

An Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Program's Impact on the Faculty Teaching Experience: A Phenomenological Approach

A Capstone Project
Presented to
The Faculty of the Fred S. Klipsch Educators College
Marian University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

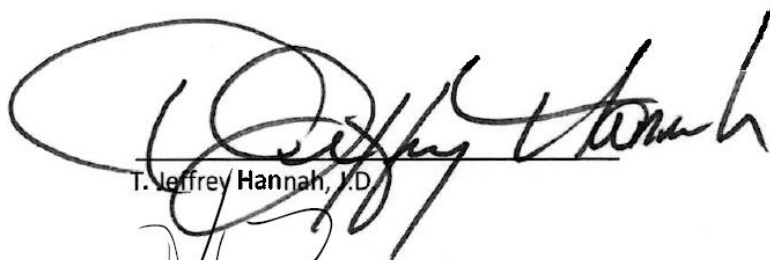
by
Mona T. Kheiry, Ed.D.

May 2024

Fred S. Klipsch Educator's College
Marian University
Indianapolis, Indiana

APPROVAL OF THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

This capstone project, "An Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Program's Impact on the Faculty Teaching Experience: A Phenomenological Approach", has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Fred S. Klipsch Educators College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.



T. Jeffrey Hannah, J.D.



Dr. Michael Baumann



Dr. David Rusbasan

Date: 4/19/24

Table of Contents

Tables and Figures	vii
Abstract.....	viii
Introduction	1
Background Information	2
Prediagnostic Work.....	3
Problem Statement & Significance	5
Purpose Statement	6
Literature Review	8
Employer and Educators' Wants and Needs.....	8
The Changing Student Body.....	10
Faculty Stress and Workload.....	13
Ideas for Faculty Supporting Underprepared Students.....	16
Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) Programs	18
Intervention	22
Methodology	25
Setting	25
Area of Focus	26
Participants	26
Courses.....	27
Faculty	28
Undergraduate Teaching Assistants	30
Researcher Role	32
Procedure.....	33
Inviting Faculty Participants.....	34
Expectations of Faculty	35
Inviting Students to Apply to the UTA Program.....	36
Compensation for UTAs	36
UTA Responsibilities.....	37
Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Training.....	38
Instrumentation	40
Data Collection.....	41

Classroom Observations	41
Interviews.....	43
Validity and Reliability.....	43
Data Analysis	44
Connections to Theoretical Framework.....	46
Confidentiality.....	48
Results.....	49
Introduction	49
Painting a Picture - Classroom Observation Findings	49
Painting a Picture – Descriptions from Participants	52
Themes and Subthemes.....	55
Conclusion	76
Discussion.....	77
Interpretation of Findings	77
Theme 1: Extra Layer of Support	78
Theme 2: Enhanced Teaching Experience	84
Theme 3: UTA Bridged a Gap	90
Theme 4: Professional Growth Through Self-Reflection	93
Revised Conceptual Assumptions	94
Limitations	96
Recommendations for Future Research	97
Implications and Recommendations	98
Challenges to Consider	100
Conclusion.....	102
References.....	104
Appendix A	124
Appendix B	125
Appendix C	126
Appendix D	127
Appendix E	130
Appendix F	134
Appendix G	137
Appendix H.....	140

Appendix I142

Appendix J144

Appendix K145

Appendix L.....146

Appendix M147

Tables and Figures

Table 1: Benefits and Challenges of Teaching Assistants	19
Table 2: Course Demographics	27
Table 3: Faculty Demographics	28
Table 4: Student Demographics	31
Table 5: Observation Schedule	42
Table 6: Interview Details	43
Table 7: UTA Responsibilities	53
Table 8: Themes, Subthemes, and Faculty	56
Table 9: List of Themes and Subthemes	76
Figure 1: Faculty-Student Dependency Cycle	22
Figure 2: Faculty-UTA-Student Capacity-Building Tripartite	23
Figure 3: Hermeneutic Circle	24

Abstract

Several job demands impact faculty engagement (Finkelstein, 1996; Peterson, 2004; West, 2012), which has implications for the success of higher education institutions and the student experience (Delmas & Childs, 2021; Cole et al., 2012; Hakanen et al., 2006; Harter et al., 2002; Marken, 2021; Shahid, 2019). The purpose of this qualitative study is to illuminate the lived experience of higher education faculty as they engage in a job resource of an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) program. The focus of the study is the faculty perspective as they interact with their UTAs and the impact on faculty as UTAs support students of varying levels of preparedness. The data from the study indicates faculty had an overall positive experience with the program with four main themes emerging, including UTAs being an extra layer of support for faculty, UTAs creating an enhanced teaching experience for faculty, UTAs bridging a gap between faculty and students, and interactions with UTAs contributing to faculty professional growth. This research provides an enhanced understanding of how a UTA program impacts the faculty teaching and learning experience and receive teaching support in their classrooms. Administrators, student support centers, and faculty support centers can have a better understanding of the faculty experience when receiving classroom support, and how this impacts faculty inside and outside of the classroom.

Keywords: higher education, faculty engagement, teaching support, undergraduate teaching assistants, underprepared students

Introduction

Shortly after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, several articles were published by popular and reputable higher education news sources discussing faculty disengagement (McClure & Fryar, 2022; McClure, 2022; McClure, 2021; Noonoo, 2020; Warner, 2021). While the articles all have slightly different angles as to the reasons for and symptoms of faculty dissatisfaction, they have a similar, basic message – faculty are feeling devalued, which is negatively impacting faculty morale (McClure & Fryar, 2022; McClure, 2022; McClure, 2021; Noonoo, 2020; Warner, 2021) and low morale is impacting faculty behavior (McClure & Fryar, 2022; McClure, 2022; McClure, 2021). In addition, faculty are lacking the resources they need to do their jobs. McClure and Fryar (2022) perhaps put it best in their article “The Great Faculty Disengagement,”

People need to feel safe, valued, and confident that they have the resources needed to do their jobs. And while those needs have always existed, the pandemic has brought new light to the extent to which our employers have failed to deliver. In many ways, institutions have neglected to create conditions for people to flourish (McClure & Fryar, 2022).

The articles mirror what the researcher witnesses in her role at her institution. As Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) of a higher education institution, the researcher interacts with faculty daily to support them with a myriad of pedagogical issues. Her interactions provide anecdotal evidence that faculty are feeling stressed, devalued, and disengaged. One faculty member shared:

We are so stretched and pulled – I feel like Play-Doh. We need more space, we need more faculty, and we need more resources. It feels toxic and that pulls out the joy. How can we do more with less? Do more with less – we’re trying to teach students and being asked to do more with less. It makes it very difficult (Anonymous, personal communication, 2022).

In addition, faculty are feeling ill-equipped to manage challenges they are encountering when teaching students. Over the last decade, there has been increased diversity within the college student body in the United States, encompassing socioeconomic status, increased enrollment in international

students, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and disability status (Brown & DiGaldo, 2011; Cleveland-Innes, 2020; Espinosa et al., 2019; Ortiz & Waterman, 2016; Smith, 2007). One of the results of the shifting student body is some students entering college at lower levels of preparedness, requiring faculty to increase remedial education in their courses (Brothen & Wambach, 2012; Saxon & Morante, 2014). Faculty feel inexperienced and unsupported in working with the shifting student population, causing feelings of frustration and powerlessness:

We're growing and expanding, but not providing students and teachers with the training and support needed – neurodiversity, ESL students, and students who read at a 4th-grade level in college. There's no input and resources. We are expanding without the infrastructure to support it (Anonymous, personal communication, 2022).

Students needing extra assistance are indicated as taking a considerable amount of time, contributing to stress levels of faculty (Quick, 2013). This study investigates how best to support higher education faculty with these challenges.

Background Information

Working at a Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) in a small, private, faith-based, higher education institution in Indiana, the researcher's role is to directly support faculty with their teaching and scholarship. The CTL assists faculty in several ways, including professional development for teaching strategies, curriculum design, classroom management, inclusive practices, and effective use of instructional technology within their curricula. While the CTL assists all faculty, regardless of full-time or part-time status, the majority of interactions are with full-time faculty. There are close to 200 full-time faculty at the university with a student-teacher ratio of 14 to 1 (National Center for Education Statistics [NSSE], n.d.). The university faculty handbook indicates faculty are to teach 24 credit hours in a 9-month period, which equates to 4 classes a semester. Enrollment has grown by more than 200% since 2001 and is currently around 4,000. The president's State of the University meetings emphasize growth as a top priority of the institution, intending to increase enrollment to 8,000 by 2030. Faculty perception at the

university is that entering students appear to have wider gaps in levels of academic preparedness, which has implications for what faculty teach, the flow of the curricula, student-faculty interactions, and the teaching methods faculty use (Perin & Holschuh, 2019).

The researcher's daily interactions with faculty gave her anecdotal evidence that faculty were overextended and needed additional support. However, it was unclear to the researcher what support was needed and how this may or may not be related to the dissatisfaction discussed in the articles. The researcher conducted prediagnostic work to better understand the situation and how best to approach it. What phenomenon are faculty experiencing? How does the phenomenon impact them personally and professionally? How can a department like ours help? Prior to formal research, the researcher set forth to gain answers to these questions through prediagnostic work consisting of a survey and interview questions.

Prediagnostic Work

Heifetz & Linsky (2017) emphasize the critical importance of diagnosing a situation prior to implementing an intervention when practicing adaptive leadership. This prediagnostic work allows individuals to better understand "the work," including challenges, dynamics, and complexities involved in a situation (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017). Root causes of problems can be identified, enabling individuals to address issues at the core rather than simply treating symptoms. This understanding helps facilitate an effective intervention tailored to the specific needs of the situation. An informal survey and informal interviews provided anecdotal data that allowed the researcher to explore the direction of the research.

The prediagnostic survey was completed in the spring of 2022. The portion of the survey pertinent to this study included two qualitative questions: What can the CTL do to better support faculty overall and what specific offerings or support would faculty like to see? Three themes emerged from the survey, including a high workload, dissatisfaction with requirements from administration, and feeling

unsupported in helping certain student populations. Faculty indicated feeling too overextended to participate in CTL services or offerings. Due to their responsibilities and schedule, professional development was a luxury they couldn't afford. In addition, some faculty expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with professional development expectations from university administration, such as requiring faculty to complete training modules. Finally, faculty indicated they felt frustration toward the challenges of teaching the growing diversity of the student body and needed support in this area. Lack of experience in teaching certain populations, such as multilingual students, neurodiverse students, or students of varying academic preparedness, made it challenging for faculty to provide students with the support they needed to be successful.

Interviews were conducted to further explore the faculty experience and to better understand what interventions could be implemented that would be supportive, impactful, and less of a drain on their workload. These confidential interviews were conducted by the researcher in the fall of 2022 with ten faculty from different disciplines, different tenure status, and a range in years of experience. A few questions targeting demographic information were included in addition to eight main questions (see Appendix A). Themes emerged from this process that mirrored data from the survey.

Almost every faculty member mentioned that their workload is exhausting and draining. Some revealed that the level to which they were stretched with job tasks was so great it felt toxic, pulling the joy out of their work. They indicated a feeling of drowning and a desperate need for balance. Many of the faculty indicated it was necessary for them to teach an overload or that the number of students in their courses had increased. Another area that almost every faculty member mentioned was the mental and emotional demands of working with students from varying backgrounds and levels of academic preparedness. Students being dependent on faculty to assist them with basic academic skills was specifically mentioned. While the faculty clearly found teaching to be meaningful and energizing, they

found it challenging to try to teach students with varying academic starting points in terms of knowledge within the content area and knowledge and skills for how to be a successful college student.

The prediagnostic data helped frame the problem. The survey and interviews revealed that faculty felt frustration when teaching certain populations of their students; however, faculty indicated not having extra time to engage in the CTL services that might be a support, such as professional development workshops and consultations. Administration requiring faculty to engage in CTL services is unlikely to feel motivating and supportive to faculty, who already feel overextended, overwhelmed, and frustrated. While offering voluntary professional development might help, the burden faculty feel from their workload seems to be a barrier to this potential idea. Feeling overextended and frustrated, faculty appeared to be protecting their time and energy by disengaging from extras, including professional development.

Problem Statement & Significance

A high workload, exhaustion, and feeling unsupported are antecedents of burnout and job disengagement (Afrahi et al., 2022; Aslam et al., 2018; Han et al., 2020; Sabagh et al., 2018). Ignoring signs of disengagement risks a negative impact on faculty, including their well-being, morale, burnout, and a decrease in their retention (Shahid, 2019; Hakanen et al., 2006; Cole et al., 2012; Harter et al., 2002). Moreover, faculty engagement has several implications for student success, institutional effectiveness, and employee productivity. Employee engagement is positively related to job attitudes (Hakanen et al., 2006), job performance (Bakker & Bal, 2010), health and wellness outcomes (Cole et al., 2012), organization profitability, and productivity (Harter et al., 2002). Moreover, faculty engagement is linked to an improved student experience (Marken, 2021) and student retention (Delmas & Childs, 2021). The research found that increased faculty engagement through strategically timed, encouraging emails had a positive, significant effect on student performance in the courses (Carrell & Kurlaender,

2020). Additionally, faculty who are burned out provide lower-quality instruction (Klusmann et al., 2008; Pyhältö et al., 2021).

This investigation explores a classroom intervention that implements a job resource designed to support higher education faculty with their teaching. According to the Job-Demands-Resources model (Baker & Demoutri, 2007) a job resource refers to parts of a job that support individuals in achieving work goals, reducing job demands (and the resulting costs), and stimulating growth, learning, and development. A job resource also promotes overall well-being. A job demand is an aspect of a job that requires sustained physical or mental effort at a cost to the individual, such as time pressure, emotional demands, or physical exertion (Baker & Demoutri, 2007). Implementing an intervention that is considered a job resource has a two-fold effect of reducing burnout and increasing engagement, whereas eliminating a job demand only reduces burnout (Shaufeli, 2017). By investing in faculty with a job resource so they feel supported and connected within the institutional community, we can build capacity within our faculty which has implications that extend to our students and the overall health of the university.

Purpose Statement

Given the prediagnostic work and guidance of the literature, the purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to illustrate the lived experience of higher education faculty as they engage in an implemented job resource of an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program. If implemented effectively, the researcher believes undergraduate teaching assistants embedded into the classroom can be a source of faculty support, potentially easing workload and stress. This research provides an enhanced understanding of the faculty teaching and learning experience, particularly experiences related to students of varying levels of academic preparedness and how faculty experience teaching support in their classrooms. Administrators, student support centers, and faculty support

centers can have a better understanding of the faculty experience when receiving classroom support and how this impacts faculty inside and outside of the classroom.

The following research questions are addressed with an emphasis on the lived experience of participants, which is the core of phenomenological research. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that explores the essence of human lived experiences, which are the subjective perspectives of individuals as they encounter a phenomenon. By deeply understanding the lived experience of individuals, researchers gain insight into the meanings, emotions, perceptions, and interpretations that individuals encounter, helping to better understand the phenomenon (Heidegger, 2005). The research questions were guided by the prediagnostic work and the review of the literature.

1. How do faculty experience stress and workload when engaging in an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program?
2. How does an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program impact the lived experience of faculty with their job, as a whole?
3. How does an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program impact the lived experience of faculty in the classroom as it relates to teaching students of varying academic preparedness?

This capstone project contains five main sections, including a literature review, a description of the implemented intervention of an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program, a methodology section describing the research methods, and a results section, including a discussion of the implications of research findings. The literature review steps through five areas to better understand the context of the challenge and what ideas already exist. These areas include employers' and educators' wants and needs, the changing student body, faculty stress and workload, ideas for faculty supporting underprepared students, and benefits and challenges of undergraduate teaching assistant programs.

Literature Review

The review of literature starts by better understanding what employers and educators want and need from graduating students, which can help frame an appropriate intervention. It then moves to the realities of the teaching landscape of faculty, reviewing changes in the student body that faculty find challenging, as well as the workload and subsequent stress faculty encounter in their jobs.

Understanding this context supports an adaptive approach and helps to mitigate less effective, technical ideas that do not consider all factors. The literature review ends with ideas for faculty supporting students with varying levels of academic preparedness.

Employer and Educators' Wants and Needs

The core of faculty jobs at the university in this study is to teach students to be prepared to pursue professional goals. The university promises its students will be exceptionally well prepared for a good life and professional pursuits through academic programs that guide students in achieving excellence and an engaged approach to learning on campus and beyond. It is expected that students achieve these outcomes from multiple avenues, however, faculty bear a significant responsibility. Given these expectations of faculty, a better understanding of what outcomes employers and educators want and need from graduating students can frame an appropriate intervention.

The literature reveals that employers and educators want graduates who can take on challenges and persevere (Hart Research Associates, 2013; Finley & McConnell, 2022). Alsop et al. (2006) define empowerment as “the process of enhancing an individual’s or group’s capacity to make purposive choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.” They go on to discuss the impact of interventions on empowerment. “It is hypothesized that interventions to improve agency and enhance opportunity structures can increase people’s capacity to make effective choices and that this can bring about other development outcomes (Alsop et al., 2006).” This explanation aligns with what

employers are looking for in their employees. Hart Research Associates (2013) conducted a study to better understand employer priorities and what they think college students need to succeed in the workplace. The study revealed the following:

- Nearly all those surveyed (93%) agree, ‘a candidate’s demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major.’
- More than nine in ten of those surveyed say it is important that those they hire demonstrate ethical judgment and integrity; intercultural skills; and the capacity for continued new learning.
- More than three in four employers say they want colleges to place more emphasis on helping students develop five key learning outcomes, including: critical thinking, complex problem-solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge in real-world settings (Hart Research Associates, 2013).

In addition, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) conducted a national survey of higher education professionals (Finley & McConnell, 2022). As well as including questions on what common institutional learning outcomes shape student success, they also asked what mindsets, aptitudes, and dispositions were essential for success and closing the equity gap. The top four items indicated as being most important for higher education to develop in students included curiosity and capacity for lifelong learning, persistence, agency/ability to take initiative, and resilience. Administrators and educators felt these mindsets, aptitudes, and dispositions were just as important as other, more explicit student learning outcomes (Finley & McConnell, 2022).

Harsh and Mallory (2013) specifically discuss the elements that build learning capacity and increase the performance of at-risk students. They posit that building capacity for successful students is best realized by focusing efforts on four areas, including:

- Cultivating learning by going to deeper levels of learning, organizing learning clearly with all important information included, and focusing on the meta-skills needed to be successful with a single skill.
- Intentionally incorporating cognitive strategies that serve as a learning chain to build full understanding along a successive learning path.
- Supporting students to develop resilience and self-efficacy to build their personal success factors.
- Cultivating student success through scholarship, service, and the growth of leadership skills (Harsh & Mallory, 2013).

These outcomes for students are important, outlining the skills, habits, attitudes, and values needed to build capacity in students so they can be successful in college classrooms and beyond. However, the implication is that faculty are responsible for teaching our students these capacity-building habits. Is it realistic for faculty to be taking on these multilayered outcomes given the current context in which they teach? The researcher continued the review of the literature to better understand the challenges of teaching students of varying academic preparedness that faculty discussed in the prediagnostic work, which may help outline a more holistic approach to supporting both students and faculty.

The Changing Student Body

The current higher education student body in the United States is the most culturally and socioeconomically diverse than ever before (Habley, 2012; Snyder et al., 2019; Tienda, 2013), with increasing diversity in college enrollment rates since 2000 for those between 18-24 years old (Hussar et al., 2020). This wide range of diversity includes ethnicity, race, international students, socioeconomic status, level of academic preparedness, and disability status (Brown & DiGaldo, 2011; Cleveland-Innes,

2020; Espinosa et al., 2019; Ortiz & Waterman, 2016; Smith, 2007). At the university in question, admission test scores are no longer required, which faculty perceive as leading to a wider array of academic preparedness for those entering. Students are considered underprepared if they perform below college standards in math, reading comprehension, and/or writing skills (Hughes, Gibbons, & Mynatt, 2013), and are often required to take remedial coursework (Provasknik & Planty, 2008). Underprepared students and increases in remedial education are continuing (Brothen & Wambach, 2012; Saxon & Morante, 2014) with one study indicating that 60% of those entering community colleges are required to take remedial education (Smith Jaggars & Hodara, 2013).

Faculty feedback received from the interviews the researcher conducted indicated concerns over the basic reading and writing levels of students with one faculty member stating that some students are reading at a 4th-grade level. Other concerns surrounding preparedness included a lack of basic knowledge in the content area, deficient study skills, student lack of understanding of how they best learn, and a shortage in habits that increase their chances of learning and retaining information, such as note-taking and active listening strategies. Other student challenges included students with high anxiety, working with absent student-athletes, teaching students whose first language is not English, and supporting student accommodations for those with disabilities. Some of the faculty indicated feelings of powerlessness in helping with some of these challenges.

While some faculty indicated in the prediagnostic work that student changes in academic preparedness are due to less stringent university entrance requirements, the research surrounding this is unclear. The literature investigating test-optional admission practices is limited and complex. While studies do find an increase in applications after adopting test-optional policies (Maguire, 2018; Lofaro, 2021; Matheny, 2022), literature shows that there is small to no impact on racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic status on the student body (Bennett, 2022; Rubin & González Canché, 2019; Saboe & Terrizzi, 2019; Matheny, 2022). Moreover, the literature shows that graduation rates and GPAs are

similar to those who submit scores (Lofaro, 2021; Matheny, 2022; Osaki, 2022), implying that any changes in the student body do not negatively impact student success. There is an assumption that graduation rates and GPAs indicate student preparedness. Matheny (2022) states, “Although there may be small differences in these outcomes for submitters and non-submitters, test-optional policies do not result in admitting students who are substantially less prepared, as some have feared.” However, the literature does not consider modifications higher education institutions implement in student support services or changes in faculty teaching practices to ensure student success. This is a gap in the literature and inconsistent with the findings in the prediagnostic work for this study. Faculty indicated that the student population appears less prepared now than in years past, requiring them to teach remedial content in their courses to help students succeed. In one study, Sachar et al. (2019) wanted to better understand what underprepared students experienced as well as the faculty interactions and perceptions of these students. While faculty had a mix of positive and negative perceptions, one theme was frustration with students’ lack of preparedness and feelings of helplessness when working with them. Faculty indicated the top teaching strategy in working with these students is individual support.

Another study by Quick (2013) analyzed faculty perceptions and preparedness in working with academically vulnerable (underprepared) students. Faculty self-reported data indicated that 80% felt they played a vital role in meeting the educational needs of the academically vulnerable, but that 82% felt the responsibility to assist these students should fall on student learning centers. This indicated that faculty seemed to want to help, but perhaps felt there were barriers to adequately help or felt assisting students with remedial education was simply not their job. In terms of preparedness to teach this population, 44% of faculty indicated they had no formal training or only on-the-job experience. The study suggested that half of respondents felt they could benefit from further professional development in instructional strategies to support academically vulnerable students (Quick, 2013). In addition, 48% of faculty from disciplines other than teacher education indicated that making accommodations for these

students decreased their teaching effectiveness; the top frustration in teaching students with reading and writing difficulties was having a lack of time (Quick, 2013).

Faculty frustrations could also be due to the perception that assisting students with remedial work is not their job and lowering their job status. Status is defined as the ranking of one's position in an organization surrounding dimensions of power, prestige, and esteem (Nelson & Quick, 2007). When employees feel they must complete tasks that are considered lower status, this can create status inconsistency. Status inconsistency occurs when an individual perceives a discrepancy between status hierarchies that are inconsistent with one another (Bacharach et al., 1993). For example, level of education and job tasks might create a status inconsistency for higher education faculty if they have a Ph.D. and are teaching students basic reading and writing skills. Status inconsistency can lead to role stress (Bacharach et al., 1993), which is specifically mentioned in the literature surrounding faculty stress. Sabagh et al. (2018) found that one of the predictors of faculty burnout was over-qualification, which is the perception that one is overqualified for the work.

While several ideas are mentioned to help support faculty in teaching underprepared students, faculty high workloads and lack of time are persistent themes in the literature, making some of the ideas mentioned seem unrealistic. The researcher continued the review of the literature to better understand faculty workload and sources of faculty stress.

Faculty Stress and Workload

Employers and educators want students who can persevere and readily apply cognitive and affective skills and habits to nuanced situations (Hart Research Associates, 2013; Finley & McConnell, 2022). There seems to be an expectation that institutions, through their faculty, teach students these skills. However, this expectation does not consider the high faculty workload and resulting stress. Research surrounding faculty stress has been explored since the mid-1980s with some research as early

as 1956. Eckert and Williams (1972) conducted research focused on how faculty view themselves and their jobs at 43 private and public colleges in Minnesota. They included a section focused on faculty satisfaction and dissatisfaction. In their research, faculty listed fewer dissatisfactions than satisfactions, which the authors felt suggested reasonably high morale with their jobs. Most frequently scored irritations or frustrations included colleagues' poor attitudes and inadequate salaries. Also included are routine duties, long hours, poor facilities, excessive committee work, inter-faculty relations, and administrative red tape. They compared the data to a previous questionnaire conducted years earlier (Eckert & Stecklein, 1961) and found increases in complaints specifically with inter-faculty relations, poor facilities, long hours, and excessive committee work. Similar stressors are found in later studies. Gmelch et al. (1985) conducted a national study that included 40 public and 40 private Ph.D. granting universities selected at random. They found the top three stressors to be imposing excessively high self-expectations, securing financial research support, and having insufficient time to keep abreast of current developments in the field. Other sources of stress included inadequate salaries, writing for publications, heavy workloads that cannot be finished in a normal workday, job demands interfering with personal activities, inadequate progress, frequent interruptions, and attending meetings (Gmelch et al., 1985).

More recent literature has similarities to the older literature but suggests increasing responsibilities contributing to stress. Sabagh et al. (2018) analyzed research on faculty burnout to synthesize the studies and identify themes. They found that job demands and a lack of resources had a clear damaging effect on faculty burnout. Predictors of burnout in the workplace included high workload, role conflict, role ambiguity, over-qualification (the perception that one is overqualified for the work), pressure to increase research, high numbers of students taught, lack of performance-contingent rewards, and imbalances between teaching, research, and service. A qualitative study in the UK looked at associated stressors of academic roles at teaching-focused universities (Darabi et al., 2017). They conducted online interviews with 31 faculty and found several factors contributed to stress.

Factors included increasing numbers of students, heavy workloads, increasing administrative burdens, time pressure, poor management, funding cuts, and the changing nature of higher education. They specifically mentioned that the demands of the job cannot be accomplished within normal working hours (Darabi et al., 2017). In addition, the Higher Education Research Institute conducted a 2016-2017 national Undergraduate Teaching Faculty Survey which had a section focused on sources of faculty stress. The top three items faculty reported as being extensive sources of stress included self-imposed high expectations, lack of personal time, and increased work responsibilities. Moreover, 31.4% of faculty considered leaving academia, and 44.6% considered leaving their current institution for another institution (Stolzenberg et al., 2019).

