

Rachel Carson College Instructional Course Assistants

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Rachel Carson College Instructional Course Assistants (CAs) are peer mentors who work with the first-quarter Rachel Carson College 1 course.

CAs receive five units of undergraduate credit while gaining strategies for effective college leadership and teaching, including: (1) cultivating a culture of community around the course's environmental themes; (2) enhancing the culture of inclusiveness, accessibility, and academic community among the diverse Rachel Carson College student body; (3) teaching and modeling academic expectations of university discourse, including analytical thinking, critical reading, and thoughtful writing expected in university coursework; and (4) teaching and learning in classroom environments. CAs help model successful critical thinking and university-level expectations for first-year Rachel Carson College students.

CAs work closely with college faculty and can be involved in a variety of activities such as leading small group discussions, discussing readings and assignments with students, leading part of a section discussion or activity, consulting with students about the content and understanding of their work, helping students in conceptual and logistical phases of their field project, and anything else that faculty and the seminar instructor decide would be worth doing. CAs are instrumental in mentoring the new cohort of students in critical reading, including commenting on weekly Key Concepts student assignments. They attend the seminar class meeting, the Plenary, and pedagogical discussions with the College Course Coordinators.

For five units of credit, CAs are expected to put in about 15 hours of work each week.

1. 1-2 hrs/wk meeting with Course Coordinators
2. 1.75 hrs/wk attending Plenary
3. 3.25 hrs/wk attending seminar class
4. 7 hrs/wk commenting on reading responses, meeting with students and with faculty, holding office hours or small group discussions
5. CAs are expected to read or review all course readings; readers will be provided.
6. CAs complete a final reflective paper that assesses their experience, performance, and learning outcomes in the course. The audience for the final paper includes future CAs.

CAs will be trained in educational strategies for seminar, lecture, and assignments, including:

1. Effective peer mentoring and peer advising that increases student connection to the college community and campus services, including student reflection on college culture, academic goals, and career goals
2. Effective leadership and guidance in class and individually with students
3. Encouraging learning through meaningful feedback
4. Encouraging and modeling active, critical thinking and learning

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5. Teaching the reading difficult texts
6. Synthesizing lecture information and taking effective notes on curricular concepts

CAs are evaluated through their mentoring feedback from the College Course Coordinators and the seminar faculty with whom they are working.