

MSU Teaching Assistant Program's Newest Addition



With this edition of The Graduate Post, Barbara Steidle and I are pleased to introduce Kevin M. Johnston. Kevin, who comes to MSU from the University of Tennessee, is a new coordinator in the Teaching Assistant Program and has been here for 6 months. Kevin will oversee many facets of the TA Program including orientation, peer consultation workshops, the Certification in College Teaching Program, and other professional development programs for graduate teaching assistants. Kevin will be a regular contributor to The Graduate Post. Please feel free to email (kmj@msu.edu) or call him (353-3062) with questions, comments, or requests for assistance. Welcome, Kevin!

Dr. Karen Klomparens, Dean of the Graduate School

"I've landed the greatest job in the world," I said to Don Straney, Assistant to the Provost and Head of MSU Faculty Development. He smiled and replied quickly, "No. *I* have the greatest job in the world." Professor Straney and I parted amicably (no small feat for me, a former Marine and a Southerner, two qualities that make me capable of turning nearly any situation into something worth fighting over), agreeing that what makes our professional lives so meaningful is that we spend a lot of time talking and working with faculty and graduate students who care deeply about teaching.

This month's *Graduate Post* theme concerns professional development. The concept has undergone some critical revision here at MSU and nationally, particularly in the last 11 years since the publication of Ernest Boyer's Scholarship Reconsidered, a report that challenged faculty and administrators to consider scholarship in a broader context. Among the many provocative questions he posed, Boyer asked academic professionals in 1990: Why not consider *teaching* as a scholarship on par with research?

Since World War II, higher education "professional development" traditionally has meant training future faculty to research and publish. Within a professional paradigm that defined job success primarily in terms of *what you had discovered* and *how you had written about it*, teaching more often than not became a less important consideration for those seeking academic professional success after 1945.

Yet, Jerry Gaff's 1975 work, Toward Faculty Renewal, marked the beginning of a serious conversation among academic professionals who called for a more equally proportionate professional balance among teaching, research, and university community service. One of the results of that growing discourse was that MSU and other land-grant universities began to pay significantly more attention to improving teaching and increased the pedagogical training of its graduate teaching assistants, most of whom made up the next generation of the nation's faculty.

In the last decade, MSU's TA Programs have made tremendous strides in the professional development of our teaching assistants. We have introduced new TAs to university

classroom teaching environments, provided on-going workshops on pedagogy, and offered teaching improvement opportunities to graduate students through a variety of other service.

MSU's recently restructured TA Program represents another step in our continuing efforts to meet the evolving needs of MSU undergraduate students, 92% of whom are Michigan residents. We have increased pedagogical training, begun the development of *departmentally-specific* TA Programs, implemented a Teaching Certification Program, and increased significantly a host of other professional development opportunities for TAs.

My hope is that we do not stop with these improvements. I would like to see us further improve the climate at MSU for teaching development by fostering on-going multi-disciplinary mentoring relationships between TAs and faculty teacher-scholars. I would like to see our TAs, many of whom are excellent teachers

themselves, take a larger role in the professional development of their peers. I'd like to see departments establish rotating *teaching faculty* positions in which an outstanding faculty teacher-scholar supervises pedagogical training for faculty and graduate students on a yearly basis. All this (and more!) to insure that MSU undergraduates are getting the best education they can and that universities who hire our graduate students as faculty know that they are getting top-notch researchers *and* teachers.

With less modesty than my mother, a native of Alabama, would like me to practice, I predict that within three years MSU will be among the nation's leaders in preparing teaching assistants to be both outstanding teachers *now* and exceptional faculty in the future. We're very close to that level already as we

"...why not consider teaching as scholarship on par with research?"

continue to enroll and utilize graduate students deeply concerned about their teaching (see the inset below).

It is a privilege to be at MSU and to be part of these changes. There are few things more gratifying than knowing you're part of something that will have a positive impact on so many. In closing, I'll steal from a popular literary voice in my cultural past and wish that all of you get a chance, as I have, to be thrown into what is, for me, a proverbial *briar patch* of

professional opportunity. I am at home here. My interactions with my new colleagues and graduate students reveal a widely shared interest not just in improving graduate student professional development on campus, but also in making a serious effort to improve the learning experience of Michigan State's sons and daughters. I look forward to sharing with you in the coming years more of my enjoyment and realizations.

