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University of Nevada, Reno



ACUE 

Association of College
and University Educators

*Learning to Teach: A Comprehensive Graduate
Course in Evidence-based Teaching Practices*

March 9, 2020

Engagement Trigger

How many hours of pedagogical training does a graduate teaching assistant (GTA) receive at your institution?

Introductions

Dr. Veronica Zepeda

Director of Graduate Student Services
University of Nevada, Reno

Dr. Matt Aguirre

Director of Postdoctoral Affairs, Grad. Recruitment, & Diversity Initiatives
University of Nevada, Reno

Dr. Charity Peak

Academic Director
ACUE



Graduate Teaching Assistant Programs

THINK-PAIR-SHARE

Think:

- What challenges do you experience with preparing graduate students to teach?
- What role do graduate teaching assistants play in improving student outcomes?

Pair with a neighbor

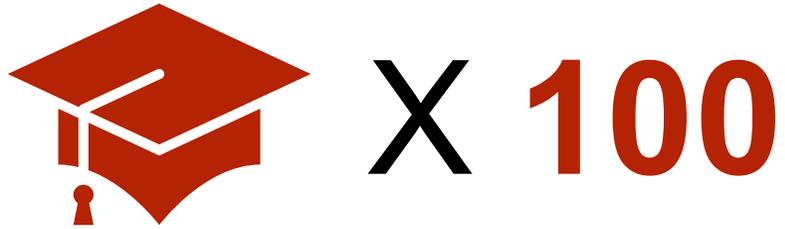
Share your responses

***Student success
efforts are incomplete.***



Quality Instruction & Investment in Faculty

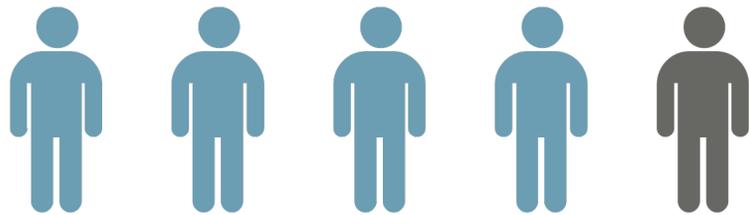




Faculty impact over **100** students every year

200:1

Students spend more time with faculty than anyone else



Four in five graduates looked to a professor for a mentor



Graduates are **1.9x** more likely to be engaged at work and lead fulfilling lives



Our mission is to
ensure student success
through quality instruction.



Comprehensive Teaching Competencies

Effective Practice Framework[®]

1

Designing an Effective Course

- ▶ Establishing Powerful Learning Outcomes
- ▶ Aligning Assessments with Course Outcomes
- ▶ Aligning Activities and Assignments with Course Outcomes
- ▶ Preparing an Effective Syllabus

2

Establishing a Productive Learning Environment

- ▶ Leading a Productive First Day
- ▶ Promoting a Civil Learning Environment
- ▶ Motivating Your Students
- ▶ Engaging Underprepared Students
- ▶ Helping Students Persist in Their Studies
- ▶ Embracing Diversity in Your Learning Environment

3

Using Active Learning Strategies

- ▶ Using Groups to Ensure Active Learning
- ▶ Using the Active Learning Cycle
- ▶ Developing Effective Class Sessions and Lectures
- ▶ Planning Effective Discussions
- ▶ Facilitating Engaging Discussions

4

Promoting Higher Order Thinking

- ▶ Providing Clear Directions and Explanations
- ▶ Using Concept Maps and Other Visualization Tools
- ▶ Teaching Powerful Note-Taking Skills
- ▶ Using Advanced Questioning
- ▶ Developing Self-Directed Learners

5

Assessing to Inform Instruction and Promote Learning

- ▶ Developing Fair, Consistent, and Transparent Grading Practices
- ▶ Developing and Using Rubrics and Checklists
- ▶ Providing Useful Feedback
- ▶ Checking for Student Understanding
- ▶ Using Student Data and Feedback to Improve Your Teaching

The Results: Students Succeed



GPA's improved 0.19 to above 3.0 across 100 courses enrolling 6,100 students. And, a John Hopkins study confirmed stronger student engagement.



Students learned more, earning better grades across 150 classes enrolling 4,500 students. Students earned more As and fewer Fs.



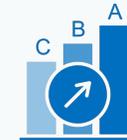
270 students of ACUE-credentialed faculty reported they received more useful feedback, found diverse views more welcome and had clearer understanding of expectations.



