MENTORSHIP, FIRST-YEAR WRITING, AND GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS: HOW FORMALIZED MENTORSHIP CAN BETTER PREPARE NOVICE INSTRUCTORS

by

HAYDEN BENSON

(Under the Direction of Nathan Kreuter)

ABSTRACT

Graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) have multiple roles at the university, simultaneously serving as researchers, students, and educators. Many are assigned teaching roles as lower-division instructors, meaning they have a large impact on their undergraduate students' foundational learning. To effectively navigate these responsibilities, GTAs require support from their departments. Many have an Instructor of Record (IoR) to report to and learn from; First-Year Writing (FYW) GTAs, however, are the IoRs for their courses, meaning they do not gain the same kind of guidance that other GTAs may receive. To best support our new GTAs, especially those who are IoRs, this thesis argues that the implementation of a formalized mentorship program would more effectively benefit GTAs, students, and faculty by facilitating transfer, promoting a heightened quality of instruction, promoting a heightened level of student retention, and allowing faculty to leave their legacy of effective student learning at the university through their mentees.

INDEX WORDS: Mentorship, Pedagogy, Teacher Education, Graduate Teaching Assistants, First-Year Writing

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DEDICATION

For my loving parents, sister, brother-in-law, grandparents, and friends.

Without your constant love and support, I would never have been able to finish this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On the modern university campus, there is a cast of characters that mimics that of the theatre stage. Faculty members serve as our principal actors, propelling the university forward through their research, administrative, and instructional duties in the way that main characters might propel the story forward. Students serve as the ensemble: larger in numbers, filling out the classrooms and auditoriums in their pursuit of higher education and opportunity. But in every production, there are cast members who must play both of these types of roles. These "understudies" learn the tracks of the ensemble, but they have to be prepared to go on as the lead when the curtain rises. On campus, these versatile actors are known as graduate teaching assistants. Whereas understudies are able to rehearse their role and receive feedback prior to stepping into their principal roles, graduate teaching assistants do not always have the resources they need to seamlessly transition between their roles on campus.

These GTAs "are simultaneously teachers, researchers, students, and employees" (Muzaka 2009)[1], particularly at research universities such as the University of Georgia. Though GTAs are often viewed as graduate students pursuing their degrees and working part-time to support their path to obtaining their degrees, how they are perceived is reliant on the ones perceiving them. GTAs will often perceive and identify as students first, seeing themselves "as students with teaching responsibilities" (Kendall & Schussler 2012; Park 2002; Muzaka 2009).[2]

[1] Valbona Muzaka, "The Niche of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs): Perceptions and Reflections," *Teaching in Higher Education* 14, no. 1 (February 2009): 1–12.
[2] K. Denise Kendall and Elisabeth E. Schussler, "Does Instructor Type Matter? Undergraduate Student Perception of Graduate Teaching Assistants and Professors," *CBE - Life Sciences Education* 11, no. 2 (June 1, 2012): 187–99.

This view is shared by some faculty and teaching services; The University of Georgia's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) tells GTAs in the introduction to the 2019-2020 Teaching Assistant Handbook that their "primary role and responsibility is that of a student" and that their "teaching assistantship serves to enable you to fulfill that primary role and to provide you with experiences that will help you further your career" (2019).[3]

However, there are differing perceptions of the role of GTAs. Undergraduates view GTAs as somewhere in the middle, "holding a status between students and academics" (Kendall & Schussler 2012; Park 2002; Muzaka 2009)[4]; faculty members view them as "research students who are also academic apprentices" (Kendall & Schussler 2012; Park 2002; Muzaka 2009)[5]; Regardless of how GTAs are formally recognized, they play an important and crucial role for their institutions in the education of their undergraduates.

GTAs are employed by their universities to typically teach "lower-division courses," consisting of several first-year students (Kendall & Schussler 2012).[6] Research studies have shown that GTAs may encompass "roughly half of the instructional staff" at research universities and that 91% of undergraduate laboratory sections at research institutions are taught by GTAs (Kendall & Schussler 2012).[7] GTAs are frequently in contact with first-year students and therefore have a large impact on their retention and expectations for their future courses and

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C. Park, 2002, "Neither Fish nor Fowl? The Perceived Benefits and Problems of Using Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) to Teach Undergraduate Students." *Higher Education Review*, 35(1): 50–62.
Muzaka, "The Niche of GTAs."

[3] Center for Teaching and Learning, *University of Georgia Teaching Assistant Handbook 2019-2020*, (Athens, GA: Center for Teaching and Learning, 2019).

[4] Kendall and Schussler, "Does Instructor Type Matter?"
Park, "Neither Fish Nor Fowl?"
Muzaka, "The Niche of GTAs."

[5] Kendall and Schussler, "Does Instructor Type Matter?"
Park, "Neither Fish Nor Fowl?"
Muzaka, "The Niche of GTAs."

[6] Kendall and Schussler, "Does Instructor Type Matter?"

[7] Kendall and Schussler, "Does Instructor Type Matter?"

academic work. 17% of UGA GTAs serve as instructors of records (IoRs), which means that they do not report to or directly work with a supervising instructor (Center for Teaching and Learning 2019).[8] A portion of this 17% encompasses the First-Year Writing (FYW) GTAs at UGA. Unlike most GTAs, FYW GTAs do not have a supervising instructor to report to or work with when teaching, grading, or designing their classes. Rather, FYW GTAs, like all IoRs, "have the most responsibilities and work the most independently" and serve as the primary instructors for the courses that they teach (Center for Teaching and Learning 2019).[9] As highlighted in Jessica Restaino's *First Semester*, these independent responsibilities provide FYW GTAs with a sense of autonomy and more freedom in their decisions designing their course, which can lead to them feeling more confident in their teaching abilities at the end of their first teaching semester (2012).[10] Though they may feel more confident, the GTA's confidence in their teaching ability "in no way suggests more than cursory knowledge about how writing has been theorized, the field's major debates, or the history of composition's disciplinary development" (Restaino 2012).[11] Furthermore, the autonomous nature of this instructional role can also lead to negative effects, such as new graduate students adopting a "sink-or-swim" mentality concerning their teaching and grading as they avoiding drowning in their teaching duties (Restaino 2012).[12]

Because of these important responsibilities, several general resources and training programs have been made to assist GTAs. At the broadest scope, the CTL created the UGA TA Handbook to serve as a guide for all GTAs at the University of Georgia. The CTL also has created more programs, such as the mandatory half-day TA Orientation that all new GTAs must

[8] Center for Teaching and Learning, *University of Georgia Teaching Assistant Handbook*.
[9] Center for Teaching and Learning, *University of Georgia Teaching Assistant Handbook*.
[10] Jessica Restaino, *First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenge of Middle Ground. Studies in Writing and Rhetoric*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012.
[11] Restaino, *First Semester.*
[12] Restaino, *First Semester.*

successfully complete, the optional Spring Teaching Symposium, and multiple monthly workshops and seminars dedicated to specific teaching struggles that new GTAs may experience and need advice on. Such general programs aid GTAs in navigating the many roles they must play as "understudies." The programs and resources serve to prepare GTAs for their new teaching responsibilities, helping them transition between their roles. Such general knowledge provides the foundation for basic, pedagogical skillsets, which is then transferred and built upon with more specified learning.

On the departmental level, FYW GTAs must attend a week-long training session prior to their start date, where they learn logistical information of teaching writing at the University of Georgia as well as specific elements of writing pedagogy. These FYW GTAs are then required to follow up on this training through a pedagogical graduate course. In this course, ENGL 6911, FYW GTAs expand on their practical training with more theory. They also are able to gain experience by crafting assignments or discussing their specific teaching challenges with the class and instructors. These training programs are beneficial for FYW GTAs and their autonomous roles as IoRs. The existence of these resources allows them to further propel themselves and transition into their role as the sole instructor for their classes, setting them up for the process of transfer.

Transfer is a crucial component of learning for students and faculty alike. Though the exact nuances of these kinds of transfer vary, all forms of transfer involve "the application of knowledge acquired in one situation or context to a different situation or context" (Nelms & Dively 2007).[13] This idea of transfer is what the training programs and materials are built upon;

[13] Gerald Nelms and Ronda Leathers Dively, "Perceived Roadblocks to Transferring Knowledge from First-Year Composition to Writing-Intensive Major Courses: A Pilot Study," *WPA Writing Program Administration: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators* 31, no. 1–2 (2007): 214–49.

they aim to provide GTAs with the base experience that they need to transfer into a new context, that being their teaching responsibilities.

Though these numerous training programs and sessions are beneficial for FYW GTAs, there are elements that they are lacking that would make them more effective. For example, GTAs often lack mentorship that could benefit them in their roles as both students and instructors and further facilitate this transfer. The deep relationships and bonds formed through a mentorship allow GTAs to feel supported, helping them better transition and switch between their roles of students and instructors with more confidence. However, UGA has no official, long-term mentorship program geared toward GTAs and their teaching duties specifically. Though the CTL acknowledges in their GTA documents that finding a mentor is a crucial step in helping GTAs grow as students and instructors (Banister 2019),[14] they do not offer specific advice or guidance in finding these mentors nor in detailing how to establish a long-term connection and professional relationship with them.