Kevin Johnston can be contacted at kmj@msu.edu

1 Boyer, Ernest L. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities for the Professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990.

2 Gaff, Jerry G. *Toward Faculty Renewal*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1975.

3 Braxton, John M., and Alan E. Bayer. *Faculty Misconduct in College Teaching*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

GOOD NEWS ABOUT MSU TEACHING!

I interview graduate students to work as small-group facilitators in our International and National TA Orientations. We give our new TAs the opportunity to meet and work in small-group settings with facilitators who have already successfully negotiated those sometimes painful first steps into teaching. For most teaching assistants, the orientations are the first training they receive to be university teachers, so I am very selective when it comes to choosing facilitators. Occasionally during these interviews, someone reminds me of what is right about higher education and why I love this profession.

I recently interviewed a doctoral student from the Math Department. Her first experience teaching math was to undergraduates in an entry-level Algebra course. Her peers recommended that as a new teacher she demand strict obedience from her students and that she maintain a rigid, hierarchical relationship between herself and the class. They recommended she never reveal any academic weakness or under any circumstances ever appear nervous in front of the class.

It's my experience with both faculty and graduate students new to the classroom that most follow just this formula, often with bad results. So, I expected her to describe a class scenario I've heard described before many times. To my pleasant surprise, she described approaching her first two weeks of class this way:

1. She clearly stated class goals and expectations, both hers and those she envisioned for her students. She then asked the students if they thought these goals were possible and, if they disagreed, how they might be achieved.
2. She admitted to her students that this was the first time she had taught a class and that she was nervous. She then (miraculously) explained why she was nervous.
3. She asked her students to help her clarify any confusion that might arise from her explanations of concepts.
4. Finally, she shared relevant information about her life. In short, she exclaimed, "I thought being myself would be more effective."

Beaming enthusiastically, she concluded our conversation by exclaiming, "My students really like me!" Clearly, I understood why. She had convinced her charges to help her teach them. With a little humility, some real concern for her students' progress, and an accurate understanding of herself as someone teaching for the first time, she had taken what is for most of us, at any level of teaching experience, the most difficult step of all: Making learning a cooperative experience by breaking down some of the traditional classroom barriers. Would you be surprised to know that Ying Li is a Chinese national who arrived in this country only a year ago? Needless to say, I hired her immediately to work this year's orientation. Her students gain tremendously from her approach. We should all be able to teach this well.

Responsible Conduct of Research

What Graduate Students Need to Know

Terry A. May, PhD

Director of Research Development

The Graduate School & Office of the Vice President for Research & Graduate Studies

Julie A. Reyes, PhD

Research Ethics Education Coordinator

Office of Research Ethics and Standards

The Graduate School introduced its 2001-2002 Responsible Conduct of Research Workshop Series (<http://grad.msu.edu/all/resconduct.htm>) saying:

“Colleges and universities are made up of professional scholars (faculty) and aspiring scholars (students and trainees) who coexist in a rich but competitive environment for the common purpose of learning, creating new knowledge, developing new insights through synthesis of existing knowledge and disseminating information and ideas for the benefit of their peers and the general public. Academic excellence comes through recognition by one’s peers. Some new and innovative ideas have the potential for generating widespread professional interest and credit in the area of their scholarship for purely academic reasons. Others have the potential for generating substantial commercial interest and financial gain. Either can be motivation to stretch and even exceed acceptable standards of conduct in how scholarship is conducted. At the same time, differing academic and personal perspectives and interests can lead to interpersonal conflicts that detract from achieving common goals.”

This is just as true for Michigan State University as it is for any other institution of higher education. While there are great differences in academic cultures, standards for graduate education and training, and how research/scholarship is conducted, all disciplines share common core values such as academic freedom for inquiry, objectivity in interpreting research findings, honesty in presenting research findings, and openness in crediting the academic contribution/prior work of others. No amount of good work and good deeds can wash away the taint from even one act violating these core values.

Beginning in the late 1980’s, incidents of alleged and actual violations became public and reported widely, not only within the respective academic communities but also to the general public that to a large extent finances such work. Such incidents

generated widespread discussion about the significance and actual extent of “misconduct” largely within the scientific communities. Equally interesting was the resulting intensity and depth of discussion about what actually constitutes “misconduct” and how to define violations of long-standing, academic core values that heretofore were generally accepted but not defined explicitly. Such discussions properly moved to how to minimize and protect against the occurrence of similar future bad acts/conflicts, including how to achieve literacy and commitment for responsible conduct through the graduate experience.