A course completion gap was eliminated, impacting 1,800 students across 113 courses. Result was 98.1% completion for Black/African American versus 96.6% for other students.



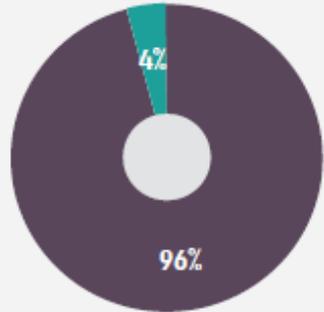
Success rates went up and DFWs down. Overall, DFW rate for sections taught by ACUE-credentialed faculty was 11.8%, while the DFW rate for sections taught by matched faculty was 15.3%.



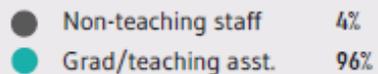
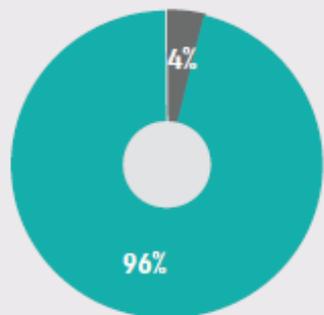
In a study of 7,183 students, students were significantly more likely to earn A, B, or C grades in courses taught by ACUE-credentialed faculty than in comparison classes

PARTICIPATION

Of 27 active course-takers:



DEMOGRAPHICS



Based on 27 course-takers

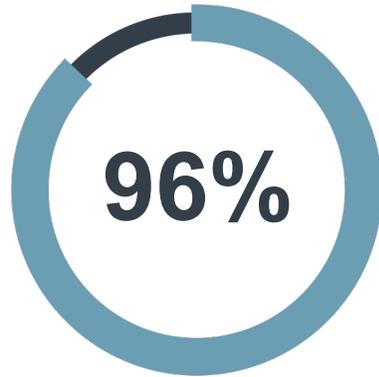
University of Nevada, Reno ACUE Course

- GRAD 702: Effective Teaching Practices in Higher Education
 - Fall 2018 to Spring 2019
 - 25 modules
 - Full academic year
- Monthly learning community meetings
 - Cross-disciplinary
 - Invited faculty participation
 - Synthesize learning about evidence-based practice
 - Demonstrated techniques
 - Shared experiences
- Teaching philosophy as final assignment

GTAs are enthusiastic...



Find the content relevant



Would recommend the course to a colleague



Report modules were helpful

Learned
115
new practices

Learned more about
70
practices

Implemented
43
new practices

Plans to implement
105
additional practices

Changes in GTA confidence before and after ACUE

Unit 1: Designing an Effective Course and Class



Unit 2: Establishing a Productive Learning Environment



Unit 3: Using Active Learning Techniques



Unit 4: Promoting Higher Order Thinking



Unit 5: Assessing to Inform Instruction and Promote Learning



Self-reported responses:

- **Extremely**
- **Very**
- Somewhat
- A little
- Not at all

BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING

After completing the course, graduate students report increases in their:

Use of research to
inform practice

38% agree
before

100% agree
after

Perception that students
are receptive to their
teaching methods

42% agree
before

100% agree
after

BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENTS

After completing the course, graduate students
report increased agreement that:

All students can be successful in their
course

54% agree
before

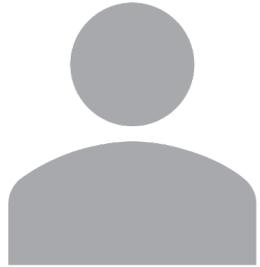
96% agree
after

Instructors can influence how
students perceive their intelligence

63% agree
before

100% agree
after

“The opportunity to enroll in Grad 702/3 was one of the reasons I chose to attend UNR”



**Comment from
Incoming graduate student**

“I honestly would have no idea what I would do if I didn't have this course guiding me through proper teaching practices... I used th[e] reciprocal interview on day one to gain the knowledge of what students needed from me in order to teach an effective class... ACUE was a great roadmap to use during my first teaching experience... [I] highly recommend [the course] to anyone going into teaching.”

“This course has been extremely helpful in encouraging me to try new techniques with my students... [T]hey have been very receptive to things like think-pair-share and other awesome techniques learned throughout this course. I'm very happy I'm taking this!”



