

Preparing for Careers in the Academy Program 2013-2014 Academic Year

What is the purpose of this program?

The purpose of this program is to help PhD students and MFA students in those fields in which this is the terminal degree (e.g. Visual Arts) to prepare for future academic careers and to strengthen their instructional effectiveness.

What are the objectives of this program for students?

- To construct a meaningful statement of teaching philosophy, grounded in best practices within your discipline/field of study and your beliefs about what an education means.
- To demonstrate an awareness of how to distinguish oneself in the academic job market, especially with respect to preparing strong application materials.
- To describe strategies for enhancing student engagement and critical thinking in the classroom.
- To design a course syllabus that evidences key ideas from the program.
- To understand and practice strategies for effectively managing classroom and student challenges.
- To develop a better understanding about various academic career paths, the transition to a faculty role, and life as a faculty member.

Who should apply for this program?

This program is recommended for advanced PhD and MFA students who:

- Are considering a career in academia.
- Have some teaching or TA experience and/or expect to have some teaching or TA experience in the future.

How will the program benefit students?

Chosen participants will join a select cohort of Mason PhD and MFA students who are preparing to go on the academic market. This program offers students the opportunity to prepare for a career in academia by developing teaching and mentoring expertise, drafting important components of the academic job application, and exploring different types of academic careers. In particular, participants will learn about best practices in teaching and learning, enhance their understanding of the academic job search process, and develop strategies for mentoring graduate students.

When is the program?

It will take place across the 2013-2014 academic year. In the fall semester, participants will enroll in a one-credit course that meets every other Friday. There will be a total of seven three-hour sessions as well as an online discussion forum. In the spring semester participants will take part in an online discussion forum and will receive individualized mentoring, which may include a classroom visit or an observation of their teaching. At the end of the spring semester, the Provost will host a reception for all program participants.

What will the program cost?

There is no cost for selected students. The Provost's office will pay for student tuition for this 1-credit course and provide the supporting course materials.

How do interested students apply?

Admission to the 2013-14 program is competitive and requires an application. Applications are due *electronically* to the Center for Teaching and Faculty Excellence (ctfe@gmu.edu) by Monday, April 1, 2013. A letter of support from the dissertation or thesis project advisor is required. Students will be notified of acceptance by late April. The 2013-14 program will be limited to a maximum of 18 students.

Criteria for selection into program: Advanced PhD students (PhD candidates preferred) or MFA students nearing completion of their thesis projects, interest in an academic career, teaching experience as instructor of record or graduate teaching assistant (GTA).

What if I have additional questions?

If you have further questions about the program, please contact Josh Eyer (jeyley@gmu.edu).

Fall Semester Program Requirements:

1. Actively participate in and attend all seven of the sessions, which will meet approximately every other Friday.
2. Complete all assigned readings and activities between sessions.
3. Create a job portfolio that includes:
 - a. A teaching philosophy statement
 - b. A cover letter for an academic job application
 - c. A research statement
 - d. An updated CV for an academic job application
 - e. A course syllabus

Spring Semester Program Requirements:

1. An active role in our online discussion forum.
2. Participation in individualized mentoring meetings, which may include a classroom visit or observation.

Tentative Fall Session Descriptions

Session 1: Program Introduction—Higher education in the 21st century

Description: This initial session will begin by reviewing the seminar goals and expectations. We will also explore the landscape of higher education today and the ways in which faculty and graduate student roles have shifted in recent years.

Finally, we will begin our discussion about developing a teaching philosophy, both for your teaching as a graduate student and for your development of a teaching statement as part of the academic job application process. This exploration of your teaching philosophy will be a conversation that continues throughout the duration of the program.

Session 2: Student engagement and learning styles

Description: In this session we will explore strategies for getting and keeping students involved in learning. Particular attention will be paid to techniques for engaging students in inquiry and critical thinking. As part of the session, participants will examine their own learning styles and learn how to appreciate learning style differences and diversity in the classroom.

Session 3: Course design, assignment design, and assessment

Description: Effective course design requires thoughtful preparation of learning objectives, assignments, and assessment tools. This session provides an opportunity to discuss a framework for course planning that can help you think about effective approaches for facilitating student learning in the context of your discipline or field of study. Additionally, we will discuss strategies for assessing student learning and providing effective feedback to students.

Session 4: Managing classroom situations and dealing with problem students

Description: Have you ever wondered how to get the majority of your students to do readings or participate in classroom discussions (or, perhaps, simply pay attention)? Have you wished that you could find a way to deal with the student who seems to completely monopolize and/or sidetrack the discussion? Have you experienced the student who seems more intent on challenging you than learning the material? In this session we will discuss classroom management challenges that are frequently encountered in a teaching environment, strategies for preventing them, and methods for managing the classroom and dealing with your students when they do occur.

Session 5: Careers in academia...what is right for you?

Description: Are you contemplating an academic career but are unsure about what's involved? Do you want to learn more about the differences in faculty roles and expectations placed on faculty at research institutions, four-year colleges, and community colleges? We will explore the range of job choices in academia and how the faculty role is influenced by characteristics and culture of the institution.

Session 6: Navigating the academic job market

Description: With fewer tenure track positions and more competition, how do you distinguish yourself as a serious candidate? In this session we will address preparing your CV and your research statements. We will also respond to questions such as:

- How can you foster professional networks in your discipline that can lead to job market success?
- How do you prepare for your job interview?
- What kinds of issues should you consider in negotiating an academic job offer?

Session 7: The transition to a faculty role

Description: In this final session we will come back to your teaching philosophy, integrating additional insights gained across the semester. This session will also highlight issues that arise in the transition from graduate student to faculty member, paying particular attention to issues related to student mentoring and negotiating the tenure process.