Since workload and lack of time were a significant demand identified through my prediagnostic work and were revealed consistently through the literature, I specifically investigated this area further. Studies have indicated that faculty workload has significantly increased over the years (Nakano et al., 2021; Rosser & Tabata, 2010; Townsend & Rosser, 2007). Nakano's et al. (2021) findings indicated that academic workload has increased significantly in ten years from 2007 to 2017, which may be attributed to a significant increase in evaluations due to accountability metrics and administrative duties attached to increasingly complex and cumbersome administrative processes. Other studies indicated that perceived workload contributed to faculty stress (Donovan, 2018; Adrian et al., 2014). A suggestion in the literature for supporting faculty with workload issues is for higher education administrators to create a quantitative workload framework or calculation to better ensure a fair balance between research, service, and teaching duties (Blodgett et al., 2018; Griffith & Altinay, 2020). While this suggestion has its merits, it's not within the power of a department like ours to make this kind of contribution.

Another factor in faculty workload is the amount of time faculty need to devote to students with varying levels of academic preparedness (Quick, 2013). The prediagnostic work revealed the challenges

faculty face when working with students of varying academic preparedness and other needs. Would an intervention specifically supporting faculty with the diverse needs of students be an appropriate job resource for faculty? To frame a possible innovation for supporting faculty in this way, it is important to understand what ideas already exist in the literature.

Ideas for Faculty Supporting Underprepared Students

Faculty indicated in the prediagnostic work that supporting students of varying academic preparedness was a time-consuming challenge they felt ill-prepared to manage. Ideas for how to support faculty with this challenge were investigated through the literature. While many ideas were reviewed, the researcher was looking for an innovative approach that would not overburden faculty.

Faculty professional development for teaching underprepared students is an overarching common recommendation in the literature for supporting faculty in understanding and effectively teaching this population (Gabriel, 2016; Sachar et al., 2019; Quick, 2013; Shankle, 2016). In addition, it's suggested that faculty provide underprepared students individual support (Sachar et al., 2019; Shankle, 2016), although a definition of individual support was not provided. What was absent in the literature regarding teaching underprepared students in higher education is differentiated instruction, which is more commonly used in K-12 schools to support students with varying abilities (Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2009). As Smale-Jacobse et al. (2019) describe it, differentiated instruction is a student-centered method of instruction that acknowledges students' different starting points. Teachers intentionally create curricula that adapt to students' learning differences, executing the adaptations while carrying out instruction (Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019). While Santangelo & Tomlinson (2009) have found that the successes of differentiated instruction discovered in the P-12 environment can be realized in higher education settings, several barriers have been revealed in the literature. The top five listed barriers include teacher lack of knowledge of this type of instructional method, time constraints,

class size, school administration and facilities, and lack of resources (Lavania & Nor, 2020). Santangelo & Tomlinson (2009), while advocating for differentiated instruction, acknowledge the amount of time required by instructors:

Effective differentiation requires a significant amount of time, effort, and dedication on the part of the instructor. In so far as the preparation for any college course can be characterized as “substantial,” preparing for a course that involves differentiated content, processes, and products proved even more intensive. (Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2009, p. 14)

However, smaller sizes of P-12 classes do appear to help teachers more readily utilize this method. In 2007 and 2008, the Canadian Education Association conducted a study to better understand the impact of class size on student learning. The class sizes were reduced to 20 or fewer students in 90% of primary classes and 23 or fewer in all primary classes. Nearly three-quarters of the teachers reported that the reduction in class size allowed them to increase small-group work and differentiated instruction (Bascia, 2010). While the research surrounding class size and differentiated instruction is promising, several studies indicate higher education faculty have a lack of time to engage in differentiated instruction, professional development, and individualized learning (Lavania & Nor, 2020, Griffith & Altinay, 2020; Hott & Tietjen-Smith, 2018; Quick, 2013; Shankle, 2016).

Lack of time and experience has made some higher education faculty turn to other methods to close the gap between underprepared students and expected course outcomes. Faculty are feeling pressured or even forced to dilute course content so underprepared students can complete their courses (Brothen & Wambech, 2012; Pitts et al., 1999). In addition, some faculty are inflating grades in order to retain students and keep students happy (Shankle, 2016). It appears some faculty are feeling frustrated and out of options when it comes to underprepared students, lowering expectations instead of building capacity within the students to achieve course goals. Other recommendations to help support faculty in teaching underprepared students in higher education included creating programs or learning communities so faculty can network and share resources (Quick, 2013; Sachar et al., 2019),

working closely with advising and tutoring centers (Huston, 2019; Quick, 2013), modifying pedagogy to be more engaging (Gabriel, 2016), building trust and rapport with underrepresented students (Gabriel, 2016), and establishing a peer mentoring program (Shankle, 2016).

While some faculty are lowering expectations to make courses easier for students who need extra assistance (Brothen & Wambech, 2012; Pitts et al., 1999; Shankle, 2016), the literature shows the flaws of this approach, as employers and educators want students to be resilient (Hart Research Associates, 2013, Finley & McConnell, 2022). How can we use alternative approaches that empower students and build capacity rather than dependency? Moreover, is there a less time-consuming approach, providing faculty with more immediate support embedded in the classroom? Huston's (2019) article discusses innovative ways academic support can be integrated into courses. The concept intrigued the researcher, as it appeared to be an adaptive response to the situation that would help make progress in supporting faculty and potentially build capacity in students. The researcher investigated the concept to understand if integrating this type of framework into a teaching assistant program could be beneficial.

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) Programs

Huston (2019), the director of academic success at Seminole State College in Florida, specifically discussed the concept of embedded tutors, a proactive strategy to partner with faculty to integrate student tutors into courses that need it most. Instead of tutors passively waiting for students to come to them, tutors work alongside the faculty to support students in various ways. Many of the tasks outlined for embedded tutors resembled teaching assistants. The researcher reviewed Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) programs and how they may or may not be an approach to supporting faculty and students.

Owen (2011) provided a review of the literature surrounding teaching assistants which have been utilized in various capacities since the 1960s. There are benefits and challenges of incorporating TAs in the classroom for the student learners, the student TAs, and for the faculty. The benefits and challenges cited by Owen are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1: Benefits and Challenges of Teaching Assistants

	Teaching Assistants	Learners	Faculty
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced learning by teaching material Development of mentoring relationships Affective gains, such as enhanced self-esteem, awareness, and tolerance of others Compensation via credit or monetary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced knowledge acquisition and academic skill development Learning from someone who understands their interests and motivations Relying on TA to answer questions and serve as a mediator or moderator with an instructor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TAs assist with a variety of tasks, such as clerical, tech support, grading, facilitating discussion groups or lab, or creating & delivering lesson plans Gain insight from TA on classroom personalities, dynamics, and comprehension of course materials Utilize TAs as student mentors or to reinforce knowledge
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible violations of confidentiality "Conflict of interest" bias toward students Anxiety produced from evaluating and organizing peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provoke anxiety and defensiveness in some students unfamiliar with the type of program May feel information received from peers is less valid Challenges traditional view of the instructor as the authority figure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time and energy are needed to supervise, monitor, and collaborate with TA TAs may need support with confidence or self-efficacy issues Faculty may feel guilt for not "earning their keep" Faculty reluctance from complete independence to being interdependent with a TA

The information compiled by Owen appears very promising; however, she cautions faculty about the amount of time and energy that goes into a teaching assistant.

Another study specifically mentioned that the investment of faculty time into the UTA program was mitigated when their office managed the organization and training of TAs. Begley et al. (2019) launched a study in which they conducted further analysis of a Service Learning UTA program. The

initial purpose of the program was to support faculty with the logistical aspects of service learning in their classrooms. However, what they found were rich relationships being established between the faculty and their TAs in which TAs were collaborative partners in improving the teaching and learning in their classrooms. TAs were engaged in different ways but were beneficial for the intended logistical tasks as well as serving as teaching consultants and pedagogical co-designers. Faculty found TAs helped improve the course and provided essential feedback. In addition, feedback from faculty did not include negative comments about invested time in working with TAs which the authors attributed to the extensive initial training program and subsequent weekly meetings with TAs through the Service-Learning Office. This suggests that if the organization, management, and training of the UTA program is in a separate office, such as a Center for Teaching and Learning, perhaps this mitigates the amount of time invested by the faculty member (Begley et al., 2019). Begley et al. go on to state that since the management and instructional load of the TAs is not on the faculty, this allows them more time and space to develop the collaborative relationship with the TAs that the faculty values.

Herrman and Waterhouse (2008) included a “Lessons Learned” section in their study about the benefits of using UTA’s in a nursing program. In addition to discussing logistical scheduling conflicts, they point out the importance of discussing the confidentiality of student information to ensure UTAs are aware of this responsibility. They addressed this by adding a confidentiality statement to a course contract, as well as emphasizing it during orientation. They go on to discuss the need to ensure faculty understand the role and expectations of UTAs so they are effectively utilized. Some faculty did not benefit from their UTA as much as others due to scheduling conflicts, a perception of overburdening the UTA, the comfort level of the UTA with the materials given to them, and other challenges. Addressing these issues with faculty early on will help with the UTA program’s success (Herrman & Waterhouse, 2008). Furthermore, they discuss the importance of intentionally evaluating the maturity level of UTAs. They address this by including specific scenarios in the interview process with potential UTAs. The

scenarios included information such as working with others, confidentiality, and helping students to help themselves. Intentionally assessing maturity was deemed important to better ensure the UTA would have the autonomy and level of responsibility needed in the role (Herrman & Waterhouse, 2008). Despite these lessons, 79% of students found the UTAs helpful in their program. In addition, the UTAs were 95.7% positive about their experience and faculty were 96.7% positive. Faculty appreciated the extra support the UTAs provided and the program was viewed as highly successful (Herrman & Waterhouse, 2008).

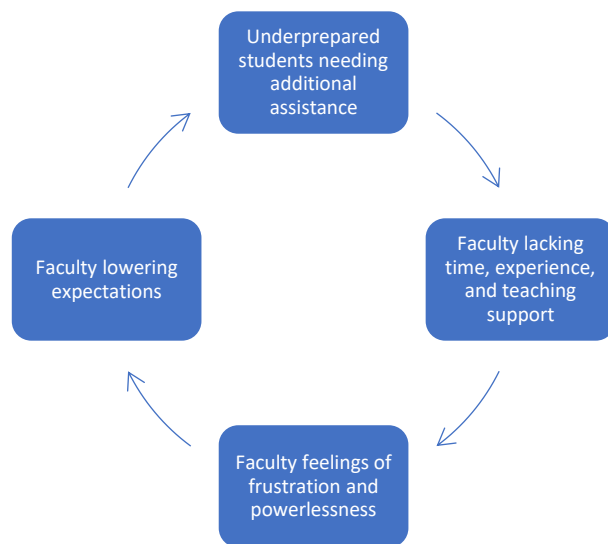
Could an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program be a job resource for faculty by directly integrating student support into the classroom? A UTA could support faculty in a variety of ways, including extra assistance for less prepared students. This could help faculty and higher education institutions approach students of varying academic preparedness from a capacity-building framework.

The next section discusses the intervention of an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program, including a description of the faculty-student dependency cycle, why a UTA program could be a more adaptive approach to supporting faculty, and the hermeneutic phenomenological method chosen to approach the intervention.

Intervention

Based on the researcher's prediagnostic work and review of the literature, she hypothesizes that faculty lack of time due to workload, inexperience, and lack of teaching support create feelings of frustration and powerlessness when encountering underprepared students in their courses (Quick, 2013). Feeling powerless to effectively support this population, some faculty lower expectations in varying ways, such as diluting course content and inflating grades (Brothen & Wambeck, 2012; Pitts et al., 1999; Shankle, 2016). This creates a dependency cycle, locking students into perpetual underpreparedness, which continues to present challenges for faculty as the cycle persists (see Figure 1).

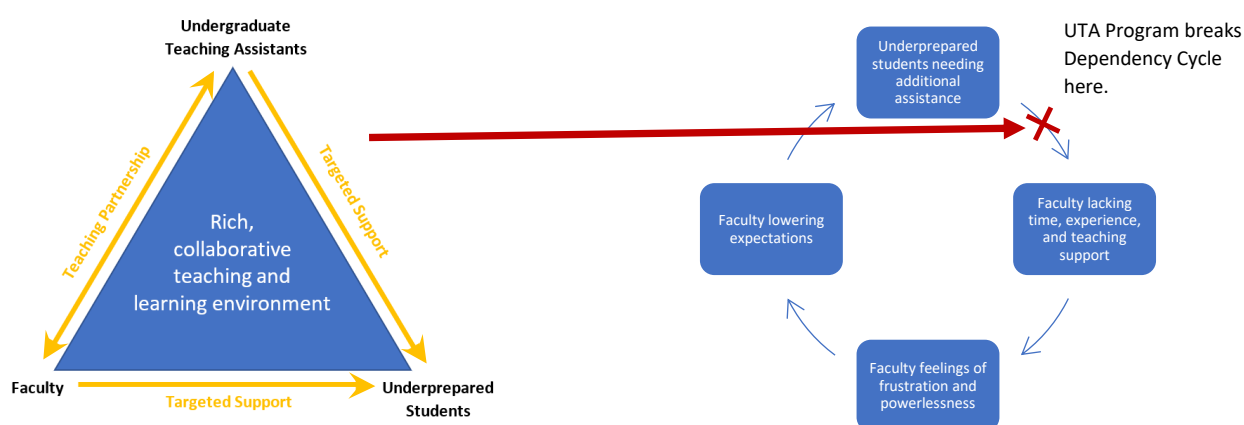
Figure 1: Faculty-Student Dependency Cycle



This is an adaptive challenge. Unlike technical challenges that have a straightforward solution to “fix” the problem, adaptive challenges are more complex and require a different response (Heifetz, 1994). As Heifetz (1994) explains, we make headway with adaptive challenges by making progress with people’s values, attitudes, and habits of behavior. The literature seems to support an intervention that will bridge the gap for underprepared students, as this will also support faculty with their workload.

Simply providing faculty with professional development, while important, is a technical fix, as it does not consider faculty workload and subsequent lack of time to attend training and implement new strategies. The researcher hypothesizes that an adaptive intervention of an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) program will be a job resource for faculty having the potential to offer meaningful support in the classroom, including mental assistance and indirect emotional relief for faculty by assisting in the classroom and supporting students. The researcher hoped that a UTA program would break the dependency cycle, providing extra teaching assistance for faculty and targeted learning assistance for students via capacity-building methods. With UTAs specifically trained to build capacity when assisting students, they can help build skills and habits students need so they are more prepared for future endeavors. A well-designed UTA program will be a job resource for faculty, creating a rich and meaningful partnership between faculty and UTAs, with both roles offering targeted support to less prepared students (see Figure 2).

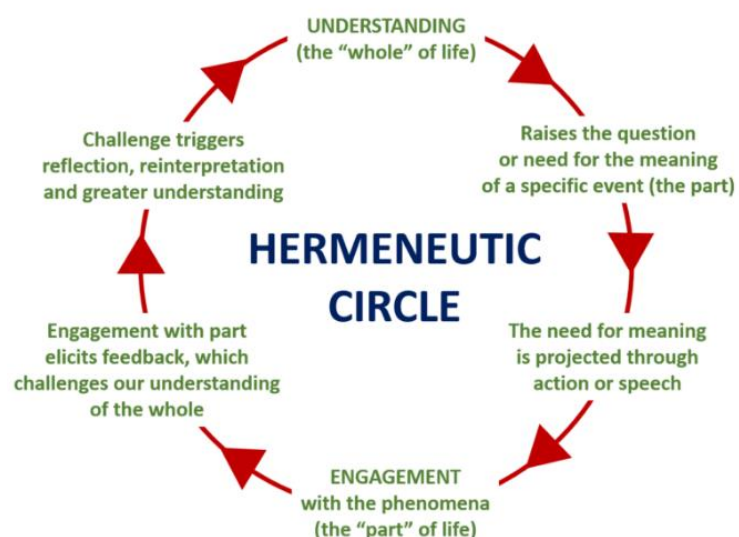
Figure 2: Faculty-UTA-Student Capacity-Building Tripartite



Phenomenology is the study of the nature and meaning of phenomena as they appear to us through experience or in our consciousness (2009, Finlay). The purpose of this investigation is to illuminate the faculty experiences while experiencing the phenomenon of a UTA program. Grbich (2012) explains phenomenology as an approach to better understanding both the hidden meanings and the

essence of experience. The phenomenological method was chosen to gain deeper and broader insight into the lived experience and perspectives of faculty as they participated in the intervention. Martin Heidegger's (2005) philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology was used, which focuses on the subjective experience of individuals to view the world as they see it. Unlike Edmund Husserl's (1859-1938) original philosophy of transcendental phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology believes that interpretations are all we have and the hermeneutic cycle is used by the researcher for this interpretive process (see Figure 3) (Kafle, 2011). By better understanding the subjective experience of faculty as they engage in the UTA program, administrators, faculty support centers, and student support centers are better equipped with the perspectives of faculty, which informs how best to support and engage faculty as the student body shifts and changes.

Figure 3: Hermeneutic Circle



From *What the Hell are Exemplary Hermeneutic Didactics? Placemaking* by H. Ernste, 2018, Retrieved March 1, 2023, from <http://ernste.ruhosting.nl/?p=627>

In the next section, the methodology is discussed, including the setting of the study, involved participants, the researcher role, the procedure, instrumentation used, and data collection methods.

Methodology

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) programs can be successful for learners, faculty, and the UTAs in a variety of ways (Odom et al., 2014; Owen, 2011; Dickson, 2011). Given the prediagnostic work along with the success of UTA programs at other institutions, the intervention was to conduct a pilot program for UTAs organized and managed by the Center for Teaching and Learning. The phenomenological methodology is used to illuminate the teaching and learning experience of faculty within a course to which a UTA is assigned and the impact on their lived professional experience. One of the goals of the research is to better understand the faculty's subjective perspectives of the program, which is why the hermeneutic branch of phenomenology is chosen.

Setting

The setting is a small, private, faith-based, higher education institution in Indiana with approximately 200 full-time faculty (National Center for Education Statistics [NSSE], n.d.) and 4,000 students. The organization has gone through substantial changes in terms of increased growth, acquisitions of other campuses and schools, faculty turnover, and other staffing changes. Approximately 20% of full-time faculty (42) resigned, retired, or announced an upcoming retirement during June 2023 through the spring of 2024 (FacultyDepartures2022-2023 & 2023-24, 2024). Based on the researcher's prediagnostic work in the spring of 2023, which included a faculty survey and interviews, it appeared some faculty were feeling overwhelmed by their workload, were dissatisfied with university bureaucracy and requirements, and felt they needed more student support. In addition, during the fall 2023 semester when the UTA pilot program was being conducted, it was announced that both the provost and assistant provost of teaching and learning were both leaving the university. Both these positions are in leadership roles presiding over faculty.

Area of Focus

Several delimitations have been identified for this study. The Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program was piloted in the August 2023 semester with four courses. This means four different courses with four faculty and four UTAs. The small number for the pilot was intentional, as it allowed the researcher the time, space, and budget to manage and organize this first iteration of this new program. In addition, courses with higher DFW rates were invited to participate in the program before expanding the invitation to other courses. These are courses in which a higher number of students receive a grade of D or F, and/or have higher withdrawal rates. The researcher also targeted courses with a minimum of 15 students enrolled in the course. Online courses were not included to keep the modality consistent. Also, the medical school was excluded, as the student population for the medical school is quite different from other populations due to the rigorous admission standards. In addition, the medical curricula are uniquely designed in such a way that the training needs for medical TAs are likely to be quite different.

Participants

Participants in this investigation are full-time, higher education faculty with the sampling a combination of convenience and purposive. Participants are selected from the higher education institution where the researcher is employed, allowing for ease of access. In addition, convenience sampling is suitable for this study since it was a small pilot program conducted within a certain amount of time. Purposive sampling is used, as the researcher selected faculty who teach courses that potentially have a higher need for extra assistance. Four courses at the university were included in the UTA pilot program, which included four full-time faculty and four undergraduate students.

Courses

Higher-need courses were targeted for this study. Two criteria determine this higher need, including DFW rates and course size. Courses in which a higher number of students receive a grade of D or F, and/or have higher withdrawal rates may have a higher need for a UTA due to challenging content or other academic challenges. Additionally, courses that have more than 15 students may have a higher need for a UTA, as research has shown that there is a significant correlation between lower numbers of students per teacher and higher student achievement (Koc & Selic, 2015). Courses with higher numbers of students may have extra benefit from UTA assistance. Campus course data was used to determine the above criteria and the eligibility of courses for the program.

The four courses in the pilot included one course each in mathematics, computer science, language, and nursing. It was also noted whether courses were required for students to take, regardless of their major, and whether there was a majority of majors or nonmajors in the course, as these demographics may impact the teaching experience for UTAs and faculty. The table below breaks down the information.

Table 2: Course Demographics

Course	# of Students	Other Sections?	Required	Majors/Nonmajors
Course 1	13	No.	Required for majors	Majority majors
Course 2	21	Yes, one other section.	Required for certain majors	Mix of majors and nonmajors
Course 3	20	Yes, two other sections.	Fulfilled language requirement	All nonmajors
Course 4	26	Yes, two other sections.	Required for majors	All majors

The number of students listed is the number toward the end of the semester after students have withdrawn. While all UTAs mostly attended one section of the course, some UTAs opened up their time outside of class to students in other sections. Also, one UTA would attend the scheduled time for

both sections of a course when teaching a lesson. While the researcher tried targeting courses with a minimum of 15 students, which was based on data from previous semesters, course one had less than 15 students the entire semester. However, all other courses were well above the targeted minimum number of students, even after withdrawals.

Faculty

While full-time faculty were targeted for the UTA pilot program, no other criteria were considered for faculty beyond their interest in the program. The program consisted of three faculty who were recruited via an invitational email and one faculty member who was referred to the researcher because she needed assistance in her course. The email invitation contained cursory information about the UTA pilot, that the pilot was being organized and managed by the Center for Teaching and Learning, and an offer to reach out if the faculty had an interest in participating in the fall, 2023 semester. Faculty indicating interest attended an initial in-person or online meeting to further discuss the program, including specifics surrounding their role, the UTA role, the types of tasks and activities in which the UTA might engage while working in their course, and other logistical items.

Faculty demographic information was obtained that may have an impact on the UTA experience, including the number of years they have taught and whether they had prior experience with a teaching assistant in one of their courses. See Table 3 for a summary of findings and faculty profiles with more detail below. To maintain confidentiality, participants have been given pseudonyms.

Table 3: Faculty Demographics

Faculty	Years of College Teaching	Prior Experience with Students Assisting in Class
Hal	11	Yes
Leah	13	Yes
Sharon	10	Yes
Kaylee	3.5	No

Faculty Hal

Faculty Hal had 11 years of higher education teaching experience and had graduate teaching assistants in the past. Faculty Hal decided to join the UTA pilot program because he had positive experiences with teaching assistants in the past. He felt students find teaching assistants more approachable and are sometimes more comfortable communicating with and asking their teaching assistant questions. He also felt that teaching assistants help students learn the material better. In addition, he felt his past experiences with teaching assistants may have helped prepare him for this experience but had doubts about having an undergraduate as a teaching assistant.

Faculty Leah

Faculty Leah had 13 years of higher education teaching experience and prior experience with students assisting with certain course aspects as interns. Faculty Leah decided to join the UTA pilot program because she thought it would be a good experience and had positive experiences with past offered programming through the Center for Teaching and Learning. She felt that her experience with students assisting in her class may have helped prepare her for the UTA program but was uncertain because the UTA role was quite different than the previous student assistant roles in her course.

Faculty Sharon

Faculty Sharon had ten years of teaching experience and had students assist in past courses, including student instructors, group tutors, graders, and a graduate teaching assistant. Student instructors differ from teaching assistants in that they do not have grading or teaching responsibilities. Faculty Sharon was excited to join the UTA pilot program so she could get extra support in the active learning environment and so the UTA could get teaching experience. Active learning and group work are emphasized in the course and Faculty Sharon finds it particularly helpful to have someone else in the classroom to help answer student questions and work with groups. She also knew she wanted her UTA

to assist with grading. Faculty Sharon felt her past experiences with students assisting in the classroom may have helped prepare her for the UTA program, but felt her focus was different from those past experiences. She wanted to ensure her UTA was getting an experience that helped with their growth.

Faculty Kaylee

Faculty Kaylee had three-and-a-half years of teaching experience and had never had a teaching assistant or students assist in other ways in the course. Professor Kaylee wanted to be a part of the UTA pilot program because she was interested in increasing peer learning. She felt having students learn from a peer and having an additional person in the class would be supportive. She also felt it would be good professional development and a learning opportunity for the UTA.

Undergraduate Teaching Assistants

Faculty chose their own UTA, which the researcher felt was important since faculty know their students' personalities and class performance best. Faculty were asked to select students who had already taken the course in which they would be a TA. Students must have received an A or B grade in the course, had good attendance and engagement, be a junior or senior, have a GPA of 3.5 or more in the major, and a cumulative GPA of 3.0.

Additional demographic information was obtained that may impact the UTA experience. All UTAs were majors in the courses in which they were assisting. In addition, all UTAs had prior tutoring experience and two UTAs also had various teaching experiences at the elementary school, middle school, or high school level. One of the UTAs was a former resident advisor, working with students in a variety of ways, including conflict resolution. Students felt these past experiences supported their UTA role. To maintain confidentiality, participants have been given pseudonyms.

Table 4: Student Demographics

Teaching Assistant	Grade Level	Major in TA Course	Student Support Experience
Natalie	Junior	Yes	Resident Advisor Peer Tutor
Yasmine	Junior	Yes	Peer Tutor Teaching experiences
Vaughn	Junior	Yes	Peer Tutor
Brad	Junior	Yes	Peer Tutor Teaching experiences

UTA Natalie

UTA Natalie had past experience as a Resident Advisor (RA) and a tutor. Her RA experience helped her with conflict resolution, communication skills, and connecting with others, all of which she felt transferred as support toward her UTA role. The tutoring experience also transferred skills to the UTA role by helping her gain practice in using different tutoring approaches and communication styles for different students. She also became proactive in asking students what they needed when tutoring. UTA Natalie also felt the UTA course associated with the program supported her in her role, specifically due to collaboration with the other UTAs, teaching a lesson, watching teaching videos, and by having another faculty member as a resource.

