

Academic Resources for Your Undergraduates

When students go to their instructors in need of academic assistance, the instructor may believe that the only possible way to help those students is to spend time working with them directly. While every instructor will probably need and want to spend some time outside of class assisting students with course material, they should be aware that there are academic resources available to students through the Rutgers Learning Centers.

The Rutgers Learning Centers (RLCs) provide a range of free academic support services, including tutoring, study groups, and academic coaching, and they are located on each of the campuses—in the ARC building on Busch, in the Kreeger Learning Center (behind Brower Commons) on College Avenue, in the Loree Building on Cook/Douglass, and in Tillett Hall on Livingston. Students can use whichever of the centers is most convenient for them, and they can utilize more than one of them.

Tutoring and Study Groups

The RLCs hold regular study groups and tutoring sessions in a variety of academic disciplines, including Computer Science, Chemistry, Mathematics, Psychology, and Economics. If you teach in another discipline, but have a large number of students who are having trouble with the material for your course, the RLCs can facilitate study groups. They will work with you to identify and train a student who has taken the course before to lead regular group meetings.

In addition, undergraduate honors students volunteer to provide one-on-one tutoring at the Kreeger Learning Center on College Avenue. There may be tutors available who are qualified to help students in your discipline. Students should contact that RLC, or they can register online at <http://rlc-chat.rutgers.edu/scheduling/oneonone.php>.

The Kreeger Learning Center has also been developing an online tutoring program. The Program is called Knight

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Introduction to College Teaching

Spring 2005 16:186:855:01
Wednesdays 4:30-6:30 p.m.
Douglass Campus

The *Introduction to College Teaching* seminar, sponsored by the Graduate School - New Brunswick and the TA Project, will explore a wide range of issues pertaining to higher education and college teaching. This seminar will help prepare you for your roles as a future faculty member. The experience will enhance your employment marketability while strengthening your pedagogical skills and your knowledge of higher education. Some readings will be required, along with attendance and participation. The 0-credit seminar will be graded satisfactory/unsatisfactory and will not incur additional fees for enrolled students. It will meet during the first twelve weeks of the semester.

Weekly topics include: an overview of higher education in the United States; developing a philosophy of teaching; multiple roles of the faculty member; course design; motivating students; testing and grading; assessment and outcomes; technology in the classroom; teaching large classes; and other contemporary classroom issues.

Call 732-932-7747 or email tapweb@rci.rutgers.edu for special permission numbers.

Academic Resources...

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Line, the Rutgers Electronic Tutoring Program. Students log in and ask the tutor questions. The website also functions as a chat program; if other students are logged in to the same session, they can discuss the course material with each other.

The electronic tutoring program is still in the process of development, and, currently, Mathematics is the only field with regularly scheduled sessions. The RLCs, however, are planning to add more sessions and can work with instructors to develop sessions for their courses.

Academic Coaching

If you have a student who seems to be struggling or who admits to feeling overwhelmed by the material, you may want to suggest that he or she take advantage of the academic coaching service. Students who are having difficulty may not need tutoring in a specific subject, but may instead need to develop their academic skills. The RLC learning specialists sit down with students and review syllabi and materials from all of their classes, to help the students assess what they need to do to meet the demands of each of their

courses. They help students to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their approach to academics and work with them to develop a strategy for success in their coursework. Depending on the individual student's needs, the academic coach can help the student improve specific academic skills, including note-taking, time management, and test-taking skills.

Other Services

The RLCs can assist TAs with their teaching tasks in a variety of ways. If you want your students to have access to course support materials, such as lecture notes, old exams, and videotapes, these materials can be placed in an RLC. If you'd like all of your students to receive instruction in a particular academic skill, you can request that an RLC staff member visit your class and make a presentation. Use this service to help students prepare for a research or writing assignment, or to address other academic issues. If you have trouble finding quiet space to hold office hours and work with students, contact an RLC. They may have space available for you to meet with your students.

For further information about any of these services, visit <http://rlc.rutgers.edu>. You can also contact the director of any of the RLCs to ask about ways to help a particular student, or your class as a whole.

International Student & Scholar Circle

A support and discussion group for new and returning international graduate students is forming. The group will provide a forum for students to share their exciting and challenging experiences of acclimating and adjusting to Rutgers and the U.S.

