

# opinions

editorial opinion

## Pass the hat

### Federal arts endowment cuts would cripple local programs

With the Office of Management and Budget cutting major programs about as carefully as a Marine barber trims a recruit's hair, it looks as if the Reagan administration considers spending for arts the split ends.

The Office of Management and Budget has proposed to cut the budget of the National Endowment for the Arts in half — to \$86 million — in fiscal year 1982. Accounting for inflation, this will be the smallest arts budget since eight years ago, when the NEA was just starting to roll and projects were fewer and simpler.

The result is obvious: arts in America will suffer. Money available to artists and schools to expand programs, carry out creative projects and, most important, serve the public will shrink to almost nothing.

Penn State is one of the multitude of places that will feel the cold steel of David Stockman's wildly snipping shears.

The University's Museum of Art could get a crew cut because of the proposed elimination of NEA's Institute of Museum Services. The institute last year gave the museum a \$25,000 grant to prepare information about the museum's permanent collection, provide educational programs for central Pennsylvania school children and expand its audience.

Even if the museum can't go out, chase down and educate the public, it will become nothing more than a showcase and a warehouse for art. It would be like a library with no one to read the books.

Other projects, including Artists Series concerts and the Pittsburgh Symphony's year-long residency, get NEA funding. The theater arts department has received funding to develop an audience in rural central Pennsylvania — a noteworthy and challenging task.

In the past five years, four University

faculty members have received fellowships from the NEA, which, although it sounds like a small number, is actually quite good in the light of the intense competition for such monies.

William Allison, assistant to the dean of the College of Arts and Architecture and grant writer for the college, said this competition will increase greatly with the reduction in available funds.

Reagan and Stockman apparently believe foundations and businesses will pick up the slack — a grandiose delusion for two such practical men. Foundations are providing less than 2 percent of the artistic activity in the country, and Allison said non-urban universities like Penn State will be at a disadvantage in getting foundation funding, because most foundations are based in cities.

That leaves business to support the arts, and while businesses have funded such public relations boons as public television and radio, they have provided very little funding for Penn State in the past. The prospects are not good for increased business support in the future.

Even if business would offer more support, what strings would be attached to the money? Imagine Andrew Wyeth being commissioned by Exxon to paint an off-shore drilling platform titled "Christina's Rig." Such prostitution would serve only to downgrade the state of arts.

So where will arts get money if not from either the public or private sectors? There is little that doesn't fall into those two categories — save heaven and hell.

It won't be easy to get artists to pray for money and it will be even harder to get it delivered that way.

The Daily Collegian's editorial opinion is determined by its Board of Directors, with the editor-in-chief holding final responsibility.



BACK TO WORK MR. PRESIDENT

## L.A. business option defended

By LEE CARPENTER  
Former Liberal Arts Student Council member

In reply to Thursday's editorial concerning the new liberal arts business option, some defense of the option must be made.

I agree with your basic premise. The liberal arts should offer "a smorgasbord of intellectual ideals." I believe that it does. My personal prejudice, after being in liberal arts for five years, is that the most challenging, therefore rewarding, experience available. Students often take advantage of these opportunities for genuine intellectual growth. "Pure knowledge," however, cannot be the exclusive goal of liberal arts — to think so would be to face the future blindly, rather than knowledgeably.

While the liberal arts offer the best classical education available, the liberal arts student is faced with choosing between ideals and employment. The business option was designed with this conflict in mind — it provides students with the opportunity to combine a classical education with some background in business practices. When I enrolled in liberal arts five years ago, the employment experts predicted a continued surplus of employment opportunities for liberal arts majors. Liberal arts students, they said, received the broadest education, and therefore were trainable for any job.

For some reason this philosophy evolved over the years into a general consensus that liberal arts students were not as employable as originally thought because of their broad backgrounds. Students were not sought after as strongly by employers and on-campus interviewers unless they had some coursework in business. To survive, liberal arts students started adding business courses to their curriculum, hoping to expand their employability. This isn't to say that liberal arts students hadn't been taking business courses all along.

A new problem emerged. With more students in business courses, overloads occurred. The College of Business Administration believed, rightly so, that its students had priority in courses they needed to graduate. Liberal arts students with general interests in business found that getting business courses was getting more and more difficult.

Therefore, the Liberal Arts Student Council negotiated with faculty and administrators in both colleges to set up the business option. Now, because of the option, liberal arts students have a genuine right to be in business courses.