UTA Yasmine

UTA Yasmine had teaching experience at the elementary school level and started being a tutor at the same time she was a UTA. While she felt these experiences may have helped her with her UTA role, she thought the most beneficial help was to focus on the passion behind the role. Specifically, she felt passionate about student growth in the courses in which she assisted and felt proud of their progress. She was passionate about being an important resource for students and playing a role in their success. UTA Yasmine also felt the UTA course associated with the program supported her in her role,

specifically she felt the topics that were taught, teaching a lesson, reflecting on the UTA experience, and discussing the role with others were helpful experiences.

UTA Vaughn

UTA Vaughn had experience as a tutor before the program and continued tutoring while in the program. Being a peer tutor helped him gain experience in the relationship dynamics of supporting students close to his age and with increased communication skills, which he felt transferred to the UTA role. UTA Vaughn felt the UTA course associated with the program was supportive of his UTA role, particularly toward the end of the semester when he was picking up on the covered topics and could more readily apply them. He also thought it was helpful to receive immediate feedback from the UTA group on his teaching while in the course.

UTA Brad

UTA Brad had experience tutoring and teaching at the middle school and high school levels. He felt these past activities positively contributed toward his UTA role by giving him similar experiences from which to draw. He felt the UTA course associated with the program was supportive of his UTA role, as it reinforced topics he was familiar with and could readily apply. He felt increased confidence after teaching a lesson in class and valued the in-class discussions with other UTAs.

Researcher Role

The researcher's role in the intervention was to organize the program, recruit faculty and UTAs, and orient and train the UTAs to prepare them to teach. The researcher observed in classrooms and conducted interviews. As the Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, the researcher interacted with most of the full-time faculty at the institution in some capacity. These interactions often manifest as one-on-one consultations, small group work, workshops, information sessions, or supporting them via email. The researcher also collaborates and partners on campus initiatives involving faculty, which

results in interactions with faculty in meetings or on committees. The researcher's role is typically one of support, assisting faculty with questions or goals they might have regarding their curricula, teaching, instructional technology, or scholarship. The researcher has had a moderate level of interaction with all the faculty participating in the pilot in varying ways. This may be a potential conflict of interest, as the researcher's past relationships with faculty may have influenced how they responded to interview questions. In addition, the UTAs may have felt they couldn't answer honestly to the questions since the researcher organized and created the program. The researcher tried to mitigate this by encouraging faculty and UTAs to be completely honest about their experiences, emphasizing confidentiality with their answers. The researcher also let them know that their honesty was important so the program could be further improved in the future. In addition, the researcher had two colleagues partner to help conduct and gather classroom observation data. Having others involved in this portion of the research incorporates different perspectives, helping to mitigate potential researcher bias.

The researcher organized the program. This means the researcher trained and communicated with the UTAs and the faculty, which is another way the researcher's role is a potential conflict of interest. The researcher believed that a UTA program could be extremely beneficial and a positive experience for the participating faculty. The researcher paid special attention to the messaging and interactions when engaging with faculty to not influence their thoughts and feelings with her own. To ensure perceptions did not make faculty feel pressured to respond in a certain way during interviews, the researcher was cognizant of the influence she had and did not share her opinions about the UTA program with faculty.

Procedure

The Undergraduate Teaching Assistant pilot program was conducted for 16 weeks during the fall 2023 semester. Data analysis was conducted during and at the end of the program via interviews and

classroom observations. To facilitate a fall start to the pilot, organization, and planning were occurring during the spring and summer before the program implementation. Several considerations were determined, such as faculty and UTA recruitment, and subsequent training to ensure participants had the resources and information they needed.

Inviting Faculty Participants

After reviewing course data, several courses were identified as being suitable for the UTA program, as they fit the criteria of an enrollment number of over 15 students and a history of higher DFW rates. The four courses in the pilot included one course each in mathematics, computer science, Spanish, and nursing. Three out of four faculty teaching the eligible courses for the fall, 2023 semester were identified by reaching out to department chairs. One faculty member from the nursing school was referred to the UTA program after the faculty member reached out to tutoring services for course assistance. The researcher's first contact with the participating faculty was via email to gauge initial interest in having a UTA in their course. Once interest was established, a more detailed email invitation was sent about the program, including information about the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) organizing, managing, and training the UTAs, as well as the faculty role versus the UTA role. Faculty determined their interest in participating in the program by replying to the email invitation. Once faculty agreed to move forward with the program, a 30-minute meeting was scheduled to discuss details, logistical information, and resources so faculty better understood their role and the UTA role.

Once the Institutional Review Board approved the research, faculty were informed of the study and invited to participate via email (see Appendix C), if they chose. They were provided with an informed consent form (see Appendix D) and notified that their participation was voluntary, with the ability to withdraw from the study at any time. Faculty were not compensated for being a part of the study. Confidentiality of collected data was noted.

Expectations of Faculty

The first expectation of faculty was to recommend a student they believed would be a good fit as a UTA in their course, as faculty have a better idea of which students have excelled in their courses. While criteria were outlined to help faculty narrow down their UTA selection, faculty were also encouraged to select someone they felt would be a good fit, overall. In addition, it's important to ensure faculty understand how they should interact with their UTA and how best to integrate a UTA into their course. The literature shows that faculty who did not have as impactful an experience with their UTAs were largely attributed to faculty misunderstanding of the UTA role (Herrman & Waterhouse, 2010). A meeting with faculty held before the start of the program helped support their understanding and comfort of their role and the UTA role. In addition, a handbook was created reinforcing the information discussed in the meeting (see Appendix E and Appendix F). Expectations were clearly outlined, including the following:

- Outlining how to utilize UTAs in the classroom, including types of tasks in which they can engage and interactions inside and outside of the classroom between faculty and UTAs
- Providing feedback for UTAs
- Identifying conflicts – UTA social concerns, time and schedule pressures, and supporting UTAs with their teaching
- How to handle situations when things go wrong

Moreover, a student-faculty agreement was created (see Appendix G) outlining the specific expectations of the course and faculty members. The agreement included tasks expected in the specific course, the schedule expectations, and expectations regarding how the UTA would interact with students and the instructor. The faculty also outlined their role in the partnership. The student-faculty agreement was submitted to the Center for Teaching and Learning after being signed by the UTAs and the faculty.

Inviting Students to Apply to the UTA Program

The faculty involved in the program were asked to recommend a student they felt would be a good fit for the UTA role, which is a method of recruitment used by other programs (Owen, 2011; Begley et al., 2019). Faculty were asked to select students who had already taken the course in which they would be a UTA, received an A or B grade in the course, and had good attendance and engagement. In addition, students needed to be a junior or senior with a GPA of 3.5 or more in the major, and a cumulative GPA of 3.0. Students who applied to become a UTA submitted an application to the web-based job board managed by the career development team and attended an interview facilitated by the researcher. The interview emphasized the UTA role, the time involved in the program, as well as the importance of scheduling. Selected students then received an official invitation to be a part of the UTA program and were asked to enroll in the internship course associated with the UTA program, COL-360, Career Exploration Internship.

Compensation for UTAs

Many UTAs receive a stipend or hourly payment; however, some institutions have relied on other means, such as tuition waivers, course credit, or simply transcript recognition (Luckie et al., 2020; Herrman & Waterhouse, 2010; Begley et al., 2019). One article discussing the best practices for undergraduate teaching assistant programs stated that only offering credit instead of payment took unfair advantage of UTAs. “Given the increasing attention to student debt, unpaid internships, and institutional integrity, it hardly seems fair or right to suggest that students work for free (Kinkead et al., 2019).” As a result of this information, the UTA pilot program was offered as a pass/fail internship course, COL-360, *Career Exploration Internship*, and a \$500 stipend per semester. The course was offered for variable credit between 1 and 3, which the students determined based on their needs. Students were encouraged to discuss credits with their advisors. The course included weekly

development sessions throughout the semester that supported UTAs with their duties. The combination of credit, payment, and experiential professional development all provided a solid compensation package for UTAs in this program. Faculty were not compensated.

UTA Responsibilities

UTAs are used in a variety of ways, dependent on discipline, level of class complexity, and class size (Kinkead et al., 2019). The pilot program allowed the faculty members to decide how they'd like to use the UTA. Faculty and UTAs were provided with the list of potential responsibilities below. A faculty member could add extra responsibilities as appropriate for their course, the characteristics of their students, and the UTA goals. A student-faculty agreement (see Appendix G) was completed by the faculty and UTA in collaboration to determine the specific tasks in which the UTA engaged, as well as other important logistical information, such as schedules. Possible responsibilities included:

- Attend all or most classes
 - Create and teach simple lessons
 - In-class demonstrations
 - Teach a class period while being observed by the instructor
 - Offer support during active learning
- Assist during labs
- Hold office hours
- Grade
 - Objective exams
 - Practice assignments needing feedback.
 - Other appropriate assignments (Straightforward/simple assignments when using a template)
- Lead review/study sessions

- Lead small group breakout sessions
- Tutor
- Develop straightforward course assignments
- Administrative/Clerical – maintain LMS, take attendance, print handouts, etc.
- Attend faculty department meetings
- Provide faculty feedback
 - Provide feedback about students to faculty
 - Provide feedback on pedagogical strategies, effectiveness of assignments/activities
 - Provide input on the design of assignments and lectures

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Training

A comprehensive training program organized, managed, and facilitated by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) was conducted throughout the semester. The Friday before the start of the semester, a two-hour orientation was held, and subsequent 1-hour sessions were continued weekly throughout the semester. The purpose of the comprehensive training program was to transfer the responsibility of preparing UTAs off of faculty so they could concentrate on building a collaborative partnership in the classroom with their UTAs. The orientation covered several topics to ensure UTAs were exposed to important information before their experience. Topics included:

- Clarification of the UTA role and expectations
- Clarification of the faculty role and expectations
- How best to interact with the faculty member
- Pressures and concerns they might encounter as a UTA
- Ethical behavior and confidentiality
- Capacity-building behaviors versus dependency-creating behaviors
- Scheduling expectations and time management

- Logistics and expectations of the weekly UTA course

The weekly sessions throughout the semester had a twofold purpose – to provide an opportunity for UTAs to collaborate as they reflected on encountered experiences and challenges, and to cover additional teaching topics and microteaching practices. At the start of the course, UTAs were asked to openly share their UTA experience for the week. The rest of the class time was devoted to covering topics that were taught via various methods to show the UTAs different approaches, including active lecturing, case studies, group work, discussions, reflection activities, demonstrations, and more. A teaching observation checklist was created, which was used by the UTAs for all class sessions as they observed the course facilitator teach. In addition, each UTA was required to create a lesson plan and teach the class their selected topic. Teaching videos were also shown so the UTAs could reflect on teaching approaches that were useful or less effective. The teaching topics that were covered during these sessions included the following, with some topics spanning multiple class sessions:

- Metacognitive strategies
- Managing groups
- Learning strategies and learning science
- Presenting and explaining material
- Strategies and resources for difficult situations
- Safety issues
- Holding effective office hours
- Facilitating discussions
- Grading and feedback
- Understanding challenging students and individual needs

Ensuring UTAs were supporting students from a capacity-building framework was important to help break the student dependency cycle (see Figure 1). The concept of building capacity was introduced in the orientation during which UTAs reflected on what habits and approaches would build capacity and what creating a dependency might look like. This concept was emphasized further in the weekly sessions as students reflected on their interactions with students. UTAs were encouraged to give the work back to students whenever possible, asking probing questions so students could form approaches to challenges on their own. In addition, a lesson specifically focused on capacity building was taught in the course by one of the UTAs. The content for the lesson included:

- Guiding and preparing students to be independent and empowered
- Different approaches to handling student questions besides giving them an answer
- Getting students actively involved in their own learning
- Asking students to generate their own knowledge instead of UTAs generating it for them
- How to encourage students in a way that builds capacity

In addition, a comprehensive Canvas course was developed with course content reflecting the topics above (see Appendix M), a syllabus (see Appendix H), reflection assignments, and logistical items.

Instrumentation

The researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in June of 2023 (see Appendix B). Data were collected via interviews and classroom observation. Each participant was interviewed once due to the time constraints of the study. The semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share their in-depth, personal stories about their lived experience, providing their interpretation and meaning to the phenomenon. In addition to interviews, observations in the classroom were conducted to witness classroom interactions in real-time. Since a good portion of the support UTAs offer faculty are within the classroom setting while interacting with students and faculty,

observations to gather information within the social situation is likely to reveal behaviors and events that uncover deeper meaning into the phenomenon. Participants were provided an informed consent form and notified that their participation was voluntary with the ability to withdraw from the study at any time. All data were password protected and remained confidential. Pseudonyms were utilized to protect identities, and any information that is too specific, making it personally identifiable, was removed from the findings.

Data Collection

Observations were completed in September, October, and November of 2023 and interviews were conducted in November and December of 2023. The purpose of the data collection was to illuminate the lived experience of faculty as they engaged in a job resource of an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) program.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were conducted twice during the semester. Observations were conducted in two phases – an earlier phase in which the researcher observed all four courses and a later phase in which two peers each observed two courses. The observations conducted by the researcher were all scheduled during the week of September 25th, giving the UTAs a full month to integrate into the classroom. To help increase the validity and reliability of captured data, second observations were conducted during October and early November by peers. A professor in the school of education at the institution agreed to observe all four courses, however, two of the courses conflicted with his teaching schedule. The researcher's colleague, an Instructional Designer at the Center for Teaching and Learning, conducted observations for the other two courses. See Table 5 for details.

Observation notes were taken using an observation rubric (see Appendix I) focused on three main areas, including 1.) the role of the faculty member and reactions and interactions with the teaching

assistant and students, 2.) the role of the teaching assistant and their reactions and interactions with the students, and 3.) the role of students and their reactions and interactions with the teaching assistant and faculty. The observation study questions included the following:

- What does the faculty role look like when a UTA is present? How does the faculty member manage and hold the space when a UTA is present?
- How does the faculty member and UTA interact?
- What is the role of the UTA? What tasks are the UTA involved in? How does the UTA role appear to supplement and support the faculty role?
- What are the interactions like between the UTA and students? How do students appear to respond to the UTA?

A short meeting was held before peer observations to discuss the purpose of the observations and to review the observation rubric. It was emphasized that the researcher was not looking for right or wrong answers, but rather, that observers were to simply witness interactions and note what they saw through their lenses using the rubric.

Table 5: Observation Schedule

Course	Observation 1	Observation 2
Course 1	9/29/23 Observer: Mona Kheiry	10/24/23 Observer: Matt Hollowell, Asst. Prof.
Course 2	9/27/23 Observer: Mona Kheiry	11/1/23 Observer: Mary Clifford, Instructional Designer
Course 3	9/27/23 Observer: Mona Kheiry	10/30/23 Observer: Mary Clifford, Instructional Designer
Course 4	9/29/23 Observer: Mona Kheiry	10/18/23 Observer: Matt Hollowell, Asst. Prof.

In addition, it was communicated to both faculty and students that the observations were non-evaluative and simply being conducted to observe interactions in the classroom. A whole section in the UTA Canvas course was devoted to what the observations were, what observers would be doing, and the non-valuative nature of the observations (see Appendix L).

Interviews

Interviews were conducted by the researcher toward the end of the program for each UTA and each faculty member, resulting in eight interviews total (see Table 6). Interview questions included the collection of demographic information for both faculty and UTAs. An additional 14 questions were included for faculty (Appendix J) and 10 questions for UTAs (Appendix K). While follow-up interviews were anticipated, time constraints prevented additional interviews.

Before the start of the interviews, a research protocol was followed during which participants were informed that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions and that the purpose of the study was to better understand their perspective and experience of the UTA program. Confidentiality of their answers was emphasized. With participants' permission, the audio of interviews was recorded using the Evistr I357 Digital Voice Recorder and transcribed by a transcription service, Writ Large Assistance, LLC. The transcribed data were reviewed by the researcher for accuracy.

Table 6: Interview Details

Participant	Role	Date of Interview	Duration (Minutes)
Natalie	Teaching Assistant	11/17/23	19:48
Yasmine	Teaching Assistant	11/17/23	20:47
Vaughn	Teaching Assistant	12/1/23	29:25
Brad	Teaching Assistant	12/1/23	19:45
Hal	Faculty	12/6/23	22:47
Leah	Faculty	12/12/23	40:82
Sharon	Faculty	12/14/23	34:54
Kaylee	Faculty	12/14/23	36:45

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability were considered in the collection of data. To ensure data dependability, interviews were conducted with both faculty and UTAs. The UTA data were supporting information used to corroborate and strengthen faculty data. In addition, data collection was diversified by including

classroom observations which provided a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. By including three observers, other lenses were incorporated into the observations which helped mitigate researcher bias and provide a broader understanding of the experiences.

To enhance transferability, detailed, rich descriptions were included in the findings. The researcher included two “Painting a Picture” sections found in the Findings section during which general data were discussed to provide a big-picture overview of the interactions between UTAs, faculty, and students. This lays out the context of the program and sets the stage for the discussion of themes.

To ensure the findings were grounded in the experiences of the participants and to mitigate researcher bias, the researcher journaled while dwelling on the data. Reflecting on the data analysis, the researcher noted expectations she had of certain participants, the validity of the expectations, and whether those expectations played a role in how the data was being framed. By critically examining preconceptions, and how that may influence interpretation of the data, the researcher was able to better ensure data were being thoughtfully considered and not potentially discounted or misconstrued. Additionally, journaling helped integrate findings by making connections between emerging themes, the research questions, and the theoretical framework. This refined the interpretation of data by creating a sound narrative that better captured the essence of the participants’ lived experiences.

Finally, transcripts were sent to faculty participants to ensure transparency in the data collection process. Faculty were invited to check the transcripts for accuracy if they felt inclined to do so.

Data Analysis

The evaluation of data for this study followed the hermeneutic phenomenological method. Since the purpose of phenomenological investigations is to seek to understand a phenomenon as a whole, the hermeneutic circle is used, where the parts inform the whole and the whole informs the parts (Peoples, 2020). As Peoples (2020) describes it, making sense of the phenomenon (the analysis of data) is a spiral

process and a constant revision of understanding as the researcher gathers new information. One moves from the different parts and pieces to the whole, and back again to parts and pieces, always taking into consideration the researcher's own life experiences. Researcher journaling accompanies the evaluation of data as new conceptions arise and deep reflection occurs (Peoples, 2020).

The general data evaluation of the transcribed interviews will occur using 6 steps outlined by Peoples (2021) regarding phenomenological investigations. The steps include:

1. Reading and deleting irrelevant information.
2. Creating preliminary "meaning units," or the features and traits of the investigated phenomenon.
3. Breaking down preliminary meaning units into final meaning units or themes.
4. Synthesizing final meaning units into situated narratives for each participant.
5. Synthesizing situated narratives into general narratives, integrating all major themes.
6. Generating a general description.

The review of classroom observation data was similar, reviewing the observation writeups to dwell on the experiences and interpret themes. Comparisons of first and second observations were made as well as comparisons between each course.

Journaling accompanied the data analysis process, which supported the spiral process of the hermeneutic circle and allowed the researcher to reflect on any potential biases that were surfacing. As the researcher dwelled on the data, journaling allowed the researcher to step back and reflect on how the different themes and subthemes fit into the big picture. This reflection process resulted in the elimination of redundant subthemes and the consolidation of themes to present cohesive data that were more representative of the lived experiences of the participants. Analyzing potential biases resulted in looking at the data through different lenses to ensure information was being thoughtfully considered and not potentially discounted. This back-and-forth process of reviewing parts and pieces

and the whole facilitated through journaling allowed the researcher to sufficiently proceed through the hermeneutic circle.

Connections to Theoretical Framework

This hermeneutic, phenomenological qualitative study specifically investigates the lived experience, or Dasein, of faculty in higher education engaging in an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) program. Martin Heidegger's (2005) philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology is used, which focuses on the subjective experience of individuals to view the world as they see it. Hermeneutic phenomenology believes that interpretations are all we have, and the hermeneutic cycle is used by the researcher for this interpretive process (see Figure 3) (Kafle, 2011). Connecting the researcher's own Dasein to the theoretical framework emphasizes the researcher's subjectivity of interpretation, the context of the experience, and meaning-making (Peoples, 2020). It provides the theoretical lens through which the phenomenon was filtered.

Dasein – Researcher Existing in the Experience

Hermeneutics emphasizes the interpreter's pre-understanding, biases, and personal context as essential components in the interpretation of meaning (von Herrmann, 2013). The researcher's process when using this framework is addressed by discussing their background and beliefs. By connecting this information to the theoretical framework, the theoretical lens is intentionally highlighted.

- **Background:** The researcher came from an education background, starting her career in the K-12 context and then moving into higher education. The researcher has worked at six different universities in the capacity of faculty, instructional designer, or education consultant. Education, teaching, learning, and peer learning are all concepts that she values, which may have impacted her interpretation of the data.

- **Personal Experiences:** The researcher encountered challenges in her first year of college, which resulted in stress and feelings of inadequacy. The researcher believes having a TA or other type of student mentor during these struggles would have benefited her, which may have impacted her interpretation of the data.
- **Interpersonal Skills:** The researcher can sometimes be hesitant when interacting with others, taking information at face value rather than probing for deeper understanding. While the researcher was aware of this and tried mitigating this phenomenon, this may have impacted how the researcher engaged with participants during interviews, potentially influencing the depth and richness of the data collected.

While challenging to carry out, the researcher made an intention to consistently question her own assumptions, prejudices, and perspectives throughout the research process to support a more balanced and valid interpretation of the data. The researcher believes that self-awareness is essential for producing meaningful and contextually grounded findings in hermeneutic research.

Using the Hermeneutic Circle

The researcher had preconceptions of how the Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) program would perform regarding the research questions. Given the research of similar programs and her own experiences with education and peer learning, the researcher felt the program would benefit faculty and would positively impact the research questions. As the researcher utilized the hermeneutic circle it enabled her to navigate between the specific details of individual experiences and the broader context of the entire phenomenon. This iterative process fostered a rich and more nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of the faculty in the UTA program.

Some preconceptions were revised and refined when navigating the parts and the whole of the hermeneutic circle. For example, it appeared challenging for one faculty member to understand how to

best utilize her UTA at the start of the program, as she was newer to teaching and had never had a TA experience before. While the researcher assumed the structure of the UTA program provided adequate faculty support, it appeared that more faculty support would benefit those newer to teaching or those who have never had an assistant before. It is important to revise preconceptions when nuanced situations like this occur to make the UTA program more robust, increasing its impact on faculty.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of participants was protected by using pseudonyms and removing any personally identifiable information. In addition, colleagues conducting observations were asked to eliminate any data on their devices after sending the researcher their observation notes. All data from observations and interviews were stored electronically and password-protected.

Results

Introduction

This section presents the results of those participating in the Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) pilot program in the fall, 2023 semester. The hermeneutic phenomenological method uses the hermeneutic circle during data analysis to gain a deeper and broader insight into the lived experiences and perspectives of participants. The hermeneutic circle emphasizes a back-and-forth process of moving from parts and pieces of data to the data as a whole in a cyclical progression. The parts and pieces are represented by the themes and subthemes. To understand “the whole,” two “Painting a Picture” sections precede the themes and subthemes providing a big-picture overview of the interactions between faculty, UTAs, and students. The big-picture overview describes the interactions, circumstances, and conditions of participants so the setting and context are familiar before diving into the details of theme and subthemes. This helps frame the relevance and significance of the themes and subthemes.

Painting a Picture - Classroom Observation Findings

Classroom observations were conducted twice for each course by the researcher and two peers. An observation rubric was used by all observers (see Appendix I) and study questions helped guide the research. The findings are presented below with each study question.

What does the faculty role look like when a UTA is present? How does the faculty member manage and hold the space when a UTA is present?

Findings from the classroom observations revealed that the faculty took a lead role in teaching, but most faculty appeared to collaborate with their UTA by discussing teaching strategies, incorporating the UTA into class lessons, and engaging their UTA in other tasks. For example, it was observed that

Professor Kaylee considered UTA Yasmine's preferences when teaching and involved Yasmine in decision-making. Professor Leah mentioned UTA Natalie several times throughout the course about the extra support Natalie might be able to provide students. Professor Leah, Professor Kaylee, and Professor Sharon each had their UTAs lead the class when teaching lessons or reviewing homework while they sat quietly off to the side, rear, or with their students. There also appeared to be a back-and-forth switching of roles and sharing of tasks with the UTA during active learning in which both faculty and UTA assisted students individually or in groups.

One faculty member, Hal, had more of a division of roles with his UTA, Vaughn. Professor Hal was observed taking on more of a traditional teaching role, lecturing and demonstrating at the front. The UTA Vaughn sat at the back of the room during lectures and would occasionally help students during demonstrations and practice.

How do faculty and UTAs interact?

All faculty were observed interacting with their UTA informally before the start of class, communicating logistics, or simply socializing. Faculty discussed class structure with their UTAs, interacted with their UTAs during active learning activities, utilized their UTA during class demonstrations, and socialized with UTAs before and after class. For example, Professor Kaylee was observed discussing the class structure with UTA Yasmine, making sure Yasmine felt good about the plan. In addition, Professor Leah intentionally interacted with Natalie during the class sessions, including her in a conversation about what students should do if they needed help and having her take part in a demonstration of an upcoming activity. It was observed that the demonstration appeared to be particularly useful and would have been challenging to carry out without a UTA present in the room. It was also noticed that faculty and UTAs briefly interacted with one another at the end of class. Professor Leah was especially excited, letting Natalie know she was pleased that Natalie got a student to participate who normally did not engage in the class.

Professor Hal had limited interaction with his UTA, Vaughn. They were observed socializing together with students before the start of the class. While they both supported students during practice time, there was no observed interaction with one another.

What is the role of the UTA? What tasks are the UTA involved in? How does the UTA role appear to supplement and support the faculty role?

UTAs were observed taking on a student support role, interacting with students, guiding them during practice, and answering questions. In addition, UTAs were observed taking on a teaching assistant role, supporting faculty with various tasks, and a teaching role, independently leading students through lessons.

For example, during active learning, UTA Natalie would immerse herself into the student experience, interacting with students during the activities. Natalie was able to provide immediate support to students while engaging with them. It was also observed that UTAs Vaughn, Brad, and Yasmine would all provide support during student individual or group practice, walking around the room while checking in with students. They would answer questions and help students troubleshoot problems. One of the observers suggested that UTAs receive extra training in asking probing questions, as the UTAs weren't always effectively engaging with students when walking around the room.

Some UTAs were observed taking on the role of assistant to the faculty member. For example, UTAs Natalie and Brad were both observed organizing activities before the start of class and passing out printed documents to students.

Finally, UTAs were observed in a teaching role. While Professor Sharon started the class off, UTA Brad was writing several problems on the whiteboard at the front of the room. Once Professor Sharon finished with a few logistics, UTA Brad led students through a series of problems at the board. He worked on the problems, asking students what they thought the next steps might be. He provided

feedback and clarification as he and the students worked through the content. UTA Yasmine was observed teaching a lesson, as well. After leading students through a short group activity, Yasmine was at the front of the room, using the whiteboard to step students through a concept. She asked students questions and provided positive reinforcement. While UTA Natalie was not observed independently teaching a lesson, Professor Leah often integrated Natalie into the modeling and demonstration portions of the lessons.