The inclusion of this specific guidance for finding mentors and establishing mentorship connections would greatly benefit our GTAs, not only as instructors and future academics/professionals, but also as growing students. In all of the programs designed by the UGA CTL and the English FYW Program, transfer is largely emphasized, even in cases where it is not stated directly. Though there has been debate over how to conceptualize transfer and changing definitions for the term, transfer is commonly agreed to be related to being able to transfer or "repurpose" knowledge learned in one context to a new context (Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak 2015).[15] Transfer is emphasized throughout our education systems and our culture, as

[14] John Banister, "How to Survive Your First Year as a Teaching Assistant," GradTeach Magazine, Fall 2019, ctl.uga.edu/_resources/documents/GradTeachMagazine-2019.pdf.
[15] Kathleen Blake Yancey, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak, *Writing across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*, Utah State University Press, 2014.

we can see from studying how parents educate their children in operating different types of vehicles or how math instructors encourage transferring common core math skills for students to complete algebraic equations. Because transfer is so necessary for education, it is also largely implemented into training documents and programs of numerous fields, even if it is not explicitly stated. The main goal of the training programs and documents geared toward GTAs is to help them learn new knowledge and material that they can then use in future contexts, allowing them to think reflectively and consciously use the knowledge that they have learned from them to fulfill their teaching responsibilities. As such, providing guidance for GTAs on how to establish mentorship connections or having the university implement an official, long-term mentorship program would greatly benefit these GTAs by allowing them to deepen their knowledge through discussions with more experienced instructors, helping them think more consciously about their learning from the training and how they can implement that knowledge into their instructional tasks. The benefits of these mentorship programs can clearly be seen in the examples from other research university's mentorship programs and their successes in increasing a new instructor's confidence, transfer, and retention.

GTAs play many roles on campus, and they would benefit from a mentorship program in each of these roles in different but equally crucial ways. Because GTAs lack the instruction experience of their tenure-track colleagues, it is important for these GTAs to establish professional bonds and have discussions about their instructional responsibilities and content with others. On the student side, GTAs need to develop their communicative and academic skills that come with working with an experienced colleague. On the instructional side, it is imperative for GTAs to build upon their training and implement their knowledge in new contexts, which is something that a mentor would be able to guide them towards. On an individual level, having a

close connection with another colleague can ease the teacher stress that may come from teaching a new course independently without the guidance that a GTA with a supervising instructor may receive.

Mentorship for GTAs would then not only benefit the GTAs themselves but the university at large. In this thesis, I will argue for the implementation of a mentorship program for the UGA FYW GTAs by first defining the benefits of mentorship both individually and across campus, analyzing the lack of actionable mentorship information found in UGA GTA-specific training programs and documents, and finally offering suggestions for how a program can be effectively implemented, using other effective, formal mentoring programs as examples. Though the primary focus for this thesis is UGA FYW GTAs, such a program can be applied for other types of GTAs at not only UGA but other, similar, research institutions that do not have a program currently in place.

CHAPTER 2

TRANSFER AND MENTORSHIP

In discussing how mentorship facilitates the transfer of knowledge, it is crucial to establish the definitions of transfer and mentorship and link their numerous benefits in relation to GTAs. To begin, this thesis will first expand upon the previous definition of transfer and discuss its importance in learning for both students and faculty alike. Then, this chapter will define mentorship and link the importance of these concepts together. By linking these concepts together, we will elucidate how mentorship facilitates knowledge transfer, which will help better prepare GTAs for their roles as students, teachers, and researchers.

As mentioned in the introduction, transfer is defined as "the application of knowledge acquired in one situation or context to a different situation or context" (Nelms & Dively 2007).[16] Though the nuances of this definition change depending on the form of transfer, the main component of applying knowledge or skills learned in one situation to another remain constant throughout these variations. Some of these forms of transfer include transfer of skill, transfer of knowledge, low-road transfer, high-road transfer, near transfer, and far transfer (Perkins & Salomon 1988).[17] Each of these variations has specific qualities that differentiate them from each other. The main differentiations between each variation involve the content of what is being transferred and the amount of ease with which this content can be transferred to new situations. For example, consider the scenario of an instructor operating a computer that has an operating

[16] Nelms and Dively, *Perceived Roadblocks.*
[17] Perkins, D.N. and Gavriel Salomon, "Teaching for Transfer," *Educational Leadership* 46, no. 1 (September 1988): 22-32.

system that they are not familiar with. The instructor will call upon their knowledge of how to use the familiar operating system and apply that to the unfamiliar system. Though the systems may have different layouts, transferring this skill and knowledge of the familiar system comes with relative ease, as the two are mostly similar. This is an example of near transfer, because of the "overlapping of features between the originating context, where the knowledge or skill was first acquired, and the target context, where it is to be applied" (Nelms & Dively 2007).[18]

However, there are also scenarios where transfer is more difficult to occur and requires specific prompting. Consider the scenario of a FYW instructor teaching students about writing with audience awareness. In conversational contexts, such as texting, emailing, or talking, students are aware of their audiences and how they should alter their language or conversation topics depending on whom they are speaking with. However, students typically do not associate this practice with the audience awareness instructors ask for in student writing. Therefore, instructors must prompt their students into connecting these two concepts together, encouraging them to transfer their audience awareness skills and knowledge in conversational contexts and apply them in the context of writing an essay for an audience. Such a process is labeled as a form of far transfer because the connections between the two concepts are not readily apparent, making the ease of transfer more difficult than that of near transfer (Nelms & Dively 2007).[19]

In several fields, facilitating student transfer and effectively teaching for transfer remain hot topics for educators. Such conversations have been occurring for nearly 100 years, as the authors of *Writing Across Contexts* mention in their piece. These conversations have evolved and grown more specific as scholars develop a better understanding of how students develop transfer

[18] Nelms and Dively, *Perceived Roadblocks.*
[19] Nelms and Dively, *Perceived Roadblocks.*

and what types of transfer occur in different contexts. The reason why the topic of transfer is heavily discussed and crucial for education is because it is usually not automatic.

In their article, Perkins and Salomon discuss a less-effective pedagogy theory titled the "Bo Peep" Theory (1988).[20] The "Bo Peep" theory claims that if students are left to their own devices, transferring their skills to new situations will occur automatically (Perkins & Salomon 1988).[21] For example, when a student drives a new, unfamiliar car, they automatically transfer their skills of driving similar cars to be able to operate the less-familiar vehicle. The authors label such transfer as low-road transfer (Perkins & Salomon 1988).[22]

While this type of transfer may occur without guidance from an instructor, other, more complex types of transfer do not occur so naturally and automatically. This is especially true since students tend to compartmentalize their learning to specific contexts when left to their own devices unless otherwise prompted not to. High-road transfer, for example, requires "deliberate mindful abstraction of skill or knowledge from one context for application in another" (Perkins & Salomon 1988).[23] A student will not automatically see the connections between the rhetorical devices taught in her writing course and the persuasive advertisements she sees on YouTube. Seeing these connections requires her to first reflect on what she has learned in class. Then, she can recall that knowledge, consider the similarities between what she has learned and what she is experiencing now, and then apply it to the advertisements to see how they make use of these rhetorical devices. After this point, she will have to continually recall this knowledge and go through this process before being able to do it more naturally.

[20] Perkins and Salomon, "Teaching for Transfer," 25.
[21] Perkins and Salomon, "Teaching for Transfer."
[22] Perkins and Salomon, "Teaching for Transfer," 25.
[23] Perkins and Salomon, "Teaching for Transfer," 25.

Such a process, however, will not happen as naturally as simplified transfer, as this high-road transfer requires more intentional actions from the student as they reflect and recall more information in different contexts. Students must use metacognition, thinking about how and what they have learned, to reflect on these more involved concepts and directly apply them to new context(s), making the process direct and intentional. Thus, the "Bo Peep" theory proves to be problematic and "inordinately optimistic" when applied to more complex connections, such as learning new pedagogy strategies for an instructor role, proving the essential nature of facilitating knowledge transfer (Perkins & Salomon 1988).[24]

Though it may not be referred to directly in the language of different workplace and university documents, transfer is a deep-seated part of how we learn and continue learning throughout our lives. For example, consider the multiple general education, otherwise known as Gen Ed., programs and curriculum at the typical American university. These programs serve as the starting point that provides each student with the foundational knowledge that they will build upon throughout their academic career, regardless of their major or career track (Grob & Kuehl 1997).[25] Gen Ed. curriculum is similar to the frame and foundation of a building that provides what is needed to build upon; they teach students the introductory materials that they will need to use and build upon in order to advance throughout their education and careers. They must take the introductory courses, or receive suitable credit from an approved source, before they can move on to more specific courses that require that foundational knowledge to be transferred into.

Much like these Gen Ed. courses and curriculum, training programs and courses that are designed for new instructors build themselves upon the idea of transfer. These training programs,

[24] Perkins and Salomon, "Teaching for Transfer," 25.
[25] Leonard Grob and James R. Kuehl, "Coherence & Assessment in a General Education Program," *Liberal Education* 83, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 34.

either through the form of mandatory orientation sessions or onboarding training, aim to prepare new employees for their new roles in the workplace. When coming into a new program and being hired for a new role, though, employees find themselves at a boundary that they must overcome. This boundary is the transition from one role to their new, unfamiliar one, which may be a challenge as they try to learn what new skillsets and knowledge they will need to be successful in this position. Crossing this boundary is essential for employees because "transfer requires crossing a boundary and a willingness to engage in new terms and practices the new context may require" (Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak 2015).[26]

These boundaries are found in all types of positions but are especially present for GTAs. As discussed earlier, GTAs adopt several roles and responsibilities with their positions. Instead of only adopting the role of a student or an instructor, they are simultaneously adopting the roles of teachers, students, colleagues, researchers, and professionals. Thus, GTAs must also cross multiple boundaries and be willing to try new things in order for transfer to occur. At this stage in their life, they will likely have the willingness to "engage in new terms and practices" that their new careers may require (Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak 2015).[27]

At most universities, becoming a GTA requires either a particular amount of credit hours in the graduate program or prior teaching experience, and to specifically accept the offer, meaning that there is more likely to be a willingness to engage in training sessions and materials. Thus, the main "roadblock" in transfer for GTAs would then be crossing the several boundaries that arise with the multiple roles and responsibilities of a GTA. Just like students transitioning from high school to college, GTAs may also have to overcome their transition from undergraduate university to graduate school. They also will have to cross the boundary of

[26] Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak, *Writing Across Contexts.*
[27] Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak, *Writing Across Contexts.*

transitioning from the role of a student to the role of a teacher multiple times throughout the semester, as they are simultaneously both. Similar to how an employee may have to cross the boundary of transitioning from one workplace to another, GTAs will likely have to cross the boundary of transitioning from a prior workplace to a new one and transition from an old academic environment to their new one, as well.