Tuesdays, 4:00-5:15 PM

Starting on 10/26/04

Please Call 732-932-3966
for information

8 Lafayette Street, CAC

(one block from the International Center)

Sponsored by the Rutgers College Counseling Center & The Office of International Students

TapTalk is produced by the Teaching Assistant Project (TAP), Graduate School—New Brunswick.
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Technology and the TA: PowerPoint as a Teaching Tool

In classrooms and at professional meetings, PowerPoint slides have become a common accompaniment to lectures and presentations. In some disciplines, lecturers are expected to use overhead slides, and, at this time, PowerPoint presentations have become the norm.

PowerPoint can serve as an effective teaching aid. Instructors can use visual aids such as charts, graphs, diagrams, and pictures to illustrate concepts. Outlines can help students navigate their way through a lecture and can highlight key points for them. Projected text can reinforce material presented orally. Instructors can print out slides and distribute them to students or make them available online, an approach that is especially helpful to students who are visual learners.

While PowerPoint presentations have the potential to enhance teaching, however, they can also be confusing and distracting. Slides may contain an overwhelming amount of information, or be difficult to understand. Instructors may become so focused on their presentations that they don't pay attention to their students and how they are responding to the material. PowerPoint presentations can also reinforce some of the least desirable aspects of the traditional lecture format: students are turned into passive con-

sumers of information, rather than active learners. In addition, instructors may become so dependent on their slides that if they encounter technical difficulties, they can't have a productive class session.

If you are going to use PowerPoint, be sure to watch your students, not your slides, so that you can gauge their reactions. Don't let a carefully crafted presentation stop you from shifting emphasis or changing activities when you see that your audience may not be absorbing what you want them to, or that they need a change of focus. Interrupt your presentation to take questions and to pose them, or to engage in discussion, group activities, or writing exercises.

Susan Buchholz and Jill Ullman of Purdue University offer several suggestions for using PowerPoint effectively. They recommend that presenters limit the number of figures and tables on a slide, use pictures and animation in moderation, cite all source material, practice their presentations in advance, and give listeners time to process the information on the slides and to ask questions.¹

The University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching makes the following recommendations for using PowerPoint:

- Use fonts 24 points or larger for the text.

- Use dark type and light background for the overhead/slide.
- Avoid USING ALL CAPS. (The normal use of upper and lowercase characters is easier to read.)
- Use Italics or color rather than underline to emphasize a point. (Underline makes some characters difficult to read.)
- Limit seven words per line and eight lines per overhead/slide.
- Use the overhead/slide as a guide for presentation.
- Face the audience when showing the overhead/slide.
- Distribute a copy of the overheads/slides to students ahead of time if possible.
- Keep the room lights on and avoid showing slides in a dark room for more than 15 minutes (Dark rooms can make students drowsy.)
- Avoid putting students in a passive mode of receiving information by combining the overhead/slide presentation with chalkboard/whiteboard use or other learning activities.
- Have a backup plan in case of a power outage or equipment failure.²

¹ Susan Buchholz and Jill Ullman, (2004), "12 Commandments for PowerPoint," *The Teaching Professor*, 18(6): 4.

² "Tips for Using Common Technology Tools in Teaching," June 2004. Accessed October 11, 2004. [Http://www.crlt.umich.edu/inst/tips.html](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/inst/tips.html).

TA
Helpline
Call
932-11TA
Monday-Friday
between
the hours
of
8:30 am - 4:30 pm

TAP Calendar

11/8	4:30-6:00 pm	Opportunities for Life Science Graduate Students and Postdocs	BCC+
11/9	6:00-8:00 pm	Networking and Interviewing for Introverts	CAC+
11/18	11:00am-12:30 pm	Public Speaking & the TA	CAC*

+Call 732-445-6127 for information or to register.

*Call 732-932-7747 for information or to register.

Want to be a Movie Star?

Get your class videotaped!

<http://taproject.rutgers.edu>

Call 932-11TA for details

Sign up for the Peer Observation Program!

Having a class observed by a peer can be a great way to gain valuable feedback about your teaching. The Teaching Assistant Project offers the Peer Observation Program to any interested TA. You will be put in contact with a fellow graduate student teacher and provided with helpful materials for giving constructive criticism. For details, or to sign up, visit the website!

<http://taproject.rutgers.edu/pop/pop.html>

Teaching Assistant Project

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