

# **A**pprentice TA

## **Purpose**

The apprentice program provides an opportunity for undergraduate students to further their anatomy education at the University of Utah. This is a one semester appointment that allows twenty-four outstanding students to expand their knowledge in anatomy. Through weekly participation as lab instructors, the apprentice teaching assistants gain a greater knowledge of the anatomy they learned as students, while becoming more competent teachers and communicators. In the lab, the apprentice teaching assistant teaches a wide spectrum of anatomy using prosected cadavers. This is a tremendous learning opportunity to which the old maxim applies, “Qui docet discit,” or in other words “he who teaches learns.”

Besides learning more anatomy, the apprentice teaching assistant trains in the art of effective teaching. This is a valuable way to develop competency and skill in communication. Good skills in communication and teaching are valuable commodities in all aspects of life.

The apprentice position spans one semester, therefore make the most of this experience. Following are guidelines, commitments, and

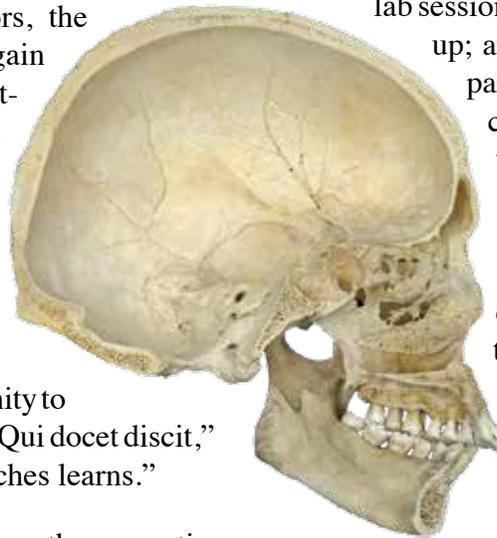
responsibilities that will help the apprentice to achieve the most out of this experience.

## **Time Commitment**

This program requires a significant time commitment. Each week the apprentice will teach one lab session, including preparation or clean up; attend a two-hour staff meeting; participate in an advanced anatomy colloquium; meet with a mentor teaching assistant to prepare for the lab; and individually study the material. Additional commitments include: proctoring examinations, grading examinations, and attending review labs.

The table at the top of the next page is an approximate summary of the time involved each week.

The bottom line — good teaching requires time. To gain the maximum benefit from this learning experience it is not wise to overextend yourself. Working full-time, while taking a heavy schedule of classes, is not conducive to optimizing the apprentice teaching assistant opportunity. Past experience shows that those who get the most out of the apprentice teaching position are those who can put the necessary time into it.



Description	Hours per Week
Lab - teaching, setting up, cleaning up, etc.	2.5
Staff meeting - Friday 3:30 to 5:30 PM	2
Anatomy colloquium - Friday 2:15 to 3:15 PM	1
Structured preparation - meet with mentor TA	3 to 4
Personal preparation	3 to 4
Grading, proctoring exams, etc.	1
Total	12.5 to 14.5

## Lab Session Responsibilities

Each apprentice teaching assistant receives a lab section that fits his or her course schedule. Apprentices must attend this lab section weekly throughout the semester prepared to teach the designated anatomy. It is the apprentice's responsibility to be prepared to teach the anatomy the students are required to learn. The apprentice should be well prepared to present the demonstrations and should have practiced these in advance of the lab session. Apprentice teaching assistants **must** do a trial-run of the entire lab with their assigned mentor before teaching in the lab each week.

Apprentices assigned to 12:55 labs must arrive one hour early to help the mentor teaching assistants prepare the lab for the day. This hour of preparation includes getting out body parts, organizing the lab, placing quiz paper on each desk, etc.

Apprentices assigned to 2:50 and 4:45 labs must arrive 10 minutes early. At this time they should help get quiz paper out for the next lab, spray and cover the body parts, and help organize the lab for the next session. At the end of lab they should repeat these steps in preparation for the next lab.

Apprentices in the 6:40 labs must participate with the mentor teaching assistants in cleaning up the lab after the students leave. This involves putting away the cadavers, cleaning the demonstration trays, and cleaning the laboratory (sinks, desktops, etc.) for the next day of labs. This will take approximately a half-hour to forty-five minutes.

## Preparation

Preparing to teach in the laboratory is a three step process:

1. Attentive attendance of the weekly staff meetings. During these meetings we discuss the upcoming lab objectives and goals. As a staff we attempt to analyze teaching techniques and approaches that will help us meet our objectives and best serve the students. Read the upcoming lab's section in this manual. Think about that lab session when you were involved as a student. Then come prepared to discuss what we as a staff can do to make this lab most effective for the students.
2. Meet once a week with the teaching assistant assigned as your mentor. This meeting should occur at least one day

before your assigned lab. This meeting **must not** occur the morning of the day you teach the lab. This session allows the apprentice teaching assistant to give the lab demonstration to the mentor teaching assistant before giving it to the students. The mentor can then provide the apprentice with constructive feedback and advice on the organization and presentation of the demonstration. This also allows the mentor teaching assistant to share effective teaching and demonstration techniques with the apprentice. Apprentice teaching assistants should review the pertinent anatomy before this meeting and come prepared with an outline of how they intend to present the demonstrations. If the apprentice does this, this session can focus on teaching technique, presentation skills, and additional anatomy knowledge instead of on getting you prepared on the basics. The basic preparation and knowledge is your responsibility.