There are several boundaries that must be crossed before transfer can occur for a GTA. It can seem intimidating for any individual to cross this many boundaries on their own; however, as discussed earlier in this chapter, transfer does not inherently occur on its own, especially when the skills and knowledge involved in teaching require much conscious, intentional thought be put into them. Perkins and Salomon stress that transfer occurs more effectively and reliably when it is facilitated by another individual (1989).[28]

At this point, much of this discussion regarding transfer has been student-centered. These sources discuss what educators can do to facilitate transfer and learning for their FYW students throughout their academic careers; however, this thesis argues for what action the university and faculty can take to promote FYW GTA development through mentorship. The lack of specific discussions on transfer for FYW GTAs limits the scope of our argument for this piece and would be an excellent area for further research and discussion. Despite their examples being specifically geared towards instructors teaching students, however, these ideas can also be applied to the roles that mentors play in mentorships with their apprentices, as it is difficult to effectively transfer one's pedagogical training without an experienced mentor's guidance.

Mentorship provides an opportunity for GTA mentees to gain assistance in crossing their boundaries and applying their learning to real-world situations and scenarios. Mentors are useful

[28] Perkins and Salomon, "Teaching for Transfer."

in assisting their mentees in becoming more accustomed to or familiar with the task/skills that they are being mentored in and in helping their mentees adjust to their new environments. Furthermore, mentorship is useful in facilitating transfer because the mentor models how transfer takes place. They serve as an example to show their GTA mentees how they have taken their base knowledge of pedagogy and applied it in their own teaching. Also, the mentors serve as the facilitators for transfer of their teaching knowledge. They explain to the mentees how they can apply their training into their own teaching, especially through the form of mock lecturing and providing feedback on it.

Mentorship, though, can be an ambiguous term, which can lead to "conceptual confusion" and "limit the quality of support provided to students and confuse those acting as mentors" (D'Abate 2009).[29] As such, before moving forward and detailing how mentorship helps GTAs cross their boundaries and transfer their training to their instructional responsibilities, it is first important to establish a clear definition for mentorship and mentorship programs to work from.

According to Frank Corbett and Kelli Paquette, mentorship is complicated because there are several interpretations of what it means to be a mentor. Mentoring "requires the mentor to fulfill multiple roles to varying degrees, dependent upon the evolving needs of the mentee" (Corbett & Paquette 2011).[30] Due to these varying roles, words such as "teacher, role model, sponsor, counselor, trainer, and colleague are…often used interchangeably with mentor" (Corbett & Paquette 2011; Sands, Parson, & Duane 1991).[31] For the purposes of this argument,

[29] Caroline P. D'Abate, "Defining Mentoring in the First-Year Experience: One Institution's Approach to Clarifying the Meaning of Mentoring First-Year Students," *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition* 21, no. 1 (March 2009), 65–91.
[30] Frank Corbett Jr. and Kelli R. Paquette, "An Investigation of Mentorship as Perceived by University Faculty, Teaching Associates, and Graduate Assistants," *Education* 132, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 285–95.
[31] Corbett and Paquette, "An Investigation of Mentorship."

this thesis will use a combination of definitions from different sources to provide a working definition of mentorship.

According to Jetta Culpepper, mentorship involves "a close relationship between two individuals" with clearly understood and selected objectives (Culpepper 2000).[32] These two individuals include a mentor, who provides "a high level of sharing, advising, and evaluating," and a mentee, who "must be willing to use guidance and constructive criticism to change his behavior in a way that advances him" (Culpepper 2000).[33] These mentors use their prior experiences and their knowledge to help guide the mentee in developing new knowledge and in transferring said knowledge to new contexts. These qualities are also supported by the definition that Corbett, Paquette, Zellers, Howard, and Barcic provide in which they define mentorship as "a reciprocal learning relationship characterized by trust, respect, and commitment in which a mentor supports the professional and personal development of another by sharing his or her life experiences, influence, and expertise" (Corbett & Paquette 2011; Zellers, Howard, & Barcic 2008).[34] Thus, mentorship involves an individual forming a close, professional relationship with a colleague in which the individual shares their experiences and materials with the intent of supporting and preparing their mentee for future professional and/or personal situations.

These mentorships tend to be seen as involving a more experienced faculty member providing knowledge to their less experienced newcomer mentee "in a linear model of the transmission of knowledge" (Corbett & Paquette 2011).[35] Though this version of mentorship

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Roberta G. Sands, L. Alayne Parson, and Josann Duane, "Faculty Mentoring Faculty in a Public University," *Journal of Higher Education*, no. 2 (1991): 174.

[32] Jetta Carol Culpepper, "Mentoring Academic Librarians," *College & Undergraduate Libraries* 7, no. 2 (2000), 71-81.

[33] Culpepper, "Mentoring Academic Librarians."

[34] Corbett and Paquette, "An Investigation of Mentorship."

Darlene F. Zellers, Valerie M. Howard, and Maureen A. Barcic, "Faculty Mentoring Programs: Reenvisioning Rather than Reinventing the Wheel," *Review of Educational Research* 78, no. 3 (2008): 552.

[35] Corbett and Paquette, "An Investigation of Mentorship."

certainly exists, there are multiple forms and variations of mentoring. These variations include formal mentorships, informal mentorships, faculty mentorships, peer mentoring, peer coaching, and peer tutoring, to name a few (Corbett & Paquette 2011).[36] Regardless of the form of the mentorship, their main goals all remain the same: to aid mentees in their development as a professional.

Mentorships are seen across several fields and professions. They can be seen in the form of college internships and on-site fieldwork, such as student teaching. Regardless of profession, these mentorships are designed "to help students transition to the professional environment," and they are "the best means for socializing and acculturating these students into [their] careers—indeed, for helping them to obtain a career position in the first place" (Lacy & Copeland 2013).[37] Some knowledge, after all, is unique to the work field. For example, a FYW GTA may have learned the most effective ways to implement active learning through their own research, training, and classes; however, there is always the possibility of unexpected distractions, disruptions, or complications that can lead to confusion in the classroom. During these times, the ability to think quickly on one's feet and implement new, impromptu strategies into lessons is a useful way to redirect the class. Such strategies for one's "teaching toolbox" take time to develop and gather, usually through a mix of research, training, and practical experience, thus showing the important role workplace experience plays in working alongside one's training, schooling, and research.

Though practical experience is relevant and useful, it is often inadequate by itself, which is why the relationship aspect of mentorship is crucial for inexperienced individuals. To illustrate

[36] Corbett and Paquette, "An Investigation of Mentorship."
[37] Meagan Lacy and Andrea J. Copeland, "The Role of Mentorship Programs in LIS Education and in Professional Development," *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 54, no. 2 (January 1, 2013): 135–46.

the essential nature of relationships and bonds in preparing individuals for their career path, Lacy and Copeland use the example of mentorship relations between librarians and students. The guidance, feedback, and advice that students receive from their mentor librarians help the students "gain confidence in [their] ability to perform [their] work" (Lacy & Copeland 2013).[38] This professional guidance, alongside their practical experience, helps the mentees "shape their professional identities" and understand their professional expectations, better preparing them for the workplace upon the completion of their academic requirements (Lacy & Copeland 2013).[39]

Having these strong mentorship relations in addition to the practical experience aids students in transferring their learning from training to new contexts in their careers. To put this in perspective, consider the findings Raytheon found from exploring Onboarding programs and their effectiveness in facilitating knowledge transfer. Onboarding programs serve to help prepare employees regarding the policies and knowledge that they will need to know to be an effective employee for their company (Raytheon 2012).[40] As such, it is crucial that the onboarding programs are designed in a way that facilitates knowledge transfer to avoid a waste of time and confusion in the future.

When asked what practices and tools they employ to facilitate knowledge transfer, 53.8% of learning leaders reported employing work shadowing and 52.9% reported employing coaching (Raytheon 2012).[41] Furthermore, "learning leaders from effective organizations describe using coaching and mentor networks approximately twice as often as those from ineffective ones" (Raytheon 2012).[42] From these statistics, there seems to be a correlation between mentorship and

[38] Lacy and Copeland, "The Role of Mentorship Programs."
[39] Lacy and Copeland, "The Role of Mentorship Programs."
[40] Raytheon, *Onboarding and Knowledge Transfer*, Raytheon, 2012, trainingindustry.com/content/uploads/2017/07/onboarding-and-knowledge-transfer-report.pdf.
[41] Raytheon, *Onboarding and Knowledge Transfer*.
[42] Raytheon, *Onboarding and Knowledge Transfer*.

effective learning transfer in terms of preparing employees for their roles in the workplace. This is further supported by the librarian and student example provided prior, where the student's mentorship helped prepare them for the workplace, both through practical experience and personal support. Thus, mentorship facilitates more effective transfer for mentees and are more effective than practical experience and schooling/training alone.

Though mentorships can be very beneficial and are effective tools for overcoming the boundaries GTAs may experience, they can only give these beneficial qualities when they are done correctly. Ineffective and negative experiences with mentorship can be detrimental to all parties involved. If mentees are unwilling to receive the advice of the mentor, the mentee misses out on the valuable experience the mentor has to offer and the mentor may be discouraged about their ability to effectively mentor in the future. Likewise, if mentors do not provide adequate support for their mentees, mentees who are GTAs can risk having their "abilities to improve their interactions with undergraduate students or to stimulate their professional growth" minimized and lessened (Corbett & Paquette 2011).[43] Thus, it is extremely important that mentorship programs, whether implemented formally or informally, are done effectively, as they have a large and lasting impact on the mentor and the mentee in multiple ways.