UTA Vaughn was not observed in any role other than student support, as he answered student questions during individual and group practice.

What are the interactions like between the UTA and students? How do students appear to respond to the UTA?

It was observed that students appeared to be receptive and comfortable with their UTAs. Students in all courses readily asked UTAs questions during individual or group practice. In addition, students interacted with UTA Natalie during the active learning activity, discussing content, laughing, and asking questions. There also appeared to be acceptance of the UTA as an authority figure in the room. As UTA Brad and Yasmine taught their lessons, students were attentive, actively listening, taking notes, and answering questions. In addition, UTAs appeared to be embraced by students as a part of their learning. For example, as UTA Yasmine walked around the room, a student group invited her to review the work they had completed. After reviewing their work, Yasmine provided them with praise and positive reinforcement. The students responded with smiles of appreciation.

Painting a Picture – Descriptions from Participants

Further illumination into the experiences of the participants in the UTA program was obtained from interviews with both faculty and the UTAs. In addition to themes and subthemes discovered and outlined in a section further below, descriptions of the UTA experience were compiled to understand the experience as a whole.

UTA's carried out several different tasks while assisting inside and outside of the classroom.

Table 7: UTA Responsibilities

Location	UTA Tasks
Inside Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach lessons • Support students with group work • Support students one-on-one • Answer questions • Explain content • Engage in active learning activities with students • Engage in demonstration activities with faculty • Pass out materials • Encourage students
Outside Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold review sessions for tests • Create review packets • Create lessons • Create documents, such as graphic organizers • Tutor • Hold office hours • Grade assignments or quizzes • Provide feedback to faculty • Hold weekly recap sessions • Update the Canvas course • Mentor students

Faculty Leah met with her TA weekly to plan that week's classes. Here she describes these interactions as well as other types of interactions she would have with her UTA.

So, we would meet weekly on Mondays to sort of talk through the plan for the week or to do any additional specific work, whether that was brainstorming, an activity she was going to do, or grading together, or giving an overview of how the grading should go. I would say there would usually be like a very brief check in at the beginning of class if there was anything specific that I wanted her to do or that she knew she was going to take on an additional role like leading an activity. I would also spontaneously use her for examples in class so that I wouldn't always let her know, but she was perfectly up to the task. We also texted quite a lot. We emailed as well, but there would be like little questions, maybe something that would come up in her study session. Or if she was preparing something, she might text me. Or if I was planning and I needed, I don't know, a celebrity to include in as an example or something like that. We had a lot of little informal conversations that way. They weren't like, extensive. But just if there was a quick question that came up outside of class time or the meeting time.

Faculty Leah goes on to describe her role with her UTA:

I think... I basically just...articulated out loud, like did a lot of the planning kind of out loud with her. Like sort of just sharing with her the way that I go about teaching a class.... it was just kind of like, okay, this is, this is what we're going to do, here's the plan, what do you think? Just kind of collaborating with her on planning and implementation.

Faculty Sharon also described the types of interactions she would have with her UTA:

Yeah, most of our interactions were, we had a handful of one-on-one meetings throughout the semester, to touch base and check in. A lot of them were in class, before class, after class, or via email. Especially if we had met and talked about like these are the different topics, these are the ones you seem most interested in and then I would send, these are the materials that I typically teach with for those particular sections. Are you interested in like picking an activity or leading this discussion or that sort of thing. I think most of it was day to day in the classroom, handful of meetings on the side, and then a little bit of emails back and forth.

Faculty Sharon appeared to take on more of a mentor role with her UTA, as she describes here:

I think I tried to be a bit of a mentor and again, like collaborator in the classroom. So especially in times where my UTA was, you know, presenting a solution to an activity or even, like introducing a worksheet, I tried to be like, "And now, you know, he's the one who's in charge of the classroom, he has the authority role."

Faculty Kaylee met with her UTA weekly in the first half of the semester, but this dropped off to every other week after mid-semester. Additional interactions included the following:

Well, she came to class. I don't know what the number would be. I bet like 70% of the time. So that was definitely, you know, time to interact before and after and during class. And the other than that, I guess emailing, I mean, emailing a little, text. I gave her my phone number because I wanted especially when she had like, you know, like if she would have had a big group or a situation that, you know, with the whole class that she could just get ahold of me if she needed me.

Faculty Kaylee took on a supportive role for her UTA, guiding her through the new experience:

Just to offer some, like guidance and support, explain what I was doing. I would also...part of my role would be like I would say like, "Tell me, you know, tell me how your weekly recap and exam reviews are going. Do you have any challenging situations?" And then we would kind of talk through them and some stuff came up. And then I would say, "Well, you know, is that something you want me to follow up on?" Or I gave her some suggestions, do you want to intervene? And even in the beginning of the semester, I think some things came up and I would encourage her, I'd be like, "That's a good thing to talk about. Ask Mona," or her other TAs, just knowing it would be good conversation pieces. In addition to teaching her, I think it was like

offering just like guidance and support with that as well. I think too, helping her a lot with just like the time management piece and expectations.

Faculty Hal did not meet regularly with his UTA. The UTA role was mostly a support role during his lectures.

Yeah. We had a few meetings outside the class. I gave them what is that expectation and what he needs to do in the class...So basically, his role was more like helping me just during my lecture. Help the students and also if other students have a question outside the class just refer to him.

Faculty Hal's role with his UTA was mostly limited to classroom interactions. He describes his role further here:

I think that was very, actually good, professional, in a way that he just interacted with me during the class. I see what are the task and actually just based on that task, like giving the service to the students, I didn't have any challenge. Maybe at the beginning, some communication through the emails, but everything was fine, like really like a smooth with him. Yeah.

Themes and Subthemes

There are four themes and 10 subthemes outlined in Table 8. The research questions from which the themes and subthemes emerged are also listed. If the theme or subtheme emerged for the faculty participants, an X is placed adjacent to it. If that theme did not emerge for the faculty participant, the cell is left blank. The frequency in which subthemes are mentioned is listed in the final column, implying the strength of the subtheme through the consistency in which it emerges in this study.

Table 8: Themes, Subthemes, and Faculty

Research Question	Theme/Subtheme	Faculty Leah	Faculty Sharon	Faculty Kaylee	Faculty Hal	Freq.
1 and 3	Extra Layer of Support					
	Shared Workload	X	X	X	X	12
	Sense of Relief	X	X	X	X	5
	Shared Responsibility for High-Needs Students	X		X		4
	Impact on Time	X	X	X	X	6
1 and 2	Enhanced Teaching Experience					
	Enjoyment	X	X	X	X	4
	TA as a Partner to Faculty	X	X			4
	Shared Classroom Dynamics	X	X		X	6
	Moments of Increased Faculty Reassurance	X	X	X		3
1 and 3	UTA Bridged a Gap					
	Provides Student Perspective	X	X	X		3
	UTA Approachability for Students	X	X		X	6
2	Professional Growth Through Self-Reflection	X	X	X		3

Research questions include the following, which correspond to the numbers in the table above:

1. How do faculty experience stress and workload when engaging in an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program?
2. How does an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program impact the lived experience of faculty with their job, as a whole?
3. How does an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program impact the lived experience of faculty in the classroom as it relates to teaching students of varying academic preparedness?

In the section below, each research question from which the themes and subthemes emerged is categorized by theme rather than by research question. Grouping by themes illustrates the overlapping nature of the subthemes and the interrelatedness of the faculty's lived experience of the UTA program.

Theme 1: Extra Layer of Support

All faculty participants indicated that their UTA was an extra layer of student support, sharing the workload inside and outside of the classroom. This theme emerged when focusing on two research questions:

- How do faculty experience stress and workload when engaging in an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program?
- How does an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program impact the lived experience of faculty in the classroom as it relates to teaching students of varying academic preparedness?

This extra layer of support impacted faculty in different ways, revealing four subthemes, including the following:

1. Shared workload
2. Sense of relief
3. Shared responsibility for high-needs students
4. Impact on time

Extra Layer of Support Subtheme 1: Shared Workload

Faculty shared several responsibilities with their UTAs, outlined in Table 7. Sharing these tasks with the UTAs helped faculty spread out their workload, which appeared to increase their job satisfaction and decrease stress levels. For example, when asked which parts of the UTA program felt supportive and enriching, Faculty Leah provided specific examples of the shared responsibilities with her UTA and how that created less worry for her:

But we would set up the plan together and she did a lot of the grading of quizzes. Some of the smaller things and so that was helpful. Sometimes she would do simple things like take attendance or put extra credit grades into Canvas. Just one fewer thing that I had to worry about, which was really nice.

Faculty felt especially supported by their UTA inside the class when engaged in active learning.

Faculty Leah continues to describe this type of support:

But it's nice, because especially in a class like that, there are a lot of people who need help. You never just sit back and let them all do it. You're always running from one student to the next who has their hand raised, so just to have someone else there in class to help with that.

Faculty Leah's UTA, UTA Natalie, described a similar experience as she supported students in the classroom during active learning:

And we would just like kind of walk around and see if they had questions....So usually I just walk around, answer questions, look at their papers, make sure they're on the right track.

Classroom observation data indicated that UTA Natalie supported Faculty Leah by completing a task before class before sitting with students to engage in active learning with them:

Before class starts, UTA Natalie is involved in a task in which she is cutting up paper in preparation for a student activity. After she's done with the task, she moves to one of the tables amongst the other students. When Faculty Leah has students practice speaking in pairs or groups, UTA Natalie joins in, working with another student close to her, or walking around the room during group work, supporting students and answering their questions.

Faculty Sharon also discussed how her UTA helped support the workload during class time. She specifically mentions the challenges of supporting students without additional support:

I think especially the way that we teach in the department, with using active learning and group work, it's much more helpful to have someone else in the classroom, like you as an individual, can make it around to maybe 15 students on a manageable way. But especially if you have them working in partners with 20 plus students, it gets really hard to just provide meaningful feedback to all of the groups and keep them in a productive state, right? I think a lot of times if a student gets stuck, then they want to be able to answer a question, but if you're busy answering other questions, then it can be hard to balance that. I think especially for the way that we teach, it's really, really helpful to have someone else there to be able to answer questions and work with groups.

During a classroom observation of Faculty Sharon's course, it was also observed that UTA Brad was at the front of the room stepping students through content at the whiteboard:

He also went through practice problems the students were working on. He was at the front of the board, stepping through the problems, asking students for feedback as he went along.

Faculty Sharon goes on to discuss how her UTA helped with workload outside of the classroom:

I appreciated especially having a consistent peer for students to reach out to. A number of them were like, "Oh yeah, well, I asked UTA Brad about this at the review session" or "I reached out because I had questions about our writing assignment" or whatever it was. I think there is something about in that class in particular, I tend to have ten to 20 office hour appointments a week with students and that can quickly max out just my capacity and time. I think having someone else that they can go to and especially someone else who might seem more approachable, because they see them on campus and know that they can be available for tutoring potentially. Or that type of service is really helpful for students.

Faculty Sharon's UTA, UTA Brad, described what he would do during the review sessions outside of class:

I usually, the week before, I would kind of create a review guide. This was just kind of a backup. And then students would come to these review sessions and they could work on, we have this homework website called Infinity where you have to complete, I think it's like 80% of the problems correct to get like the point for that homework assignment. If any students had questions over like a homework problem, I would help them with that or on their previous quizzes, tests. And then if they wanted just the review guide, I would, I would give them that review guide where they could work on it and then maybe check answers with me or just check answers using online, and then help them through that too.

Faculty Kaylee also mentioned how her UTA helped with her workload when she felt like she was drowning:

...the exam review process is something that takes a lot of time and once she felt comfortable and able to take that on, that was a really big help. Some of it was I think my own, like I do open library office hours and then she was doing that two-hour recap, and at one point I didn't have enough one-on-one appointments. And instead of like switching [those appointments] out for the Wednesday, I tried to add them on and then I was drowning. And I realize, like, I have UTA Yasmine. She's there on Fridays. Like if we've just had an exam and I need more one-on-one appointments, just like switch that out. I do think that helped too.

Faculty Kaylee's UTA, Yasmine, echoed this shared workload when asked about her role with Faculty Kaylee, "I think I was definitely like a supportive element. Like, if she was like overwhelmed with a lot of meetings, like I could take some of those."

During an observation of Faculty Kaylee's course, it was also observed that UTA Yasmine taught a short lesson:

When teaching a short lesson, UTA Yasmine steps students through a concept, asking questions, providing clues, and giving positive reinforcement. She writes on the board as she steps through the concept, asking questions throughout the process. When students engage in group activities, UTA Yasmine walks around the room, checking in with students and answering their questions.

Faculty Hal indicated that his UTA was particularly helpful with the in-class workload. This was especially true when he reflected on his other class, which did not have a UTA:

I see my TA help them individually as students to solve the problem they face. Now suppose the case that I don't have that. I have exactly that in my other course. I have a math program with 22 students compared to this class which is 12. I don't have a TA there. I can see the difference because there is no one else to ask to take care about the students when, because it's just me, I cannot make a copy of myself. Right. I cannot...I can go and answer that, but what should I do with others?

This support was seen during the classroom observation for Faculty Hal and UTA Vaughn. In contrast to the course he described without a UTA, the shared workload allowed Faculty Hal to continue lecturing when students would encounter issues, which UTA Vaughn would address:

When students were involved in practice, UTA Vaughn would immediately stand up and start walking around the room. He would check to see what they were writing and occasionally make corrections. He answered questions and explained content. UTA Vaughn did not teach a lesson, but was in a support role as Faculty Hal taught, helping students, as needed.

Extra Layer of Support Subtheme 2: Sense of Relief

All faculty participants indicated that having their UTA as an extra layer of support provided a sense of relief. The UTA support appeared to lessen the pressure faculty were feeling and, subsequently, levels of stress. For example, Faculty Leah described the emotional impact of working with students in her class who seemed less engaged. She appeared to blame herself when students were not achieving

certain expectations. Having a UTA to talk through certain aspects of the course took this burden off her and provided her with a sense of relief:

Maybe because I'm so emotionally committed. I had a challenging semester teaching all general education classes and feeling burned out midway through, like I just cared too much and they didn't... My level of engagement was not equivalent. Students level engagement was not equivalent to my level engagement, let's say that. And that's a challenge. That's always a challenge. I think it was helpful to talk through certain things with my UTA. Like I don't know why this didn't work. And there were several times when she would say, "I think they're getting out of the course exactly what they want." I really appreciated hearing that from her. Because whenever I don't see students comprehending, or just engaging the way that I want them to consistently, I always am thinking, okay, what can I do differently? What did I do? And it was nice to have it from a student perspective to say, well...

While Faculty Leah indicated that her UTA shared workload responsibilities, it appeared she did not always get a sense of relief from this type of support. She discussed feeling odd when struggling students did not meet with her for offered support:

There is one thing I'm curious about, whether this is a result of the TA-ship or if it's just changing demographics in this new group of students. But the students would not come to talk to me, like the ones who are struggling, who failed quizzes or whatever, I always reach out. Let me know how I can help you, like let's talk about this together. I sent many emails, some of them multiple times, offered to meet with them. I think only one actually came from that class to get help with content. The others always were like, "Oh, I'll go see [the UTA]" or whatever. And I don't know if that's just because they were getting out of the class exactly what they wanted and they didn't want to put in extra time. If it's because there was some barrier that's new as I'm older and they are the same age, like a generational gap. I don't know if it's COVID students, because this new group of students seems really different in the ways they want to interact and their anxieties. A lot of them at the end of the semester said that because I asked them point like why didn't you come? This is weird. Students usually just refuse to come see me. They did it politely, but basically they're like, "Oh, that's ok. I've got this." And I'm wondering if... it's really great that they had [the UTA] and her study sessions. I think some of them really would come to that. I don't know if they wouldn't have come anyway because that's who they are or because that there was someone of their generation there that was just automatically they would go to her instead of talking to me. I'm curious as to whether that is a consequence of having a TA, or if that's just the nature of the class, if that makes sense. That was a little bit of a challenge. But at the same time, I'm really glad that she was there. If they're the group of students who didn't feel like they could relate to me enough to come ask for help or just didn't want to, I'm glad that she was there to provide that support.

The rest of the faculty indicated that the relief they felt was due to the shared workload with students. For example, Faculty Sharon felt relief during class time when her UTA helped answer questions, “Yeah, I think again, there was a little bit of relief of I don't have to feel like I have to jump from one thing to the next, because I had back up.”

Faculty Kaylee also describes feelings of relief, as sharing the workload with her UTA helped alleviate feelings of nervousness and stress:

I knew there was this extra layer of support for the students. And when I look at like my biggest stressors, I think sometimes it is me being nervous. Like I don't have enough time to get the students what they need. So, like having those be so successful, like I do think it took away some like emotional stress.

Faculty Hal sometimes felt pressure in the classroom when trying to support students during practice time. Not being able to spend more time helping students to problem-solve issues made him feel bad. He described how his UTA helped relieve this type of pressure:

...let's say if I know that my student cannot solve the issue and I'm under the time constraint as you mentioned, because I need to finish my lecture and there are two or three students, I cannot fix the issue. And there is no one to ask them for help, then I feel bad. I'm a kind of person that I'd like to get that solved for them as quickly as I can. And I start looking and say, "Okay, I cannot fix that now. It is a little bit more time," and I see other students finish it. That's kind of putting me under pressure now, okay, what should I do? It happened for me in my other class. There were other good students, and I sometimes call them. Say, "Can you go and look at this? Because I'm working with another student. Can you look at this?" That put me definitely under pressure sometimes, but that's the case that I may not have that. But if I have that normally, this relieves, give me that relief in moment. Yeah.

Extra Layer of Support Subtheme 3: Shared Responsibility for High-Needs Students

In addition to providing a sense of relief for faculty, two faculty indicated that their UTAs were a critical piece to the success of certain students, potentially making a difference in whether the students passed or not. This shared responsibility appeared to support faculty with their goal of helping students

succeed in their courses. For example, Faculty Leah discussed the role her UTA took with a student who she felt probably would have dropped without the extra UTA support:

But I know the fact that they [the UTA and student] developed that relationship and that she [UTA Natalie] was there helping coach him through, "Okay, you can do this, this is how you get on." ... That was instrumental to his success. I think he probably would have ended up dropping the class.

In addition, Faculty Kaylee had her UTA work with a student who was repeating the course. The student was continuing to struggle, so Faculty Kaylee strategically utilized her UTA to provide extra support for this student. Faculty Kaylee felt the UTA support was a big reason this student was probably going to pass the course:

Look, I had a student repeating too, who had repeated the course. Just really lovely, special student. I was meeting with her a lot. I felt like she was still struggling. I reached out to my UTA, even though I appreciate that the system works more, that the student initiates [contact]. But I'm like, "Hey, I want to introduce you guys on an email connect," and I think that student may pass. I was getting my UTA that feedback today, because it's like we always give the student the credit who did the work and made it across the finish line there. But I do think she was probably a big part of her success too, yeah.

UTA Yasmine, Faculty Kaylee's UTA, supported her statement above as she described how students with less preparation utilized her and how she may have turned some grades around:

I definitely think like students who weren't really doing too well in the course came to me a lot. I think a lot of it was just not even about the Patho content, just about like college in general. And being able to support them like studying techniques and just listening to their concerns, but also being like that one person that's like--you have to take charge of your own learning. Nobody's going to do it for you, type thing. I think hearing that from like a student perspective rather than a professor saying that hit a little bit differently because some of them have really taken that to heart and flipped their grades around. Yeah. I think just being able to conquer those barriers with them, not telling them what to do with it kind of added that level of support to get them where they need to be.

While Faculty Sharon did not discuss her UTA being critical to her students' success, UTA Brad described how some of the students seemed to turn around after attending his review sessions:

I would say that a lot of the time the students that came to those review sessions or asked if I was in the library at a certain time and I would help them out usually probably could have prepared a little better. I think throughout the semester, those students that I support that actually came to me that were underprepared at the start, are not the students that were underprepared at the end. So, I think they kind of realized, they kind of changed, they kind of talked to me about it. So, I feel like I supported. There's definitely still some students that are probably unprepared, but they didn't really seek out help, I guess, like some of the students did.

Extra Layer of Support Subtheme 4: Impact on Time

The subtheme of time contained conflicting perspectives. Two faculty indicated that sharing the workload with their UTA helped mitigate some of their time constraints with their courses. Other faculty weren't quite sure. It appeared that time was less of a factor and faculty benefitted from their UTAs in other ways, such as shared workload and responsibilities. For example, Faculty Leah thought her UTA may have helped with time, but she appeared uncertain:

I think a little bit. I don't think it was a huge difference, but I don't know, maybe that's the difference if they went to her study sessions instead of coming to talk to me. So, in that case, I guess so.

However, she did not feel the UTA took additional time away from her and was less intensive than past student support she has received from other programs:

At first, I was not sure whether that additional time during the week would be a burden, but in the end, it didn't feel like a burden because I was going to be doing class planning or whatever anyway.

...this [program] did not take more time. Versus the others were kind of time intensive.

Faculty Sharon felt the time placed toward her UTA balanced out with the time she received back from the UTA support. This made it so it felt like about the same amount of time she would put into teaching a course:

But I would probably guess that it balanced about the same, right? Like I spent more time interacting with him and collaborating together on the activities and worksheets and figuring out what that would look like. And also, it saved me a little bit of time to have him doing stuff, and so I think it was probably net about the usual typical working load.

Faculty Kaylee felt that having a UTA helped with some time constraints, but that this did not occur until the second half of the semester. Her UTA needed extra support to adjust to the UTA role, which took more time at first. This was faculty Kaylee's first time working with a student assistant in a course and UTA Yasmine's first time in a UTA role, which may have contributed to the role adjustment. She described her experience as enriching despite any extra time:

[The UTA program] was brand new to everyone and brand new to me. I think this semester took a lot of work that doing it in the future wouldn't, even if it was a brand-new person. That doesn't take away from it being enriching, because that's a good process too, because I think in the spring I'll be able to get feedback. Like I got back some time, I was able to do more one-on-one appointments and things like that...

While she states above that she got back some time, Faculty Kaylee goes on to describe how supporting her UTA with preparing a lesson felt stressful and time-consuming:

That process was a little tricky and probably a learning curve just because I don't think she realized like how much time it would take. Even with me saying like, okay, we need to come Wednesday and connect. Like I feel like even with me setting deadlines and trying to guide her, I think that ended up causing like maybe stress and more work for me to do that part of it.

Faculty Hal indicated that his UTA definitely helped with time constraints surrounding his course:

Yeah, definitely it helps. Because if it's not there, then the material going to finish in one session might take longer because we spend more time helping to fix that because they get behind. So, yes.

While it was unclear whether the UTA program helped faculty with time constraints, none of the faculty indicated that the UTA program, on average, consistently took more time. This may be due to the UTA program being handled by a central office, including a UTA course in which students were enrolled. This program structure was intentionally created to mitigate the amount of time faculty would need to spend training their students how to be teaching assistants. All four UTAs indicated that the course was helpful. For example, UTA Yasmine described her experience with the course:

Yes, I definitely think that like all the topics that we talked about, I used like every single one of them somehow, like being with the students or working with the Professor. I think being able to decide when we talked about what [in the course] was really helpful, too. Because we were able to reflect on our own experience and be like, “Oh, I think I need more support in this education-wise.” Or “I think we should have a discussion about this.” I think that was a crucial part of that.”

Theme 2: Enhanced Teaching Experience

All faculty participants indicated that interacting with their UTA enhanced the teaching experience in multiple ways. This theme emerged when focusing on two research questions:

- How do faculty experience stress and workload when engaging in an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program?
- How does an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program impact the lived experience of faculty with their job, as a whole?

Four subthemes emerged from this theme, including:

1. Enjoyment
2. UTA as a partner to faculty
3. Shared classroom dynamics
4. Faculty reassurance

Enhanced Teaching Experience Subtheme 1: Enjoyment

Having someone else to collaborate with in the classroom who could provide a different perspective appeared to create feelings of enjoyment for the faculty. This enjoyment appeared to help faculty feel more satisfied with their teaching experience. For example, Faculty Leah described how having a UTA was fun and positive:

I would say overall, it's been a really positive experience. I've enjoyed working with my UTA. I think it's been helpful both for me and for the students. It's been really fun to have someone who is of the same generation as the students to help brainstorm ideas and to think about

what's going to work, and what's not going to work, and have a go-between. Overall, I'd say very positive.

Faculty Sharon described how she could chat with her TA during class about course content or collaborate on activities. The open conversations in front of students allowed an opportunity for students to join the conversation. These types of interactions created an appealing atmosphere for Faculty Sharon and her students:

I think that helped establish the friendly atmosphere that yeah, made it enjoyable for me too as well, to come to the classroom and even just be able to bounce ideas off each other. Like "Two more minutes for this activity?" "Yeah, okay, sounds good."

Faculty Kaylee also described feelings of joy. She specifically discussed how the program gave her a healthy outlet that made her feel good about her work:

...when I'm involved in things like this that are kind of like outside but not outside like, and I'm really enjoying it. Like for me it's giving me this like good, healthier work... I don't know, situation to be like, well, I really enjoy this and this is a cool thing to follow. So, like for me it was that was nice too. Yeah.

Faculty Hal also enjoyed the experience and hopes to have a TA in future courses:

I think overall, this was very good. I'm really happy to have the TA. That's the reason I ask you again [laughs] if you have a chance I can have one for my other course, because I feel like special for those other programs with more number of students, I probably need. But yeah, I didn't see anything really challenging or...everything was very positive.

Enhanced Teaching Experience Subtheme 2: UTA as a Partner

Two of the faculty partnered closely with their UTAs, collaborating with them on teaching and eliciting their feedback to get a different perspective. They both expressed this being a positive aspect of the UTA experience. Having a partner with which to collaborate appeared to provide faculty with beneficial feedback and an improved course. For example, Faculty Julia could turn to her UTA when things didn't go as planned. Obtaining feedback from her UTA in this way created a feeling of collegial rapport:

I think it's always nice to have a colleague. I felt like there was that additional collegial feeling of having someone to look at. Like if things go really poorly, they just share a little at the end of class, oh what happened here?

Faculty Sharon describes how she provided her TA flexibility and choice because she wanted to be more of a partner:

Yeah, I think I tried to give him the freedom of flexibility to say, what topics are you interested in the most? Do you want to have, what are you hoping to get out of this experience? That we were really partnering together, instead of me saying like grade these things, do these things.

