

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Graduate Teaching Scholar Program (GTS) Program Overview

Program Objective

The primary objective of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Graduate Teaching Scholar (GTS) Program is to prepare interested doctoral students for a rewarding academic career. Those holding academic faculty positions within a college or university are expected to be active in teaching, discovery, and outreach. Doctoral education programs have historically emphasized preparation for research and scholarly publications, and for outreach. However, to some extent many candidates who complete a doctoral program in agricultural and life sciences have minimal preparation and experience in formal teaching.

GTS Scholarship Funding

A Scholar selected for the GTS program will be eligible to receive up to three years of funding at an annual (12 month) stipend rate equivalent to step 17. This stipend will be funded by a 50% commitment from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), with the remaining 50% coming from the home department. The college will also provide 100% of the tuition for the Scholar during each academic year. The Scholar will also receive a free student membership in an appropriate professional organization with an emphasis on teaching for the duration of the scholarship (provided by the home department), and up to \$1000 in travel support (provided by the college through an ALCE account) for use for presenting scholarship in teaching (papers or posters) at a professional conference in the second or third year of the Scholar appointment.

A Scholar selected for the GTS program may receive additional partial scholarship support from his/her home department. This will help avoid situations where a student may wish to participate in the GTS program but who would not wish to forfeit part of the funding that they would normally receive from another scholarship or fellowship.

First-Year Activities of the Graduate Teaching Scholars include

- Scholars would be expected to attend the graduate school GTA workshop offered in August <http://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/classes>
- Enroll in ALCE 6415 (fall) and ALCE 6416 (spring)
 - As a part of these courses Scholars will do weekly observations of courses taught by various faculty across the college and university to see different teaching practices used by faculty in their daily work
 - As a part of the course work Scholars will attend NLI sessions each semester and attend the CIDER Conference for High Education
- Meet a minimum of every other week with their faculty mentor to learn about their mentor's teaching philosophy, teaching practices, and discuss the Scholars experiences in the GTS classes and activities
- Attend/assist with the course they are assigned to work with while in the program
 - During this first year this role will look similar to a TA assignment, with occasional teaching opportunities based on the course content

- Consider enrolling in one of the courses for the Future Professoriate Certificate program. All Scholars are expected to complete the certificate requirements as a part of their completion of the GTS program
- Complete fifty-percent of the course planning and student assessment materials (for the assigned course they will be instructing) as a part of the summer portion of the assistantship
- Attend scheduled summer meetings with the GTS Program Director to work on the course planning and assessment materials as well as plans for conducting research in an aspect of teaching and learning

Second-Year Activities of the Graduate Teaching Scholars include

- Enrollment in ALCE 6425 (fall) and ALCE 6426 (spring)
 - As a part of these courses Scholars will develop a plan to conduct a small research project focused on an aspect of teaching and learning scholarship of interest to them and their teaching practice
 - As a part of the course work Scholars will attend NLI sessions each semester and attend the CIDER Conference for High Education
- The second year of the GTS program provides the opportunities for the Scholar to share instructional responsibilities (50%) for their assigned course within their home department or within the college
- Meet a minimum of every other week with their faculty mentor to collaborate on their course planning and develop their strategies for team-teaching or co-teaching the Scholars assigned course
- Enroll in one of the courses for the Future Professoriate Certificate program. All Scholars are expected to complete the certificate requirements as a part of their completion of the GTS program
- Complete the remaining fifty-percent of the course planning and student assessment materials (for the assigned course they will be instructing) as a part of the summer portion of the assistantship
- Attend scheduled summer meetings with the GTS Program Director to work on the course planning and assessment materials as well as plans for conducting research in an aspect of teaching and learning

Third-Year Activities of the Graduate Teaching Scholars include

- Enrollment in ALCE 6435 (fall) and ALCE 6436 (spring)
 - As a part of these courses Scholars will conduct a small research project focused on an aspect of teaching and learning scholarship of interest to them and their teaching practice
 - As a part of the course work Scholars will attend NLI sessions each semester and attend the CIDER Conference for High Education
- Scholars will assume full responsibility for the same course taught during Year Two of the program as the faculty of record
- Meet every other week with their faculty mentor to collaborate on course planning and discuss strategies for teaching for the assigned course
- Enroll in any remaining course needed for the Future Professoriate Certificate program. All Scholars are expected to complete the certificate requirements as a part of their completion of the GTS program