**Feedback from current
2019-2020 cohort**

“I believe this course is an invaluable addition to my graduate education and a great step towards... my professional goal of becoming a college instructor.”

ACUE Course Models & Cohorts

2017 (Pilot Year)

- 6 modules
- 2x Cohorts of 25



2018 – 2019

- Grad 702 (3 credit course)
- 25 Modules
- 77 applied for course
- 27 completed course
- Masters & Ph.D. students
- 20+ graduate programs



2019 – 2020

- Grad 702 & 703 (4 credit course)
- 25 Modules
- 40 applied for course
- 20 completed Grad 702 and currently enrolled in Grad 703
- Masters & Ph.D. students
- 15+ graduate programs

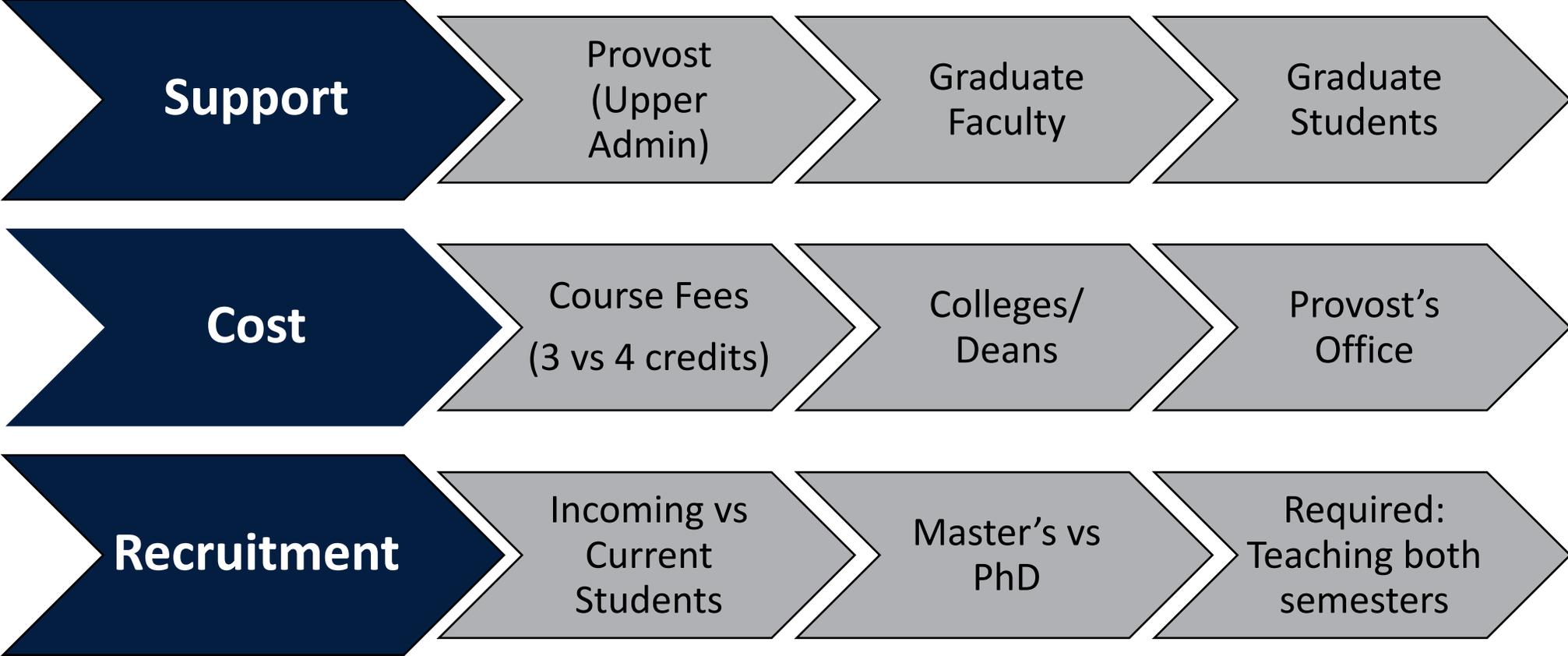
ACUE Course Models & Cohorts

Integrative Neuroscience
Basque Studies Chemistry
Criminal Justice
Civil and Environmental Engineering
Molecular Biosciences
Ecology, Evolution and Conservation Biology
Journalism **Political Science** Business
Anthropology Physics Mathematics
English Atmospheric Science
Computer Science and Engineering
Cell and Molecular Biology
Education Public Health
Geography