Effective mentorship and mentorship programs are important for all parties involved. Regardless of one's role in the interaction, mentorships, when performed effectively, are beneficial for both the mentee and the mentor. For mentees, effective and positive mentorship is reported to lead to important professional development advances, such as increased job

[43] Corbett and Paquette, "An Investigation of Mentorship."

satisfaction (Fagenson 1992),[44] better opportunities for promotions (Scandura 1992),[45] and "an accelerated learning curve" (Kumar & Blake-Beard 2012; Eby & Lockwood 2005).[46] Effective and positive mentorship can also lead to positive emotional benefits for mentees, including reduced stress levels; a feeling of power; "better socialization and increased self-worth and self-efficacy" (Kumar & Blake-Beard 2012).[47] These results directly lead to more active effort that the mentees will extend toward their tasks, higher personal satisfaction, and an increased likelihood of continuing in their profession (Mallette et. al 2020).[48]

Though there is a large focus in recent literature on the mentee's benefits from a successful mentorship, the mentor also gains positive benefits from an effective mentoring relationship. For example, effective mentorships can help female faculty mentors specifically in their professional development, leading to them advancing in their careers by "breaking the glass ceiling" (Kumar & Blake-Beard 2012; Parker & Kram 1993).[49] Effective mentorship can also be more generally beneficial, as well. It can allow the mentor to use their knowledge and experiences to assist their mentees, ultimately leading to the mentor acquiring "gratification from peer recognition" and "loyal supporters" (Kumar & Blake-Beard 2012; Eby & Lockwood 2005).[50] It also allows the mentor to "leave behind a legacy to a new generation of employees,"

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[44] Ellen A. Fagenson, "Mentoring--Who Needs It? A Comparison of Proteges' and Nonproteges' Needs for Power, Achievement, Affiliation, and Autonomy," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 41, no. 1 (January 1, 1992): 48–60.
[45] Terri A. Scandura, "Mentorship and Career Mobility: An Empirical Investigation," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 13, no. 2 (1992): 169.
[46] Payal Kumar and Stacy Blake-Beard, "What Good Is Bad Mentorship? Protégé's Perception of Negative Mentoring Experiences," *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations* 48, no. 1 (2012): 79.
Lillian T. Eby and Angie Lockwood, "Protégés' and Mentors' Reactions to Participating in Formal Mentoring Programs: A Qualitative Investigation," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 67, no. 3 (January 1, 2005): 441–58.
[47] Kumar and Blake-Beard, "What Good is Bad Mentorship?"
[48] Dawn Mallette, Katy Blatnick-Gagne, Karen Alexander, Jeffrey Fletcher, and Mathew Baker. "Enhancing Self-Efficacy for Teaching and Retention: The Need for a Career and Technical Education Teacher Mentorship Program," *Techniques,* 2020.
[49] Kumar and Blake-Beard, "What Good is Bad Mentorship?"
V. A. Parker & K.E. Kram, "Women Mentoring Women: Creating Conditions for Connection," *Business Horizons* 36, no. 2 (1993): 42-51.
[50] Kumar and Blake-Beard, "What Good is Bad Mentorship?"

ensuring that their experiences and knowledge will continue to persist and even be passed down after their eventual departure from their workplace (Erikson 1965; Kumar & Blake-Beard 2012).[51]

As seen from the numerous benefits listed for both mentees and mentors, mentorships have a large impact on those involved. While this thesis has focused primarily on the positive benefits of an effective mentorship, there are also severe drawbacks to an ineffective mentoring program. Thus, to progress our argument, we will discuss those drawbacks and show how to avoid the qualities that make a mentorship ineffective.

There are numerous benefits to an effective mentorship; however, if the mentorship is not executed properly, it can lead to negative effects. These negative effects can include increased stress levels and decreased job satisfaction for the mentee (Scandura 1998).[52] However, ineffective mentorships may also result in drawbacks that are less obvious than mentees simply being less prepared for their positions and roles. They can also lead to more, negative emotional effects, some of which include the mentee feeling a sense of betrayal, becoming more withdrawn (Feldman 1999),[53] and adopting ingratiatory behavior to "clone" themselves in the image of the mentor (Scandura 1998).[54] These negative feelings and experiences can then lead to lowered self-efficacy, as one's satisfaction with their job is directly linked to one's feelings of self-efficacy (Mallette et al. 2020).[55] With a mentee's lowered self-efficacy and feelings of being unprepared, they are then more likely to leave or seek out a new profession (Mallette et al.

Eby and Lockwood, "Proteges' and Mentors' Reactions."
[51] E. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, W. W. Norton, New York, 1963
Kumar and Blake-Beard, "What Good is Bad Mentorship?"
[52] Terri A. Scandura, "Dysfunctional Mentoring Relationships and Outcomes," *Journal of Management: Lubbock Then College Station Texas*, 1998.
[53] Daniel C. Feldman, "Toxic Mentors or Toxic Proteges? A Critical Re-Examination of Dysfunctional Mentoring," *Human Resource Management Review* 9, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 247.
[54] Scandura, "Dysfunctional Mentoring Relationships and Outcomes."
[55] Mallette et al., "Enhancing Self-Efficacy for Teaching and Retention."

2020).[56] Specifically speaking of teachers, Sutcher et al. declared that "teachers with little preparation tend to leave at rates two to three times as high as those who have had a comprehensive preparation before they enter" (2016).[57] To avoid these negative effects, both personally and professionally, it is then imperative that mentees are prepared by a well-structured mentorship that benefits all involved.

An observant reader will notice that much of this discussion regarding mentorship derives from business-oriented sources and research. This focus is because many pieces in composition studies tend to directly focus on pedagogy and student success rather than formalized professionalization. The business field provides a more detailed look into professionalization and what is required to professionalize in the workplace. Thus, translating this discussion from business to FYW GTAs can help us reframe how compositionists can establish professional mentorship relations with their new GTAs. The next chapter will establish the framework for how the current documents for new FYW GTAs discuss mentorship in relation to professionalization, which will be further discussed in the subsequent chapters.

[56] Mallette et al., "Enhancing Self-Efficacy for Teaching and Retention."
[57] L. Sutcher, L. Darling-Hammond., and D. Carver-Thomas, *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.*, Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2016.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Because it is crucial for GTAs to be properly prepared for their roles as instructors, it is equally important that their universities and programs provide them with easily accessible information on teaching at their university and department. This information can range from logistics, such as how to input grades into the university's specific online learning platform, to pedagogical strategies, such as how to use active learning techniques to prompt student engagement and class discussion. This necessary information is presented in several, varying forms, such as electronic documents, physical handbooks, conferences, week-long training programs, mandatory training sessions, monthly workshops, and much more. To support the argument for why more actionable, formalized mentorship is necessary for facilitating more effective transfer in FYW GTAs, for better preparing them to be more effective instructors, and for improving their self-efficacy and confidence in their teaching strategies, this thesis will be observing and analyzing a selection of different training materials and programs ranging from the university-level to the FYW program-level. This analysis will highlight the various levels of actionable mentorship to be found in these documents, identify the areas where mentorship is strong, and identify the areas where it is lacking and needs improvement. By identifying these areas of strength and areas where improvement is needed, this thesis demonstrates how the strengths can be expanded upon to improve the programs and documents where mentorship is lacking. In improving this lack of actionable mentorship, FYW GTAs at UGA will be better

prepared and supported in their teaching endeavors, making for more effective educators and, thus, bettering preparing the students they teach.

As discussed in the introduction, the University of Georgia has several documents and training programs dedicated to the education and enrichment of new GTAs. The Graduate School, CTL, and individual departments/colleges across UGA come together to create beneficial programs and documents for GTAs to use in educating and preparing themselves for their new role as faculty. There are generalized training documents created to educate all GTAs about the experiences and potential challenges they will most likely all face, regardless of field. These documents and programs include but are not limited to: the University of Georgia Teaching Assistant Handbook (published annually), GradTeach Magazine (published every semester and previously known as the UGA CTL TA Newsletter), TA Orientation (mandatory, held every Fall), and the Spring Teaching Symposium (held every Spring).

In addition to these universal materials for GTAs, there are also discipline-specific courses and programs to educate GTAs for teaching pedagogies that are relevant for their specific instructional duties. These vary throughout the different colleges and disciplines at UGA, though all must be approved the UGA Graduate School to count as appropriate credit for GTAs. For the UGA FYW program, these training programs include the New FYC Teaching Orientation (mandatory week-long training) and ENGL 6911 (mandatory semester-long graduate course, held every fall). These two programs provide discipline-specific training in writing pedagogy, covering topics such as writing transfer pedagogy, process pedagogy, and ePortfolio theory.

This thesis will observe and analyze all of these mentioned documents and programs that serve to prepare FYW GTAs for their roles as IoRs. For the purposes of clarity, the analysis of

the documents and training programs are separated into two different categories: universal training materials and FYW training materials. The universal training materials involve the CTL's documents and programs designed to generally prepare the broad range of GTAs at UGA. The FYW training materials solely focus on the program-specific materials used to prepare FYW GTAs for their roles as FYW instructors. All of these aforementioned documents were accessed and obtained through the UGA CTL website and Emma, the UGA exclusive online learning platform used to teach FYW. This thesis will individually analyze each of the aforementioned materials and state the level of actionable mentorship measured in that document by discussing the specific language used in each, how deeply it is covered and explained, and how this impacts the FYW GTA.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

The programs, trainings, and materials for GTAs at UGA provide GTAs with knowledge about practical and theoretical learning that will help prepare them for their instructional duties. Though they each cover different materials, they are beneficial to GTAs in each of their own ways. In this chapter, this thesis will be analyzing how effective they are in helping GTAs learn about and establish mentorship connections as they prepare for their instructional responsibilities.

