

CFA Research Brief #1: Teaching Associates in the CSU

Summary

- The number of Teaching Associates (TAs) employed by the CSU has increased significantly in the 1990s;
- The most dramatic increases came during the recession years of the early 1990's. During this same period the number of CSU lecturers declined and student enrollment contracted;
- The current budget crisis could potentially result in CSU lecturers being replaced by TAs

Introduction

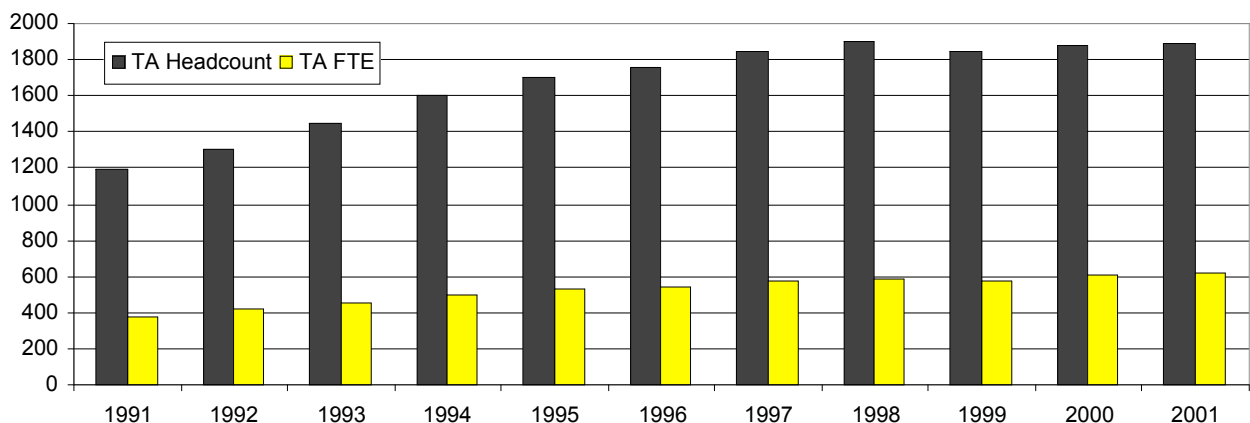
The California State University, like many institutions of higher education, employs a number of graduate students to provide in-class instruction. When utilized properly, teaching associates (TAs) can serve a valuable role in the university setting. TAs can deliver quality instruction when provided with the proper tools and training. Students who intend on entering a teaching career after graduation can gain vital classroom experience through employment as a TA.

Graduate students are properly classified as Teaching Associates when they perform instructional activities as a part of their degree requirements. Student employees that perform instructional duties for reasons other than meeting academic requirements should be classified as lecturers and included in the CFA bargaining unit.

Growth in Teaching Associates

The CSU's use of Teaching Associates (TAs) has increased significantly over the last decade. In 1991 the CSU employed 1,189 TAs. By 2001 the number of TAs has grown to 1,892, an increase of 59.1 percent. When converted to full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, the number of TAs climbed from 373 in 1991 to 622 in 2001, an increase of 66.8 percent.

Figure 1: Teaching Associates Employed in the CSU



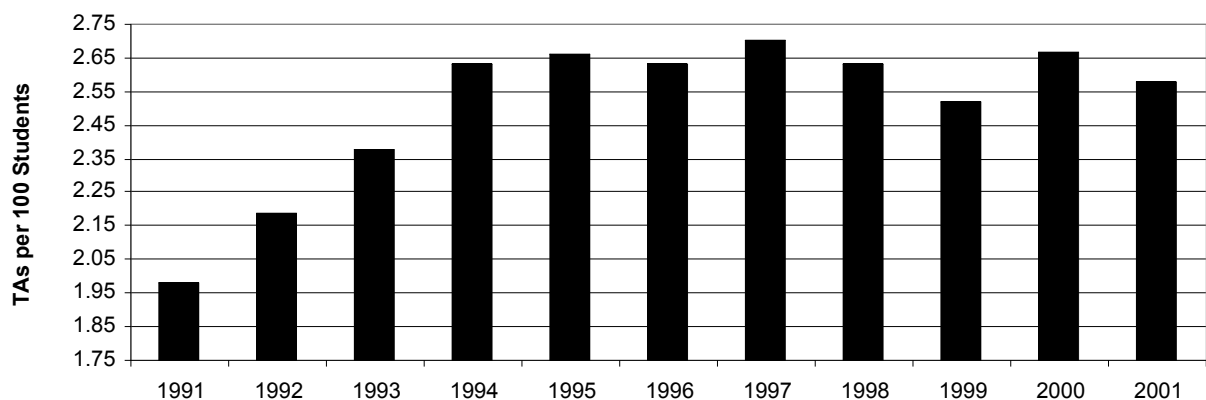
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Headcount	1,189	1,309	1,451	1,607	1,706	1,762	1,841	1,902	1,850	1,878	1,892
% Incr.	--	10.1%	10.8%	10.8%	6.2%	3.3%	4.5%	3.3%	-2.7%	1.5%	0.7%
Cum. %											59.1%
FTE	373	417	449	494	532	546	573	581	580	607	622
% Incr.	--	11.8%	7.6%	10.1%	7.7%	2.5%	5.1%	1.3%	-0.1%	4.7%	2.4%
Cum. %											66.8%

The most significant increases in TA employment came in the early to mid-1990s. The total number of full-time equivalent TAs increased by 7.5 percent or more in each year from 1992 to 1995, a period of significant budgetary hardship. It is important to note that lecturer FTE declined precipitously at approximately the same time TA employment expanded, falling by 38.6 percent between 1990 and 1993 (4,396 in 1990 to 2,699 in 1993). *It appears as though the CSU used increasing numbers of TAs to assume some of the teaching responsibilities normally met by lecturers.* The CSU began hiring lecturers as the State's fiscal condition improved during the latter portion of the decade.