Faculty Sharon's UTA, UTA Brad, described how he perceived their relationship, which he described as more of a partnership:

I felt like it was like, what's the best way to say this? Kind of like a mutual relationship or something like that. Just kind of like, we just kind of worked together. It didn't seem like it was like, I guess like a powered dynamic or anything where I was just like, "Oh, I just want you doing all the dirty work like grading" or all this kind of stuff. I got to actually do lessons in the class, which was something that I really wanted to do when I started.

While Faculty Kaylee did not indicate that she felt she had a partnership with her UTA, UTA Yasmine felt a collaborative relationship between them:

I didn't feel like it was like authoritative and like student type thing. I definitely feel like we collaborated really well and had that like open communication and a good relationship between both of us. I felt heard and appreciated and all the good things.

Enhanced Teaching Experience Subtheme 3: Shared Classroom Dynamics

Three of the faculty discussed how their UTA modified the classroom dynamics, increasing the level of energy in the classroom. Having an additional teaching presence in the room increased positive interactions with students during activities and with the content, enhancing the teaching experience for faculty. The faculty found this to be a positive aspect of having a UTA. For example, Faculty Leah described how her UTA would encourage students to volunteer answers:

I felt glad that she was there to help them. I also think that there were moments where because she was sitting there like, "You can do this, like come on, volunteer to answer," that changed the nature of the classroom experience for them in a positive way.

Classroom observation data also indicated that Faculty Leah intentionally worked UTA Natalie into class activities, which appeared to change the teaching dynamic. Modeling of conversations could more easily be demonstrated to students:

Faculty Leah was intentional at several points in the lesson to include UTA Natalie. UTA Natalie made the announcement at the beginning of class about leading a review session, and she also modeled the conversation with Faculty Leah that students later tried to recreate based on their own experiences.

Faculty Sharon described how it can be exhausting to teach students who are used to passively learning. They can be uncomfortable shifting to an active learning environment and having a UTA helped to keep the energy up:

I think [this subject] is notorious for like this is my entire experience of learning, is the person comes in the room and they start writing on the board. You're lucky if [the students] ever turn to face you. I think it can be uncomfortable for students to have a different interaction. And also, it can be really exhausting to be doing that every day. And it's helpful to have someone else to be keeping the energy up and to play off of as well.

Classroom observation data showed that Faculty Sharon's class was energetic and that UTA Brad was an integral part of the course.

The class was engaged, respectful, participating, and appeared motivated to learn the content. Faculty Sharon's energy and enthusiasm was evident, as witnessed by her nonverbal cues, which appeared to support student engagement. UTA Brad appeared to be an integral part of the class, going through problems at the board, having his name mentioned several times by the teacher, and interacting with students while walking around the room as they worked on problems. Students responded to both Faculty Sharon and UTA Brad by engaging in their practice problems, taking notes, asking questions, answering questions, and participating with each other. There was also a feeling of familiarity that came from the students, as little guidance was needed to get them actively started on problem-solving. There appeared to be a routine that students understood. They also appeared to have an ease around one another, Faculty Sharon, and UTA Brad. This indicated to me that the highly collaborative environment was more the norm than an exception.

Faculty Hal felt engagement was maintained as his UTA helped to answer questions for students who were stuck. This helped students to progress with their work and stay on track:

I believe that the one that is very helpful is also the engagement. I think if you, in my case, if the student cannot get the answer on computer, they might get frustrated very easy, very fast. Now if I have my TA always helping with that and get that answer and see what's going on, right? Then I can keep the engagement also positive and high during my class.

Faculty Hal's UTA, UTA Vaughn, described how he would actively try to increase student involvement in the class:

And occasionally, for the students that were above the class or like not above the class but exceeding pretty well in the class, I would give them additional like maybe not assignments, but... "Hey, could you do this in a different way?" or "Can you try to, try to write this code without using this function?" "Can you make it do this?" Additional assignments or additional tasks that are significantly more challenging just to keep them engaged and keep them thinking about the topic.

Enhanced Teaching Experience Subtheme 4: Faculty Reassurance

Three of the faculty discussed how the UTA perspective gave them moments of increased reassurance with certain aspects of their teaching. This reassurance enhanced the faculty teaching experience by validating their feelings and creating a reciprocal learning process. For example, Faculty Leah found it helpful to talk through lessons with her UTA after they had carried them out. If a lesson didn't go as well as she hoped, she appreciated receiving feedback from her UTA on how she could have handled things differently. Her UTA would sometimes respond with, "I think they're getting out of the course exactly what they want." She appreciated this feedback, "I think it was helpful to talk through certain things with UTA Natalie. Like I don't know why this didn't work... What did I do? And it was nice to have it from a student perspective..."

Faculty Sharon also appeared to gain reassurance from interacting with her UTA in this way:

If I'm in an unhealthy place as a person, then I think a lot of the support that students need can feel a little bit too needy. There's something really refreshing about being able to ask and check in with the TA and be like, hey, this is the problem that was on this quiz. Students did not think that they had enough time, they didn't know how to do it. You've been in class. Do you feel like this is me trying to be tricky or anything like that? And he was able to say, "No, we did a problem exactly like that in the review session. This is very reasonable."

Faculty Kaylee gained reassurance by having her UTA partner with her to support students with varying academic preparedness.

It just gave me some confidence, right, that there's this external support outside of just me to help the students, which is really big, right? And then the helpfulness of the time, right? To try to meet with 15 students one-on-one who are underprepared is really challenging....I think is really time efficient and like good.

Theme 3: UTA Bridged a Gap

All the faculty participants indicated that their UTA bridged a gap between them and their students. Their UTA provided a student perspective or was an approachable option for their students. This theme emerged when focusing on two research questions:

- How do faculty experience stress and workload when engaging in an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program?
- How does an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program impact the lived experience of faculty in the classroom as it relates to teaching students of varying academic preparedness?

Two subthemes emerged from this theme, including:

1. Provides Student Perspective
2. UTA Approachability for Students

UTA Bridged a Gap Subtheme 1: Provides Student Perspective

Three of the faculty participants discussed the value of getting feedback from a student perspective when collaborating with their UTA. The student perspective helped translate generational differences and provided insight into students' needs and experiences, which helped faculty teach more effectively. For example, Faculty Leah discussed how her UTA would let her know if students might like a learning activity or would interpret generational differences for her, explaining certain cultural aspects of the students in the class:

Having someone of their generation to say, yeah, I think that they'd really like this activity or suggest say celebrities that we can use as examples. Like once she helped explain... a couple of students, mentioned a term that I was unfamiliar with, "Dap up," have you heard of this? It's like that kind of handshake that guys do. And when we were talking about how students, how people interact with each other and how they greet, a couple of them had written something like that on their discussion board. And I was looking at it and I texted I was like, "What is this?" And she found like an infographic for me. She was like, "It's the thing guys do." That was fun. We had a couple of those sorts of things. I'm like, I don't know how to interpret this. Please translate.

Faculty Sharon found it helpful when her UTA would describe aspects of the content with which he most struggled. As an expert in the field who has taught the course multiple times, this helped Faculty Sharon better understand the needs of her novice learners:

I also found it helpful because there are a couple times where I said like, "These are the materials that I used the last time that I taught this particular section that you were interested in teaching, but feel free to use something else," and he would bring in or create a worksheet of "This is what I struggled the most with when I was a student." I thought that was really helpful too because this is my fourth time teaching it at [the university]. And so, it can be really easy to forget, oh right, I know the common student errors, but I forget which pieces of it would be most helpful, especially from their perspective as someone who's encountering it for the first time.

Faculty Kaylee found it helpful to turn to her UTA when discussing the textbook website with her students. Having not utilized this tool from the student side of things, Faculty Kaylee could turn to her UTA to clarify aspects of the technology:

I think sometimes it would feel helpful if something came up where...this is logistic, but the students use this tool, Kaplan. It's a website, but I don't really have the perspective on like being a student. When I was teaching them about that in the section she was there, I was like, am I right? Can you add? And then she could fill in. I feel like that, it was nice to like, have a student perspective, like in the classroom.

UTA Bridged a Gap Subtheme 1: UTA Approachability for Students

Three of the faculty participants described how students felt comfortable with their UTA since the UTA was a peer. Faculty felt the UTA approachability for their students was an extra resource in the courses, which helped them better support their students. For example, Faculty Leah described how students struggling with course content seemed to prefer meeting with her UTA. While this felt weird to her, she was glad the students were comfortable meeting with the UTA:

Near the end of the semester, hearing from the struggling students who weren't doing their homework and who would say that they have challenges in these particular areas. When I asked them to meet with me and they were it's, "You know, I'll just go to [the UTA]," that felt a little weird like... but I'm not sure that it would have been any different. You know, I'm glad that she was there, that they felt comfortable going to her and they may have been even more checked out without her being there.

Faculty Leah's UTA, UTA Natalie, described how she felt students were sometimes more comfortable getting support from her instead from Faculty Leah. She felt some students felt she was more approachable:

...feedback I've gotten from the students and even when I was her student, she is like intimidating. Not in a negative way, but she just kind of has that. So, a lot of students have said that I've been like more approachable. I said I'm a student too, and I'm also learning. And so, I did feel valuable in the class because they felt more comfortable to come to me sometimes to talk about stuff. And a lot of them do come to office hours consistently as well.

Faculty Sharon described how the approachability of the UTA has the potential to support students who might have anxiety over the content or are getting used to the college atmosphere:

I think having someone else that they can go to and especially someone else who might seem more approachable, because they see them on campus and know that they can be available for

tutoring potentially. Or that type of service is really helpful for students, especially if they're also overcoming content anxiety and getting used to college, and what it's like to have different resources that they maybe didn't have available in high school as well.

Faculty Hal felt students would prefer interacting with the UTA over an instructor. He also felt that the UTA approachability potentially helped students better learn the material:

But I feel like one great things about TAs is maybe they are better approachable by students compared to the instructors. Could be an age gap, could be other things, I'm not sure. But even though after a couple of few sessions, I feel like they better approach the TAs, in some cases. I know some cases might not be true, but most of the cases, I feel they'd rather ask them a question and communicate with the TA. That's one thing. And another thing is basically when they're better they can easier get approach by the students. They get better if they know the materials very well because we selected them. We know that they know that right? They can help them better to basically learn the materials.

Faculty Hal's UTA, UTA Vaughn, felt he was a bridge between the instructor and students. However, he also felt it was sometimes challenging to get some students to openly communicate with him:

But I think sometimes students would not ask me questions even though like I want to make them feel as comfortable as they can and I want to be like that bridge between, you know, themselves and the teacher. But I think a couple of students opened up towards the end of the semester to me because I'm again, that peer, the bridge between them and the professor. And instead of going to the professor, they, you know, kind of came to me. So, I think I was well respected by the students. But my role, I think, I don't know. It was just hard to get, hard to get people out of their shells.

While faculty Kaylee did not discuss UTA approachability, her UTA, Yasmine, described her experiences with the students. She indicated that students may have felt she was a less intimidating option:

My role with the students has definitely evolved over the semester. I think I started out as not really sure what to think about it, but it quickly became like a mentor to like undergrad, like the students, and like, I feel like relationships have definitely been formed more. Not just like with an academic thing, but just through like the nursing community. I think there's definitely been like, like they feel confident coming to me and confide in me. And like I feel as though like they can be heard more without like the intimidation of like going to the professor and like talking to

them. So, I think it's, I kind of like became an advocate and just like that support person for them.

Theme 4: Professional Growth Through Self-Reflection

The theme of professional growth through self-reflection emerged when targeting the research question:

- How does an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program impact the lived experience of faculty with their job, as a whole?

Interactions with UTAs seemed to increase awareness of teaching and roles for three of the faculty participants, appearing to contribute to professional growth. This professional growth helped faculty with their teaching as they would reflect on insights that surfaced during discussions with their UTAs. For example, Faculty Leah reflected on how some students might view her, which does not match how she views herself. Interactions with her UTA appeared to provide insight into Faculty Leah's identity as an instructor:

Maybe, I'm trying to reflect on that a little bit more right now and figure out what was going on with those dynamics. And possibly, because again, that's not something that I would necessarily attribute to myself. But I've heard her say that to me too, because we've had conversations about class dynamics and also about how this class might relate to other classes that she's taken and joked around about how I'm apparently the scariest professor, which is hilarious to me. But also, it gives me an indication of, okay, like this, this is maybe where I am right now. I don't know. There's been some insights there, but it's been more in conversation with her. I don't know if that answers your question. I'm not trying to be scary.

Faculty Sharon discussed how including “the why” behind her teaching when mentoring her UTA made her realize that her students would also benefit from this type of information. Having these conversations with her UTA specifically reminded her of this practice:

I think that's something that the more that I teach, the more I learn that I need to do a better job of communicating to students the reasons behind the stuff that I'm doing. Because there's often lots of reasons, but I just don't feel like I have time with the content we have to cover to

communicate that. And so, I think that was a nice reminder to have those conversations with the TA as well.

Faculty Kaylee reflected on how feedback from her UTA made her think about how to deliver higher-quality education to students, which she felt was supportive:

I just think the experience of having a, having a student who's like willing to offer some feedback and give ideas, for me, I like that. I think it is a form of support, right? Like how can we improve the class and deliver high-quality education to students? I thought that was supportive.

Conclusion

This chapter illuminated the results of the hermeneutic, phenomenological qualitative study, exploring the lived experiences of four faculty as they engaged in an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program. Classroom observations were carried out twice for all four courses and interviews were conducted for eight participants, including four participating faculty and their four UTAs. Utilizing the research questions and the hermeneutic circle, four themes and 10 subthemes emerged.

Table 9: List of Themes and Subthemes

Theme/Subtheme
1. Extra Layer of Support
Shared Workload
Sense of Relief
Shared Responsibility for High-Needs Students
Impact on Time
2. Enhanced Teaching Experience
Enjoyment
TA as a Partner to Faculty
Shared Classroom Dynamics
Faculty Reassurance
3. UTA Bridged a Gap
Provides Student Perspective
UTA Approachability for Students
4. Professional Growth Through Self-Reflection

The next section discusses interpretations for each subtheme, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and implications for those wanting to recreate the study.

Discussion

The purpose of this hermeneutic qualitative phenomenological study is to illustrate the lived experience of higher education faculty as they engaged in an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) program. This research provides an enhanced understanding of the faculty teaching and learning experience, particularly experiences related to students of varying academic preparedness. The research also helps illuminate how this type of program impacts faculty feelings toward their jobs and gives insight into how faculty experience teaching support in their classrooms. While research was found that focused on the impact of undergraduate teaching assistant programs in higher education institutions, much of the research appeared to target how these types of programs impacted the teaching assistants and/or students. There is limited research on how these programs impact faculty, particularly outside of the classroom experience. Three research questions were focused on to help illuminate the lived experience of faculty as they experienced the UTA program.

1. How do faculty experience stress and workload when engaging in an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program?
2. How does an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program impact the lived experience of faculty with their job, as a whole?
3. How does an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program impact the lived experience of faculty in the classroom as it relates to teaching students of varying academic preparedness?

Interpretation of Findings

By investigating the lived experience of faculty as they engaged in a UTA program, the research focuses on the faculty perspective rather than the student or UTA perspective. Examining the impact of

the themes on faculty, institutions of higher education can better understand how they might support faculty with similar types of programs.

Theme 1: Extra Layer of Support

Extra Layer of Support Subtheme 1: Shared Workload

Studies have indicated that faculty workload has significantly increased over the years (Nakano et al., 2021; Rosser & Tabata, 2010; Townsend & Rosser, 2007). Nakano's et al. (2021) findings showed that academic workload has increased significantly in ten years from 2007 to 2017 with other studies indicating that perceived workload contributes to faculty stress (Donovan, 2018; Adrian et al., 2014). All the faculty in this study indicated that their UTAs assisted with their workload. Faculty sharing responsibilities with their UTAs, inside and outside of the classroom, could lead to faculty perceiving a lower workload, which could increase job satisfaction (Tentama et al., 2019).

All four faculty in the study shared part of their workload with their UTAs, which was cited twelve times in the data. This included support inside the classroom, during which UTAs answered student questions during active learning and group work, taught lessons, and passed out materials. In addition, the faculty described several responsibilities their UTAs had outside of the classroom. UTAs tutored students one-on-one, conducted group review sessions before tests, ran group weekly recap sessions, and held general office hours. One faculty member also had her UTA grade assignments. Two of the faculty indicated that this outside help appeared to reduce the number of students who would come see them during their office hours. Faculty Kaylee stated, "...at one point I didn't have enough one-on-one appointments. And instead of like switching them out for the Wednesday, I tried to add them on and then I was drowning. And I realize, like, I have [my UTA]. She's there on Fridays." Faculty Leah also indicated that when she reached out to struggling students to come see her, they said they would meet with her UTA, which felt odd to Faculty Leah, "When I asked them to meet with me and

they were it's, "You know, I'll just go to UTA Natalie," that felt a little weird like... but I'm not sure that it would have been any different."

One barrier that surfaced surrounding shared workload was hesitancy to potentially overload the UTA. Faculty Sharon did not want to burden her UTA given that UTAs are also taking a full course load. She held back from giving her UTA more work to respect his schedule:

...there were a number of times where I was like, I would love for you to be more involved or to give you more responsibility or even just to be able to defer some of the work to you because I know that you're responsible and are able and capable of doing it. But I want to respect the fact that you have quite a full course load and you're not being paid to do all of this extra work on top of it.

Experience with the program for both faculty and UTAs may help alleviate this concern. If faculty utilize the same UTA for repeated semesters, familiarity with the roles, the UTA schedule, and the UTA capabilities may help faculty feel they can utilize their UTA more fully.

Overall, UTA programs can be valuable for supporting faculty with their workload by assisting with a variety of teaching tasks, including clerical, tech support, grading, facilitating discussion groups or labs, or creating and delivering lesson plans (Owen, 2011). Faculty can rely on their UTAs for assistance which can contribute to a sense of satisfaction of working toward common goals. This satisfaction can lead to less burnout (Lee & Lin, 2019; Spector, 1997), allowing faculty to perceive they have more time and energy in their schedule (Donovan, 2018). Increasing job satisfaction via a shared workload with UTAs has implications that go beyond the classroom. According to prominent organizational psychology researcher, Dr. Paul Spector (1997), job satisfaction leads to other positive outcomes, including increased commitment to the organization, higher levels of job performance, and engagement in organizational citizenship behaviors, such as supporting other colleagues.

However, effective implementation and management of UTA programs are essential to ensure that certain UTA responsibilities are offloaded from the faculty, as considerable time and energy may be

necessary to ensure TAs are effective (Owen, 2011). Faculty investment in work in a UTA program can be mitigated when a central office manages the organization and training of TAs (Begley et al., 2019). This study intentionally structured the UTA program with the Center for Teaching and Learning organizing the program and training the UTAs.

Extra Layer of Support Subtheme 2: Sense of Relief

Faculty indicated that collaborating with their UTA and having them share a portion of the responsibilities mitigated the pressure they felt which provided a sense of relief. It appeared that social, collaborative support from their UTA reduced pressure when compared to handling tasks alone. Individuals who perceive a higher level of social support are less likely to experience negative outcomes of stressful events (Laskey & Cohen, 2000).

All faculty indicated they felt this sense of relief when their UTA supported them, cited five times in the data. Faculty Leah appeared to feel relief when her UTA gave her feedback that alleviated Faculty Leah's self-imposed high expectations of her students' engagement. Faculty Leah was disappointed in the level of disengagement of some of her students and felt it could be her fault. Her UTA reassured her, "I think they're getting out of the course exactly what they want." This feedback was appreciated by Faculty Leah. While Faculty Leah seemed to feel relief in this situation, she also indicated that she felt weird when struggling students would see her UTA instead of her, "This is weird. Students usually don't refuse to come see me." She indicated that this felt challenging for her, but that she was glad that her students felt comfortable obtaining support from her UTA.

The other faculty felt a sense of relief having their UTAs be a backup for them inside and outside of the classroom. Faculty Sharon and Faculty Hal felt pressure when helping answer student questions during practice and active learning. Their UTAs helped mitigate this pressure by sharing this responsibility. Faculty Kaylee's UTA helped alleviate her stress and nervousness by supporting students

outside of class by holding weekly recaps and exam review sessions. While Faculty Kaylee's UTA helped alleviate stress, there was an adjustment period at the beginning of the semester that felt challenging for Faculty Kaylee, "I think for me what was challenging was like the, well, UTA Yasmine was not feeling confident and not decisive, which is okay. And I think that was a challenge, a little bit to navigate that." Role ambiguity for a new UTA at the start of a program may be a challenge to some faculty, which could lower feelings of relief.

Overall, social support via UTAs in the classroom appeared to create a sense of relief by reducing pressure. This is consistent with research by Laskey & Cohen (2000) that social support has a buffering effect on stress that allows individuals to better cope and maintain psychological health. This can play a role in mitigating emotional exhaustion that is commonly associated with burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2000). A UTA program providing social support could have similar effects, reducing faculty emotional exhaustion and increasing psychological health. This UTA program maximized aspects of social support in several ways. Faculty were encouraged to choose their own UTA to ensure they received the support they needed in terms of content knowledge and a good fit for personality. This personality fit was important, as we wanted faculty to view their UTAs as partners. In addition, emphasis was placed on meaningful collaboration with UTAs, relying on them for a variety of tasks. This collaboration was described to faculty before the start of the program and reiterated in the UTA-Faculty Agreement (see Appendix G).

Extra Layer of Support Subtheme 3: Shared Responsibility for High-Needs Students

Research surrounding underprepared students and the prediagnostic work for this study indicated that faculty struggle to support underprepared students, which can create feelings of frustration and helplessness (Sachar et al., 2019). Faculty indicated the top teaching strategy in working with underprepared students was individual support (Sachar et al., 2019), which is challenging for

faculty due to a lack of time (Quick, 2013). The researcher in this study did not gather data on student academic standards and was unable to identify if underprepared students received targeted support. However, it appeared UTAs were able to provide individual attention inside and outside of the course for higher-needs students.

Two faculty and two UTAs indicated that the shared responsibility in supporting higher-needs students was critical to student success, which was cited four times in the data. Both Faculty Leah and Faculty Kaylee discussed how their UTAs worked closely to develop relationships with certain students needing extra assistance. Faculty Kaylee specifically had her UTA work with a student who had to take the class a second time. Both faculty indicated that certain students were unlikely to pass without this assistance. In addition, UTAs Brad and Yasmine also felt they had supported higher-needs students in a significant way. UTA Yasmine felt she had flipped some grades around and UTA Brad felt that some students who worked with him were more prepared by the end of the class.

Research shows that 48% of faculty from disciplines other than teacher education indicated that making accommodations for underprepared students decreased their teaching effectiveness (Quick, 2013). Faculty Sharon described her experiences with higher-needs students:

A lot of us are also feeling that strain and wanting to be supportive. And especially as our students are arriving less and less prepared, so each year, I'm surprised how much students don't know when they come into class. Like they don't recognize basic concepts. And these are fundamental skills that theoretically they were introduced to in middle school. But they're here, right? They've taken classes to get to that point, a number of courses in between, and yet a lot of these really foundational skills are still confusing them and tripping them up. That adds a lot of work and time and energy to what is required of us as instructors.

Through individualized student support, a UTA program appears to help faculty close the gap for higher-needs students, which may reduce the work, time, and energy that is required for faculty to support this population. Closing this gap helps faculty focus on student success with the intended course goals.

Extra Layer of Support Subtheme 4: Impact on Time

Research shows that faculty feeling time pressure is a contributing factor to stress and that the demands of the job cannot be accomplished within normal working hours (Darabi et al., 2017). Another study discussed extra time involved in supporting the expectations and competing needs of students was a challenge for faculty (Quick, 2013). The data surrounding time was conflicting in this study. While all faculty discussed time, which was cited six times in the data, faculty seemed uncertain that their UTAs provided time relief. However, none of the faculty indicated they felt they had to, on average, put *more* time into their UTA than what they received back. It appeared that the UTAs were not a technical fix, simply alleviating time constraints. Rather, the UTAs provided support for faculty by assisting in the classroom and supporting students.

Faculty Leah appeared hesitant in saying her UTA alleviated time constraints, “I think a little bit. I don't think it was a huge difference, but I don't know...” When discussing interactions with her UTA she goes on to say, “At first, I was not sure whether that additional time during the week would be a burden, but in the end, it didn't feel like a burden because I was going to be doing class planning or whatever anyway.” Faculty Sharon felt the time placed toward her UTA balanced out with the time she received back from the UTA support. Faculty Kaylee felt her UTA helped with time constraints, but that she had to put in more time with her UTA at the beginning of the semester since there was an adjustment period that she and her UTA went through. Faculty Hal was the only participant who felt time constraints were definitely alleviated.

Instead of alleviating time constraints, it is possible that UTAs reduced the cognitive load faculty felt by assisting them with teaching tasks and answering student questions during in-class practice activities. Cognitive load is the load on the cognitive system that results from performing various tasks (Paas & van Merriënboer, 1994). Faculty complete several tasks and have competing responsibilities and

multiple roles (Sabagh, et al. 2018). Multitasking contributes to a high cognitive load (Walter et al., 2015). Relying on the support of UTAs may increase the cognitive resources faculty have by reducing the amount of multitasking typically required by faculty and the amount of role conflict faculty feel (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

In addition, Owen (2011) cautions faculty about the amount of time and energy that goes into a teaching assistant. Consequently, one of the goals of the researcher was to mitigate the amount of time faculty had to spend getting their UTA prepared for their role. The program was structured so UTAs were enrolled in a UTA course facilitated by the researcher, who is a teaching and learning expert. UTAs were provided support in understanding the UTA role, engaged in discussions surrounding any challenges they were encountering as UTAs, and were trained in teaching and learning techniques. It appears this course may have helped, which is seen in the data. All four UTAs stated that the UTA course was very helpful in supporting them in their roles, including collaborating with other UTAs, learning teaching topics, teaching a lesson, observing others teach, and reflecting on their UTA experiences. Three of the faculty said the UTA course appeared to support their UTAs in varying ways and one faculty member was uncertain. Another study found it beneficial for a separate office to organize, manage, and train TAs. Begley et al. (2019) found that when the management and instructional load of the TAs is not on the faculty, this allows them more time and space to develop the collaborative relationship with the TAs that the faculty values. This appears to be reflected in this study, as well.

Theme 2: Enhanced Teaching Experience

Enhanced Teaching Experience Subtheme 1: Enjoyment

All faculty participants in this study said having a UTA was a positive experience they enjoyed, using words such as fun, happy, enjoyment, and healthy. This was cited 4 times in the data. According to

Fredrickson's (2004) "broaden and build" theory, positive emotions promote psychological well-being, resilience, and thriving. In addition, happiness is related to job satisfaction (Watson & Slack, 1993).

