

Effective Teaching at Georgia State Advice for New Teachers

10 Tips for First-Time Teaching Assistants

Laura Carruth, Ph.D.

Director, Center for Excellence in
Teaching & Learning

Associate Professor, Neuroscience Institute



- = **Good Teaching!**
- Variety of disciplines represented in this room
- Shared common characteristic—enthusiasm for what you're studying and a desire to learn more and create knowledge.
- This requires effective communication
- Novice vs. Expert



1. Reflect on your own past educational experiences

- Think back on your own undergraduate training and model the positive experiences.
- What made your good instructors good?
- What helped you learn?
- Don't repeat teaching approaches that didn't work for you or were less than engaging.



2. Set a class culture

- Get to know your students, but
- Don't become friends with them or be afraid of them.
- Provide a professional, positive and engaging learning environment.
- Set boundaries regarding your role as an instructor and theirs as students.
- You might not be much older than your students (and some may be older than you are), but let them know why you're here, what you're studying, and about your career path.



3. Take “ownership” of your class

- GTAs often teach sections of large courses and aren't involved in writing the syllabus or exams.
- Because of this some TAs may inadvertently send the message that they are passively involved in the course.
- If you act passive, your students may think that you lack knowledge about the course and be reluctant to ask you questions.
- One simple strategy is how you talk in class:
 - Use “I” language and say “What I want you to think about here is...” and “What I think will help you prepare for the test is ...”
This sends the message that you know what is going on, can answer questions and help your students be successful.



4. Set the tone for your class early and don't make lots of changes

- First impressions in class, are important.
- Your first class meeting should serve to break the ice and to establish class routines and a class culture.
- If you want students to contribute to discussions and ask questions, give them an opportunity from the first day.
- Follow the policies laid out in your syllabus. Changing a major policy, such as grading, during the semester is very disruptive to students.



5. Don't be afraid to not know something

- But make sure to find the answer and follow-up
- We are all still learning and being asked a question that you don't know the answer to (especially in front of an entire class) can be frightening and shake your confidence.
- Don't be afraid to say you don't know something. Say “that's a great question—let me find out the answer” or ask your class to look it up. But then make sure to follow-up so that everyone knows the answer.



6. Less is more

- New teachers have a tendency to cover more material than necessary or possible.
- It's often difficult when first teaching to judge how much material can be covered in one class session.
- Be realistic with time and make sure to save time for questions, discussion and review.



7. Learn how to respond to students

- At some point in your teaching career a student will tell you that “If I don’t get an A in your class, I will lose HOPE!”
- It is important that you treat all students fairly and don’t provide grading opportunities for some students that aren’t offered to the entire class.
- Developing a formulaic answer to use whenever you receive this type of message makes responding easier.



8. Evaluate your teaching and get feedback from students

- Course evaluations are one way to gain insight into what aspects of a course are working or not working.
- Consider informally evaluating your teaching several weeks into the semester and use the feedback to reflect on your teaching and make changes, where possible.
- GIFTS



9. Maintaining student confidentiality

- Since the enactment of the 1974 federal law called the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), instructors are not permitted to disclose students' records to anyone other than the student.
- Be mindful of maintaining students' confidentiality in other circumstances.
 - Don't post grades in a way that publically displays any student identifying information.
 - Don't hand back graded assignments with letter or numeric grades in a way that makes the grades visible to other students.
 - Don't openly discuss your students or their class performance anywhere students may overhear (this includes complaining about students!)
 - Don't post anything related to students or their performance on social media.



- <http://deanofstudents.gsu.edu/student-conduct/ferpa/>
- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) was enacted to give students access to their education records and to protect their privacy. Unless a student is legally dependent, the university is prohibited by FERPA from releasing student account information to a parent or guardian or other unauthorized third party without the student's consent.
- Students who wish to authorize an individual to have access to their student records should complete the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Waiver in the Dean of Students office.



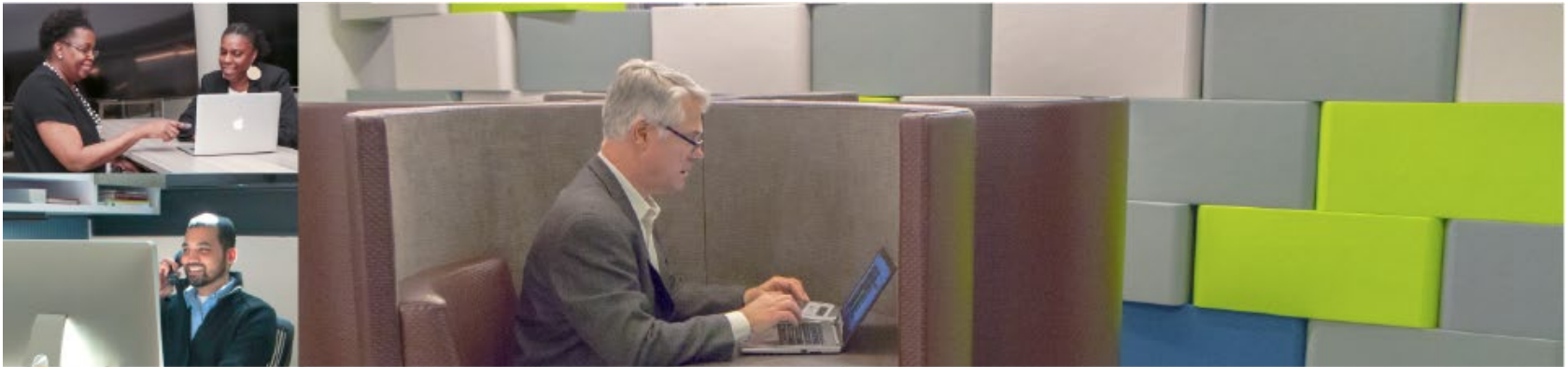
10. Use campus resources

- Talk to your advisor and fellow graduate students about their teaching philosophies and always ask for advice.
- Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning.