- Complete and submit a manuscript from the teaching and learning research project for consideration as a conference poster, conference presentation, and/or journal publication

Faculty Mentors

The faculty member who is the instructor of record for the course assigned to the new Scholar would be the logical candidate to serve as the direct mentor of the Scholar during the semester. However, faculty mentoring could be provided by another member of the department. The faculty mentor is expected to have the following responsibilities with the Scholar:

- Attend all of the classes delivered by the Scholar in the course during their first and second years in the program. During the third year the Scholar and mentor will agree upon the desired number of observations during the teaching semester.
- Meet with the Scholar at least every other week during the first and second years in the program. The, meet at least once per week during the semester with the Scholar teaches full-time to provide help and guidance related to a variety of issues related to the course – e.g., lecture preparation, homework/project/examination preparation and grading, issues related to student learning, etc.
- Meet monthly with the other faculty mentors and the GTS Program Director to discuss mentoring and implementation teaching practices of their Scholar
- Prepare a written summary evaluation of the Scholar's teaching performance at the end of each semester, and meet with the Scholar to review the evaluation and suggest ways in which instructional effectiveness could be improved.

The faculty member serving as the mentor for the Scholar during this instructional experience should receive appropriate consideration of this activity and level of mentoring responsibility when their instructional assignment is made for that academic year. The mentoring work is expected to be an important commitment of the faculty member serving in this role.

Evaluation of Performance and Continuation in the GTS Program

Continuation of a GTS position program requires successful progress toward fulfilling the activities outlined above. Performance evaluations will be done in conjunction with the head of the Scholar's home department, the faculty mentor, and the GTS Program Director.

It is the responsibility of the GTS Program Director to provide a written performance review for each Scholar at the end of their first year of their program. Copies of this performance review are to be provided to the head of the Scholar's home department. A meeting should be held between the head of the Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education, the Scholar, the GTS Program Director, and the Scholar's home department head whenever a Scholar receives a written performance evaluation that is deemed "unsatisfactory performance" or "needs major improvement". At this meeting performance improvement expectations will be presented to the Scholar in writing so that the Scholar understands the improvements that must be achieved during the second year in the program in order that they may retain full Scholar funding for the third year of their program. A second weak performance evaluation at the end of this second year could result in loss of the Scholar's GTS appointment and associated scholarship funding.

Continuation of a GTS position from year two to year three of the program requires evidence of appropriate effort and success regarding the Scholar's assigned course instruction responsibilities and those activities outlined above. The student evaluation scores of the Scholar and written

mentor evaluation (completed at the end of the semester the course is taught by the faculty mentor) are to be reviewed by the head of the Scholar's home department, and a meeting held between the mentor, head, and the Scholar to review these evaluations. The department head would offer suggestions to the Scholar regarding ways of improving teaching effectiveness. If the department head has significant concerns after either semester regarding the performance of the Scholar these should be put in written form and given to the Scholar at the evaluation meeting. The memo must indicate corrective measures the Scholar is to take and performance improvement expectations that are to be achieved in the subsequent semester in order for the Scholar to retain their GTS position.

Voluntary Termination of a GTS Position

Scholars may decide at the end of any academic semester during their Scholar appointment that they wish to voluntarily resign from the GTS program. Such a resignation should be discussed with the faculty mentor, the Scholar's dissertation advisor, and ultimately the head of the Scholar's home department. Resignations from the program are to occur before the end of a semester if they are to take effect at the beginning of the following semester. Scholars are not allowed to resign their position in the middle of an academic semester, because of the obvious negative effects on the students registered in the affected class.

GTS Program nominations must include the following materials

1. Cover page (use the PDF provided) with appropriate signatures.
2. A current curriculum vita.
3. A two-page personal statement that specifically addresses the candidate's interests in, and goals for, an academic career with an emphasis on teaching.
4. Two reference letters from faculty members that specifically address the potential of the candidate to succeed as a classroom educator and future academician. For students presently enrolled at VT, one of these faculty should be the student's advisor who should indicate in her/his letter the expected graduation date of the student.

A faculty committee in the college, co-chaired by the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, will review nomination materials for a GTS position. Selection of recipients will involve consideration of all nomination materials, with special focus on the nominee's personal statement and the specific reference letters that addresses the candidate's potential for future success as a teacher in an academic environment. The committee, for final selection, will most likely interview candidates.