LAFAYETTE COLLEGE

Department of Biology

The laboratory teaching assistant program at Lafayette College began in 1961 with two students. Since that time the program has evolved to now include up to 22 general biology teaching assistants plus approximately ten other teaching assistants assigned to our 200-level courses each academic year. However, what has not changed is the Department's commitment to the teaching assistant program. We highly value your position as a teaching assistant and recognize the unique and important role you play in allowing the Department to reach its mission each semester. We want you to appreciate the importance of the role you are about to undertake and understand exactly what it is that we expect from you this semester. Please carefully read through the following job description. Be sure to discuss any questions or concerns with the faculty member involved in the course.

Teaching Assistants (TA) - Job Description

TAs will:

1. Attend a Departmental Safety Training Session prior to the start of the semester in which you are teaching. Follow lab safety procedures as discussed and posted, and ensure that students follow these procedures. This includes wearing a lab coat and goggles when required.

2. Meet with the course instructor at the beginning of the semester and as frequently as the instructor deems necessary.

3. Read the lab handout at least a day before the lab session. Set up laboratory sessions in advance, preferably in the morning (or as early as possible). Arrive at least 15 minutes before the lab starts and spend the full three hours assisting in the lab. Please be advised that, on occasions, you may need to come in to check on experiments or be available to allow students to get into the lab to check on their experiments or collect data. In addition, if a student requires a make-up lab, you and the student will work out a mutually convenient time for the student to perform the missed work.

4. At the end of the lab session, have students clean the equipment and table space they have used. Make a visual inspection of each work area. Take note of students not cleaning up after themselves and remind them in the next class. Please check all regular supplies (including gloves, pipette tips, biohazard and trash bags) and equipment at the end of each class to be sure there is enough for the following class. Make sure everything is neat and in order. If another course is using the same space, it must be

ready, *a day in advance*, for the other TA to set up their lab without having to move equipment. If you have to borrow equipment from the course instructor's research laboratory, you must return this equipment promptly, after the lab session ends. At the end of the semester, lab cleanup may be a more extensive undertaking requiring several hours of your time spread over the last week of the semester (and possibly into finals week).

5. Provide students with positive learning experiences, motivate student inquiry, and guide points of discussion / interpretation of results. Engage students by asking thought-provoking questions and encouraging them to provide insightful answers. This requires walking around and interacting with each student.

6. For some classes, the TA role includes grading lab write-ups - this should be discussed with the faculty member in charge.
    a. If grading is included as part of your normal TA activities, you must submit grades regularly to the instructor in charge. In addition, you will be expected to provide comments and feedback on the students' graded work consistently and in a timely manner. Discuss with the course instructor the best way to submit feedback.

7. It is expected that you are familiar with all safety policies and procedures and know the location of the SDS files, eyewash station, fire extinguisher, and showers as well as the operation of the eyewash station, fire extinguisher, and lab shower.

8. Should some unfortunate circumstance (e.g., illness) prevent you from teaching your regularly scheduled laboratory session, you must contact the instructor as early as possible. Be sure you have their preferred contact information so that alternative arrangements can be made.

9. TA's will receive a contract from the Department through the Provost Office. While the position is a salaried position, you must still fill out a timesheet each week according to the schedule outlined by Charlotte Gilbert. Time sheets turned in after the deadline will NOT be held for the next pay period and you WILL NOT be paid. You may not tally your hours and submit one or two timesheets per semester – you must submit a timesheet for each pay period ON TIME. Failure to turn in your timesheet after your second warning will be grounds for termination ("3 strikes").