Many students combine their interest in the humanities and social sciences with a business background, because it suits their career goals. Students in former language majors are obviously more employable in foreign corporations if they have a business background. And, obviously, many take business courses because of the unpredictability of the job market.

Remember, too, that this is an option. One can choose not to take it — a student can enroll in business courses without using the option, or choose not to take any at all. I do not consider the establishment of the business option a "selling out" of the liberal arts education, nor is it a threat to "pure knowledge."

There are as many if not more social scientists and humanists in liberal arts who have never taken a business course as those who have. I have to admit that the scarcity of job opportunities frightens me, too, but we're liberal arts majors, and therefore adaptable.

Of course we're concerned with finding jobs — as the popularity of certain majors change, students worry about the availability of choices. Some end up changing their major from one they truly enjoy to a more "practical" major that has job opportunities. If anything, this abandoning of the more classical liberal arts curriculums is the subject for concern.

The introduction of the business option was a practical reflex action, legitimizing what liberal arts students have been doing for years — setting up back-groves in business to expand their opportunities. The intellectual environment still thrives in liberal arts, unsubordinated, and as challenging as ever.

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Photo by Stan Vaites

## the daily op-ed

### Faculty Senate TA legislation

By JOSEPH R. REED  
Associate professor of engineering, University Faculty Senator

Let me begin by saying that Vickie Ziegler of the German department should be writing this article. She chaired the subcommittee formed by the Undergraduate Instruction Committee of the University Faculty Senate to study the impact on undergraduate instruction of the teaching done by graduate teaching assistants.

I was a member of the subcommittee, but Dr. Ziegler, who is now on sabbatical leave, was much nearer to the pulse of the subject.

The work of the subcommittee was completed in two parts: an informational report to the Faculty Senate in October 1980, which was logistical in nature, and a legislative report in March 1981, which was aimed at correcting ills frequently associated with graduate teaching assistants. The informational report contained all sorts of facts and figures which were extracted from University records with the help of the Office of Planning and Budget. In a given academic year, the University might have as many as 1,200 graduate assistants with instructional assignments ranging from paper grading to teaching a section of a course.

The legislation is only a beginning step in making instruction by graduate teaching assistants more uniform across the entire University.

Of course an undergraduate student might ask, "Why are graduate teaching assistants necessary in the first place?" There is no simple answer to this question, since it relates to the role of the graduate student at the University, as well as to the question of where faculty members of the future come from.

Graduate students usually seek advanced degrees in order to extend their education toward the limits of knowledge in their field. They are generally excellent students because admission to a graduate program requires it, but often they can't afford to continue their schooling without financial support. Such support can come in the form of graduate assistantships in research, or teaching at substantial levels of income.

Frequently, the assistantships in research are externally funded, as parts of larger grants to faculty members whose proposals are approved by sponsors. The student who accepts this form of support conducts research under the supervision of a faculty member. As a bonus, he might receive a stipend for thesis from his research experience. All fields require research in order to advance their state of the art. Unfortunately, popularity with external sponsors is variable and changeable.

Consequently, internal funds have to be made available for teaching assistantships in order to keep viable the graduate and research programs in all fields. Students who accept this support may have to pursue unaided ideas for thesis topics. Many students in this category may be sampling a faculty career. Hence, graduate teaching assistants who are motivated by research and/or teaching may emerge as new faculty members.

Graduate students in general and graduate teaching assistants in particular are an extremely vital part of the University. They are learning how to push back the frontiers of knowledge by conducting research. Everyone who comes with the University gains, since the further the frontiers are moved, the greater the reputation and ability of the University in providing educational services.

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## At a crossroads? Grad students must unite to face tough times ahead

By DAN RAITEN  
Graduate Student Association member representative to Graduate Council

Steve is trying to finish his thesis and his grant has run out. But because he has been here for eight successive terms, his department can't give him an assistantship to complete his Masters. His advisor tells him to apply for graduate work study-faculty aide program. Since he is eligible to receive a grant-in-aid to cover tuition and fees, the faculty aide money should be enough to get by and finish up.

Everything seems fine until a week before registration, when he receives notice from the Office of Student Aid saying that because he was on a half-time assistantship for three terms prior to this term, his income — calculated using some irrelevant formula — has been deemed to be too high.