Universal Training Materials Analysis

The universal training materials at UGA are all products from UGA's Center for Teaching and Learning. This unit's goal and mission is to "provide support and leadership [for faculty, graduate students, staff, and administrators] to foster an institutional climate that reinforces excellence in teaching and learning across the University of Georgia" ("About Us").[58] As such, the CTL hosts several training programs for GTAs, faculty, staff, and administrators across campus. For the purpose of this argument, however, this thesis will focus on the resources geared toward GTAs.

On their website, the CTL has a document titled the "University of Georgia Teaching Assistant Handbook." From the name alone, a reader can see that this source is meant to serve as a guide for GTAs at UGA as they navigate their new teaching responsibilities. In the most recent version of the handbook, last updated August 12th, 2019, the introduction states that the authors

[58] "About Us," Center for Teaching and Learning, accessed July 17, 2020, ctl.uga.edu/about-us/.

"sought to re-think from the ground up what kinds of information would be helpful and necessary for TAs at UGA and let the TA experience guide our redevelopment of this document at every turn" (Center for Teaching and Learning).[59] As such, this work is a complete, ground-up revision of the previous TA Handbook. It serves to develop alongside the current TAs and to provide more helpful information as they gain more input from their readers. This is clear from their reminders that they "welcome suggestions and comments on this work in progress" and encourage readers to email them any comments, suggestions, or contributions they may have (Center for Teaching and Learning 2019).[60] It is clear that the authors of this document greatly value the input from their GTA readers and want to help this document grow in a way that is useful for GTAs; however, in its current state, it lacks in areas that could greatly benefit current GTAs, especially those who also serve as instructors of record.

In the table of contents, there are several categories that GTAs can glance over for their specific inquiries. Some examples include how to manage one's time as a GTA, how to prepare for an effective teaching presentation, and how to "[Become] a Better Instructor" (Center for Teaching and Learning 2019).[61] Out of the 93 categories, 20 are followed by an asterisk. When one flips to these sections marked with the asterisk, one will find that the section is under development, as indicated by the italicized "Coming Soon!" under the section header. The sections that are most relevant for this thesis's argument include Section 1.1.3 "Finding Mentors" and Sections 1.3.2 to 1.3.6, which all relate to resources for Instructors of Record.

Because these sections are under development, there is currently no information for current GTAs on how to find mentors or independently work as IoRs. Because they are included

[59] Center for Teaching and Learning, *University of Georgia Teaching Assistant Handbook 2019-2020.*
[60] Center for Teaching and Learning, *University of Georgia Teaching Assistant Handbook 2019-2020.*
[61] Center for Teaching and Learning, *University of Georgia Teaching Assistant Handbook 2019-2020.*

in the document, it is clear that the CTL views these subjects as important for new GTAs; however, because there is no information listed at the time of writing, current GTAs will struggle in learning how to find mentors or work independently as IoRs. The lack of both of these categories also complicates matters further, as IoRs especially are in need of a mentor due to the lack of a supervising instructor to guide them through their new teaching responsibilities. As such, current GTAs, especially IoRs such as FYW GTAs, do not have these specific resources that would benefit them in finding mentors, establishing connections, and facilitating the transfer of their training. While the section headers indicate a list of practical information that IoR GTAs can use to fulfill their independent roles, such as learning how to input grades in Athena and E-Learning Commons (eLC), the fact that they are underdevelopment means that the 17% of IoRs at the University of Georgia must turn to another source for this crucial information. With a mentor, this could be easily solved by contacting the mentor and walking through it with them; however, because there is no such program, GTA IoRs and FYW GTAs must find these answers through their own, independent research, taking away from their time fulfilling their multiple responsibilities as students, instructors, and researchers.

In addition to the UGA TA Handbook, the CTL also has another resource for TAs: GradTeach Magazine. UGA GTAs submit articles to be published in the magazine, which is published virtually every fall (GradTeach 2019).[62] The annual publication includes very useful information for new GTAs, including articles such as John Banister's "How to Survive Your First Year as a Teaching Assistant" and a calendar that lists all of the year's planned CTL-sponsored Workshops, such as TA Cafés. The magazine is a practical and knowledgeable source

[62] GradTeach Magazine, Fall 2019, ctl.uga.edu/_resources/documents/GradTeachMagazine-2019.pdf.

to turn to for first-year GTAs as they seek more opportunities for training and education at the UGA.

Though the information listed in this magazine is useful for GTAs, it also lacks the specificity that could better benefit GTAs. For example, in Banister's "How to Survive Your First Year as a Teaching Assistant," Banister lists 8 tips that he has learned through his experiences as a GTA. In his first tip, he highlights the importance of finding a mentor, stating, "Finding a more experienced graduate student (or faculty member) in your department to be your teaching mentor will make a world of difference" (Banister 2019).[63] He highlights how a GTA's colleagues have likely experienced similar situations to those that a first-year GTA may struggle with, thus emphasizing the importance of having an experienced colleague to turn to for mentorship and guidance. Banister even encourages GTAs to become this mentor for other new GTAs in the future, whenever possible; however, the article fails to detail how to go about finding a mentor, establish these connections, or create a mentorship with another colleague. While it is beneficial for GTAs to understand the immense benefits that come from a mentorship relation, it is difficult for one to foster it if they do not know about to move forward with doing so. Thus, this magazine also does not benefit current, first-year GTAs in finding mentorships as much as one would like to see, especially given how important the role of a mentor is made in this article.

While the CTL creates documents that are beneficial for new GTAs, they also hold events specifically tailored toward new GTAs. One such event is the mandatory TA Orientation, which is held every fall prior to the first day of classes. The TA Orientation lasts half of a day and is set up in a conference-style format. All first-year GTAs are required to attend the entirety

[63] Banister, "How to Survive Your First Year as a Teaching Assistant."

of the orientation to receive credit that fulfills UGA's TA Policy. The orientation begins with an introductory event where GTAs learn the general policies at UGA and the resources that they have available for them (CTL, UGA Graduate School, etc.) and the different types of panels they will be able to attend. After the introductory sessions, the GTAs are then free to attend any of the "breakout sessions" that interest them. Each year, they have different sessions for the GTAs to choose from. For 2019, some of these sessions included "Teaching in the Lab," "Leading Discussions," and "Effective Lesson Planning" (Center for Teaching and Learning 2019).[64] These sessions repeated for the two breakout sessions, so GTAs were free to choose the two that most interested them for the two sessions. After these sessions concluded, all the GTAs came together again for a final session that taught them important offices on campus that they should become familiar with, a keynote address, and a poll that allowed them to mark themselves as having fully attended and completed the orientation.

All of these sessions provided practical information for GTAs that are applicable across multiple disciplines and fields. As I personally attended the Fall 2019 TA Orientation, I noticed that many of the sessions felt more geared toward GTAs that had supervising instructors rather than the 17% of GTAs that are IoRs. As I sat there with my other FYW GTA colleagues, we listened to advice that was beneficial; however, many of the questions about how to resolve particular classroom issues ultimately had the same answer: Ask your supervising instructor for guidance. Not having a supervising instructor, my FYW GTA colleagues and I felt that these types of answers were, unfortunately, not as applicable to us; however, now as I look back on that situation, I realize that this situation highlighted the importance of having a colleague to serve as a mentor. There were some situations that could be better handled or advised with a

[64] Center for Teaching and Learning, "2019 Teaching Assistant Orientation Schedule," Center for Teaching and Learning, accessed May 15, 2020, ctl.uga.edu/resources/documents/2019-tao-schedule.pdf.

person that had experience with the situation at hand. Thus, having a mentor, especially for those who are independent IoRs, would benefit GTAs, as the mentors would provide the GTAs with guidance and experience that pulls from their own personal experiences with specific classroom situations.

The last session that the CTL hosts is the Spring Teaching Symposium, which is a relatively new, annual event held every spring. The Spring Teaching Symposium is much more like a traditional academic conference, allowing attendees to choose whichever sessions are most appealing to them during the full-day event. The Symposium offers several sessions that are geared toward GTAs and their teaching styles, which can be seen from the event's date on a Saturday every year to avoid conflicts with teaching and/or class schedules and the sessions that the symposium hosts. In 2020, the event offered sessions that covered many pedagogical-based theories that could be widely applied across disciplines. Some of these sessions included "Generative Learning Strategies: Building Meaningful Knowledge to Apply New Situations in the Classroom," "Playground in Learning: Gamification in Classroom Environments," and "Working Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: On Making Mistakes and Moving Forward" (Center for Teaching and Learning).[65]

Each of these sessions was heavily based on both experience on the behalf of the GTA presenters and pedagogical theory. As an attendee of the 2020 Spring Teaching Symposium, it was eye-opening to hear how my more experienced colleagues implemented these tactics into their classrooms and/or handled specific issues that originated in the classroom. Though I have not interacted with many of them outside of this event, it was beneficial for me as a new instructor to see how they handled those situations, as I could then take that information that I

[65] Center for Teaching and Learning, "4th Annual Spring Teaching Symposium Schedule," Center for Teaching and Learning, accessed May 15, 2020, ctl.uga.edu/_resources/documents/sts-abstracts.pdf.

learned and apply it to my own teaching contexts, thus facilitating the transfer of this knowledge that is based upon my initial GTA training. As such, it becomes clear how a more frequent and deeper experience like this can be facilitated through a mentorship program. By having a mentor, new GTAs such as myself could learn from the experience of their colleagues and thus have a better understanding of how to handle particular circumstances that may arise throughout their teaching career. As such, having a greater emphasis on this mentorship, or a program in general, could benefit GTAs in a similar way that my conversations with my colleagues from the Spring Teaching Symposium benefited me.