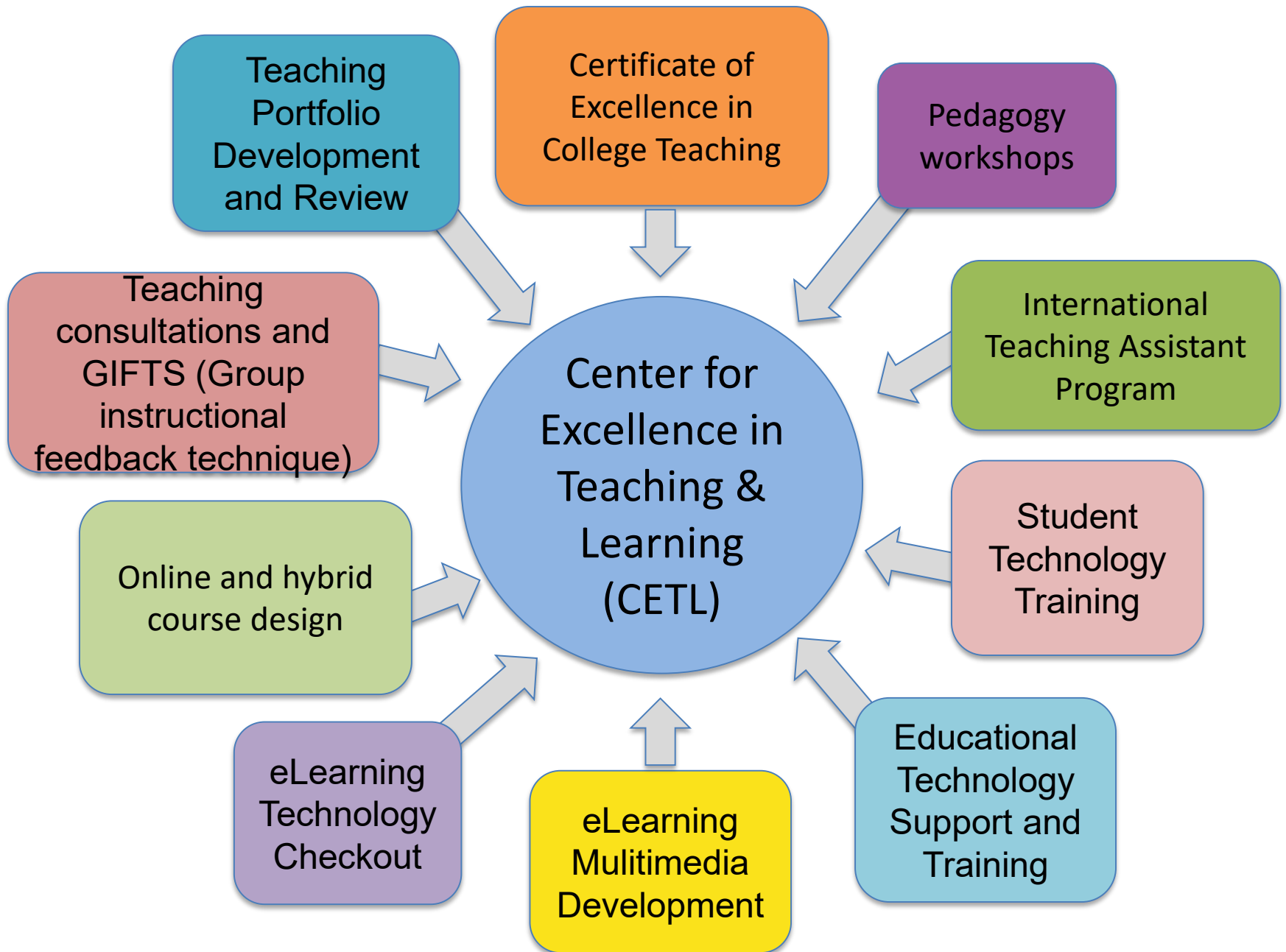
Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning

- CETL is here to support all of your instructional needs.
- Visit us in Library South, Room 100 (first floor)



- CETL: <http://cetl.gsu.edu/>







The CETL offers a variety of workshops, certifications and support for graduate students teaching at Georgia State University.

[Certificate of Excellence in College Teaching](#) is available to all graduate students who have participated in pedagogical training at Georgia State and held a teaching or lab assistantship.

[International Student Training](#) -The CETL works with graduate students who are non-native speakers of English to help them develop their teaching style and address the difficulties that can arise while teaching in a non-native language.

[The Group Instructional Feedback Technique \(or GIFT\)](#), is a highly effective tool for providing instructors confidential information from their students about how to improve a course.