These are examples of the kinds of problems facing graduate students. In the past, these types of situations have been more the exception than the rule. However, there is an incipient change taking place. It is one that threatens the very nature of graduate education. The concept of financial accountability has become a motivating force in all our lives. The government and other funding agencies are no longer willing to finance the training and education of graduate students.

Witness new guidelines that outline the formula for distributing federal grant money, and determine how much money goes to the University for operating costs and how much the researcher keeps. As it works now, the cost of graduate tuition and fees is included in the money that went to the University so the researcher can write the grant and not have to include that in the direct cost of the research.

But as of July, tuition will be included as a direct cost of the research. This means that it will be cheaper for some researchers to hire one full-time technician than to hire two half-time grad assistants.

This is but one small shift in a large pattern. In the passionate plunge toward national economic stability, low-cost student loans are becoming a thing of the past. Fellowships are disappearing and funding for research in many fields is tapering.

To the graduate student of today and tomorrow, this all means that we will be under increasing pressure to tow the line and do whatever we are told if it means some money to live on. The attitude can be seen already: students are told, "This is graduate school, it's supposed to be tough, and if you don't like it there are 100 applicants behind you who would love the opportunity that you have."

Graduate students are faced with increasing pressure to bring in money. The result of a disproportionate emphasis on grantmanship is a de-emphasis on quality teaching and advisement. Advisement at Penn State ranges from excellent to nonexistent. The trend is toward the latter. This is due to the intense pressure on faculty to produce, combined with a lack of initiative and assertiveness on the part of graduate students.

Even an adviser with the best intentions can't help a student who is "too smart" or "too intimidated" to express a legitimate complaint.

There are answers to these problems, but they will involve a coordinated effort among the graduate faculty, the graduate school administration, and the graduate student community.

The graduate school must begin to go beyond unsympathetic rhetoric and convince the administration that graduate education at Penn State is not at a crossroad. Grad students need support to call off the IRS's policy of harassment and give grad students — who are already approaching poverty level — some tax relief.

Grad students need a separate office of financial aid, not just an individual tangled up in the hopeless morass of Boush bureaucracy. Perhaps the best solution would be a separate grad student financial aid office in Kern Building that would include a tax consultant or at least some coherent tax advisement.

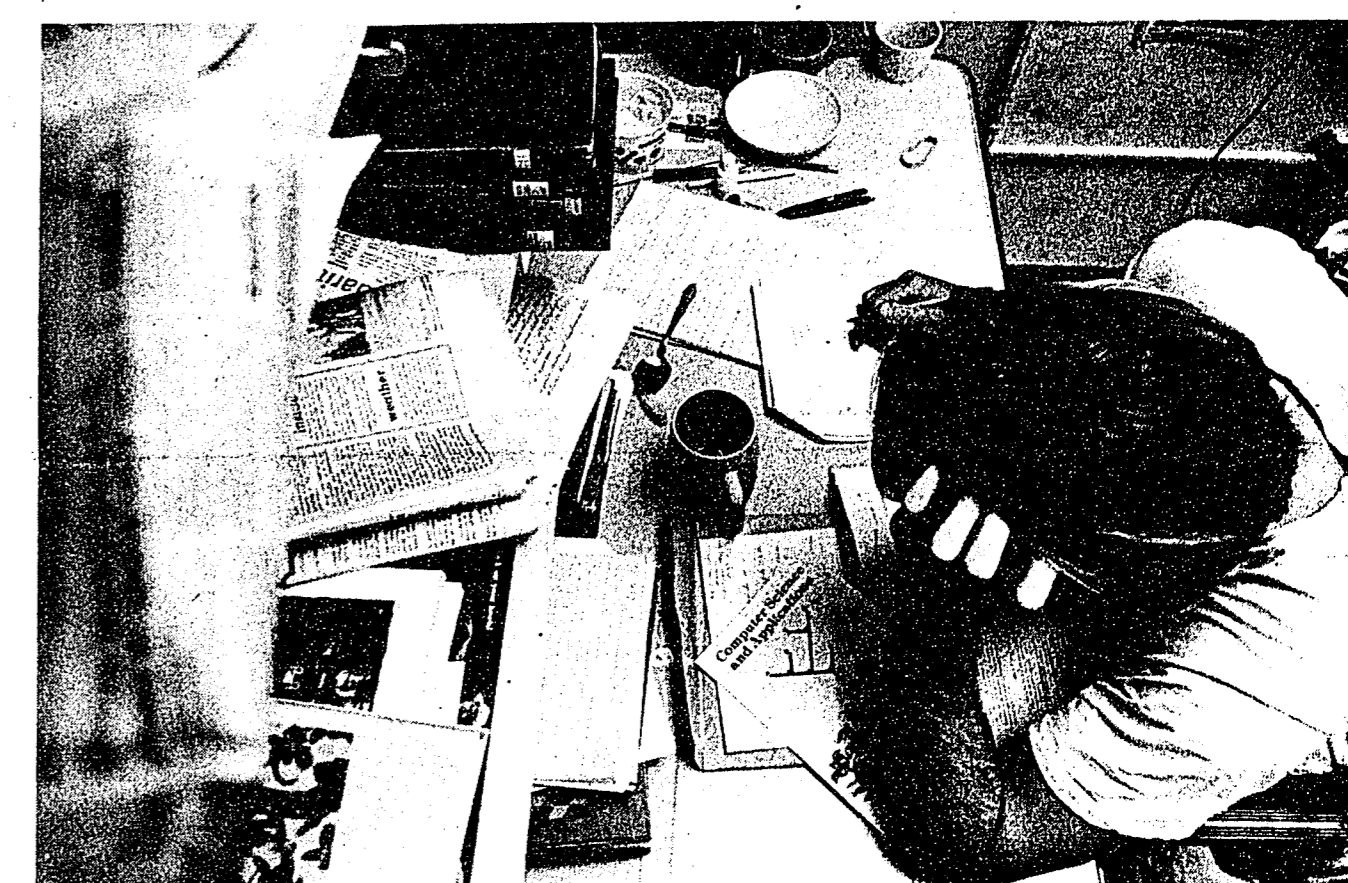
On a policy level, the time has come for a standardized procedure that would ensure that all graduate students have the opportunity at least once a year to sit down with their adviser and a committee and evaluate where they have been and where they are going. This would be a chance for faculty members to express the feelings about the student's responsibility and give the student a clear understanding of their expectations.

