

USF/UCSF Partnership for Mentoring and Teaching

Frequently Asked Questions: University of San Francisco Teaching Opportunities

Logistical questions:

- *How many students are enrolled in a lab section?*

Typically, lab sections have approximately 20 students. The maximum number of students in a lab section is 24.

- *Are office hours required for lab instructors?*

No, lab instructors spend 2-3 hours a week with students in lab and have sufficient time to interact. Lecturers will need to hold office hours (minimum 1 hour/week).

- *What are the responsibilities for lab instructors?*

Lab instructors typically are responsible for teaching a weekly lab section (2-3 hours) on their own and attending a weekly instructor meeting. Lab instructors also may be required to write and grade quizzes for their section, grade lab reports, grade lab practical exams, and/or grade homework assignments. These activities are course-dependent.

- *What do I do if I will have to miss a lab section during the semester for a professional commitment (e.g., attending a conference)?*

Typically, missing one week of lab can be accommodated and arranged at the start of the semester by trading with another lab instructor. There may be some weeks labs do not occur, such as weeks with holidays (including a fall break and spring break at mid-semester). Check with Deneb Karentz for specific scheduling concerns. Please note, it is difficult to accommodate vacation time.

- *What role does a lab instructor have in designing the syllabus?*

The syllabus for classes with multiple lab sections is created by the course professor and approved by the Biology Department. While lab instructors are not involved in the development of current syllabi, they will have the opportunity to provide suggestions for modification of the labs.

- *Are office hours required for lecture instructors?*

Yes, a minimum of one hour per week is mandated by the University of San Francisco. There is a part time faculty office available, and office hours can be scheduled before or after class.

- *If teaching a lecture course, how much freedom will the instructor have to modify the curriculum?*

For lower division courses required for Biology or Nursing majors, courses are standardized and syllabi are approved by the Biology Department. Instructors can modify how material is delivered and determine how students will be evaluated, but course content must be followed as presented in previous syllabi.

For upper division Biology courses, the part-time instructor will have more flexibility to change/modify the syllabus relative to course content, how students will be evaluated, etc.

- *Are there similar teaching opportunity partnerships with other departments besides Biology?*

Chemistry and Physics occasionally have teaching opportunities for part-time lab instructors and lecturers. Contact Deneb Karentz for more information.

Content questions:

- *What is an example of a lab activity for General Biology I lab?*

One of the labs investigates factors that affect enzyme activity. Students test how changes in pH or temperature alter enzymatic reaction rates.

- *What is a lab practical exam?*

At USF, students may be assessed by taking a lab practical. These are exams given in the lab with physical set ups from previous lab activities. For example, an actual dissected animal might be presented to students with a pin designating a specific structure, tissue, or organ that the students need to identify.

- *What is the “open lab” for human anatomy?*

The open lab is an optional lab section, a time for students to come and go as needed to review the lab material. There are no assignments or grading, the instructor of this section is responsible for answering student questions.

- *Is there an order that students take human physiology and human anatomy?*

No, nursing students can take these courses in either order. Nursing majors must take Human Anatomy, Human Physiology, and Microbiology during their first year (two semesters), and can do this in any combination (but not all three in the same semester).

Applying for a position:

- *Who can apply for part time teaching positions at USF?*

Anyone can apply for advertised positions. If you are a graduate student or post-doc, before you apply please check with your PI to see if they will support this extra

activity. If you are supported by a fellowship, you need to verify that outside employment is allowed.

- *Do I have to have prior teaching experience to be hired?*

Prior teaching experience is not required for lab instructor positions, the program is designed to provide teaching experience. Applicants for teaching full courses are expected to have prior teaching experience (at the minimum as a lab instructor at USF).

- *Who do you suggest for references?*

Usually applicants use their PI, collaborators, undergrad professors, etc.

- *Can you apply to teach a course you have not taken yourself?*

While you don't necessarily need to have taken the course you are applying to teach, you do need some indication in your background that you could teach a class in that particular subject area. This might be obvious in your CV, but should also be highlighted in your cover letter.

Mentoring an undergraduate in the lab:

- *How is the research mentor program organized?*

If you are interested in mentoring an undergraduate student in your lab, contact Deneb Karentz for information on advertising the opportunity. Positions can be paid or volunteer, with students typically working 8-12 hours per week during the school year, and perhaps more hours during the summer months. Deneb Karentz will post the advertisement, but applications will be sent directly to you for selection.

- *When is a good time of year to start a new student in the lab?*

Students are assigned and begin projects on a rolling basis throughout the year.