Faculty Leah described her UTA experience as really positive and that it was really fun interacting with her. Faculty Sharon said her UTA created a friendly atmosphere in the classroom and that she enjoyed interacting with him. Faculty Hal indicated that having a UTA was a positive experience and that he was really happy to have him. Faculty Kaylee also said she really enjoyed her experience with her UTA and that it was a good, healthy situation for her. However, Faculty Kaylee indicated that interacting with her UTA was challenging to navigate at the beginning of the experience. In addition, the UTA program felt tricky for her due to the level of faculty autonomy, "Maybe like not having any structure and guidelines was tricky." An initial adjustment period for those inexperienced with students assisting in the classroom may diminish some feelings of enjoyment of the program.

Overall, the faculty appeared to enjoy the UTA program. Fredrickson's (2004) "broaden and build" theory describes how positive emotions broaden individuals' perspectives, encouraging creative thinking which can lead to increased cognitive flexibility. Positive emotions also build psychological, social, and physical resources that contribute to overall well-being. Overall, experiencing positive emotions initiates an "upward spiral" of well-being and flourishing (Fredrickson, 2004). Another study showed that social relations predicted positive emotions (Sahu & Srivastava, 2017). Specifically, social contacts and relationships contribute to happiness and well-being (Argyle & Martin, 2000). Faculty enjoying the UTA relationship could contribute to the social capital they experience through an increase in positive emotions, positively impacting their overall well-being.

Enhanced Teaching Experience Subtheme 2: TA as a Partner to Faculty

Research on TA programs describes rich relationships being established between faculty and their TAs with faculty appreciating both the logistical assistance and the collegial partnership (Begley et

al., 2019; Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Owen, 2011). Begley et al. (2019) found in their study that the nature of the faculty-TA relationship was described by faculty as collegial. The faculty viewed their TAs as co-teachers or colleagues who provided beneficial feedback and improved the course. They depict TAs as collaborative partners, helping to improve teaching and learning in the classrooms (Begley et al., 2019). The UTA program wanted to intentionally create this partnership between faculty and their assistants by allowing faculty to choose their own UTA and what the UTA role looked like in their course. This appeared to support the partnership, however, past experience with student assistants and feeling comfortable with the program seemed to impact the level of collaboration faculty established with their UTAs.

Two of the faculty described having a partnership with their UTAs, cited 4 times in the data. Having a partner with which to collaborate appeared to provide faculty with beneficial feedback and an improved course. For example, Faculty Leah described how she could turn to her UTA when things didn't go as planned in the classroom to get feedback from her, which created a collegial rapport. Faculty Leah had chosen her UTA by putting a callout for students to apply for the position. Several students were interviewed and a final selection was made based on personality, skill set, and scheduling. In addition, Faculty Leah had prior experience relying on undergraduates to assist in her course. This appeared to give Faculty Leah confidence in her UTA. Faculty Sharon discussed how she intentionally created a partnership with her UTA by allowing him a choice and asking him what he was interested in taking on in her course. She also appreciated having conversations about teaching with her UTA. Faculty Sharon had worked with her UTA as a grader in past courses. In addition, she was aware of her UTA's background and skillset, having had him in several of her classes. This prior relationship appeared to "kickstart" their collaborative relationship. Faculty Sharon also had prior experience with undergraduates assisting in her course.

Having collaborative partnerships with UTAs has multiple benefits. Fingerson & Culley (2001) found a collaborative partnership between faculty and UTAs benefitted students by promoting learning-centered approaches, encouraging active learning, and enhancing accessibility and support. They also found benefits for faculty, including a positive impact on instructors' perceptions of teaching. Faculty described their UTAs as invaluable and led instructors to adopt a less individualized and more collaborative approach to teaching (Fingerson & Culley, 2001). A collaborative partnership with UTAs enhances the faculty teaching experience and the student learning experience.

Two of the faculty in this study did not specifically mention a partner relationship with their UTA. While she had chosen her UTA, Faculty Kaylee had no prior experience having students assist in her course. She also indicated that the open flexibility of the UTA program felt a bit tricky, as the program simply provided suggestions for how to incorporate UTAs into courses rather than a rigid structure. In addition, Faculty Kaylee indicated concerns about her department's willingness to utilize a UTA for teaching and grading. Faculty Hal had no prior experience teaching the course to which the UTA was assigned. In addition, he did not have a prior relationship with his UTA and was unaware of his UTA's skill set and personality. He was also used to having graduate students in this role and felt hesitant about having an undergraduate as a teaching assistant:

Because if it's not a graduate, I'm a little bit in doubt about a student first, but...if it's undergraduate, difference now with other kids is low. Maybe I cannot give him that responsibility to take care of... I want to have all control and make everything.

Faculty Hal's hesitancy is a phenomenon mentioned in the literature. Owen (2011) describes one of the challenges of teaching assistant programs as faculty reluctance to be interdependent with a TA. Perhaps Faculty Hal did not experience his UTA as a partner due to the absence of a prior relationship. Both Faculty Hal and Faculty Kaylee also lacked experience in having undergraduates assist in their courses and appeared to feel low levels of psychological safety in fully utilizing their UTAs.

Psychological safety refers to the belief that it is safe to take certain risks without fear of negative consequences (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). When employees feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to engage in certain behaviors, including experimenting with new approaches, without fear. A lack of experience and a lack of support could have contributed to lower levels of psychological safety for faculty engaging in a pilot UTA program. To establish higher levels of psychological safety, a UTA program might consider creating strong partnerships with departments, ensuring familiarity and acceptance of the program within the culture of various schools. The schools can communicate the program to their faculty, establish additional criteria for eligible courses, and create expectations for faculty and UTAs in the program. The acceptance and formally established norms of schools helps their faculty understand how the program fits into the culture of the school, creating a psychologically safe environment in which participants can comfortably operate. In addition, to help faculty who are inexperienced with utilizing undergraduate students in this role, extra resources with tips, expectations, role descriptions, and previous successes could help build trust in the program.

Enhanced Teaching Experience Subtheme 3: Shared Classroom Dynamics

Three of the faculty indicated that their UTA modified the classroom dynamics which enhanced their teaching experience. These modifications consisted of increased energy in the classroom, increased interactions with students, and increased student interactions with content. This was cited six times in the data and was perceived as a positive aspect of the UTA program, helping faculty teach more effectively.

For example, when asked to embody her experience and imagine herself in the physical classroom interacting with her UTA, Faculty Sharon described how it can feel exhausting trying to keep her students actively engaged with the content. She felt having her UTA helped keep the energy up and was someone she could “play off of.” In addition, Faculty Leah’s UTA was intentionally integrated into

course activities, which allowed her UTA to interact regularly with students. Her UTA encouraged students to participate as well as modeled certain practices for the students. Faculty Hal felt his UTA was able to increase engagement by keeping students on track. This helped keep the flow of the course moving forward. His UTA also indicated that he would encourage students who finished activities early to try engaging in the content in different ways.

Further probing of this topic found research surrounding the impact of teaching assistant programs on classroom dynamics. One study found that UTAs integrated into a first-year seminar experience appeared to impact engagement. Students in the study appreciated UTAs for their peer-to-peer teaching style, making the class more comfortable and engaging (Gordon et al., 2013). In addition, another TA study found that TA support and interactions played a crucial role in student engagement, aligning with findings from studies on faculty contributions to engagement (Wilson & Summers, 2020). Fingerson & Culley (2001) found faculty with UTAs developing a collaborative classroom environment through a more dialogue-based, democratically run course. They also found that UTAs can promote a shift in perspective among students, encouraging them to take a more active role in their learning. A UTA program can help create a more dynamic teaching environment, assisting faculty with their teaching which appears to increase teaching effectiveness and student learning.

Enhanced Teaching Experience Subtheme 4: Faculty Reassurance

Three of the faculty discussed how their UTAs gave them reassurance with certain aspects of their teaching. The increased reassurance received by their UTAs contributed to an enhanced teaching experience by validating faculty with their approach. This reassurance may mitigate faculty stress by reducing self-imposed high expectations (Gmelch et al., 1985; Stolzenberg et al., 2019). It also appeared to boost the positive feelings faculty felt toward the UTA experience.

For example, both Faculty Leah and Faculty Sharon found it helpful to talk through lessons or assignments with their UTAs. If they received negative feedback from students or if a lesson did not seem to go well, they could discuss the situation with their UTA. The UTA feedback sometimes felt reassuring to them, which they appreciated. Instead of placing blame on themselves for a disappointing outcome, the faculty were able to gather insight from their UTA that supported their approach. UTAs appeared to remind faculty that students must also take accountability for the learning process. Faculty Kaylee received reassurance when her UTA helped her with her students. “It just gave me some confidence, right, that there's this external support outside of just me to help the students, which is really big, right? And then the helpfulness of the time...”

Some research reveals faculty feel reassured by TA insight (Acosta et al., 2019; Marsh & Overall, 1979). Acosta et al. (2019) specifically mention reassurance as it relates to feelings of validation that result from a reciprocal learning process. The TA’s validation of the appropriateness of teaching styles helped to reassure faculty. Studies have shown that faculty self-imposed high expectations are one of the top three stressors experienced by faculty (Gmelch et al., 1985; Stolzenberg et al., 2019). Having UTAs reassure and validate faculty when they expect a different outcome in the course may help mitigate stress faculty feel.

Theme 3: UTA Bridged a Gap

UTA Bridged a Gap Subtheme 1: Provides Student Perspective

Owen’s (2011) review of the literature surrounding teaching assistants lists the benefits and challenges of incorporating teaching assistants into courses. One of the benefits listed includes the insights faculty receive from the teaching assistant on classroom personalities, class dynamics, and comprehension of course materials, helping faculty to customize their teaching to their students’ needs. This benefit also emerged from the data in this study.

Three of the faculty described the value of receiving the student perspective from their UTA, cited three times in the data. Their UTAs helped translate generational differences and provided insight into the students' needs and experiences. For example, Faculty Leah appreciated having her UTA interpret cultural interactions that she didn't understand, "I'm like, I don't know how to interpret this. Please translate." She also described how her UTA probably enjoyed being a cultural mediator, helping to explain those types of things. Faculty Kaylee leaned on her UTA when working with technology, who let her know how students experience technology. Faculty Sharon found it helpful when her UTA described areas of the course content he struggled with most, as this helped her to see how she could further help her students. "I forget which pieces of it would be most helpful, especially from their perspective as someone who's encountering it for the first time." However, Faculty Sharon also indicated that there were a few times when miscommunication occurred between her students and UTA, "I think there were a couple moments where there were miscommunications of students thinking one thing when that wasn't what was communicated or at least intended to be communicated." She had to handle this type of miscommunication, making her bridge the gap between students and the UTA.

Overall, faculty appreciated the UTA feedback which allowed them to better understand the teaching context related to the student experience. Faculty Leah indicated that she modified examples to be more relevant to the student population. Faculty Kaylee was able to provide more pointed instructions when guiding students through the textbook student portal. Faculty Sharon was able to identify potential struggle points for students more easily, making appropriate pedagogical modifications. UTA's bridging the student gap allowed faculty to teach more effectively by tailoring their pedagogy to meet the needs of their students.

UTA Bridged a Gap Subtheme 2: UTA Approachability for Students

Three of the faculty and three of the UTAs felt they were a more approachable option for their students, cited six times in the data. Having UTAs be an approachable option for students inside a course appeared to support the faculty by providing them with an extra resource that students felt comfortable utilizing. This comfort appeared to be due to UTAs being a peer to students, close to their age and in their generation.

For example, UTA's approachability for students was described by Faculty Sharon as helpful and Faculty Hal felt it may have increased student learning in his course. While Faculty Leah felt a bit weird that students appeared to approach her UTA more often than her, she was glad that they felt comfortable with her UTA, "I'm glad that she was there, that they felt comfortable going to her and they may have been even more checked out without her being there." It was unclear why Faculty Leah felt weird, but Owen (2011) found one of the challenges discussed in the literature is faculty feeling guilt for not "earning their keep." This may have contributed to the challenges Faculty Leah mentioned.

The approachability was also mentioned by the UTAs, allowing them to take on a mentorship role with students. In this role, UTAs assisted with course content, study skills, and normalizing feelings and experiences. UTA Yasmine felt she became an advocate for students, quickly becoming a mentor. Students felt comfortable confiding in her, which allowed her to help them conquer barriers getting in the way of their success. UTA Natalie also felt that she was a comfortable, approachable option for students, which allowed her to help them with course content during office hours. UTA Vaughn felt a couple of students at the end of the semester opened up to him, helping him bridge a gap with the professor.

TA approachability was discussed in the literature in which students described ease of interaction with their UTA and how this helped them feel comfortable asking questions (Mohandas et

al., 2020). Owen (2011) describes a similar experience when discussing the benefits of teaching assistants in courses. The study indicates that students benefited from learning from someone who understood their interests and motivations. In addition, faculty found it a benefit to utilize their UTAs as a student mentor (Owen, 2011). Student mentors have been found to reduce stress and increase a sense of self-efficacy and belonging in students (Raymond & Sheppard, 2018). One of the goals of higher education faculty is to help students succeed and increase course retention. UTAs being an approachable option for students could potentially help faculty by enhancing the student experience, which may impact retention (Raymond & Sheppard, 2018).

While UTAs were an approachable option for students, the capacity-building theme was emphasized throughout the program during which UTAs were encouraged to put the work back on students (see Appendix M for points emphasized in the training curriculum). It is important to note that students feeling comfortable approaching UTAs is not due to UTAs being less challenging than faculty. This capacity-building approach was important to mitigate or break the dependency cycle by building skills, habits, attitudes, and values that create lasting capacity.

Theme 4: Professional Growth Through Self-Reflection

Three of the faculty indicated that they received insight from their UTA that enhanced awareness, which was cited three times in the data. Discussions with their UTAs created space for faculty to self-reflect on their teaching, contributing to their professional growth. While faculty insight from their UTA was listed as one of the benefits in Owen's (2011) literature review about teaching assistant programs, the insight discussed by Owen was largely related to faculty gaining the student perspective from their UTAs. Insights mentioned included information about classroom personalities, classroom dynamics, and comprehension of course materials (Owen, 2011). The insights discussed in

this section go beyond those gained through the student perspective, potentially contributing toward growth that could transfer to the overall professional development of faculty.

For example, Faculty Leah reflected on how some students might view her, which does not match how she views herself. Conversations with her UTA appeared to provide insight into Faculty Leah's identity as an instructor, which she indicated was something she was continuing to reflect upon. Faculty Sharon described how communicating with her UTA to explain why she did the things she did when teaching helped her gain insight into her teaching methods. She felt the practice of explaining "the why" would be beneficial to also communicate to her students. Faculty Kaylee indicated that interactions with her UTA gave her ideas for how to deliver higher-quality education to her students.

Donald Schön (1983) introduced his theory of reflection-on-action, in which individuals review and analyze their experiences after a situation occurs. By stepping back to reflect, individuals can see patterns and insights that lead to a deeper understanding of the assumptions and values that inform their approach. This reflective practice is important for learning, growth, and adaptation, which can lead to increased effectiveness (Schön, 1983). Boud et al. (1985) suggest that reflecting with others enriches the process because reflection is inherently social and interactive. Reflecting with others enhances learning and growth through stimulating dialogue, different perspectives, feedback, and co-constructing knowledge (Boud et al., 1985). A UTA program provides faculty with an individual with whom they can specifically discuss course challenges and successes. This discussion can lead to self-reflection and professional growth.

Revised Conceptual Assumptions

In a hermeneutic phenomenological study, the researcher discusses how previous assumptions, noted while journaling, were revised after analyzing data (Peoples, 2020). Several assumptions were modified or confirmed during the process of evaluating data via the hermeneutic circle.

Assumption Modification: Faculty Want UTAs to Grade

It was assumed that faculty would utilize their UTAs to help with grading. The researcher has had many personal interactions with faculty discussing various aspects of teaching and curriculum development. During these interactions, the time it takes to grade tests and assignments has often been a topic of conversation. Due to the amount of time grading appears to take, the researcher assumed faculty would be pleased to have UTA assistance with this responsibility. Only one faculty member took advantage of using their UTA for grading purposes. Two of the faculty felt reluctant to use their UTA for grading, fearing that students or their department would be displeased with having undergraduates grading work. Another faculty member decided to not utilize her UTA for grading since he was not interested in this responsibility. Grading, confidentiality, and feedback are all topics covered in the UTA training course and will continue to be an option. Since this is the first experience faculty and UTAs have had with this program, it may take time for faculty to get used to using undergraduate students in this capacity. Perhaps once the program is more established, faculty will feel more comfortable allowing their UTAs to grade.

Assumption Modification: Faculty Want UTAs to Teach

While three of the faculty had their UTAs teach lessons or lead the class in some other fashion, one faculty member did not. The faculty member indicated that he was used to graduate teaching assistants and was uncertain about the level of responsibility that was appropriate for an undergraduate teaching assistant. The faculty member appeared hesitant to relinquish control of leading the class. This faculty member was also hesitant to have the UTA grade in the course. Teaching and grading are two responsibilities that set UTAs apart from other types of support that undergraduate students offer at the university. For example, Student Instructors at the university do many of the same tasks and responsibilities as UTAs, even attending class sessions regularly. A different program may be more appropriate for faculty who prefer to teach and grade exclusively on their own.

Assumption Confirmation: UTAs a Faculty Resource

Based on the prediagnostic work and research, the researcher assumed UTAs would be a resource for faculty in some capacity. This assumption appears to be true based on the findings of this study. Several of the subthemes that surfaced also appeared in the literature. For example, faculty sharing the workload with their teaching assistants and teaching assistants bridging a gap in the classroom were themes that were expected. However, enjoyment and faculty reassurance when interacting with their UTA was a surprise. It appears there was a depth and richness that formed in the collaborative relationships between faculty and their UTAs that is a gap in the literature.

Limitations

Several limitations existed in the research. The pilot program only included four faculty, which is a small sample size, limiting the number of voices and experiences recorded for the study. The faculty involved in the study were also mostly from a single school, the College of Arts and Sciences. While one faculty was from the school of nursing, voices from other professional schools were left out, such as the School of Business or the School of Education.

In addition, the pilot was conducted for 16 weeks in the fall semester of the academic school year, limiting the experiences of this study to a single semester rather than a full academic year. While it is likely that the UTA program will continue into the spring semester, data needed to be evaluated immediately after the fall semester due to personal time constraints.

The researcher implemented and organized the program as well as data collection. While colleagues helped obtain classroom observation data, interviews were conducted solely by the researcher. As a result, faculty and UTAs may have been hesitant to fully critique the UTA program. Having additional colleagues to collect interview data could have resulted in richer insights and different perspectives. In addition, the researcher was inexperienced in designing interview questions. At times, the interview

questions elicited redundant responses. Follow-up interviews would have been beneficial; however, time constraints prevented the researcher from scheduling additional interviews.

Classroom observation data was obtained using an observation form that was not specifically intended for observing UTAs in a course (see Appendix I). In addition, certain sections of the observation form did not separate faculty, students, and UTAs for the entered data. An observation form specifically intended for the collection of UTA data with a more granular breakdown of participants being observed has the potential to collect richer data.

Finally, the study was conducted at a single institution, making it possible that the results are not generalizable to other institutions with differing characteristics, such as cultural and demographic diversity, the campus setting/location, public versus private, or the size of the institution.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several opportunities for further investigation or exploration based on the findings of this study. Future research might consider addressing the impact of undergraduate teaching assistant programs on the lived experience of faculty over a longer period. Having the same UTA for multiple semesters could have different results. For example, perhaps some of the benefits described in this study would be amplified. In particular, it would be interesting to see if the enjoyment of the UTA program persists and, if so, how that impacts faculty perspectives on their job as a whole. Joy, growth, and reliance on a teaching partner are all states that could be further impacted by time.

While the data from this study were quite positive, there were some challenges, as well. One faculty member found it challenging to address her UTA's initial indecisiveness. It would be interesting to investigate if these types of role adjustment challenges continue once a UTA has experience in the role and how that may impact faculty's lived experience of the program.

It was interesting that three of the faculty participants felt reassurance from their UTAs. Feelings of reassurance and validation seemed to contribute to the positive feelings faculty experienced during the UTA program. Some research reveals faculty feel reassured by TA insight (Acosta et al., 2019; Marsh & Overall, 1979). This appears to be connected to the self-imposed high expectations faculty have set for themselves as it relates to student learning. UTAs seemed to be able to mitigate faculty feelings of self-blame when students do not appear to learn content to the level faculty intend, which warrants further investigation.

One of the gaps in the literature surrounding test-optional colleges is what modifications schools might need to make in terms of student support services and teaching practices to accommodate incoming students. What practices do colleges need to modify for the changing student body, including underprepared students? It appears that a UTA program could help, as the critical support that UTAs were able to provide for high-needs students is an exciting finding. The research in this study is a promising sign that this type of support could be impactful for underprepared students, however further research is needed. In addition, a possible consequence of UTAs supporting underprepared students could be faculty-increased teaching effectiveness, job satisfaction, and time management. Further investigation would help clarify the data.

Implications and Recommendations

The literature surrounding UTA programs often emphasizes outcomes and findings surrounding teaching assistants and students (Felege, 2018; Philipps et al., 2016; O'neal et al., 2007). Faculty are not a focus or are left out of the study. This study specifically focuses on the lived experience of faculty as they engage in an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program, filling a gap in the literature on faculty-focused research for this type of intervention. This study intentionally implemented several practices to

help support faculty with the UTA program. There are several recommendations for institutions who would like to recreate this study, including:

- Using a central office to manage the program,
- creating strong partnerships with departments and schools,
- enrolling UTAs into a course that trains them for the role,
- allowing faculty to choose their UTA, and
- creating extra resources for faculty inexperienced with having a UTA.

To mitigate the amount of time faculty spend on a UTA program, institutions might consider structuring a UTA program so that the organization and facilitation of the program is managed by a central office. All the logistics of hiring, payment, and training UTAs are streamlined by an office, taking this burden off faculty, schools, and departments. This type of model provides UTAs with consistent, uniform support and allows instructors to focus on developing rich relationships with their UTAs and course-specific issues. It also helps with faculty time constraints, which is a source of stress for faculty (Darabi et al., 2017).

It is recommended that any central office organizing a UTA program create strong partnerships with departments and schools. Collaborating closely with schools ensures that the UTA program is fully understood, aligns with the needs of the faculty, and is accepted by the various subcultures existing across campus. This partnership can help create the psychological safety that faculty using the UTA program need. This psychological safety may free up faculty to fully utilize their UTAs in ways that faculty may otherwise feel hesitant, such as teaching and grading.

Institutions might also consider having UTAs enrolled in a course so they are engaged in ongoing, comprehensive UTA training throughout the experience. The course or training can provide UTAs with topics they can immediately apply in their assigned courses, such as teaching strategies,

learning science, facilitating groups, communication techniques, and more. In addition, the training can allow a space for UTAs to collaborate, developing UTA relationships where they can provide each other feedback on any issues that come up. Teaching these topics in a separate course offloads general teaching and learning topics from faculty, allowing them to focus on content-specific topics with their UTAs. In addition, UTAs have an outlet for concerns, gaining support from another source beyond their faculty.

In addition, institutions might consider having faculty choose their UTAs to ensure an established relationship exists. It appears that faculty who already have a working relationship with their UTAs feel more comfortable collaborating closely with their UTA and relying on them more heavily with teaching responsibilities. This appears to provide a more meaningful experience for faculty and UTAs.

Finally, institutions might consider having extra resources for faculty who are inexperienced with a student assistant in their course. While documentation outlining the details and logistics of the program fulfills certain needs, faculty new to this type of program may need more support. It is suggested that integrating stories from faculty experienced with the UTA program may help contextualize the program for incoming faculty. For example, faculty videos describing their UTA experience and providing tips or recommendations, may help faculty better understand their role and the UTA role.

Challenges to Consider

While the themes and subthemes emerging from the data are positive, there were several challenges encountered during the study that are worth considering when creating similar programs.

- **Scheduling Issues** – The Undergraduate Teaching Assistants all took a full load of courses and had extracurricular activities, such as sports. Finding sections of courses that worked well for the UTAs took flexibility on the part of the faculty and the UTA. While UTAs are expected to attend

most or all classes of the section to which they are assigned, sometimes that is not possible. In addition, schedules can be challenging to align when finding observers to view a UTA in a course. Having several potential observers can be helpful to mitigate scheduling issues.

- **Power Dynamics** –Questions might arise around the power dynamics between faculty and UTAs. There could be concerns about UTAs being over relied upon or relied upon in an unhealthy way. While this did not appear in the data, it is an important consideration. Ensuring faculty understand their role, the UTA role, and how not to interact with their UTA can help. It is also important to encourage UTAs to have healthy boundaries, emphasizing that they are students first and UTAs second.
- **UTA as a Burden** – While the data did not reflect faculty viewing their UTAs as a burden, it is possible certain faculty could view a UTA as net-draining. As discussed in other sections, Faculty Kaylee and her UTA, Yasmine, had an adjustment period at the beginning of the semester. Yasmine had confidence issues in her role as a UTA and Faculty Kaylee had never had a student assist in her course. This required extra faculty support during the first half of the semester, which could have been perceived as a burden. This may be mitigated by having extra resources for faculty engaged in the program and guidance from faculty and UTAs who have already participated in the program in the form of tips or best practices.
- **Course Selection** – While courses were selected based on DFW rates (courses historically having higher numbers of students receiving letter grades D and F, and/or higher withdrawal rates), the number of students in a course, and faculty interest, concerns may arise surrounding the perceived fairness of the faculty selection process for courses receiving a UTA. Some faculty may wonder why their course was not selected to have a UTA. This may be mitigated by partnering closely with departments and schools to ensure the UTA program is managed and established in a way that works well for the culture of the department. In addition, there were questions that

emerged surrounding the helpfulness of the program in other types of courses. For example, a course that did not have higher DFW rates. Collaborating with departments to determine what criteria are useful to consider when assigning courses with a UTA may help.

- **Inclusive Teaching** – Another potential concern could arise around the ability of UTAs to support students with diverse learning needs, such as neurodiverse students. If the UTA program desired to provide that kind of specific support, additional training and resources would likely need to be provided for the UTA.

Keeping these potential challenges in mind can strengthen a UTA program and better support faculty and UTAs engaged in the program.

Conclusion

The great faculty disengagement has been observed by many. “Faculty might not be quitting, but they’ve left the building — sometimes departure is a state of mind (McClure & Hicklin-Fryar, 2022).” My prediagnostic work with higher education faculty into this dissatisfaction revealed that the job demands of high workload and challenges in teaching students with different academic starting points were sources of frustration. Faculty professional development for teaching underprepared students is an overarching common recommendation in the literature for supporting faculty in understanding and effectively teaching this population (Gabriel, 2016; Sachar et al., 2019; Quick, 2013; Shankle, 2016). However, my prediagnostic work indicated that faculty were already emotionally depleted and lacked time in their schedule due to high workloads. The challenge was more complex and needed an adaptive approach instead of a technical fix.