At the same time, universities and their faculties had to respond to parallel initiatives by the federal government to impose policies, guidelines, and regulations of various kinds to “insure the responsible conduct of research.” Knowledge and compliance with such formal requirements are just as important as understanding and implementing the principles for research and scholarship of the respective disciplines. This is especially significant for graduate students that are early in their academic careers and often have limited experience in dealing with such issues.

The Graduate School offers professional development workshops (<http://grad.msu.edu/stuwork.htm>), including the Responsible Conduct of Research series (<http://grad.msu.edu/all/resconduct.htm>) in conjunction with The Office of Research Ethics and Standards. This series is intended to provide specific information about the responsibilities of students, faculty and research staff in conducting research, interacting with others both within and outside defined research groups, and complying with policies and regulations of sponsors and the University. It is designed to stimulate local discussions, complement department activities, and reinforce issues raised by [The Research Integrity Newsletter](#) (see below) in responding to these needs.

All sessions are held in the Kellogg Center, and parking passes are provided. All sessions are free, but we asked that you register (by phone: 517.353.3231; or by email gradwrsp@msu.edu). Please provide your name, phone number,

email address, and department. The deadline is one week before the session. Persons with disabilities should contact the Graduate School to request special arrangements no later than one week prior to the session date. Requests received after this date will be met when possible. For added details, please see the Graduate School's web page <http://grad.msu.edu/all/respconduct.htm>.

Another important source of information and educational guidance is [The Research Integrity Newsletter](http://grad.msu.edu/integrity.htm), published semi-annually (<http://grad.msu.edu/integrity.htm>) and sponsored for the past six years by The Graduate School, The Office of Research Ethics and Standards, and The Center for Ethics and Humanities in the Life Sciences. Past issues have focused on: Authorship, Data Control and Management; Preventive Ethics; The Ethical Environment for Research and Graduate Studies at MSU; Research Mentoring; Research Involving Human Subjects, Part I & II; and, Getting Human Subjects Approval at MSU. These past issues can be found at the web site provided above.

The current issue addresses "Best Practices at Michigan State University" and highlights both the 1) Authorship and 2) Data Control & Management guidelines which have been adopted by the University Research Council. The current newsletter will be distributed to all faculty and graduate students. It is also available at the [Research Integrity Newsletter](http://grad.msu.edu/integrity.htm) web site provided above.

While these information sources are intended largely for educational rather than regulatory purposes, they are comprehensive and provide a firm foundation to respond to future requirements for training in the responsible conduct of research that will likely be imposed soon by the Public Health Service

(PHS). It is possible that these requirements could be expanded to all federally-funded research.

In December, 2000, the Public Health Service issued a policy¹ on Instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research that was later suspended for administrative reasons. The proposed policy would have required that

"...research staff (as defined below) at extramural institutions shall complete a basic program of instruction in the responsible conduct of research, as set forth in this document. Research staff who are working on the PHS-supported project at entities other than the institution that received the PHS research grant, cooperative agreement, or contract, are also covered by the policy. The institution may make reasonable determinations as to which research staff fall within the policy. The policy pertains to all research, including animal, human, and basic research, or research training, conducted with grant, contract, or cooperative agreement support from any agency, or office, of the PHS."

The question is not "if" students will be faced with issues concerning the responsible conduct of research, the question is "when." The ability to make reasoned judgments and wise decisions depends on a complete knowledge base and a comprehensive understanding of the issues for not only disciplinary questions but also the principles for responsible conduct.

¹For a complete text of this policy please go to:
<http://ori.dhhs.gov/html/programs/finalpolicy.asp>

The 2001-2002 Responsible Conduct of Research Series

- *The Graduate Experience: Responsibilities of Students and Their Mentors*
Thursday, September 20, 2001
- Special Lecture: *Should Scientists be Responsible for Impacts of Modern Technologies?*
Stephen Palumbi of Harvard University,
Tuesday, October 16, 2001
- *The Ethical Challenges of Contemporary Academic Research: Whose Rights? Whose Responsibilities? Whose Common Good?*
Wednesday, October 17, 2001
- *Responsibility for Integrity: Data Collection and Stewardship, Scientific Misconduct, Whistle-blowing*
Wednesday, November 7, 2001
- *Responsibility to the Institution: Safety in the Workplace and Stewardship of Intellectual Property*
Tuesday, January 22, 2002
- *Responsibility to the Subjects of Research: Humans and Animals*
Thursday, February 7, 2002
- *Responsibility for Objectivity: Conflicts of Interest*
Tuesday, February 26, 2002

MSU's First Andrew Rasmussen Fellowship Recipients

Two Michigan State University master's students, Jeremy Herliczek from Journalism and Jake McKinley from Industrial Microbiology, recently became the first recipients of the Andrew Rasmussen Fellowship. Each year, two candidates receive the fellowship to support advanced graduate work.