It would also allow for a firm understanding of the student's financial situation so at least they wouldn't have to worry about being "buried" in a fit of financial austerity in the middle of Winter Term. Most importantly, it would mandate that channels of communication be open from both sides.

Graduate students also have a responsibility to solve these problems. We must stop the alienation we create between ourselves and graduate faculty. We must realize that we are all being affected by these problems. Being too busy is no longer a viable excuse when another graduate student is being exploited under too great a workload.

The Graduate Student Association has attempted and will continue to try to advocate the graduate student position in these forums open to us.

In order to be effective we need a unified, informed constituency. It's time for graduate students to come out of the closet and support each other, today and for the future of graduate education at Penn State.



## Physics TAs rate high with students

By MILTON COLE  
Associate professor of physics

Several introductory physics courses at Penn State consist of lectures presented to a large class by a faculty member, which are supplemented by laboratory and discussion sections involving fewer than 30 students. The last two may be taught by either graduate teaching assistants or faculty. In the former case, the experience of an undergraduate may vary from exhilarating to frustrating, depending on the individual graduate student.

Occasionally a student may come to question or even challenge this mode of instruction. My aim here is to evaluate and explain this system as it operates in the physics department. The same system operates, incidentally, in nearly every university in the United States. I believe that it works well here.

From an undergraduate's perspective, the most important issue is the quality of instruction provided by graduate assistants. Fortunately, I am able to address this question "objectively" in two ways. One uses the method of class evaluations. These are written anonymously during the last week of class and immediately collected by a student volunteer, who

brings them to the physics department office. Several weeks later (after grades are submitted), they are read, first by the faculty member in charge of the course and then by the individual graduate teaching assistant.

Obviously there is a substantial variation of the assessments given to various assistants. One result, however, can be stated simply: in the physics department the average rating of assistants is somewhat better than "good" on a scale presenting the choices of "excellent," "good," "fair," and "poor. The same average rating is given to faculty members doing the same teaching. This is a remarkably strong statement of approval by the students for both of these groups. It shows that both are, on the whole, conscientious and qualified.

Some students and faculty have argued that such evaluations are not the best means of assessing instructional quality. An alternative method is to determine student performance in these courses. A similar result is obtained: on a given test, students who have a graduate student in charge of their class perform as well, on average, as those who have a faculty member in charge.