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological investigation is to illuminate the lived experience of higher education faculty as they engage in a job resource of an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) program. The focus of the study is the faculty perspective as they interacted with their

UTAs and the impact on faculty as UTAs supported underprepared students. The data from the study indicates faculty had positive experiences overall, creating rich relationships with their UTAs that benefited faculty, both emotionally and logistically. Administrators, student support centers, and faculty support centers can have a better understanding of the faculty experience when receiving classroom support, and how this impacts faculty inside and outside of the classroom. This study strives to go beyond a technical fix by implementing a meaningful, adaptive intervention that has a long-term impact.

References

- Acosta, L. A., Overgaard, P. M., Pool, N. M., Renz, S. M., & Crist, J. D. (2019). You learn when you teach: a narrative pedagogy for faculty and graduate teaching assistants. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(11), 2891-2902.
- Adrian, C. M., Cox, S. S., Phelps, L. D., Schuldt, B. A., & Totten, J. W. (2014). Issues Causing Stress among Business Faculty Members. *Journal of Academic Administration in Higher Education*, 10(1), 41-46.
- Afrahi, B., Blenkinsopp, J., de Arroyabe, J. C. F., & Karim, M. S. (2022). Work disengagement: A review of the literature. *Human Resource Management Review*, 32(2), 100822.
- Alsop, R., Bertlesen, M., & Holland, J. (2006). *Empowerment in practice: From analysis to implementation*. World Bank Publications.
- Argyle, M and Martin, M. (2000) 'The psychological causes of happiness', in Strack, F., Argyle, M. and Schwarz, N. (Eds.): *Subjective Well-Being: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, pp.77–100, Pergamon Press, New York.
- Aslam, U., Muqadas, F., Imran, M. K., & Rahman, U. U. (2018). Investigating the antecedents of work disengagement in the workplace. *Journal of Management Development*, 37(2), 149-164.
- Bacharach, S. B., Bamberger, P., & Mundell, B. (1993). Status Inconsistency in Organizations: From Social Hierarchy to Stress. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 14(1), 21–36.
<http://www.istor.org/stable/2488127>

- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands-resources model: State of the art. *Journal of managerial psychology*, 22(3), 309-328.
- Bakker, A. B., & Bal, P. M. (2010). Weekly work engagement and performance: A study among starting teachers. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 83, 189–206.
- Bailey, T. R., & Jagers, S. (2016). When College Students Start Behind. *Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University*.
<https://doi.org/10.7916/D82B8ZHF>
- Bascia, N. (2010). Reducing class size: What do we know. *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education*.
- Begley, G. S., Berkey, B., Roe, L., & Schuldt, H. E. (2019). Becoming partners: Faculty come to appreciate undergraduates as teaching partners in a service-learning teaching assistant program. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 3(1), 89-105.
- Bennett, C. T. (2022). Untested admissions: Examining changes in application behaviors and student demographics under test-optional policies. *American Educational Research Journal*, 59(1), 180–216. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312211003526>
- Bickel, J. (2009). Why It Is Smart to Facilitate Faculty Members' Resilience. *Academic Medicine*, 84(6), 688.
- Billups, F.D., (2021). *Qualitative Data Collection Tools: Design, Development, and Applications*. Sage Publications.

- Blodgett, N. P., Blodgett, T., & Kardong-Edgren, S. E. (2018). A proposed model for simulation faculty workload determination. *Clinical Simulation in Nursing*, 18, 20-27.
- Bong, C., Fraser, K., Oriot, D. (2016). Cognitive Load and Stress in Simulation. In: Grant, V., Cheng, A. (eds) *Comprehensive Healthcare Simulation: Pediatrics. Comprehensive Healthcare Simulation*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-24187-6_1
- Boud, D., Keogh, R., & Walker, D. (1985). *Reflection: Turning experience into learning*. London: Kogan Page.
- Brothen, T., & Wambach, C. A. (2012). Refocusing developmental education. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 36(2), 34-39.
- Brown, J. T., & DiGaldo, S. (2011, May). *Post-secondary and career issues faced by individuals with autism spectrum disorders*. Annual meeting of the Connecticut Career Counseling & Development Association, Hartford, CT.
- Caesens, G., & Stinglhamber, F. (2014). The relationship between perceived organizational support and work engagement: The role of self-efficacy and its outcomes. *European Review of Applied Psychology*, 64(5), 259-267.
- Camara, W. J., & Mattern, K. (2022). Inflection point: The role of testing in admissions decisions in a postpandemic environment. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 41(1), 10-15.
- Carrell, S. E., & Kurlaender, M. (2020). My professor cares: Experimental evidence on the role of faculty engagement (No. w27312). *National Bureau of Economic Research*.

Chaudhary, R., Rangnekar, S., & Barua, M. K. (2012). Relationships between occupational self efficacy, human resource development climate, and work engagement. *Team Performance Management: An International Journal*, 18(7/8), 370-383.

Cleveland-Innes, M. (2020). Student demographic change and pedagogical issues in higher education. *Inequality, Innovation and Reform in Higher Education: Challenges of Migration and Ageing Populations*, 159-173.

Cole, M. S., Walter, F., Bedeian, A. G., & O'Boyle, E. H. (2012). Job burnout and employee engagement: A meta-analytic examination of construct proliferation. *Journal of Management*, 38, 1550–1581.

Cook-Sather, A. (2014). Multiplying perspectives and improving practice: What can happen when undergraduate students collaborate with college faculty to explore teaching and learning. *Instructional Science: An International Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 42(1), 31-46. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11251-013-9292-3>

Daniello, F., & Acquaviva, C. (2019). A faculty member learning with and from an undergraduate teaching assistant: Critical reflection in higher education. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 3(2), 109-117.

Darabi, M., Macaskill, A., & Reidy, L. (2017). A qualitative study of the UK academic role: positive features, negative aspects and associated stressors in a mainly teaching-focused university. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 41(4), 566-580.

De Wit, H. (2011). Trends, issues and challenges in internationalisation of higher education.

Amsterdam, Netherlands: Centre for Applied Research on Economics and Management,
Hogeschool van Amsterdam

Delmas, P. M., & Childs, T. N. (2021). Increasing faculty engagement in the early alert process. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 58(3), 283-293.

Dickson, P. E. (2011, March). Using undergraduate teaching assistants in a small college environment. In *Proceedings of the 42nd ACM technical symposium on Computer science education* (pp. 75-80).

Donovan, R. A. (2018). Perceptions of stress, workload, and job satisfaction among HSS faculty: Executive summary. Kennesaw, GA: Kennesaw State University.

Eckert, R. E., & Stecklein, J. E. (1961). *Job motivations and satisfactions of college teachers: A study of faculty members in Minnesota Colleges* (No. 7). US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education.

Eckert, Ruth E. & Williams, Howard Y. & Minnesota Univ., Minneapolis. Coll. of Education. (1972). *College Faculty View Themselves and Their Jobs*. [Washington, D.C.]. Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED074960>

Edmondson, A. C., & Lei, Z. (2014). Psychological safety: The history, renaissance, and future of an interpersonal construct. *Annual Review Organizational Psychology Organizational Behavior*, 1(1), 23-43.

Ernste, H. (2018, December 15). *What the hell are exemplary hermeneutic didactics?*

Placemaking. Retrieved March 1, 2023, from <http://ernste.ruhosting.nl/?p=627>

Espinosa, L. L., Turk, J. M., Taylor, M., & Chessman, H. M. (2019). Race and ethnicity in higher education: A status report.

FacultyDepartures2022-2023 & 2023-24 [Excel spreadsheet]. (2024). Faculty Assembly Canvas Course.

Felege, C. J. (2018). *The long-Term Significance of working as an undergraduate teaching assistant*. The University of North Dakota.

Felege, C. J., Hunter, C. J., & Ellis-Felege, S. N. (2022). Personal impacts of the undergraduate teaching assistant experience. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 22(2), 33–66.

Fincham, J. E. (2008). Response rates and responsiveness for surveys, standards, and the Journal. *American journal of pharmaceutical education*, 72(2).

Fingerson, L., & Culley, A. B. (2001). Collaborators in teaching and learning: Undergraduate teaching assistants in the classroom. *Teaching sociology*, 299-315.

Finkelstein, J. J. (1996). *Faculty vitality in higher education. Integrating research on faculty: Seeking new ways to communicate about the academic life of faculty*, 71-80.

Finley, A., McConnell, K. (2022). *On the same page? Administrator and faculty views on what shapes college learning and student success*. American Association of Colleges and Universities. Retrieved Feb. 6, 2023 from

https://dgm81phhvh63.cloudfront.net/content/user-photos/Research/PDFs/OntheSamePage_FINAL_2-15-22_pdfprint.pdf

Finlay, L. (2009). Debating Phenomenological Research. *Phenomenology & Practice*, 3, 6-25.

Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *Philosophical transactions of the royal society of London. Series B: Biological Sciences*, 359(1449), 1367-1377.

Gabriel, K. F. (2016). *At-risk and unprepared students in US higher education: The impact on institutions and strategies to address the new student body landscape*. In Routledge Handbook of the Sociology of Higher Education (pp. 176-186). Routledge.

Gerber, L. G. (2010). From the Editor: Governance in a Time of Financial Crisis. *Redbook*, 96.

Gmelch, W. H., Lovrich, N. P., & Wilke, P. K. (1984). Sources of stress in academe: A national perspective. *Research in Higher Education*, 20(4), 477-490.

Goff, C., & Lahme, B. (2003). Benefits of a comprehensive undergraduate teaching assistant program. *Problems, Resources, and Issues in Mathematics Undergraduate Studies*, 13(1), 75-84.

Gordon, J., Henry, P., & Dempster, M. (2013). Undergraduate Teaching Assistants: A Learner-Centered Model for Enhancing Student Engagement in the First-Year Experience. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 25(1), 103-109.

Grbich, C. (2012). *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction*. London: Sage Publications Inc.

- Griffith, A. S., & Altinay, Z. (2020). A framework to assess higher education faculty workload in US universities. *Innovations in education and teaching international*, 57(6), 691-700.
- Habley, W. R., Bloom, J. L., & Robbins, S. (2012). *Increasing persistence: Research-based strategies for college student success*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Hakanen, J. J., Bakker, A. B., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2006). Burnout and work engagement among teachers. *Journal of School Psychology*, 43, 495–513.
- Han, J., Yin, H., Wang, J., & Zhang, J. (2020). Job demands and resources as antecedents of university teachers' exhaustion, engagement and job satisfaction. *Educational Psychology*, 40(3), 318-335.
- Harsh, S., & Mallory, M. (2013). The Future of Education: Building Capacity for Success. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 80(1).
- Hart Research Associates. (2013). *It Takes More Than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success*. Washington, DC. Association of American Colleges and Universities https://dgm81phhvh63.cloudfront.net/content/user-photos/Research/PDFs/2013_EmployerSurvey.pdf
- Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Hayes, T. L. (2002). Business-unit level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 268–279.
- Heidegger, M. (2005). *Introduction to phenomenological research*. Indiana university press.
- Heifetz, R. A. (1994). *Leadership without easy answers*. Harvard University Press.

- Heifetz, R., & Linsky, M. (2017). *Leadership on the line, with a new preface: Staying alive through the dangers of change*. Harvard Business Press.
- von Herrmann, F.W. (2013). *Hermeneutics and Reflection: Heidegger and Husserl on the Concept of Phenomenology* (K. Maly, Trans.). Toronto University Press.
- Herrman, J. W., & Waterhouse, J. K. (2010). Benefits of using undergraduate teaching assistants throughout a baccalaureate nursing curriculum. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 49(2), 72-77.
- Hott, B. L., & Tietjen-Smith, T. (2018). The professional development needs of tenure track faculty at a regional university. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 35.
- Hughes, A. N., Gibbons, M. M., & Mynatt, B. (2013). Using narrative career counseling with the underprepared college student. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 61(1), 40-49.
- Hussar, B., Zhang, J., Hein, S., Wang, K., Roberts, A., Cui, J., & Dilig, R. (2020). *The condition of education 2020*. NCES 2020-144. National Center for Education Statistics.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED605216.pdf>
- Huston, J. (2019). *Reinventing the mission: The vital role of academic support in the higher education accountability era*. *Voices of Reform*, 2(1), 87-95.
<https://www.voicesofreform.com/article/10633-reinventing-the-mission-the-vital-role-of-academic-support-in-the-higher-education-accountability-era> doi:10.32623/2.00008

Irwin, V., Zhang, J., Wang, X., Hein, S., Wang, K., Roberts, A., & Purcell, S. (2021). *Report on the Condition of Education 2021*. NCES 2021-144. National Center for Education Statistics.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED612942.pdf>

Jaggars, S. S., Hodara, M., & Stacey, G. W. (2013). Designing Meaningful Developmental Reform. Research Overview. *Community College Research Center*. Teachers College, Columbia University.

Judge, T. A., Bono, J. E., & Locke, E. A. (2000). Personality and job satisfaction: The mediating role of job characteristics. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85(2), 237-249.

doi:10.1037/0021-9010.85.2.237

Kafle, N. P. (2011). Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified. *Bodhi: An interdisciplinary journal*, 5(1), 181-200.

Karpenko, L., & Schauz, S. (2017). Thinking as a student: stimulating peer education in the humanities with an undergraduate teaching assistant. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 17(3), 124-135.

Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. (1978). *The social psychology of organizations 2ed*. New York City: John Wiley.

Kinkead, J., Titchener, F., & Wheatley, R. (2019). Best Practices of Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Programs. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 30(3), 139-159.

- Klusmann, U., Kunter, M., Trautwein, U., Ludtke, O., & Baumert, J. (2008). Engagement and emotional exhaustion in teachers: does school context make a difference? *Health and Wellbeing*, 57, 127–151.
- Koc, N., & Celik, B. (2015). The impact of number of students per teacher on student achievement. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 177, 65-70.
- Lambert, E. G., Minor, K. I., Wells, J. B., & Hogan, N. L. (2016). Social support's relationship to correctional staff job stress, job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. *The Social Science Journal*, 53(1), 22-32.
- Lavania, M., & Nor, F. B. M. (2020). Barriers in differentiated instruction: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7(6), 293-297.
- Lakey, B., & Cohen, S. (2000). Social support and theory. Social support measurement and intervention: A guide for health and social scientists, 29, 29-49.
- Lee, Y. H., & Lin, M. H. (2019). Exploring the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction among clinical nurses. *ESJ*, 15, 449-60.
- Lofaro, A. (2021). *The Growth of the Test-Optional Movement: Analysis of Test-Optional Admissions Policies in American Higher Education* [Doctoral Dissertation, Seton Hall University]. Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses.
<https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/2848>

Luckie, D. B., Mancini, B. W., Abdallah, N., Kadouh, A. K., Ungkuldee, A. C., & Hare, A. A. (2020).

Undergraduate teaching assistants can provide support for reformed practices to raise student learning. *Advances in physiology education*, 44(1), 32-38.

Maguire, E. (2018). *Going test optional: A case study*. In J. Buckley, L. Letukas, & B. Wildavsky

(Eds.), *Measuring success: Testing, grades, and the future of college admissions*

(pp.171–192). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Marken, S. (2021, March). Faculty engagement linked to better student experience. *Gallup*

Education. <https://www.gallup.com/education/330167/faculty-engagement-linked-better-student-experience.aspx>

Marsh, H. W., & Overall, J. U. (1979). *Validity of Students' Evaluations of Teaching: A*

Comparison with Instructor Self Evaluations by Teaching Assistants, Undergraduate Faculty and Graduate Faculty.

Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2000). *The truth about burnout: How organizations cause personal*

stress and what to do about it. John Wiley & Sons.

Matheny, K. T. (2022). University readiness assessments and equity in college admissions.

In Society for Research in Educational Effectiveness.

<https://www.sree.org/assets/Matheny%20full%20report.pdf>

McCambridge, J., Witton, J., & Elbourne, D. R. (2014). Systematic review of the Hawthorne

effect: new concepts are needed to study research participation effects. *Journal of*

clinical epidemiology, 67(3), 267–277. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclinepi.2013.08.015>

- McClure, K. R., & Fryar, A. H. (2022, July 12). *Opinion: The great faculty disengagement*. The Chronicle of Higher Education. Retrieved February 1, 2023, from <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-great-faculty-disengagement>
- McClure, K. R. (2022, June 6). *Don't blame the pandemic for worker discontent*. The Chronicle of Higher Education. Retrieved February 1, 2023, from <https://www.chronicle.com/article/dont-blame-the-pandemic-for-worker-discontent>
- McClure, K. R. (2021, September 27). *Higher Ed, we've got a morale problem - and a free T-shirt won't fix it - edsurge news*. EdSurge. Retrieved February 1, 2023, from <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2021-09-27-higher-ed-we-ve-got-a-morale-problem-and-a-free-t-shirt-won-t-fix-it>
- Miller, G. E., Buckholdt, D. R., & Shaw, B. (2008). Introduction: Perspectives on stress and work. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 17(1-2), 1-18.
- Mirza, D., Conrad, P. T., Lloyd, C., Matni, Z., & Gatin, A. (2019, July). Undergraduate teaching assistants in computer science: a systematic literature review. In *Proceedings of the 2019 ACM Conference on International Computing Education Research* (pp. 31-40).
- Mohandas, L., Mentzer, N., Jaiswal, A., & Farrington, S. (2020). *Effectiveness of Undergraduate Teaching Assistants in a First-Year Design Course*. In 2020 ASEE Virtual Annual Conference Content Access.
- Mulvey, M. E. (2008). Under-prepared students-A continuing challenge for higher education. *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education*, 24(2), 77-87. Nakano, S.,

- Beaupré-Lavallée, A., & Bégin-Caouette, O. (2021). Accountability Measures in Higher Education and Academic Workload: A Ten-Year Comparison. *Brock Education Journal*, 30(2), 116-116.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a part of the U.S. Department of Education*. Retrieved March 10, 2023 from <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=151786&s=all&id=151786>
- Nelson, D. L., & Quick, J. C. (2007). *Organizational behavior: Foundations, realities, challenges*. Thomson South-Western.
- Noonoo, S. (2020, April). *Many frustrated teachers say it's not burnout - it's demoralization - edsurge news*. EdSurge. Retrieved February 1, 2023, from <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2019-11-19-many-frustrated-teachers-say-it-s-not-burnout-it-s-demoralization>
- Odom, S. F., Ho, S. P., & Moore, L. L. (2014). The Undergraduate Leadership Teaching Assistant (ULTA): A High-Impact Practice for Undergraduates Studying Leadership. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 13(2).
- Oerlemans, W. G., & Bakker, A. B. (2018). Motivating job characteristics and happiness at work: A multilevel perspective. *Journal of applied psychology*, 103(11), 1230.
- O'neal, C., Wright, M., Cook, C., Perorazio, T., & Purkiss, J. (2007). The impact of teaching assistants on student retention in the sciences: Lessons for TA training. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 36(5), 24.

- Ortiz, A. M., & Waterman, S. J. (2016). The changing student population. *The handbook of student affairs administration*, 267-285.
- Osaki, T. (2022). *Effects of test-optional admissions on underrepresented minority enrollment and graduation*. Retrieved from https://ttosaki.github.io/trevorosaki/Trevor_Osaki_jmp10_17_2022.pdf
- Owen, J. E. (2011). Peer educators in classroom settings: Effective academic partners. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2011(133), 55-64.
- Paas, F. G. W. C., & van Merriënboer, J. J. G. (1994). Instructional Control of Cognitive Load in the Training of Complex Cognitive Tasks. *Educational Psychology Review*, 6(4), 351-371.
- Peoples, K. (2020). *How to Write a Phenomenological Dissertation: A Step-by-Step Guide*. Sage Publications.
- Perin, D., & Holschuh, J. P. (2019). Teaching academically underprepared postsecondary students. *Review of Research in Education*, 43(1), 363-393.
- Peterson, C. J. (2004). 9: Is the Thrill Gone? An Investigation of Faculty Vitality Within the Context of the Community College. *To Improve the Academy*, 23(1), 144-161.
- Philipp, S. B., Tretter, T. R., & Rich, C. V. (2016). Undergraduate teaching assistant impact on student academic achievement. *Electronic Journal of Science Education*, 20(2), 1–13.
- Philipp, S. B., Tretter, T. R., & Rich, C. V. (2016). Undergraduate teaching assistant impact on student academic achievement. *The Electronic Journal for Research in Science & Mathematics Education*, 20(2).

- Pitts, J. M., White, W. G., & Harrison, A. B. (1999). Student academic underpreparedness: Effects on faculty. *The Review of Higher Education*, 22(4), 343-365.
- Pyhältö, K., Pietarinen, J., Haverinen, K., Tikkanen, L., & Soini, T. (2021). Teacher burnout profiles and proactive strategies. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 36(1), 219–242
- Quick, R. L. (2013). Exploring faculty perceptions toward working with academically vulnerable college students. *College Quarterly*, 16(4), n4.
- Raymond, J. M., & Sheppard, K. (2018). Effects of peer mentoring on nursing students' perceived stress, sense of belonging, self-efficacy and loneliness. *Journal of nursing Education and Practice*, 8(1), 16-23.
- Reza, A. H., & Leyli, B. E. (2016). Investigating the role of organizational happiness in teachers' occupational burnout. *Journal of Fundamental and Applied Sciences*, 8(2), 1444-1465.
- Rigotti, T., Schyns, B., & Mohr, G. (2008). A short version of the occupational self-efficacy scale: Structural and construct validity across five countries. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 16(2), 238-255. doi:10.1177/1069072707305763
- Rosser, V. J., & Tabata, L. N. (2010). An examination of faculty work: Conceptual and theoretical frameworks in the literature. *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research*, 449-475.

- Rubin, P. G., & González Canché, M. S. (2019). Test-flexible admissions policies and student enrollment demographics: Examining a public research university. *Review of Higher Education*, 42(4), 1337–1371. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2019.0068>
- Sabagh, Z., Hall, N. C., & Saroyan, A. (2018). Antecedents, correlates and consequences of faculty burnout. *Educational Research*, 60(2), 131-156.
- Saboe, M., & Terrizzi, S. (2019). SAT optional policies: Do they influence graduate quality, selectivity or diversity? *Economics Letters*, 174, 13–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2018.10.017>
- Sachar, C. O. S., Cheese, M., & Richardson, S. (2019). Addressing misperceptions of underprepared students: a case study at a public American university. *Global Education Review*, 6(4), 1-18.
- Sahu, A., & Srivastava, K. B. (2017). Antecedents and consequences of positive emotions in the workplace. *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*, 8(2), 99-117.
- Saks, A.M. and Gruman, J.A. (2014), What Do We Really Know About Employee Engagement?. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 25: 155-182. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21187>).
- Santangelo, T., & Tomlinson, C. A. (2009). The application of differentiated instruction in postsecondary environments: Benefits, challenges, and future directions. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 20(3), 307-323.

- Saxon, D. P., & Morante, E. A. (2014). Effective student assessment and placement: Challenges and recommendations. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 24-31.
- Schaufeli, W. B. (2017). Applying the job demands-resources model. *Organizational Dynamics*, 2(46), 120-132.
- Schon, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action* (p. 1983). New York: Basic Books.
- Shahid, A. (2019). The employee engagement framework: high impact drivers and outcomes. *Journal of Management Research*, 11(2), 45.
- Shankle, C. A. (2016). Faculty perspectives on underprepared students. *Journal of Psychology*, 4(2), 37-58.
- Smith, C. P. (2007). Support services for students with Asperger's Syndrome in higher education. *College Student Journal*, 41, 515-531.
- Snyder, T. D., De Brey, C., & Dillow, S. A. (2019). *Digest of education statistics 2017, NCES 2018-070*. National Center for Education Statistics.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED592104.pdf>
- Spector, P. E. (1997). *Job satisfaction: Application, assessment, causes, and consequences* (Vol. 3). Sage.
- Stolzenberg, E. B., Eagan, M. K., Zimmerman, H. B., Berdan Lozano, J., Cesar-Davis, N. M., Aragon, M. C., & Rios-Aguilar, C. (2019). *Undergraduate teaching faculty: The HERI faculty survey 2016–2017*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

- Tentama, F., Rahmawati, P. A., & Muhopilah, P. (2019). The effect and implications of work stress and workload on job satisfaction. *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research*, 8(11), 2498-2502.
- Tienda, M. (2013). Diversity≠ inclusion: Promoting integration in higher education. *Educational Researcher*, 42(9), 467-475. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X13516164>
- Townsend, B. K., & Rosser, V. J. (2007). Workload issues and measures of faculty productivity. *Thought & Action*, 23(1), 7-19.
- Walter, S. R., Dunsmuir, T. M., & Westbrook, J. I. (2015). Studying interruptions and multitasking in situations: The untapped potential of quantitative observational studies. *International Journal of Human Computer Studies*.
- Warner, J. (2021, March 22). *Demoralization. optimism?: Inside higher ed*. Just Visiting. (n.d.). Retrieved February 1, 2023, from <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/just-visiting/demoralization-optimism>
- Watson, D., & Slack, A. K. (1993). General factors of affective temperament and their relation to job satisfaction over time. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 54, 181-202.
- Wawrzynski, M. R., & Lemon, J. D. (2019). Understanding student learning outcomes of peer educators. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 188, 61-69. <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20346>

West, E. L. (2012). What are you doing the rest of your life? Strategies for fostering faculty vitality and development mid-career. *Journal of Learning in Higher Education*, 8(1), 59-66.

Wilson, D., & Summers, L. (2020). *The Importance of Teaching Assistant Support and Interactions in Student Engagement*.

Appendix A

Predisgnostic Interview Questions

1. What is being a faculty-member like for you?
2. When do you feel the most energized – what's the experience like and the factors involved?
3. When do you feel the least energized/depleted – what's the experience like and the factors involved?
4. What are the top 3-5 things that already exist that feel like resources or sources of support for your job and your teaching?
5. What doesn't exist that would feel supportive for you with your job and teaching (whether it be within your department, from administration, or from the CTL)?
6. Do you feel you have the time and support to do what you want or need to grow and learn in your field or with your teaching?
7. Are there needs your students have that, if fulfilled, would be supportive for you when teaching them?
8. What would feel supportive for you, not just professionally, but personally?

Appendix B

Approval from Institutional Review Board



Institutional Review Board

DATE: 06-15-2023
 TO: Mona Kheiry & Jeffrey Hannah
 FROM: Institutional Review Board
 RE: S23.166
 TITLE: An Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Program's Impact on the Faculty Teaching Experience
 SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
 ACTION: Determination of EXEMPT Status
 DECISION DATE: 06-15-2023

The Institutional Review Board at Marian University has reviewed your protocol and has determined the procedures proposed are appropriate for exemption under the federal regulation. As such, there will be no further review of your protocol and you are cleared to proceed with your project. The protocol will remain on file with the Marian University IRB as a matter of record.

