GRADUATE STUDENT INSTRUCTORS, THEIR COURSES, AND THE SUPPORT THEY NEED

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Background

- **Teaching preferences and values vary greatly for GSIs by different characteristics**
  (e.g., Luo, Bellows, & Grady, 2000; Luo, Grady, & Bellows, 2001; Prieto & Altmaier, 1994; Prieto, Yamokoski, & Meyers, 2007; Shannon, Twale, & Moore, 1998;)

- **Professional development for GSIs**
  (e.g. Harris, Froman, & Surles, 2009; Nyquist & Wulff, 1996; Meyers, 2011; Savage & Sharpe, 1998; Sales, 2007)

- **What is missing from GSIs’ professional development**
  (e.g., Austin, 2002; Boyer, 1991; Civikly & Hidalgo 1992; Darling & Dewey, 1990; Feezel & Myers 1997; Hardré & Burris, 2012; Prieto, 1999)
Research Questions

- What characterizes graduate student instructors (GSIs) and the undergraduate courses they teach?
- What types of support do GSIs report needing?
- What characteristics impact the types of support GSIs find important?
Data Source

- FSSE for Graduate Student Instructors
- 8 Research Institutions
- 2,560 GSIs who taught or assisted with an undergraduate course
- Avg response rate = 32.6%
Analyses

- What characterizes Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs) and the undergraduate courses they teach?
  - Descriptives

- What types of support do GSIs report needing?
  - Descriptives

- What characteristics impact the types of support GSIs find important?
  - Two Ordinary Least Squares regressions
GSI Characteristics (n = 2,560)

- 54% women
- 70% White
  - 13% Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pac Island
  - 3% Black/African American
  - 3% Hispanic/Latino
  - 6% Amer Ind, Alaska Nat, Other, Multi
  - 6% Pref not to respond
- 78% Pursuing doctorate
- 67% goal = prof or instr
- 81% US citizen
- 78% heterosexual
- Avg age = 29
- Avg 2.7 years in current degree program
- Avg 2.6 previous years of teaching experience
Course Characteristics

• 43% Upper division
  52% Lower division
  5% Other division

• 25% Large course (≥51)
  50% Med course (21-50)
  25% Small course (≤20)

• Top four disc areas:
  27% Arts & Humanities
  18% Phys Sci, Math, & CS
  16% Social Sciences
  10% Bio, Agric, & Nat Res

• 60% fulfill a general ed req
• 96% Classroom instruction on-campus
  2% Comb of classroom instr & dist ed

• 83% had no community-based project
  76% had no living-learning component
  38% had no research
  82% had no intern, co-op, field exp
# Importance of Teaching Support

How important is it to you that your institution assists you in the following areas?  
1=Not important, 2=Somewhat important, 3=Important, 4=Very important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing students' critical thinking or problem-solving skills</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a supportive learning environment</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving your interactions with students</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporating active learning strategies</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating experiences with diversity</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using technology to improve student learning</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cronbach's $\alpha = .836$
## Importance of Assessment Support

How important is it to you that your institution assists you in the following areas? 1=Not important, 2=Somewhat important, 3=Important, 4=Very important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessing student learning</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specifying learning outcomes</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading discussions</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing assignments or exams</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cronbach's $\alpha = .825$
Independent Variables

- Gender
- Age
- US citizen
- Degree pursuing
- Degree obtained
- Occupational goal
Results for Importance of Teaching Support

- **Women** ($\beta_{\text{Women}}=.165^{***}$ ref = men)
- **GSIs of color** (e.g., $\beta_{\text{AfrAmer}}=.104^{***}$ ref = White)
- **Pursuing a Master’s deg** ($\beta_{\text{Mast}}=.100^{***}$ ref = doc deg)
- **Age** ($\beta_{\text{Age}}=.079^{**}$ ref = White)
- **Occupational goal** ($\beta_{\text{CollInstr}}=.074^{**}$ ref = oth occup goals)
Results for Importance of Assessment Support

- **Women** ($\beta_{Women} = .134^{***}$ ref = men)
- GSIs of color (e.g., $\beta_{AfrAmer} = .097^{***}$ ref = White)
- Pursuing a Master’s deg ($\beta_{Mast} = .084^{**}$ ref = doc deg)
- Int’l GSIs ($\beta_{Int’l} = .066^{*}$ ref = US citizens)
Discussion

- Assist GSIs with incorporating HIPs
- Link GSI development activities to
  - Developing students' critical thinking or problem-solving skills
  - Creating a supportive learning environment
- Work on white, male, younger, doctoral pursuing GSIs see the importance of teaching and assessment development
Thanks!

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References


References


