Our Mission Statement: The Center for Instructional Excellence promotes transformative, evidence-based education for academic success at Purdue University and beyond.

Teaching Assistant Orientation (TAOr)

Description & Goals
As part of its instructional development services for graduate students who teach courses at Purdue’s West Lafayette campus – and in cooperation with Purdue Libraries and Information Technology at Purdue (ITaP) – CIE sponsors TAOr during Week 0 every fall semester.

As a result of attending TAOr, graduate teaching and research assistants will better understand how their varying roles can support the teaching and learning mission of the University by fostering optimal learning environments. They will be able to identify effective techniques for helping undergraduates in lab, recitations, and classrooms make connections from respective learning activities to the learning outcomes of a given course, degree program, and field. Specifically, participants will:

1. Select methods to create a more engaged classroom through discussion, group work, teaching and learning technologies, and other initiatives and resources.
2. Be better able to employ effective presentation techniques, including lecture, PowerPoint, media, and visual aids.
3. Anticipate and prepare for the particular challenges of teaching their first course, including university resources available to assist them.
4. Work with ITaP Instructional Development Center staff to more effectively use teaching and learning technologies such as Blackboard.
5. Identify information literacy strategies through Purdue Libraries that support student-centered learning.
6. Identify how cultural differences impact teaching and learning.
7. Describe some challenges U.S. students of color, international students, LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities may face in college classrooms AND identify strategies to reduce bias in how and what they teach.

Registration Process

TAOr is coordinated through individual academic departments. Information is sent to the following positions in each department, using contact information listed on The Purdue Graduate School website: department head, graduate committee chair, and graduate contact. Correspondence is sent via Purdue email on the following schedule:

End of May: Announcement of TAOr dates, session descriptions, and a reservation form which must be completed and returned to CIE with estimates on the number of participants in each session.

Mid-July: Confirmation of spaces being held in each session for the department, and a form for entering each participant’s name and email (for check-in).

Week prior: CIE’s registration system will generate a reminder email a day or two prior to each session, and remind participants to bring their PUID cards to sign in.

CIE staff handles on-site sign-in electronically. Reports of a graduate student’s participation can be generated afterward for department requirements and CIE certification*. We also ask for feedback on the sessions from participants and use this information in planning the following year’s orientation.

*Graduate students interested in completing any of the three-tiers of the Graduate Teacher Certificate program sponsored by the Teaching Academy, and administered by CIE, must complete TAOr, including micro-teaching and playback.

Questions about TAOr, or any of the other resources offered to support graduate teaching excellence, may be directed to cie@purdue.edu.