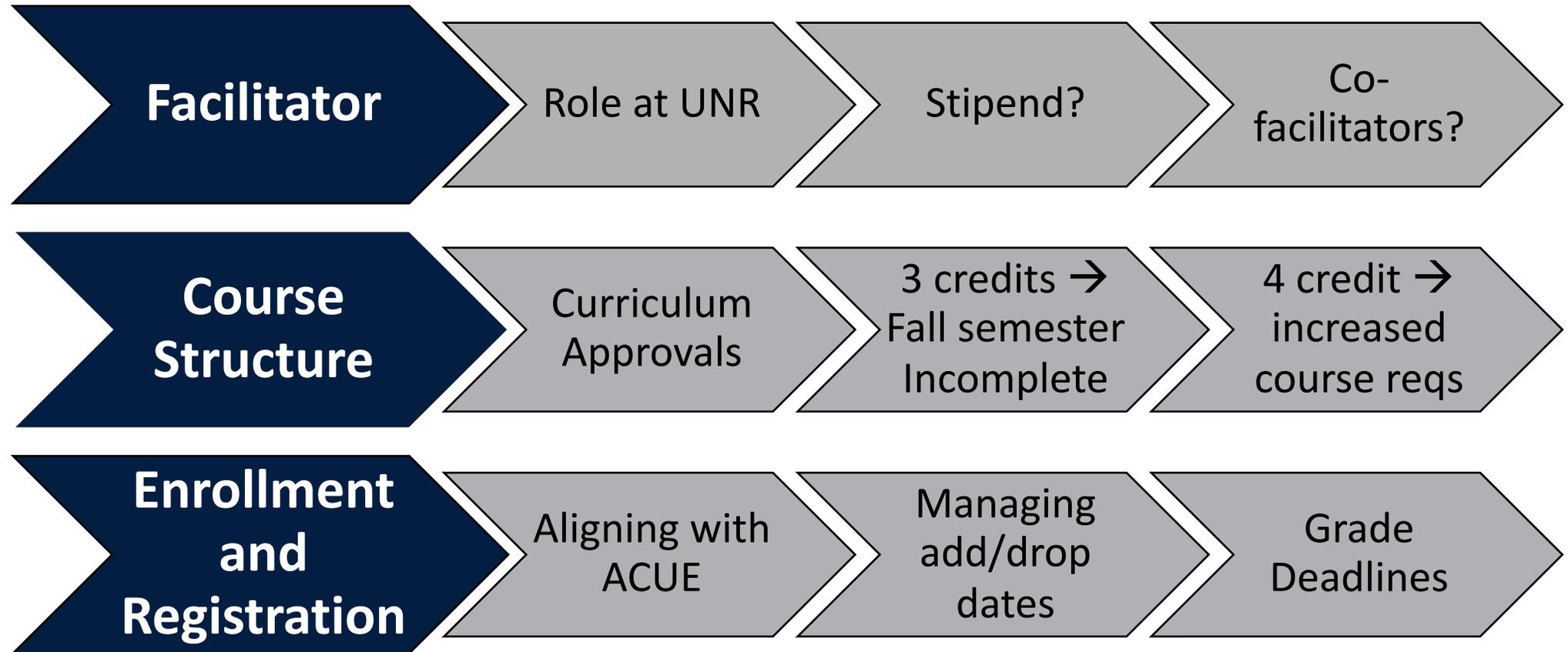
2019 – 2020

- Grad 702 & 703 (4 credit course)
- 25 Modules
- 40 applied for course
- 20 completed Grad 702 and currently enrolled in Grad 703
- Masters & Ph.D. students
- 15+ graduate programs

UNR Initial Challenges



UNR Continued Challenges



Next Steps for Grad 702/703 at UNR



Identify Permanent Funding Structure

- Course fees = >60% of cost per student
- Alternate funding sources: Donors, Course fee

Increasing Enrollment

- 25 students/year → 50 or 100?
- Elective status/integration with degree program
- Certificate program

Assessment and Tracking

- Teaching evaluations
- Graduate Student career opportunities/path

Discussion

How could a comprehensive course in evidence-based instructional practices for GTAs support student outcomes at your institution?



**Invest in GTA success
to improve student success!**