

Teaching Fellows Program
Center for Engaged Learning, Furman University

Rev. 03-12-2024

Purpose of the Program

The Teaching Fellows Program pairs students with faculty for experience in course design/development, small group facilitation, and/or content delivery. Faculty benefit by enhancing their students' learning and gaining new perspectives on their courses, while Fellows gain valuable preparation for careers in education, coaching, leadership, professional training, or graduate teaching assistantships. While not all courses are ideal candidates for hosting a Teaching Fellow, faculty should view participation as an opportunity, not an obligation.

Common Fellow Models

Feedback from current faculty mentors has revealed four promising models for Fellow partnerships, although this is not an exhaustive list.

1. **Course integration:** Fellow partners with you to support course instruction and may be involved in lecture, leading activities, or facilitating student or group interaction during class meeting times.
2. **Project-based:** Fellow partners with you to advance a specific pedagogical strategy (flipped or active learning activities) or instructional technology advancement (clickers, GenAI, Kahoot). For example, A Furman faculty member mentored a Fellow from another department (CSC) as they wrote a program that allowed students in their course to more easily visualize the pedagogical goal of the course.
3. **Supplemental Instruction/Support:** Fellow partners with you to support supplemental instruction intervention or support for your course. Fellows may or may not attend class sessions.
4. **Course Design:** Fellow partners with you to develop and design a new course, perhaps participating in the course once it is offered.

Program Parameters

- **Eligibility:** Normally seniors/juniors with previous enrollment and excellence in the course, with a 3.0+ GPA in their major(s).
- **Compensation:** \$600 per semester for 4-5 hours weekly activity. Academic credit may not be awarded for the fellowship.
- **Role:** Collaborative partners, not assistants for mundane tasks or course monitoring, for defined aspects of the course (see promising models above). Fellows cannot participate in the grading of academic work.
- **Application:** Rolling basis until first day of class each semester; student submits app., faculty & department chair approve, CEL confirms.

- **Sustainability:** Departments should assume responsibility for a Fellow(s) after a trial period (3-4 years) for courses needing ongoing Fellows. The CEL will not support Fellows in perpetuity.
- **Faculty Support:** Currently there is no stipend for mentoring Fellows.

Mentor Approved Promising Practices

Members of the Furman community have shared the following promising practices about how best to engage with, use, and support a Teaching Fellow.

- Teaching Fellows are particularly useful when they can be in direct contact with students around a particular **hands-on assignment** or activity. Faculty have expressed success with Fellows using small-group work in class, and in lab settings for additional support.
- Some faculty have mentored Fellows to take on small mini-lectures or responsibilities for components of **course delivery**, although this may be more successful with particularly strong students with a solid experiential foundation.
- Decisions about whether or not the Teaching Fellow should **attend class sessions** depends on the focus of the Fellow's responsibilities and interests. If the Fellow's presence in class is necessary, it is important to recognize that there are a limited number of hours per week available to the Fellow.
- The Teaching Fellowship tends to produce the best results when the faculty member invests time to set clear expectations, **meet with their Fellow** throughout the semester, discuss strategy and tactics for their role in the course, and provide ongoing feedback.
- Some faculty have expressed an interest in providing **training for or collaborative planning opportunities with the Fellow** in advance of the course. The CEL and the FDC are taking this into consideration.
- Faculty members have indicated that students tend NOT to take advantage of **Teaching Fellows' office hours**, and thus that is probably not the best use of a Fellows' time. Exceptions are when Fellows hold office hours outside the normal work day, e.g. in the evening, or in advance of a particular assignment or test.

Outcome Assessment

Currently, there is no formal mechanism in place to assess the Teaching Fellow program. However, faculty mentors are welcome to consider assessing both the impact of the Fellow on the course and student learning and the impact of the experience on the Fellow.

For Course Impact:

- **Student feedback:** Include questions in mid-semester feedback or end-of-semester evaluations specifically about the Fellow's interaction (e.g., clarity, helpfulness, accessibility).

- **Review of Fellow contributions:** Assess the quality (accuracy, clarity, impact) of Fellow-led sessions, labs, or discussions through direct observation and feedback.
- **Analysis of student performance:** While not solely attributable to the Fellow, consider if there are positive trends in student learning outcomes in areas where the Fellow played a leading role. This can be especially helpful when compared to duplicate courses without a Fellow.

For Fellow Impact:

- **Self-reflection:** Encourage Fellows to reflect on their teaching experiences through journaling or guided conversations. Prompt them to identify areas of strength and weakness, and set goals for improvement.
- **Peer observation:** Facilitate opportunities for Fellows to observe one another to learn new strategies and gain different perspectives.
- **Formal evaluation:** Organize regular meetings to provide constructive feedback on the Fellow's performance, focusing on specific examples and offering suggestions for improvement.