This fellowship results from the generosity of Michigan State University alumnus Andrew Rasmussen, who created a "living legacy" to support graduate studies through an endowed fund. In 1951 Mr. Rasmussen earned a bachelor's degree from the School of Journalism, which became part of the College of Communication Arts and Sciences in 1955. His wishes for the endowed fund were to broadly support students interested in graduate study in any field. This year, to reflect Mr. Rasmussen's academic background, the Graduate School collaborated with the School of Journalism in the College of Communication Arts and Sciences to select Jeremy Herliczek. To reflect Rasmussen's general support of graduate education, the Graduate School partnered with the College of Natural Science to choose Jake McKinley.

Jeremy Herliczek earned his bachelor's degree in M.S.U.'s renowned Journalism School in 1996. As an undergraduate, Jeremy won the Circumnavigators Club Foundation Around-the-World Grant.

This grant allowed Jeremy to travel to seven countries—Thailand, Nepal, Malaysia, Mauritius, Kenya, England, and Ecuador—to study the environmental, cultural, and economic effects of nature-based tourism. In addition to shooting 120 rolls of film, he interviewed more than 60 government officials, park managers, and indigenous people. His project was published in The Amicus Journal, the publication of the Natural Resources Defense Council. The Rasmussen Fellowship will allow Jeremy to continue his work in the master's program and will afford him the opportunity to attend photographic conferences and workshops. He is currently working with Associate Professor Darcy Drew Greene, focusing on photography, multimedia production, and immigration issues.

With such a background, according to Dr. Steve Lacy, the Director of the School of Journalism, Jeremy was "an excellent first recipient of the Rasmussen Scholarship. He is currently teaching photojournalism and has taken a leadership role in revitalizing our photography courses. With the help of Darcy Green and David Olds, the photography advisor of The State News, Jeremy is instrumental in integrating computer technology with photography. In the future, we expect the Rasmussen Fellowship to help us recruit equally outstanding graduate students."

The other fellowship recipient, Jake McKinley, is a master's student in Industrial Microbiology in the College of Natural Science. This graduate program is innovative in that it requires an industrial internship as well as a certificate in business and communication skills. In 2001 Jake graduated from the University of British Columbia where his lab supervisor, Michigan State University alumnus Dr. Bill Mohen, urged Jake to consider MSU's microbiology program. Jake stated, "I was impressed by the size

of the Microbiology Department and the diversity of the research. I could imagine it being a highly productive environment with several researchers working on closely related topics. It was easy to make a long list of professors that I might want to work for."

Upon applying, Jake discovered the newly formed Professional Master's Program in Industrial Microbiology, and decided that the addition of business training and internship opportunities to his studies in microbiology could take him in his chosen professional direction. The costs of studying in the United States presented a difficulty, however. "Although I was definitely interested in the program, funding was the crucial factor in allowing me to accept an offer of admission. Without the Rasmussen Fellowship and a graduate assistantship, I wouldn't have been able to come to Michigan State University."

Dr. John Merrill, coordinator of the master's program in Industrial Microbiology, indicated that the program's success depends upon top-notch students like Jake McKinley. "Our program will only be successful if the graduates we place in industry are of very high quality and capability. Jake McKinley was selected for the fellowship because we feel that he is exactly the type of student who will bring recognition to the program. We hope that his success, and that of his colleagues in the program, will ultimately result in a sustained pool of excellent applicants, as well as growing interaction with, and support from, our industrial partners."

Graduate School Dean Karen Klomparens is pleased to offer the first of the Rasmussen Fellowship awards, noting that "the Graduate School is excited to partner with MSU graduate programs to offer assistance to qualified fellowship candidates. The Rasmussen Fellowship is an endowed fund, with the interest available for annual awards. Mr. Rasmussen truly created a living legacy for future generations."

