# Teaching Assistant (TA) Job Description - Fall 2021

**RAP Seminar Instructor**

**Name of Instructor _____________________________  RAP ______________________________**

RAP courses provide the framework for first-year college students to master course content, cultivate academic skills and develop valuable relationships with instructors and peers. The general **mission** of RAP is to foster student success and satisfaction academically, personally and socially, while increasing retention and student progress toward graduation.

**PRIMARY RAP GOALS**

**Related to student experience:**
- Support students in achieving a *smooth transition* to college life.
- Provide students with the opportunity to develop *lasting connections* with their peers and instructor.
- Ensure students are aware of the **multitude of resources** and **opportunities** that are available at UMass Amherst.
- Help students embrace the relationship between **healthy living strategies** and academic and personal success.
- Guide students in the development/advancement of various **skills** to achieve success in college and beyond.

**Related to instructor experience:**
- RAP will provide **support** to instructors in their work; from syllabus development, exploring type of assignments, rigor/student workload, classroom dynamics, and interactions with and any concerns regarding students.
- RAP will provide **opportunities for instructors to learn and grow** through group meetings with other instructors (from various departments), mid-semester feedback tool, as well as individual meetings with RAP staff.

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**Qualifications:**
- Experience working with first-year college students or willingness to participate in training
- Understanding of and agreement to comply with the **RAP Specific Responsibilities** (see below)
- Consent of department/college

**Teaching Responsibilities:** *(NOTES: 1. the information below applies whether the course is being taught face-to-face or remotely. 2. Remote instruction is expected to be done synchronously whenever possible.)*

**Common Content**

Every First-Year Seminar will contain the elements of the common content which attend to the following themes/goals:

1. **Enhancing Engagement:** Ensure students are well informed about the wide array of opportunities and campus resources that will assist them and enhance their college experience.
2. **Building Connections:** Foster students’ understanding of the transition from high school to being part of a college community and the core values and community standards defining what it means to be a member of the UMass Amherst community.
3. **Self-Guided Learning:** Introduce students to the importance of utilizing mindful time management, targeted study strategies, and intentional planning for academic achievement and pathways to success.

**Curriculum:**
- Engage students in activities that explore the seminar topic.
- Incorporate information from the **Student Success Planner & Handout** (available online) into the seminar.

**Require** students to complete:
- One reflection activity verbally and/or in writing that articulates their expectations for the RAP Seminar experience
- **Optional**: Have your students to attend a “RAP Well-Being Workshop”. Details to be provided.

**Methods:** Establish a dynamic classroom environment that:

- Affirms student identity throughout the semester; employ age/course appropriate activities that provide opportunities for students to become better acquainted with their classmates with a goal of building a stronger class community.
- Utilizes local newspapers, websites, field trips on and off campus, guest speakers, small group and/or individual activities and/or group projects to explore the seminar topic when possible.
- Encourages students to make academic, social, and extra-curricular connections across the university and the surrounding community.
- Supports first-year students in achieving a smooth transition to the college life:
  - Encouragement of speaking up in class, sharing experiences and asking questions
  - Utilizing technology opportunities such as Moodle discussion
  - Encourage students to seek assistance with any concerns by utilizing office hours as well as through other support venues across campus

K. Weilerstein 3/12/2021
### RAP meetings/collaboration

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<th>What:</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Where</th>
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<td>Meet with Kathy (<a href="mailto:kathyw@umass.edu">kathyw@umass.edu</a>) or Maureen (<a href="mailto:porter@acad.umass.edu">porter@acad.umass.edu</a>) before TA contract is submitted to Graduate Assistantship Office for processing</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Via Zoom or phone</td>
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| To understand expectations of a RAP instructor and confirm that it’s a good fit  
  - NEW INSTRUCTORS: learn about RAP mission, goals and structure and introduction  
  - RETURNING INSTRUCTORS: discuss and reflect on prior experience. Learn about any changes for the upcoming year. Discuss common resources that students will be receiving. | | |
| Attend a lunch meeting with staff from the residence halls (choose one day from 2 options during **week #1 or week #2**) | Early Sept. | Goodell 416 or via Zoom (tbd) |
| Community Development: Meet the folks working with your students in the residence hall and learn about ways that we can collaborate with each other | | |
| Meet 2x with Kathy and/or RAP staff and small group of instructors in a Faculty Learning Community Meeting - **week #4 and week #10** of the semester. | Week #4 and Week #10 | Goodell 416 or Via Zoom (tbd) |
| Ensure instructors are learning new tools and skills – growing as teachers.  
Ensure students are gaining an exceptional experience  
In a facilitated environment, share information with other instructors regarding course content, classroom environment, successful teaching strategies, assessment techniques as well as instructor generated topics. | | |

**NOTE:** Faculty Learning Community Meeting formats may be revised due to COVID-19 if needed. These meetings are OPTIONAL for seminar instructors.

### RAP Specific Expectations

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<tr>
<td>Submit seminar description for website</td>
<td>March/April</td>
<td>email to RAP</td>
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<td>Updated seminar descriptions provide timely information for students to choose RAP</td>
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| A welcome email.  
  1. The RAP office will provide a template that you can personalize  
  2. Send your edits and confirm that we have your correct UMass email so the students can reply to you if they have questions/comments  
  3. The email will be sent from the RAP office once enrollment is complete | June/July | Email to Kathy |
| To connect early with students and help them get excited about the fall. | | |
| Submit syllabus for review and feedback. | By mid-August | Online |
| Ensure that all elements on the Syllabus Checklist are included.  
Ensure that information and expectations are well articulated and easily understandable by first-year students. | | |
| Facilitate student completion of **RAP Mid-semester Feedback Survey during class time** **week #6** | Week #6 | Classroom |
| Collect feedback for instructors with ample time remaining in the semester to make changes if needed. | | |
| Have students complete **SRTIs** on the last day of class **during class time**. | Last day of class | Classroom |
| Get critical feedback for instructors and program analysis. | | |
| Complete end of semester **instructor** RAP survey (if given). | By specified deadline | Online |
| Ensure that the RAP office gets meaningful information that could lead to programmatic changes for subsequent semesters. | | |