FYW Training Materials

While the CTL provides a plethora of materials for educating GTAs, those materials focus on generalized teaching strategies that can apply to a wide range of subjects and fields. For example, lesson planning and discussion-based classes are a staple of several disciplines and classes across colleges. As such, each department determines the specific type of training GTAs should undergo in order to best prepare themselves for teaching in that field. The First-Year Writing Program thus has its own set of training programs to help benefit their GTAs in preparing themselves to understand, teach, and utilize writing pedagogy. The two main trainings that are mandatory for FYW GTAs include the week-long New FYW Teaching Orientation, affectionately nicknamed FYW Boot Camp, and ENGL 6911, a semester-long, 3-hour course based on writing pedagogy.[66]

The FYW Boot Camp is a week-long program that new FYW GTAs take part in prior to the first day of classes. In the program, FYW GTAs attend full-day sessions that educate them on practices that they will need to be aware of and understand before teaching FYW at the

[66] Information about these programs was obtained through personal experience and documents that are accessible through Emma, the UGA exclusive platform used for the FYW program.

University of Georgia. Much of this information is practical, such as learning how to navigate, use, and grade on the browser-based, writing platform that all UGA FYW courses use: The Electronic Markup and Management Application, otherwise known as Emma. Other sessions focus on more theory-driven discussions, such as the ethics of grading for grammar in student essays or ePortfolio theory. Regardless of the day's sessions, the entire week of FYW Boot Camp focuses on preparing GTAs for their roles as writing instructors.

Though the FYW Boot Camp was beneficial for GTAs, especially those who were not familiar with the policies at UGA, there is only so much information that can be covered in a week-long period. As such, some important topics, such as transfer pedagogy or mentorship, could only be covered in an hour-long session at most. The 2019-2020 FYW Boot Camp helped GTAs better understand their expectations and writing pedagogy than they had before the week-long session, though the lack of time was a bit limiting in helping GTAs fully understand and learn the material. For example, on the first day of the week-long training, there was a session where 4 experienced GTAs came in to conduct a "Question and Answer" session regarding expectations of the first year as a new GTA. During the session, these GTAs shared their experiences in the classroom and answered questions that the new GTAs had regarding what they should expect in their new roles. Many thoughtful conversations were had during this moment, including a conversation regarding experiences with gender discrimination from students and how to use these moments as teaching opportunities for all students in the classroom. Hearing from their own experiences over the years that they had been GTAs was beneficial to many of the GTAs in the training program, myself included. These conversations with the experienced GTAs helped the new GTAs better understand what to expect in the classroom and how they can transfer their knowledge from past experiences and this program

into the new contexts of their teaching. Though the session was only an hour long, many of my colleagues discussed how helpful it was to have insight from them and how they helped guide them through their expectations for their teaching roles. As such, a longer, more in-depth program of this through the form of mentorship could also prove to be beneficial for new GTAs, considering how beneficial an hour-long discussion with 4 colleagues was for the new group of 20-30 FYW GTAs at the time.

Finally, the last form of official training for FYW GTAs is the 3-hour graduate course ENGL 6911. ENGL 6911 is a graduate course that FYW GTAs enroll in as a requirement from the department and the graduate school. It serves to expand upon the university-wide GTA training programs as well as the FYW Bootcamp. In the ENGL 6911 course, GTAs learn more details about writing pedagogy theories, receive practice in crafting assignments, and establish connections with their colleagues to discuss common challenges that occur during one's first year of teaching at a new institution.

According to the syllabus and calendar for the Fall 2019 section, ENGL 6911 allows students to spend the first half of the week having a peer-led discussion over pedagogical readings, theories, and strategies. The other half of the week is spent helping GTAs as they practice applying these theories and strategies in their classrooms/teaching preparations. The very structure of this course is built upon the concept of transfer, which is directly mentioned in the language of the course design and the structure of the assignments. For example, as highlighted in the course's Student Learning Outcomes (SLO), the course required students to "understand, apply, and evaluate the theory and practice behind FYW pedagogy." The GTAs enrolled in this class were also simultaneously teaching their first set of FYW courses at UGA, meaning that they could directly apply this theory and practice into their teaching. For example,

GTAs may have applied transfer-specific wording and theory when crafting their syllabi or applied peer review practices learned in ENGL 6911 to their peer review days in ENGL 1101. Furthermore, assignments were designed to be reflective to allow GTAs to both understand what areas in their teaching they could build upon and help prepare them for the final assignment: crafting a composition teaching portfolio that they would be able to use and build upon throughout their profession.

In addition to helping GTAs gain knowledge and practice with writing pedagogy theories, this course also serves to help students "create a cohort of colleagues who can support [their] teaching." To facilitate this, the instructors of the course would set aside time at the beginning of each class to propose questions or challenges they had experienced. The group would then spend time proposing suggestions for how to handle these challenges, either by repeating information that they had heard from others or by sharing personal experiences. The instructors would also work together with the GTAs to support them in handling these challenges, providing experience, expertise, and suggested readings that would help GTAs navigate these challenges.

Such a cohort and support from peers and experienced instructors alike is crucial, especially for novice GTAs. Instructors are essential for facilitating student engagement and leading students to success in their classrooms. As novice instructors of a Gen Ed. course that is designed to provide students with the base knowledge they need for their future academic and workplace success, FYW GTAs may feel overwhelmed by the pressing responsibilities, regardless of their levels of experience (Mallette et al. 2020).[67] Thus, support from those who are also experiencing these challenges can be beneficial for GTAs, because they are then able to

[67] Mallette et al., "Enhancing Self-Efficacy for Teaching and Retention."

share strategies and improve their teaching together. The lack of such discussions and support from peers has been shown to be negative for GTAs, with GTAs reporting that the void of not having an open-discussion teaching environment made them feel unprepared and "impacted their time in graduate school and their decisions about career paths" (Grekul & Barkway 2019).[68] This course provides GTAs with not only a way to transfer and build upon their earlier training; it also allows them to have a brief teaching community with their peers and the instructors for the duration of the course that shares qualities of effective mentorship.

Such a course is helpful and beneficial for GTAs, as it provides them with a way to learn more about writing pedagogy, practice new teaching strategies, and gain support and knowledge from their peers and instructors. Similar programs, such as Pelton's 16-week long, student-centered graduate pedagogy seminar and Boman's training workshop, have been shown to lessen GTAs' feelings of first-time teaching anxiety, decrease their nervousness regarding public speaking, increase their confidence and self-efficacy in their teaching skills, and help them adopt effective teaching behaviors (Boman 2013; Pelton 2014).[69] This is especially important due to the fact that GTAs at institutions without formal mentorship programs "generally do not receive regular feedback or engage with their associated faculty members in a thoughtful reflection on their practice," which means that this class allows GTAs to gain this type of feedback and reflection when they normally would not (Kenny et al. 2014).[70]

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[68] Jana Grekul and Kelsi Barkway, "'We Are Here for Research but Also for Teaching': Exploring the Impact of Graduate Student Teaching Assistantships on Professional Development and First-Time Teaching Experiences," *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching & Learning Journal* 12, no. 2 (July 2019): 1–19.

[69] J. S. Boman, "Graduate Student Teaching Development: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Training in Relation to Graduate Student Characteristics," *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 43, no. 1 (2013), 100-114.
J. A. Pelton, "Assessing Graduate Teacher Training Programs: Can a Teaching Seminar Reduce Anxiety and Increase Confidence?" *Teaching Sociology* 42, no. 1 (2014), 40-49.

[70] N. Kenny, G. P. L. Watson, and C Watton, "Exploring the Context of Canadian Graduate Student Teaching Certificates in University Teaching," *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 44, no. 2 (2014), 1-19.

Though the course is effective and beneficial in numerous ways, it unfortunately only provides a brief teaching community, lasting only 15-weeks. Once this course ends, it is up to GTAs to continue these relations with one another and their instructors. Maintaining this frequent contact and discussions about teaching may be difficult to maintain due to the GTAs' many responsibilities as students, instructors, and researchers. Anecdotally, my peers and I found it difficult to maintain frequent contact with one another due to our different class loads, teaching schedules, and academic writing for future conferences and publications. Discussions of teaching and new strategies would typically only occur when there was a particular challenge to resolve, which seems to be a shared sentiment from other graduate students without formalized mentorship programs. When Grekul and Barkway, for example, interviewed several graduate students at the University of Alberta regarding their perceptions of graduate teaching assistantships, 65% of participants stated that they had an informal mentorship with their supervisor or another member of their department while 25% reported having no mentor at all (2019).[71] Only 10% reported having a formal mentorship (Grekul & Barkway 2019).[72] Despite having this type of informal mentorship, these GTAs still reported that they felt they would have benefited from a more structured mentorship where they could discuss their teaching challenges specifically. These GTAs reported "the topic of teaching as only coming up if there was an issue, otherwise they would be more likely to use this time to discuss their research" (Grekul & Barkway 2019).[73] Others reported feeling frustrated with having to seek out these forms of mentorship with little guidance, as seen by one participant's response to the survey: "I just feel like there is not that ongoing mentorship that I think some of us graduate students are really

[71] Grekul and Barkway, "We Are Here for Research but Also for Teaching."
[72] Grekul and Barkway, "We Are Here for Research but Also for Teaching."
[73] Grekul and Barkway, "We Are Here for Research but Also for Teaching."

looking for" (Grekul & Barkway 2019).[74] Therefore, while ENGL 6911 provides an effective setup for mentorship in the early stages of the graduate teaching-assistantship, the informal nature of the cohort still leaves GTAs wanting more.

