

The **Learning Assistance Study Skills Lab (LASSL)** is a division of the Counseling and Student Development Center. The primary goal of LASSL is to help students at NIU learn more in less time with greater ease and confidence. LASSL provides help to students in developing study skills, test preparation techniques and time management. It assists students in becoming more efficient and independent learners. Workshops are held throughout the semester, and graduate counselors are available for

individual consultations. For more information, call 753-1206 or visit their website at www.stuaff.niu.edu/csdc/lasrl.htm.

The **University Ombudsman** is an independent resource person who assists members of the university community in the expeditious settlement of administrative, academic, and individual complaints or grievances, and serves to facilitate communication within the university. The services of the Ombudsman are available to all persons in the university including faculty, staff and students. All communications with the Ombudsman are held in strict confidence. For more information, call 753-1414 or visit the website at www3.niu.edu/depts/ombud/ombuds2.html.

Student Athlete Support Services (SASS) is a program designed to provide academic support services for NIU's student-athletes. The services include educational counseling, academic and eligibility monitoring, tutoring, training camp, supervised study, major and career choice information and referral services. Instructors are asked to reply to SASS's monthly progress requests for all student athletes. Instructors should also receive a list of all scheduled competitions where student-athletes will miss class. These are to be considered excused absences, although students are responsible for all missed work. For more information call 753-1342 or check www3.niu.edu/athletics/sass/index.html.

The **Writer's Workshop** provides required weekly tutoring to freshman enrolled in the Department of English's two-semester 103P composition classes. The Lab is located in DuSable 261. More information can be obtained by calling 753-0272 or check <http://www.engl.niu.edu/comskills/>.

The **Writing Center** provides writing assistance for all campus writers - - undergraduate and graduate students, staff and faculty. The center tries to supply concrete, attentive reader response for all clients. The center is located in Stevenson Towers South, Lower Level. For more information, call 753-6636 or check http://www.engl.niu.edu/writing_center/.