Providing Teaching-Related Support

or

I’m a TA, now what?
What do TA’s do?

• Primarily undergraduate laboratory courses
  – General Biology
  – Microbiology, Genetics
  – Anatomical Sciences
  – Some more advanced/specialty courses
• Primary lecturer (faculty), lab involvement varies
• Laboratory coordinator (professional staff)
What are my duties?

- Laboratory coordinator will explain specifics
- Introduce students to that days lab/topic
- Help students work their way through the lab
- Some courses, help with lab prep or cleanup
- Prepare and administer quizzes (varies)
- Grade lab reports
- Keep laboratory grades
- Communicate with lab supervisor/instructor
Am I on my own?

• No, there are several places for help/guidance
• Laboratory supervisors or faculty lecturer will prepare lab with you prior to lab meeting
• Experienced TAs are a good resource
• Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center (www.facdev.niu.edu)
Expectations & Advice

• Unique position
  – Close to students in age and experience
  – “Peer” to students, unlike most faculty
  – Separate from them in accomplishments, academic experience, professional position

• Positives
  – Students are usually more comfortable with TA
  – Less of a barrier, more open communication
  – Shared experience

• Negatives
  – Students may attempt to take advantage
  – May not view you “seriously” enough
Professionalism (with your students)

• Keep some distance
• Be relaxed, can be informal, just not “too friendly”
• You have legal & ethical responsibilities to them (grades, confidentiality of student records)….. FERPA
• Relationships outside of class should wait until after the end of the semester…………
Professionalism (with supervisor, etc.)

- Good communication
- Make sure all parties are clear on expectations, even if you’ve taught together before
- Attend all preparation meetings
- Keep good, accurate records
Miscellaneous Teaching Advice

• Your syllabus is your friend
• Make expectations clear
• Be organized, clear, on-time (even if your students are not…)
• You don’t know everything, so don’t feel as if you need to. “I don’t know (but will find out)” is an acceptable answer!
Other issues, concerns

- Workload – (20 hours per week)
- Gradebooks (Blackboard, Excel, Paper)
- Office hours
- Copy Cards
- Exam Proctoring, Course Evaluations
- Special-needs students
- Religious holidays (individual students)
- Grade issues, cheating
- Safety
Questions? Concerns?