Teaching Assistants and Student Enrollment

One would expect changes in total TA employment to correspond with the changes in student enrollment (particularly graduate student enrollment) increases. This is not the case in the CSU. The number of TAs grew much more rapidly than graduate student enrollment during the 1990's. From 1991 to 2001 CSU graduate student enrollment (FTE) increased by 27.6 percent while TA employment (FTE) grew by 66.8 percent. In other words, a much greater proportion of the CSU graduate student population has taken on teaching responsibilities during the 1990s. In 1991 there was 1.98 full-time equivalent TAs for every 100 FTE graduate students. By 2001 this ratio had grown to approximately 2.58 TAs per 100 graduate students, an increase of 30.3 percent. The most significant increases in this ratio came in the early 1990s, when the number of TAs increased despite the fact that overall student enrollment declined.

Figure 2. Full-Time Equivalent TAs per 100 Graduate Students



	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Grad Enrollment	18,878	19,022	18,879	18,799	20,033	20,757	21,255	22,059	23,027	23,853	24,090
TA FTES	373	417	449	494	532	546	573	581	580	607	622
TAs per 100 Grad Students	1.98	2.19	2.38	2.63	2.66	2.63	2.70	2.63	2.52	2.55	2.58

Information by Campus

CSU campuses vary widely in their use of TAs. Not surprisingly, TAs are used most often at the system's larger campuses. Six CSU campuses (Fresno, Fullerton, Long Beach, Northridge, San Diego and San Francisco) employ over 100 TAs each. In sum, these six campuses employ over two-thirds of the TAs in the system. San Diego is the single largest employer of TAs in the CSU with over 500, or approximately 25 percent of the total TA headcount. Several smaller campuses (Dominguez Hills, Monterey Bay, Maritime Academy) do not utilize TAs.

Figure 3: Teaching Associates Employed at CSU Campuses (Headcount)

Campus	1991 Headcount	2001 Headcount	Percent Change
Bakersfield		2	n/a
Channel Islands			n/a
Chico	34	97	185.3%
Dominguez Hills			n/a
Fresno	111	119	7.2%
Fullerton	52	136	161.5%
Hayward	31	49	58.1%
Humboldt	15	50	233.3%
Long Beach	136	180	32.4%
Los Angeles	70	94	34.3%
Maritime Academy			n/a
Monterey Bay			n/a
Northridge	136	149	9.6%
Pomona	27	63	133.3%
Sacramento	40	79	97.5%
San Bernardino		13	n/a
San Diego	358	506	41.3%
San Francisco	106	159	50.0%
San Jose		76	n/a
San Luis Obispo	58	77	32.8%
San Marcos		20	n/a
Sonoma	14	15	7.1%
Stanislaus		8	n/a
CSU Total	1189	1892	59.1%

A number of campuses dramatically increased their utilization of TAs during the 1990's (see *Figure 3*). Three campuses (Chico, Fullerton, and Pomona) more than doubled their TA headcount. The number of TAs employed at Humboldt more than tripled. San Jose, which did not employ any TAs in 1991, had 76 in 2001. The TA headcount increased by 10% or less at only three campuses (Fresno, Northridge, and Sonoma).

The data follows much the same pattern when part time TA positions are converted to FTE positions (*Figure 4*).

Figure 4: Teaching Associates Employed at CSU Campuses (FTE)

Campus	1991 FTE*	2001 FTE*	Percent Change
Bakersfield		1.0	n/a
Channel Islands			n/a
Chico	10.4	27.0	160.2%
Dominguez Hills			n/a
Fresno	35.6	38.3	7.6%
Fullerton	13.2	39.7	200.0%
Hayward	7.4	15.5	108.0%
Humboldt	3.1	12.6	310.0%
Long Beach	39.5	52.9	28.0%
Los Angeles	27.3	34.9	33.9%
Maritime Academy			n/a
Monterey Bay			n/a
Northridge	43.4	52.1	20.2%
Pomona	10.3	22.2	114.8%
Sacramento	10.4	26.4	153.7%
San Bernardino		4.3	n/a
San Diego	127.4	206.6	62.1%
San Francisco	26.4	37.6	42.5%
San Jose		19.5	n/a
San Luis Obispo	15.0	19.7	31.6%
San Marcos		5.7	n/a
Sonoma	3.2	3.2	0.5%
Stanislaus		2.6	n/a
CSU Total	372.6	621.8	66.8%

*Rounded to nearest one tenth.

Conclusion

The number of Teaching Associates employed by the CSU has grown dramatically over the last decade. Taken by itself, this growth is not terribly problematic. However, when examined in a broader context, the data seems to indicate that TAs may have been used to supplant more expensive lecturer faculty during the lean budgetary years in the early 1990s. This practice is of great concern, especially considering the current state budget problems.

Unfortunately, low pay and lack of benefits in the TA classification and a steady decline in instructional spending may force departments to use TAs in the place of lecturers. Lean departmental budgets often leave department chairs with limited options: either staff a section with a TA or don't offer the course at all.

CFA recognizes the value and experience graduate students derive from working as TAs. *At the same time, leaders and activists must work to ensure that TAs are not used as replacements for lecturer faculty during lean budget years.* This will require departmental funding that is sufficient to avoid the lecturer/TA tradeoff.

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