USING UNDERGRAD TA’S TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION

Wayne Knoblauch, Professor
Applied Economics and Management, CALS

Description:

(1) Course is AEM 3020, Farm Business Management: Topics include Income Statements, Balance Sheets, Cash Flow Statements, Business Analysis, Investment Analysis, Form of Business Organization, Machinery Economics, Human Resource Management, etc.
(2) Three lectures and three lab sections each week
(3) Normally 6 to 8 Undergrad TA’s and 1 Grad TA
(4) All Undergrad TA’s have taken the course and done well
(5) Undergrad TA’s receive 3 credits of Supervised Teaching Experience
(6) Each Undergrad TA will develop and teach at least one lab exercise and problem set
(7) All will grade problem sets and exams
(8) All will hold office hours
(9) All will participate in holding review sessions for the exams
(10) I conduct the field trips during lab as well as the lab the first week of class
(11) Weekly meeting to organize and plan for the week ahead, usually on Monday at 8 am
(12) Grad TA responsible for recording grades in Black Board and for one week of lectures, usually on economic principles

Keys to Success:

(1) Labs assigned to Undergrad TA’s at the beginning of the semester
(2) Weekly meeting to coordinate “who is doing what” during the week
(3) Send out emails summarizing responsibilities as discussed and assigned during Monday meeting
(4) Review of printed material, lab exercises and problem sets, one week before it is sent to the printer. Review answer keys twice.
(5) Review material so all are comfortable teaching the topic or ask who is most comfortable
(6) Coordinate grading, each TA grades same questions on all exams and problem sets
(7) Hire only those who want to be a TA
(8) A good administrative assistant!
(9) Good organization: Changing direction of a course is like turning a cruise ship around quickly, it can’t be done!
(10) A class that wants to learn and enjoys humor!