These motivations pertain to our perceived mission of both graduate and undergraduate teaching. I feel strongly that these are quite compatible. The evidence cited above indicates that the present system of using graduate teaching assistants does not in the slightest compromise the quality of our undergraduate instruction.

Of course these conclusions about averages do not provide the complete picture. Some graduate students' ratings fall in the excellent category. We are very proud of these and honor them with teaching awards. By definition, half do worse than average. Their performance

often improves after the standard midterm class monitoring by the supervising faculty member. In the rare case of a serious deficiency, the student is relieved of his duties.

About one-third of the physics graduate students in United States universities come from abroad. The foreign students at Penn State are often our best, both in research and teaching. They provide, in addition, an element of cultural enrichment to our environment. In some cases, there is a communication difficulty owing to their accent. The department is aware of such situations. Both in admissions policy and in class assignments we select students to minimize this problem.

Finally, I want to explain the necessity for the physics department to employ graduate teaching assistants. The reasons, not in order of importance, are: 1) to provide financial support for graduate students, 2) to enable large lecture courses to be split into much smaller discussion sections while relieving the faculty of what would otherwise be an excessive teaching load, 3) to help train graduate students for teaching, and 4) to provide quality education at a low cost.

## Graduate Student Association needs visibility, participation

By PHIL GROSS  
Graduate Student Association President

I will not be writing today about teaching assistants, but rather about the organization that represents TAs and indeed the entire graduate student community.

The Graduate Student Association finds itself in difficult times. Student participation is at an all-time low, our committees are greatly understaffed, and our finances are in disarray. I can think of no better example of our plight than the fact that in our recent elections, I ran unopposed for the office of president.

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During the coming year, I will be invited to participate in the meetings of the Board of Trustees committee on educational policy. I will be invited to attend meetings of the full Board of Trustees. I will participate in the Alumni Council and Alumni Executive Board in full voting capacity. I am a member of the Student Advisory Board, which meets regularly with President Oswald, Provost Eddy and Vice President for Student Affairs Raymond O. Murphy.

I will occupy all these important positions in the role of representing all graduate students and I do so without the vote of a single graduate student.

I was never asked my views on such important issues as tuition increases, the taxation of teaching assistants' salaries or the graduate student's role in a Penn State University Student Association-like reorganization of student government.

I must ask myself questions like, "How many graduate students I know my name, let alone feel confident that I will adequately represent their views?" "Under the circumstances, will top administrators take me seriously as a student leader?" and "Why can we get 200 grads to show up when we give away free beer but then, at an election, must count the voting

members among the 40 in attendance to see if we have a quorum?"

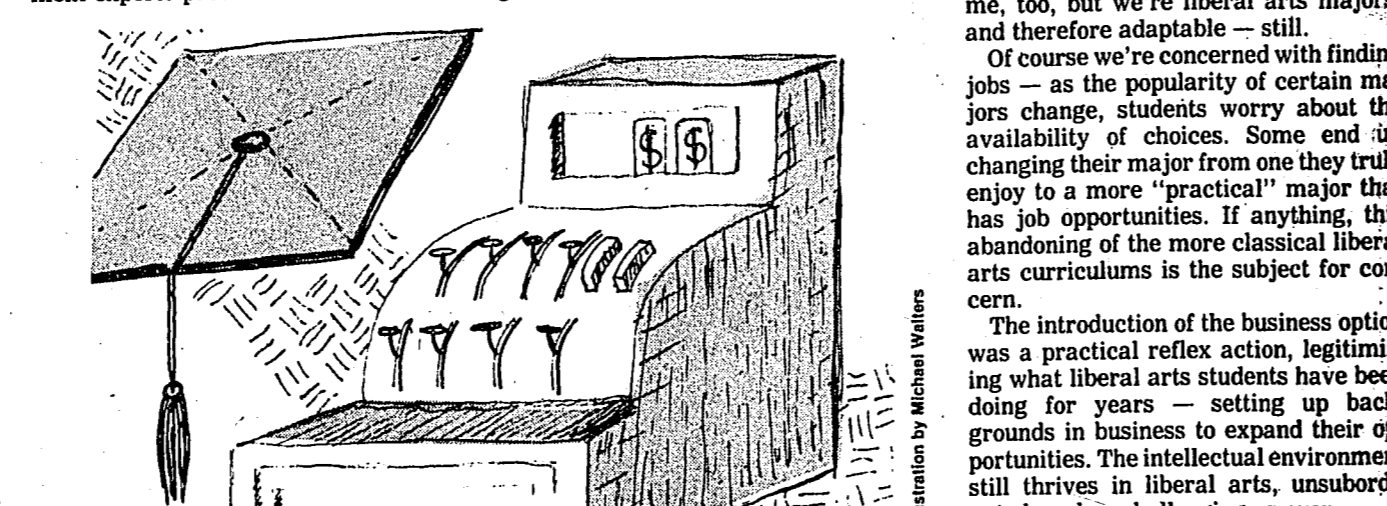
The Graduate Student Association must be revitalized. We must have more participation so that we can honestly say that we represent the graduate student body. We must become more visible and more involved with campus issues.