3. Personal study and preparation. All teaching assistants working in the lab should come prepared with a firm knowledge of the material the students receive in lecture. Apprentices should prepare personally prior to the weekly staff meeting and prior to the meeting they have with their mentor teaching assistant. During this personal preparation, outlines of demonstrations should be made and anatomy knowledge should be thoroughly reviewed.

### Weekly Staff Meetings

This is an opportunity for all staff members to prepare to be better anatomists and teachers of anatomy. Apprentice teaching assistants should attend the meetings prepared to discuss how to become competent, effective teachers in the laboratory environment. Bring any questions or constructive comments to the meeting for discussion. Apprentices will benefit and enjoy the meeting more if they become involved in its

process. All input is valuable and could lead to improvements in the course.

During the meeting apprentice teaching assistants will have an opportunity to participate in a teaching capacity. In most meetings throughout the semester each apprentice will get to present a formal demonstration to other staff members. A schedule of these teaching assignments will be handed out at the first staff meeting.

### The Apprentice TA Demonstration

This course has achieved success because the teaching staff is constantly undergoing evaluation. This evaluation includes student evaluation, peer evaluation, and self evaluation. Constructive criticism is a very powerful tool. Only through critical evaluation can one improve. One of the valuable experiences this program provides is the opportunity to do a lot of teaching. The apprentice's teaching begins each week with the demonstration given to peers in the staff meeting.

The purpose of this demonstration is to provide a teaching experience that is evaluated by a group of experienced colleagues. This teaching demonstration lasts approximately 8 to 10 minutes. This is followed by a 4 to 5 minute discussion that critically assess the demonstration. Aspects of the demonstration that were done well will be pointed out, as well as items that require improvement or need additional thought. Being receptive to this sort of critical feedback is essential to becoming a better teacher. All teaching assistants can learn and benefit from these discussions.

This demonstration during staff meeting is not meant to cover a complete rotation in the lab, as this cannot be accomplished in the allotted time. Since your demonstration will not last as long as the one you give during lab, it need not cover all the material. You should recognize the time constraints involved in your demonstration and organize the demonstration to fit within the time limits. Anyone can be a good teacher given the luxury of unlimited time, we however must be

good teachers within limited time frames — this requires extreme preparation.

It is the apprentice's responsibility to use appropriate dissections. Apprentices are encouraged to meet prior to the meeting and look at the appropriate parts that will be used. You should organize the material into a concise, sequential presentation, with logically flowing transitions from topic to topic, body part to body part, and structure to structure. Strive to use good demonstration skills as you show structures on the body parts. Your demonstration should have a brief introduction, an organized demonstration, and a brief conclusion.

## **Apprentice and Mentor Meeting**

To facilitate the apprentice teaching assistant's learning and preparation process, each apprentice teaching assistant will be assigned a mentor — a more experienced teaching assistant. The apprentice will meet with their mentor at least once a week for 3 to 4 hours (or as long as is necessary to satisfactorily meet the teaching requirements for that week's material). The purpose of these sessions is:

- 1) the development of organized, effective, concise demonstrations;
- 2) the discussion of effective teaching techniques;
- 3) the review of demonstration techniques and methods;
- 4) and most important - **TEACHING PRACTICE!!!!!!!**

Apprentice teaching assistants are expected to have a competent knowledge of the anatomy for the coming lab prior to meeting with their mentor teaching assistant. This allows time and emphasis to be placed on the above stated objectives rather than on review of the required anatomy. The meeting is designed to be a highly interactive environment, where the apprentice can ask questions and suggest innovative ideas, while gaining critical feedback from the mentor teaching assistant.

At each meeting the apprentice should come prepared with outlines of each demonstration to be given in the lab. During this meeting the apprentice will teach each of the demonstrations to the mentor teaching assistant. This is the most effective way to become a better teacher. Practice, practice, practice.

This weekly preparatory meeting is absolutely vital and should not, under any circumstances, be missed. Failure to attend has two consequences: first, the apprentice will not have achieved a level of preparation acceptable to this program, thus, jeopardizing the education of the students; second, because of this the apprentice will not be allowed to present demonstrations in the laboratory during that week, consequently missing a valuable experience.

## **Proctoring and Grading Exams**

During the semester apprentice teaching assistants, along with the mentor teaching assistants, will grade and monitor examinations. These are responsibilities that demand concentration and care. Refer to the chapter on grading and proctoring examinations for more information. The time involved in these activities will average out to approximately an hour per week over the entire semester.

## **Colloquium**

All teaching assistants, both mentor and apprentice, are required to attend the anatomy colloquium (fall semester) or anatomy and physiology colloquium (spring semester). This occurs every Friday afternoon from 2:15 to 3:15 PM. This is an opportunity to learn more anatomy, physiology, and related topics, something I believe to be paramount to good teaching. This is a graded course for which a teaching assistant may register for one hour of credit each semester. Teaching assistants do not have to register for the credit, but whether they register or not they still must attend the colloquium.