Overall, The University of Georgia provides several forms of training for GTAs, both at a university-wide and discipline-specific level; however, all of these forms of training and documents lack the information that would help guide novice GTAs in forming helpful mentorships regarding their teaching. Even though the discipline-specific ENGL 6911 course provides a setup for an informal type of peer mentorship, it may be difficult for FYW GTAs to balance all of their responsibilities as they proceed to cross the boundaries of transitioning into these multiple new roles in their lives and careers. Furthermore, even when they are able to do this, the discussion of teaching appears to only come up when there is a challenge that needs to be addressed or resolved, most likely due to the lack of structure regarding the mentorships that are currently being fostered by FYW GTAs. How, then, can the university and English department facilitate these discussions for their GTAs and allow them to gain the numerous benefits that come from an effective, structured mentorship? This thesis aims to answer this question by observing and analyzing the different qualities of effective mentorships and proposing solutions for formal and informal mentorships, which will be expanded upon in the upcoming chapters.

[74] Grekul and Barkway, "We Are Here for Research but Also for Teaching."

CHAPTER 5

EFFECTIVENESS AND ROADBLOCKS OF CURRENT FYW MENTORING

From analyzing the different forms of training offered by the CTL and FYW program, it is evident that they both value mentorship and recognize its benefits for their GTAs; however, their level of effectively implementing mentorship varies and needs improvement to truly benefit GTAs. For example, the CTL expresses the importance of finding a mentor and how mentorship helps GTAs learn from the experiences of others in the GradTeach Magazine; however, the CTL also does not provide information or advice on how GTAs can actively seek out this mentorship, making it difficult for inexperienced GTAs, who are most likely new to the university, to find a mentor that will be a good match for them and their career goals during the beginning of their teaching experiences, a critical time period for GTAs as they learn how to transition into the role of the instructor.

The FYW Bootcamp and pedagogy course, on the other hand, provide FYW GTAs with a more effective form of mentorship. For the purposes of this thesis, this chapter will discuss the effective qualities of this cohort type of teaching community but will also emphasize the drawbacks and need for further improvement to best benefit the GTAs and, consequentially, their students.

The same group of students who attended the week-long Bootcamp also enrolled in the ENGL 6911 pedagogy course. They spent their time at Bootcamp learning new teaching strategies, logistical information for teaching at UGA, and discussing thought-provoking readings regarding writing pedagogy. The Bootcamp, however, aimed to do more than just

prepare GTAs for their new roles quickly; it also aimed to create a teaching cohort among the new GTAs. With everyone being in a similar position, each GTA was able to quickly connect with one another and feel more comfortable sharing and asking for advice. This was facilitated by the team-building activities implemented into the program, which also served as effective examples of team-building exercises to use with their own students. One of these activities included Dr. Joshua King's exercise where GTAs formed teams and were asked to draw what writing "looked" like. The activities, along with interacting with each other for a full week, led to the formation of close bonds among the 22 new GTAs.

After the week-long Bootcamp, all 22 GTAs were also enrolled in the same ENGL 6911 course, further perpetuating these bonds. Over the course of the fall semester, a teaching cohort formed and created a learning community. Each member served to support each other by providing advice on how to handle their challenges and encouragement. This ultimately created a large group of educators where each member was able to grow and benefit by sharing experiences and receiving advice from those who were in similar positions. The familiarity among the GTAs allowed this professional bond to form, where they were each helping one another become more effective instructors by sharing their experiences and transferring their knowledge into the new context of teaching. The frequency of these class sessions, which were held twice a week, also helped reinforce these bonds and allowed for further opportunities to discuss strategies to improve their teaching.

Due to this cohort, GTAs were able to practice applying their teaching strategies in the classroom before transferring and applying that knowledge with their own students. As a personal example, a colleague and I provided a lecture on ePortfolios to the teaching cohort. The lesson was meant to prepare my peers for teaching their own ePortfolios lectures for their

students, as FYW students must complete an ePortfolio at the conclusion of the semester. I received feedback a few weeks after the lesson that my peers had used this knowledge that I provided them and applied it to their own lectures over the ePortfolios. Likewise, I found myself doing the same, transferring that experience of teaching to my cohort and improving upon it as I taught a similar lecture to my own students. Thus, we all were able to transfer this knowledge in different ways, which ultimately benefitted our comprehension of understanding how to teach ePortfolios and our student's understanding of completing their ePortfolios.

Though this type of learning community among colleagues allowed for many benefits in our teaching and helped better prepare us for our positions, the short length of the course resulted in these benefits coming to a halt. Upon the arrival of the Spring semester, ENGL 6911 concluded and the teaching cohort split into their own specific courses and teaching schedules. Because of this, the teaching cohort was no longer able to communicate with each other as they had before. Many had schedule conflicts, making it difficult to discuss or meet with each other outside of "water-cooler talk" or occasional meetings in the hallway between classes.

This learning community provided similar benefits to those of an effective mentorship. By receiving frequent support and advice from one another, the GTAs were able to reinforce their learning from their training and course work, better preparing them to transfer it into their course work. However, these benefits would have been taken a step further if these GTAs also had a form of mentorship alongside this. By having this more supportive, long-term structure through the form of mentorship, GTAs would be able to benefit from these benefits provided by the learning community for a longer amount of time, making them more prepared for their instructional responsibilities.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND SOLUTIONS

From the observation and analysis of UGA's training programs and documents, it is evident that the university recognizes mentorship as a crucial component of a GTA's teaching experience; however, at this point in time, mentorship is not as emphasized, explained, or facilitated as much as it could be to better benefit GTAs, which would ultimately improve both their performance and their impact on undergraduate learning and retention. Furthermore, mentors would also benefit from a mentorship program, as it would allow for them to share their learning successes and leave a legacy at the university. Their mentorship would cause a ripple effect on instruction, allowing their teaching strategies and effective pedagogy to be spread across several classrooms, whereas it would reach one if the faculty member had not mentored. Therefore, the university, its faculty, its GTAs, and its students would all benefit from the implementation of a mentorship program. This thesis will provide multiple solutions, including a one-year, comprehensive mentorship program and an informal mentorship, that the university and the UGA English department could adopt to improve and build upon the portions of mentorship that are already present, ultimately creating an effective way to prepare GTAs for their current teaching and future professional prospects.

Before discussing these proposed solutions, however, it is crucial to understand what qualities make up an effective mentorship program. As discussed in chapter two, a negative mentorship can have long-lasting, emotional impact and professional drawbacks. Therefore, to

properly understand how to implement these mentorship programs, we must recognize what qualities to avoid and which to adopt before moving forward with the proposed solutions.

Effective Mentorship Programs

According to Lynda Slimmer, there are three qualities that encompass an effective, academic mentorship program. The first quality is that the program must be "supported by an institutional culture that values mentoring and provides it with a formal organizational home" (Slimmer 2011).[75] That is, the institution must recognize the benefits of mentorship in that it provides valuable experience for the mentees that will support both their emotional and professional growth. This quality is already obtained by the University of Georgia, as we can see from the UGA CTL's documents that provide a heavy emphasis on the value of mentorship. What the University of Georgia could improve upon here is providing it with a "formal organizational home" (Slimmer 2011).[76] By adopting a formal, university-wide program, the university would ensure that all GTAs have automatic access to the experience, training, and support needed to grow and handle the challenges that they will face with their new roles. They will not need to search for a mentor on top of discovering how to navigate their own challenges, making it a more streamlined process overall and leading to an effective mentorship program that benefits all involved.

Slimmer's second quality of effective mentorship programs relates to the mentor. She states that the mentor must be "an experienced educator who has passion, confidence, and the expertise to guide others toward teaching excellence" (Slimmer 2011).[77] A mentor needs to be experienced so that they can share their guidance with their mentees. After all, a mentee wants

[75] Lynda Slimmer, "A Teaching Mentorship Program to Facilitate Excellence in Teaching and Learning," *Journal of Professional Nursing* 28, no. 3 (May 1, 2012): 182–85.
[76] Slimmer, "A Teaching Mentorship Program."
[77] Slimmer, "A Teaching Mentorship Program."

the mentor to share their past experiences and discuss how they then learned from them so that the mentee can learn from it, as well. As one GTA stated in the University of Alberta survey, "I really want to hear about mistakes that people have made. I feel that would be really helpful" (Grekul & Barkway 2019).[78] Furthermore, a mentor must be confident, have the expertise, and the passion to properly guide and support the mentee. Mentorship requires the mentor to do more than just providing experiences and feedback for professional support; effective mentorship requires that the mentor also provides emotional support, as this is tied closely with one's self-efficacy, which is then a primary factor in determining how likely it is for an individual to remain in their profession (Mallette et al. 2020).[79]

Finally, Slimmer's third quality relies on the availability of the mentee and the mentor. She states that the mentee "has flexible, timely access to the mentor" (Slimmer 2011).[80] In order to receive the feedback that GTAs find helpful in assisting them with their growth as an educator, there must be frequent communication between the mentee and the mentor (Grekul & Barkway 2019).[81] This, then, requires that the mentee and the mentor find times when they are both mutually available. They also must meet frequently so that the mentee can obtain the constant feedback that will help them grow as a professional.

Now that the criteria for an effective mentorship program has been established, there are a few key elements to note. First, to maintain this effectiveness, there needs to be a formalized mentorship program in place. Informal mentorships can be maintained and should be encouraged, as well, because of how they can also contribute to a GTA's "professional

[78] Grekul and Barkway, "We Are Here for Research but Also for Teaching."
[79] Mallette et al, "Enhancing Self-Efficacy for Teaching and Retention."
[80] Slimmer, "A Teaching Mentorship Program."
[81] Grekul and Barkway, "We Are Here for Research but Also for Teaching."

development and confidence" (Grekul & Barkway 2019)[82]; however, there is also a need for a formal mentorship program due to how it can provide more opportunities for frequent, pedagogical training. To fully understand the structure of a formal mentorship program, this thesis will turn to the example of the Teaching Mentorship Program at the College of Nursing Department of Behavioral Health Science (BHS).