Although researchers for exempt studies are not required to complete online CITI training for research involving human subjects, the IRB **recommends** that they do so, particularly as a learning exercise in the case of student researchers. Information on CITI training can be found on the IRB's website: <http://www.marian.edu/academics/institutional-review-board>.

It is the responsibility of the PI (and, if applicable, the faculty supervisor) to inform the IRB if the procedures presented in this protocol are to be modified or if problems related to human research participants arise in connection with this project. Any procedural modifications must be evaluated by the IRB before being implemented, as some modifications may change the review status of this project. Please contact me if you are unsure whether your proposed modification requires review. Proposed modifications should be addressed in writing to the IRB. **Please reference the above IRB protocol number in any communication to the IRB regarding this project.**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Amanda C. Egan".

Amanda C. Egan, Ph.D.
 Chair, Marian University Institutional Review Board

Appendix C

Email Invitation to Faculty to Participate in Study

Invitation to Participate in my Research



Mona Kheiry

To [Redacted]

Bcc: Mona Kheiry

You replied to this message on 8/14/2023 9:56 AM.



InformedConsentForm_MonaKheiry.pdf
82 KB



Mon 8/14/2023 9:56 AM

Good morning, [Redacted]

As part of my doctoral program in organizational leadership, I am doing a research project dealing with the impact of teaching assistants on the faculty teaching experience (IRB Protocol #S23.166). I am writing to ask for your help in this project.

Engaging in this research project will help us better understand the faculty teaching and learning experience and how their experiences are impacted by a teaching assistant. We want to ensure we can better support faculty and their students. Your participation is voluntary, and it will in no way affect your relationship with Marian University, or the UTA program.

If you are interested in participating and sharing your insight, you would participate in an interview at the end of the semester that would take place either in-person or via WebEx. The interviews are semi-structured, and it is anticipated that the interview will last 60 minutes. In addition, one person would visit your class on an agreed upon time twice during the semester to quietly observe the dynamics between TA, faculty, and students. There is minimal risk to you and anything you share will be kept confidential. Dates and times for participation are flexible.

Please see attached for more detailed information. If you are interested or have additional questions, please let me know.

Thank you for your time and interest!

Mona

Mona Kheiry

Marian University | Director | Center for Teaching and Learning | Library, 2nd floor

✉: mkheiry@marian.edu | 📞: 317.955.6193 | 🌐: <https://mu.webex.com/meet/mkheiry>

Appendix D

Consent to Participate in Research

Study Topic: Impact of Teaching Support on Faculty Experiences

Researcher: Mona Kheiry

Faculty Mentor: Jeff Hannah

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please read and consider the information carefully. Please feel free to ask questions before making your decision to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the impact of an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program on how faculty experience their jobs and their teaching, particularly experiences related to teaching underprepared students. You have been selected to participate in this project and the researcher believes you would be a helpful source of information based on the objectives. Your opinions, ideas, and experiences (as well as the opinions, ideas, and experiences of approximately 7 others) will be used by the researcher in a cumulative paper, which may or may not be published or presented.

Procedures/Tasks

Interviews will be audio-recorded, with your permission, so that the researcher may have a more accurate record of your comments than note-taking alone can provide. With your permission, two classroom observations will occur by the researcher or a colleague, with notes taken. If applicable and by your permission, certain email interactions between faculty and teaching assistants will be submitted to the researcher for review.

Duration

Interviews are expected to last approximately 60 minutes and will occur by appointment. An additional follow-up interview lasting approximately 30 minutes may occur to clarify information. Again, by appointment. Two classroom observations scheduled on an agreed upon time will last the entire duration of the allotted class period.

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your relationship with the university.

Risks and Benefits

The research presents minimal risk. However, because you will be asked questions about your teaching, potential challenges surrounding your teaching, and how these challenges impact you personally and professionally, it might present emotional discomfort for you. The risk of this discomfort is unforeseeable.

Confidentiality

Efforts will be made to keep you and your identity confidential. Real names will be replaced on all documentation and recordings with a pseudonym (with the exception of one master list of pseudonyms and participants' real names). Information that is too specific and makes participants identifiable will not be included in reports or other uses of the data to ensure confidentiality. At the end of the study, all identifiable information will be disconnected from its (real name) source.

Incentives

Participants will not receive any type of payment for involvement in this study.

Participation Rights

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty of loss or benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

Contacts and Questions

For questions, concerns, or complaints about this study you may contact: Mona Kheiry at 317.955.XXXX or mkheiry@marian.edu

If you have questions about your rights or responsibilities as a research participant, please contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at irb@marian.edu.

Signing the Consent Form

I have read and understand/been made to understand this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject

Date and Time

Investigator/Researcher

I have explained the research to the participant or their representative before requesting the signature above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or their representative.

Printed name of person obtaining consent

Signature of the person obtaining consent

Date

Consent form adapted from Plumlee, J. (2023, May). *Nudging the nudgers: A mixed method study to understand the impact of family engagement on student success.*

Appendix E

Faculty Handbook for UTA Program

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Program

Faculty Information

Mona Kheiry
Director, Center for Teaching and Learning

Overview

The Center for Teaching and Learning is piloting an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) program in the fall of 2023. Certain courses are eligible for this pilot program, including yours! The program is being completely organized and facilitated by the CTL including training, supporting, and compensating student TAs. For this first pilot, TAs are to be selected for a specific section of a course and are to attend all or most class meetings in which they are assisting. TAs are to partner with faculty to support the course in several ways, depending on the needs of the course, the needs of the enrolled students, and the strengths of the TA. This document outlines the details to ensure you and your TAs have a positive start to the program.

Compensation for UTAs

The UTA program is considered an internship experience. Student TAs are to enroll into an internship course in order to receive credit for their participation in the program. In addition to course credit, students receive a \$500 stipend.

UTA Selection Process

To ensure you receive the best TA, we initially ask faculty to nominate a student for the TA role. You know which students have done well in your course in terms of content, attendance, and motivation. We do ask that you consider the following criteria when recommending a student for the TA role.

- Will be a junior or a senior during the TA experience
- Received an A or B grade in the course in which you would like them to TA
- Had good attendance and engagement in the course in which you would like them to TA
- Have availability in their schedule to TA in your course section (they will attend all or most of these classes)

If you do not have a student in mind, please let us know and we can put a call out to students to see who might be interested in the role. We will rely on your guidance for the final selection to ensure you receive a match that works best.

UTA Responsibilities

While the CTL hopes UTAs are used in a variety of ways so they are exposed to different experiences, the tasks in which they are involved is ultimately up to you. It is best to collaborate with your UTA when deciding on their role so they are able to provide input. Tasks to consider include the following, although it is not considered a comprehensive list. You are welcome to request additional duties.

- Attend all or most classes
 - Create and teach simple lessons
 - In-class demonstrations
 - Teach one class period while being observed by instructor
 - Offer support during active learning
 - Deliver a lecture
- Assist during labs
- Hold office hours
- Grade
 - Objective exams
 - Practice assignments needing feedback.
 - Other appropriate assignments (Straightforward/simple assignments when using a template)
- Lead review/study sessions
- Lead small group breakout sessions
- Lead group projects or discussions
- Tutor
- Develop course assignments
- Administrative/Clerical – Maintain LMS, take attendance, print handouts, etc.
- Attend faculty departmental meetings
- Provide faculty feedback
 - Provide student feedback to faculty
 - Provide feedback on pedagogical strategies, effectiveness of assignments/activities
 - Provide input on design of assignments

UTA Time Commitment – Hours Per Week

UTAs are expected to attend a 5-hour orientation prior to the start of the semester. In addition, UTAs are expected to attend all or most of the class sessions for the section in which they are assisting. They are also required to attend a 1-hour weekly reflection/training session through the CTL. This equals approximately 4 hours per week. An additional 5-10 hours of work a week beyond the expected 4 hours is typical. The actual time can vary depending on the curriculum and level of support students need each week. The CTL does not dictate how you utilize the time, as it will differ depending on your discipline, curriculum, TA strengths, your needs, and the needs of your students.

Having UTAs Grade and Potential Conflicts

The CTL will prepare UTAs to grade with appropriate training. Specifically, they will learn about ethical behavior, confidentiality, and FERPA. There will be sessions covering effective grading techniques and providing feedback. It will be helpful for instructors to provide rubrics, templates, exemplars, or other types of resources to help support TA grading. High-stakes assignments should not be graded by a teaching assistant. In addition, we request teaching assistants **not** grade the work of those in which a conflict of interest exists. Close friends, significant others, or family members of the teaching assistant would qualify as a conflict of interest. Please discuss this with your TA and determine if there are students in the course that may pose a conflict.

Letting Students Know About the UTA – Syllabus Mention

Students in your course should know your course has a UTA. Please insert a blurb in your syllabus that the course will have a teaching assistant, who the teaching assistant is, and how to contact them. In addition, please include a brief sentence or two about the general role of the teaching assistant.

How Do UTAs Differ from SIs?

Student Instructors (SIs) are a part of the Center for Academic Success & Engagement- CASE and do not have teaching and grading responsibilities as a part of their role. TAs will be specifically trained by the CTL to take on teaching and grading responsibilities and we hope they have an opportunity to teach a lesson, portions of a lesson, or even entire class periods while being monitored by you. The CTL will also be covering confidentiality, FERPA, ethics, and how to provide effective feedback in the TA training so they can grade simple, straightforward, or objective assignments. While the TAs can be responsible for these types of tasks, it is not a requirement. Please involve your TA in ways you think will work best given your course structure and student population.

UTA Training

A large goal of the UTA program is to support faculty in their courses and bridge the gap with struggling students. We want to ensure the time and energy of training and supporting UTAs falls on the CTL, allowing faculty to take on more of collaborative partnership with UTAs. While we hope faculty will provide feedback to UTAs and mentor them when needed, much of the teaching and learning support will be managed by the CTL. Any discipline-specific training will be the responsibility of the faculty member, with the CTL covering the topics below. This training will occur during an orientation prior to the semester and weekly sessions throughout the semester. In addition to these items, students will be involved in microteaching practice sessions.

- Clarification of the role and expectations of a UTA
- How best to interact with a faculty member
- Ethical behavior, confidentiality, and FERPA
- Safety issues
- Strategies for difficult situations
- Presenting and explaining
- Increasing participation
- Assisting in labs
- Managing groups

- Grading and feedback
- Holding effective office hours
- Learning strategies and learning science
- Metacognitive strategies
- Understanding challenging students and individual needs

Providing Feedback for UTAs

The CTL will be meeting with teaching assistants on a weekly basis to ensure they have the support they need, providing guidance and feedback. In addition, with faculty permission, the CTL will observe the classroom experience twice in a semester to see how UTAs are doing. Instructors are encouraged to provide informal guidance and informal feedback to ensure teaching assistants are delivering the support you need. However, it is not an expectation that you formally assess your UTA. The CTL will want to know if you are experiencing ongoing challenges, as this will help guide how we support the TA and whether we ask them to be a part of the program in the future.

Getting Started with Your UTA – Faculty/TA Agreement

Ensure you start the UTA experience positively by meeting with your TA to discuss expectations and scheduling. Please fill out the student-faculty agreement provided to you by the CTL in order to outline your specific expectations of the TA in your course. The agreement should include the TA tasks expected in the specific course, the schedule expectations, and any other expectations regarding how the UTA will interact with students and the faculty member. Please complete and submit the agreement to Mona prior to the start of the semester, as this will help the CTL better understand the UTA role in your course.

The Faculty Role

We hope the UTA program is a rich and collaborative experience for faculty, with the teaching assistant taking on a role that feels meaningful and supportive. To help facilitate this experience, the CTL is taking on much of the organization, training, and support of the teaching assistants. However, faculty will need to consistently engage with their teaching assistant. Please meet with your UTA regularly to ensure they understand your ongoing expectations. It will also be helpful to have a meeting at the start of the semester to orient students to the course and to your teaching philosophy. Establish logistical items as well, such as how often to meet and the best way to communicate with one another. It is not necessary for you to formally assess your teaching assistant, but please provide informal guidance and feedback to ensure you receive the support you desire and the support students in your course need. If you encounter challenges with your UTA, please reach out to Mona to discuss.

Appendix F

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Handbook for UTA Program

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Program

Student Information

Mona Kheiry
Director, Center for Teaching and Learning

Overview

The Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) Program pairs a student Teaching Assistant (TA) with a faculty member. The TA works closely with that faculty member in a specific course, attending all or most course sessions, become an integral part of the classroom. The hope is that a collaborative relationship develops between faculty and TAs, allowing TAs to support the class and students in a variety of ways, such as co-teaching, co-developing assignments, grading, and more.

Compensation of UTAs

This program is an internship and a course has been established in which you can enroll for variable credit – **COL-360: Career Exploration Internship**. Variable credit means you choose the number of credits that makes the most sense given your needs – 1 to 3 credits. In addition to receiving credit for the internship experience, you will receive a \$500 stipend for each semester in which you are a TA.

Selection Process

Potential TAs are recommended to the program by faculty. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) then makes the final selection, which allows the selected student to apply to the position inside of Handshake and enroll into the internship course.

UTA Responsibilities

UTAs are used in a variety of ways, which is dependent on discipline, level of class complexity, and class size. Below is a potential list of activities in which TAs may be involved, however, every faculty member and student will decide on what they want out of the experience. Your strengths and the needs of the classroom will be considered when classroom duties are established.

- Attend all or most classes
 - Create and teach simple lessons
 - In-class demonstrations
 - Teach a class period while being observed by instructor
 - Offer support during active learning
- Assist during labs

- Hold office hours
- Grade
 - Objective exams
 - Practice assignments needing feedback.
 - Other appropriate assignments (Straightforward/simple assignments when using a template)
- Lead review/study sessions
- Lead small group breakout sessions
- Tutor
- Develop course assignments
- Administrative/Clerical – maintain LMS, take attendance, print handouts, etc.
- Attend faculty departmental meetings
- Provide faculty feedback
 - Provide student feedback to faculty
 - Provide feedback on pedagogical strategies, effectiveness of assignments/activities
 - Provide input on design of assignments

UTA Support & Training

The CTL is organizing the program and supporting TAs as they go through the experience. There will be an initial orientation on the Friday prior to the start of classes in the fall semester – for the **Fall 2023 semester, this date is Friday, August 18th**. More details for this orientation will be emailed to you. In addition to the initial orientation, TAs will meet once weekly for one hour with the CTL to cover topics, reflect on that week's teaching experience, and ask questions to ensure they have all the support and resources they need to have a successful experience. Topics being covered during these sessions may include the following:

- Clarification of the role and expectations of a TA
- How best to interact with the faculty member
- Ethical behavior and confidentiality
- Safety issues
- Strategies for difficult situations
- Presenting and explaining
- Increasing participation
- Assisting in labs
- Managing groups
- Grading and feedback
- Holding effective office hours
- Learning strategies and learning science
- Metacognitive strategies
- Understanding challenging students and individual needs
- Microteaching practice sessions

Important Next Steps

If you would like to move forward with the TA experience, there are next steps to consider in order to get hired and get enrolled.

Apply to the Job Posting

Please apply to the job posting in Handshake. This will require you to have a resume inside the system. Contact the Exchange if you have questions about this. You can find the job inside Handshake by searching for the Job ID: **7744450**. Always feel free to reach out to me, as well. I am here to help.

Enroll into the Course

If you would like course credit for this experience, you will need to enroll into the course. The course is **COL-360: Career Exploration Internship, Section MM02**. The course will have a visible note on it stating that it is for the TA program, which will help you choose the right section to enroll into. Don't forget to select the number of credits you want for this experience. It defaults to 1 credit, but you can choose 2 or 3 credits for the course.

Appendix G

UTA/Faculty Agreement Form

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Program

This is an agreement between the instructor and teaching assistant. The document is meant to be discussed and agreed upon together. It is expected that the TA attend all or most class sessions to assist in a variety of ways. While the CTL hopes TAs are involved in a variety of tasks, the duties in the course are an agreement between faculty and TA, depending on wants, needs, and strengths. Please submit the agreement to Mona prior to the start of the semester.

Semester/Year: _____

Course Number/ Section: _____

Course Title: _____

Days Section Meets: _____

Time Section Meets: _____

Student Name: _____

Instructor: _____

Please discuss and put an X next to the TA duties that are agreed upon. Leave blank if the item is not an expectation or possible expectation. The notes column is an optional section to fill out, if needed.

Duty	Expectation	Possible Expectation	Notes
Create and teach simple lessons			
In-class demonstrations			
Teach an entire class period while being observed by instructor			
Offer in-class support during active learning			
Lead small group breakout sessions			
Assist during labs			
Hold office hours			

Grade objective exams			
Grade practice assignments			
Grade other types of assignments			
Lead review/study sessions			
Tutor			
Develop course assignments			
Administrative/Clerical – maintain LMS, take attendance, print handouts, etc.			
Attend faculty departmental meetings			
Provide feedback to instructor, such as student feedback, feedback on teaching strategies, or input on design of assignments, etc.			
Other duties (please list):			

Schedule Expectations

Please list any expectations outside of the course meeting times. These might include faculty-UTA meetings, UTA office hours, review sessions, etc. To lessen potential time conflicts, the UTA should share timeslots when they are regularly available to fulfill these expectations.

For TAs Who Will Grade

It is considered a conflict of interest to grade the work of fellow students you know well. Good friends, significant others, or family members are all considered conflicts of interest. For ethical reasons, it is important for you to identify to your instructor if such conflicts exist and to remove yourself as a grader of their work. Please ensure this is a conversation once the student roster is known.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Faculty Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix H

UTA Course Syllabus

COL-360: Career Exploration Internship: Being an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant

Instructor: Mona T. Kheiry

Course Location: Second Floor of Library in the Center for Teaching and Learning (Behind Elevator)

Course Meeting Times: Every other Friday, 1:30-2:30pm

Credit: Variable Credit of 1-3 credits per semester. Discuss with your advisor what works best.

Text: No text. We will utilize the content inside Canvas as our main resource.

Course Description: The internship is designed to give students an opportunity to explore career options not directly related to the student's major area of study. Three class meetings with the director of internships are required for completion of the course. This is an internship experience as a teaching assistant (TA) to help teach a college course. Only students who have been recommended by faculty and approved by the Center for Teaching and Learning can enroll. Minimum 60 hours of work experience required per credit. Internship credits do not count toward credits required in a specific major. Graded S/U.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Evaluate interactions with students to determine strategies that are capacity-building versus dependency-creating.
2. Evaluate student engagement of course content in order to recommend appropriate metacognitive strategies.
3. Implement effective group facilitation to promote learning.
4. Communicate effectively with different people from many backgrounds in order to support all levels of learning.
5. Integrate best-practice presentation skills when teaching a lesson.
6. Implement active learning best practices when teaching a lesson.
7. Develop effective feedback skills and objective grading for multiple types of formative and summative assessments.
8. Apply confidentiality and ethics to teaching in order to holistically respect all students.

Methods and Procedures:

This is a very hands-on internship course that serves as a companion course for the Teaching Assistant (TA) experience. As you TA in the course to which you are assigned, this course will serve as a source of support in multiple ways. We course will be a place in which we check-in regularly on how your TA experience is progressing and vet any issues or concerns that come up. The course will also teach important topics in order to ensure you have the skills and background knowledge to be an effective TA. Topics will include but are not limited to the following:

- Your role and responsibilities as a TA

- Ethical behavior, confidentiality, and FERPA
- Capacity building in order to support student learning
- Metacognitive strategies
- Managing groups and facilitating group discussions
- Holding effective office hours
- Learning strategies and learning science
- Active learning
- Presenting and explaining
- Grading and feedback

Course Assessment:

We will use a variety of methods to achieve learning with these topics, including reflections, self-assessment, peer assessments, micro-teaching lessons, and more.

Grading Criteria:

This is an S/U course – satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Good attendance and engagement in the course assessments listed above will result in a satisfactory grade.

Attendance Policy:

It is expected that you attend class sessions, as the only way we can learn these topics and apply them effectively to the course you are TAing is by actively engaging in the material. Active engagement is critical for growing your teaching skills. That being said, sometimes life happens. If you need to miss a class, please communicate this in advance so we can discuss options for ensuring you have the information and resources you need to be a successful TA.

Appendix I

Observation Rubric

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Program Observation Form

Instructions: Please note that not all columns have to be filled out. Please fill out the information that is relevant for your experience. Please include detailed descriptions of the participants, including the identification of the frequency and duration of interactions. Also notice who talks to whom, anyone who may be excluded from conversations, and/or any power shifts that may occur. Note anything that was expected to happen but did not. When appropriate, include exact quotes or significant statements. If an activity occurs, describe it in chronological order.

Course: _____

Name of Observer: _____

Date/Time: _____

Number of Participants: _____

Setting: _____

Participants: Who are the participants, what are they doing, and how are they acting/interacting?

Participants	Individual Behaviors	Group Behaviors	Nonverbal Cues	Conversation Topics/Threads
Teaching Assistants				
Faculty				
Students				

Researcher Notes/Reflections:

Use of Space:	Individual Behaviors	Group Behaviors	Nonverbal Cues	Conversation Topics/Threads
What is the setting, what objects are central to the setting, and how is the space being utilized by participants?				

Researcher Notes/Reflections:

Types of Activities:	Individual Behaviors	Group Behaviors	Nonverbal Cues	Conversation Topics/Threads
In what types of formal or informal activities did participants participate?				

Researcher Notes/Reflections:

Demographic Details:	Individual Behaviors	Group Behaviors	Nonverbal Cues	Conversation Topics/Threads
What details, such as place, time, setting, lighting, mood, number of participants, etc. impacted the experience?				

Researcher Notes/Reflections:**Overall Researcher Reflections:**

Adapted from *Qualitative Data Collection Tools: Design, Development, and Applications* (P. 138) by F. Billups, 2021, Sage Publications.

Appendix J

Faculty Interview Questions

1. Demographic Information:
 - a. How many years have you been teaching?
 - b. Have you had a TA or SI before? Please explain.
 - c. Is your course a required course for students?
 - d. How many students?
 - e. Do you have a sense of the ratio of majors and non-majors in your course?
 - f. What made you want to be a part of the UTA program?
2. What was your experience with the Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Program? What felt supportive and enriching? What felt challenging?
3. Did your teaching assistant feel like they helped mitigate your time constraints with the course?
4. Did having a TA in the course provide any emotional support or a sense of relief?
5. What was your role with your UTA and how did it feel?
6. What types of interactions did you and the teaching assistant have? What was that experience like?
7. How did your role feel with your students? Did you notice changes to your role with your students from past experiences?
8. How did it feel being in the physical classroom with your teaching assistant present? What did you notice about your thoughts, feelings, and body language?
9. What were the interactions like between your teaching assistant and your students? How did it feel when observing the interactions?
10. Did the teaching assistant support underprepared students?
11. If yes, what did that support look like? What was that experience like? How did that impact your role? How did you feel about the support?
12. If no, what was that experience like? How did that impact your role? How did you feel about the lack of support?
13. How has the Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program impacted you personally and professionally?
14. How has the Undergraduate Teaching program impacted your job, as a whole?
15. Are there any critical experiences or critical moments that were particularly important or meaningful that have shaped your opinions and feelings about the Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program?

Appendix K

UTA Interview Questions

1. Demographic information:
 - a. Grade Level:
 - b. Majors/Minors:
 - c. Have you had other roles where you worked with students? In what capacity?
2. What was your experience with the Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Program? What felt supportive and enriching? What felt challenging?
3. What was your role with your faculty and how did it feel?
4. What types of interactions did you and your faculty member have? What was that experience like?
5. How did your role feel with the students? Did you feel fully utilized?
6. How did it feel being in the physical classroom? What did you notice about your thoughts, feelings, and body language?
7. Did you support underprepared students?
8. If yes, what did that support look like? What was that experience like? How did that impact your role? How did you feel about the support?
9. If no, what was that experience like? How did that impact your role? How did you feel about the lack of support?
10. Are there any critical experiences or critical moments that were particularly important or meaningful that have shaped your opinions and feelings about the Undergraduate Teaching Assistant program?
11. Did you feel the UTA course helped to prepare you for your TA role? If so, how? Was there any other support you received that helped you feel prepared for your role?

Appendix L

Canvas Information About Classroom Observations

What Are They?

Classroom observations for Undergraduate Teaching Assistants are a non-evaluative, low pressure observation conducted by me inside your course while you are present in your TA role. You don't have to be teaching or doing a task in front of the class. It's simply a way for me to observe the interactions between you, your instructor, and the students. It's a way for me to better understand the experiences that are happening in the course you are TAing.

What Will You be Doing?

I will simply sit quietly at the back of the room and jot down notes of what I see. I take a lot of notes, but that's because I write down pretty much everything that's happening. This is different from the teaching observation forms that you have filled out because I'm not going to be specifically looking at your teaching. I'm simply observing interactions in the classroom and jotting down what I see. It helps my understanding when I see how the students and faculty interact with you in your TA role.

Will My Grade be Impacted?

Not at all. Non-evaluative means that I won't be evaluating your skills or progress toward anything. Observations are simply a way for me to better understand the experiences happening in your courses.

When Will They Happen?

There will just be one observation this semester. I will conduct it at a time when you will potentially be teaching or involved in an active learning activity. We will discuss and agree upon a date.

Appendix M

Capacity Building Topics in UTA Course

Capacity Building Vs. Creating Dependency

Building capacity in your students is about turning the learning back on them. You already have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to do well in this course. Your students are learning these skills and they can only do this through experience. Do not create a student dependency on you, as that dependency teaches students that they can't do it on their own. We are here to **GUIDE** students and to **PREPARE** them to be independent and empowered. Empower them by trying the following:

- Let them know that you are here as a guide to empower them. You want them to feel confident and empowered in the class, which is why you intentionally use certain methods. This can help mitigate frustration when you don't immediately fulfill a need they might have. Don't provide immediate answers for students, as this creates a dependency on you. Try these methods, instead:
 - If a student asks a question, determine if it's the type of question you can answer with a guiding question to get them thinking about the topic on their own.
 - Ask students to think about their own methods and what else might work better for them. Create a space for self-reflection.
 - Give students options and have them determine what might be best.
- Get students actively involved in their own learning. If you're creating something for your students, ask yourself if it's appropriate for them to be creating that item (or something similar). For example, if you're creating an infographic, a table, or some other visual aid, can students create it instead of you? What might they need to create this item on their own?
- Ask students to generate their own knowledge instead of you generating it for them. Ask them to predict, reflect, make connections to their own lives, discuss their own approaches, or summarize information in their own words.
- Encourage students and let them know that they can do it. They have the power to do well in the course and you are here to give them the tools to be successful. Your encouragement in their abilities can help this process.