FIRST DAY OF CLASS - GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START

The following guidelines will help you as you are planning for and conducting your first day of class. Don't feel like you need to do everything on this list for your first week to go well. Instead, use this checklist as a guide for your preparation. Good luck!

- **Meet with your instructor of record or TA coordinator prior to the first day of class and ask any questions you might have about the course or your role as a teaching assistant**
  - What are the goals of this course and how does the course fit into the department's curriculum?
  - What will the course cover? If there is anything you don't understand about the organization or content of the course, just ask!
  - What are my responsibilities? It is important to note that the roles and responsibilities for TAs vary by department – lab assistant, recitation leader, assignment grader. What a lab assistant does, for example, will also vary by department and/or course. This is why it is so important to have this initial conversation with your instructor of record or TA coordinator about your role.
  - How is my teaching going to be assessed?
  - What materials will I need to teach the course?
  - Course Policies. What do I do if ...
    - → A student misses an exam?
    - → A student is late for class?
    - → A student does not turn in homework or turns in homework late?
    - → A student requests my lecture notes?
    - → A student cheats on an exam?
    - → Two students hand in very similar assignments?

- **Visit the classroom or laboratory in which you will be teaching prior to the first day of class**
  - Where is the classroom or laboratory located?
  - What type of media equipment is available? How does it work?
  - How is the classroom or laboratory arranged? Is the seating flexible?
  - (For Laboratory Assistants) Where are supplies stored? What equipment will be available?

- **Establish credibility and create a positive and professional environment on Day 1**
  - Arrive to the classroom or laboratory early
  - Dress professionally. Ask more experienced TAs what they wear to teach
  - Show your enthusiasm - Why do you think this course is important?
  - Write information on the board or project on a PowerPoint slide (course number and title, your name & office hours, best way to contact you - hours, venue – email, phone)

FIRST DAY OF CLASS - GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START (CONTINUED)

- **Establish credibility and create a positive and professional environment on Day 1**
  - Look at the students!
  - Introduce yourself and welcome students
    - → If believe students might have difficulties pronouncing your name – pronounce it for them
    - → Tell students how you would like to be addressed
    - → Tell student a little bit about your background and your teaching style
    - → Talk about your expectations of student learning
    - → Tell students what they will have to do to be successful in class
    - → Tell students the best way to contact you (office hours, phone, e-mail, social media). This is often a good time to talk about your policy and/or comfort level with social media connections with students
  - Listen to and learn from students
    - → Ask how much students know about the subject
    - → Learn student names (start this on Day 1, and try to learn names as soon as possible)
    - → Consider gathering information on student backgrounds, interests and/or expectations for the course. You might ask them to write this information down (on an index card, piece of paper, via e-mail) or have students respond in class to this question
    - → Give student permission to ask questions if they don't understand the material or understand your speaking (speed of speaking, pronunciation)
    - → Don't hesitate to respond to a question with "I don't know. Let me get back to you with answer"

- **Set Expectations on Day 1 (provide overview of course, requirements, and policies)**
  - You may choose to refer to the syllabus as you provide the overview of the course, requirements and policies
  - Provide course goals, requirements, assignments, and meeting times
  - Dates/ places of exams and dates of required assignments, quizzes and tests
  - Grading criteria and methods used to determine final course grades. If you use "Turnitin" (ow.ly/qvYgR) for your course, include the recommended statements in your syllabus
  - Set your attendance/ late policy, make-up policy and expectations for class participation
  - Required and recommended course materials
  - Set expectations for academic integrity and honesty. Visit ow.ly/qvZCN for university policies (academic honesty, limits to confidentiality, accommodations for students with disabilities, drop-adds, attendance, others)