This Teaching Mentorship Program was introduced in the 2006-2007 academic school year in order to help fulfill their college's goal of educating "highly competent nurse leaders for clinical practice, academic scholarship, and health care administration in adult health science areas" (Slimmer 2011).[83] Because their university's enrollment of new students and retirement of old faculty are increasing, new faculty members are hired frequently and require training to transition into their roles. Thus, the program is designed with three goals in mind, which involve facilitating "new faculty members' transition from the role of nurse clinician to the role of nurse educator," supporting "the implementation of evidence-based learning practices," and encouraging "the development of teaching scholarship" (Slimmer 2011).[84] The formal program aims to prepare new faculty members for their new positions as educators because "most begin their teaching experience with minimal preparation in the teaching/learning process" (Slimmer 2011).[85] Thus, by having an experienced teacher mentor guide these new faculty members through the scholarship of teaching and learning, specific to nursing, the new faculty are better prepared to teach their incoming students.

There are clear statements that the teacher mentors must follow and meet to best prepare their mentee students. These statements refer to the mentor as "a facilitator of learning who role

[82] Grekul and Barkway, "We Are Here for Research but Also for Teaching."
[83] Slimmer, "A Teaching Mentorship Program."
[84] Slimmer, "A Teaching Mentorship Program."
[85] Slimmer, "A Teaching Mentorship Program."

models the…knowledge and skills in the practice of nursing," "a content expert who makes theoretical knowledge come alive and relevant to nursing practice," "an advocate for learning who demonstrates a joy of teaching and a passion for discovering new knowledge," and "a learner who engages in a reciprocal partnership with students to share knowledge" (Slimmer 2011).[86] These statements echo the language found in Slimmer's effective mentorship program qualities, as these statements depict the mentor as an expert who has passion for and is educated on the subject that the mentor is teaching for the new faculty member.

The Teaching Mentorship Program requires new faculty to take part in the New Faculty Departmental Orientation Program, which is a year-long training experience tailored to each individual new faculty member by the teaching mentor. The first semester involves the teaching mentor reviewing the Department New Faculty Manual with the mentee, establishing clear teaching expectations, helping the mentee discover their current and potential strengths that can grow and be built upon, and supporting the mentee through these self-identified areas of improvement (Slimmer 2011).[87] In the second semester, the mentor and mentee both review the student evaluations from the previous term and continue to take part in professional and teaching development opportunities through the form of "internal workshops, external conferences, or individualized development modules designed by the mentor" (Slimmer 2011).[88] During the review of the evaluations, the mentor provides the mentee with feedback on their performance and teaches them how to navigate student feedback and apply it to their future teaching practices. They then end the semester with a list of teaching goals that they would like to achieve during the next academic school year.

[86] Slimmer, "A Teaching Mentorship Program."
[87] Slimmer, "A Teaching Mentorship Program."
[88] Slimmer, "A Teaching Mentorship Program."

This mentorship program has been positively perceived by those who underwent it. New faculty members reported that they had positive experiences with the quality of their mentor relationship as well as setting new teaching goals. In the survey that asked them to rate the program's level of helpfulness from 1 to 4 (1 being not helpful, 4 being very helpful), the mean score for both of these categories was a 3.5 (Slimmer 2011).[89] In addition to the mentee being satisfied with the program, it seems that the program has had a beneficial effect on the undergraduate students, as well. In their exit assessments, the Undergraduate Nursing Education students reported an increase in satisfaction with the quality of instruction. Students were asked to rate their satisfaction with the quality of instruction from 1 to 7 (1 being not at all satisfied, 7 being extremely satisfied) (Slimmer 2011).[90] The exit assessment results prior to the mentorship program's implementation in 2005 reported a mean score of 5.00 while the results for 2009 showed an increase with a mean score of 5.67 (Slimmer 2011).[91] It is evident how better-trained faculty members who focus on improving their teaching correlate with higher satisfaction of the quality of instruction from undergraduates.

From this example of an effective mentorship program, one can observe how the program goes to great lengths to support the less-experienced faculty members by having the mentors share their experiences and give feedback to their mentees regarding their teaching practices. Such a formalized program can serve as an effective model for a UGA formal mentorship program.

[89] Slimmer, "A Teaching Mentorship Program."
[90] Slimmer, "A Teaching Mentorship Program."
[91] Slimmer, "A Teaching Mentorship Program."

Solutions

A formalized mentorship program would provide FYW GTAs with the frequent contact and support that they would need from their mentors to become more effective educators. One potential solution would be to model an official UGA GTA mentorship program after the one highlighted by Slimmer. Its core mechanics and foundation can be used to create a mentorship program that is currently lacking across the University as a whole. Therefore, if UGA were to implement a year-long, mandatory mentorship with an experienced faculty member, GTAs would be able to have more experience, expertise, and support from others.

Such a program would have all new GTAs assigned a formal mentor for at least one academic year. This mentor would ideally be a different individual than their major professor to avoid the issue of talking only about research instead of teaching practices and strategies. This mentor would serve as the person of contact that the mentee would meet with frequently to discuss their progress with their teaching, challenges, successes, ways to improve their teaching, what new pedagogical works they have studied, and much more. The mentor would then guide the GTA through these discussions, providing their expertise and support for the challenges and successes that the GTA faces throughout their first year of teaching. Ideally, it would be best to have the mentor and GTA meet weekly so that the GTA can readily discuss their teaching each week and also keep themselves accountable. During this weekly meeting, the mentor may provide feedback on the GTA's lesson plans or mock lessons, allow them to observe the classes that they teach, and provide them with resources that they think are applicable. Due to the main obligations an experienced faculty member may have for the university, it is ideal that the mentor receives two class release time. In place of teaching these two courses each week, they would

spend that time meeting with their multiple GTA mentees and focus on their progress at becoming a stronger, more effective instructor.

For FYW, some changes may have to be made. It is ideal for the mentor to be a tenure-track faculty member who has experience teaching the course and is up to date with FYW pedagogy developments; however, the majority of FYW classes are taught by GTAs and the tenure-track faculty have several obligations to the university, as well. This means that one tenure-track faculty member may have several mentees to meet with each week, not including the students that they are major professors for or students who they are on the committee for.

In light of this, I propose a cost-effective solution. Because of the success generated by the peer-style mentorship seen in ENGL 6911, it would be beneficial for more experienced FYW GTAs to mentor new, incoming GTAs. Anecdotally, my peers found it helpful to hear the experiences of the GTAs who came to speak with us about their challenges and successes during Bootcamp. Implementing this into a year-long would not only benefit the mentee GTA, but also the mentor GTA. The mentee would gain the support and expertise from their mentor, while the mentor GTA will gain the skills of mentoring others, which can boost their confidence and become a great item that will benefit them on their resume. The program becomes a win-win situation, where both parties are benefiting. It would maintain this feeling of a teaching cohort found in ENGL 6911, but will persist for longer than a single semester, ultimately better preparing the mentee GTAs for their first year of teaching. Then, that mentee GTA would go on to mentor another new GTA once they have gained the expertise needed to do so, creating a self-sufficient cycle of GTAs teaching and learning from one another.

This mentorship program may take time to implement, especially when one considers the process of adjusting the base guidelines of this mentorship and altering it for each department's

specifications. To satisfy this in the meantime, informal mentorships are also a temporary solution. For example, there can be a faculty and graduate learning community or group that members opt into. The focus of this would be advancing one's pedagogical knowledge and would act similarly to a reading group. Members would present their challenges and receive mentorship and advice from the group, much like that seen in ENGL 6911; however, this is more beneficial due to the inclusion of tenure-track faculty who have more experience and expertise for how to handle certain situations. This also allows for new GTAs to meet and interact with faculty members, further promoting the opportunities for future informal mentorships outside of the group.

By adopting at least one of these forms of mentorship, or possibly both, all parties would be able to benefit. Mentors would be able to leave a lasting impact on not only their GTA mentees, but also the quality of learning and teaching throughout their program. GTAs would be able to have more support to better prepare them for their instructional duties and learn to navigate their roles as instructors to minimize teaching stress. Students would be able to have a higher quality of instruction, improving their retention and quality of learning. Finally, these mentorships would result in a higher quality of learning and instruction for the students and instructors at the university, improving their image, reputation, and academic status as a successful higher-education institution. As such, these forms of official and informal mentorship would heighten and improve instruction and learning at the university in many ways, making it a positive addition to the mandatory training programs for GTAs at the University of Georgia.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, we have discussed the role of mentorship in academia and the benefits therein. At the beginning of this discussion, we compared the role of GTAs to that of the understudy in theatre productions. Understudies work tirelessly to learn the ensemble roles that they tend to play, but they do not go on as a principal character without extensive preparation for this new role. They may prepare by seeing the principal actor play the role, but also through discussions with that actor or with their director. They do not take on the role in a vacuum, but often marry previous portrayals of the character with their own knowledge and understanding of the character's motivations, ultimately crafting their own version of this character that they are prepared to play in the future. Like the understudy who requires rehearsal and direction prior to stepping into a principal role in a production, GTAs prepare to transition between their roles as students into that of instructors by taking advantage of the resources afforded to them, not the least of which is mentorship.

Through mentorship, GTAs are able to become better prepared for their roles as educators due to the practical transfer it provides, become better equipped with handling the responsibilities that come with simultaneously acting as a student, researcher, and educator, and are able to gain more opportunities and skills that will help them advance in their chosen career track. Though FYW GTAs gain much support from the university, the English department, and their peers, the short-term nature of the mentorship already in place leaves these GTAs not fully

prepared for their teaching responsibilities as they could be with the implementation of such as program.

Because they have a great influence on the first-year students that they teach, it is imperative that these GTAs are well-prepared and supported for their teaching duties. With a formal mentorship in place, FYW GTAs would have the opportunity to expand upon the mentorship already in place, receive even more support from others, and become even more effective educators in the process, ultimately leading to great benefit for all who are involved.

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