Certainly the issues are at hand. The only question in my mind is GSA's ability to adequately and effectively deal with them.

The recent PSUSA issue is an excellent case study of our problems. Its lessons should not be ignored. The idea of a centralized reorganization of student government involving both graduate and undergraduate students has merit.

However, GSA did not become involved with this issue by some of our officers that, in its proposed form, it was not in graduate students' best interest.

It was then discovered that GSA's constitution does not allow for a referendum of the graduate student community at large. This meant that while undergraduates were participating in a binding vote, the outcome of which could affect grads, GSA could only conduct what amounted to an opinion poll. In spite of the obvious drawbacks of the situation, graduate student turnout was enormous and overwhelmingly against PSUSA.



## Free

State College contains two universities. One charges tuition. The other is Free. Since its inception in the '60s, the Free University has been through many changes and managed to hold together.

What is Free U's current situation? Is there enough participation for it to carry on? Or is it just a hang-out for children of the '60s?

On Tuesday April 28, The Daily Collegian's Op-ed page will examine Free U: its problems and potential. Anybody wishing to contribute, please submit letters (one double-spaced typewritten page) and forums (two to three pages) to the editorial office, 126 Carnegie Building. Deadline is 5 p.m. April 25.

question is never how much the students liked their instructor, but how much they learned.

The thesis I advocate is that the dedicated student can learn regardless of the quality of the instruction. This should not be difficult because Penn State students are especially dedicated and conscientious. The competent and innovative instructors at Penn State will ensure the high quality of teaching. I speak for all TAs when I say it is our unique pleasure to participate in the excellent educational experience at Penn State.

Granted, there are legitimate complaints concerning graduate teaching assistants that in short compass has not been addressed. My aim was to reemphasize the fact that the teaching-discipline, our students and the perfectibility of man. Perhaps my most sincere confession is that the administration, faculty, staff and students are being a TA at Penn State satisfying, stimulating and self-fulfilling.

the daily Collegian

## A teaching assistant's confessions

By RICKY BURGESS  
Graduate-speech communication

Much has been said, and some has been written, about teaching assistants at Penn State. Undergraduate students often complain that the TAs' lack of experience and expertise. This composition is not a rebuttal, but rather frank confessions from a graduate teaching assistant.

TAs are in a schizophrenic position, being part instructor and part student. Most of us are dedicated instructors who are sympathetic to students' needs and wants. We are mature adults living below the poverty line in order to complete our education. Therefore, TAs are utilizing their present occupation to practice, perfect and pursue their future vocation. Moreover, we take pride in our position, our performance and our scholarly peers.

The liberal arts education system is based upon the educational methods developed by the Greek rhetorician Isocrates. The system was meant to merge deductive and inductive reasoning procedures to fully expand the minds of the students. Unfortunately, our educational system

has emphasized primarily deductive analysis. When given a research assignment, many students will ask, "What do you want me to say?" as if the purpose of the task were to simply please the instructor, instead of developing the student's intellectual skills. Hence, some students with the ability to "preach the gospel" to a particular subject. Yet, the object of scholarship is the formation of the individual's personal theories and beliefs.

Most of the University's departments, and in particular the speech department, of which I am a member, have a rigorous program that TAs must complete before being allowed to teach. The success of our program makes us proud and assured that we have some of the best TAs in the country. Now, no one is asserting that TAs are perfect. As students learning teaching procedures, we are bound to make mistakes but before criticizing a TA, reflect on the about of energy you put into a course. The old adage that students learn about their final grade are those receiving a B.