Undergraduate TA's Summary, 2026
Senate Faculty Standards Committee

Clarification notes: This report uses the term "Undergraduate teaching assistants (TA)" because it was used during discussions. Some participants had used this term in the past, before the newer term "Learning Assistants" was introduced.

Summary of Findings on Undergraduate Teaching Assistants at UConn
During the Fall 2025 semester, the Faculty Standards Committee met three times with multiple groups that oversee, or have direct knowledge of, the use of undergraduate students in teaching and pedagogical instruction. This summary describes findings from those meetings and discussions. The report also presents actionable recommendations for improving the role and oversight of undergraduate teaching assistants at UConn.

Goals of the Faculty Standards Committee Meetings
The purpose of these meetings was to provide the Senate Faculty Standards Committee (FSC) with an overview of current practices involving undergraduate students in instructional support roles across the University. This was not intended to be a comprehensive review of all programs, but rather discussions focused on key programs that represent the range of undergraduate teaching assistant roles at UConn.

In particular the meetings/discussions aimed to:

(i) Review existing models for undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs).
(ii) Examine program structures, including eligibility criteria, compensation models, training, supervision, and assigned responsibilities.
(iii) Identify possible areas of concern, particularly with respect to student data access, faculty workload, and the relationship between undergraduate support roles and graduate assistant positions.

Summary of Discussions and Findings

The committee heard presentations from three groups that use undergraduate students in instructional support roles.

(1) Dr. Kristen Govoni (Associate Dean of Academic Programs, CAHNR) provided an overview of undergraduate support programs within CAHNR. Undergraduate teaching assistants for instructional assistant (Term used by AHS) have previously completed the course and work under close

supervision of instructors or graduate assistants. Undergraduates are assigned when there is a clearly defined instructional need and are not allowed to grade high-stakes assignments. Participation is credit-based. The Departments of AHS, PVS, and ANSC currently employ this model. Nutritional Science is exploring its adoption, and Natural Resources and the Environment (NRE) is piloting a paid model rather than a for-credit approach.

(2) David Ouimette (Executive Director, Institute for Student Success) and Leo Lachut (Director of Academic) described two long-standing programs within First-Year Experience (FYE): the Undergraduate Mentor program and the Supplemental Instruction (SI) program. Undergraduate Mentors are paired with FYE courses and enroll in a 3-credit EPSY companion course focused on para-professional skills and professional development. Their primary role is to support student transition, belonging, and engagement. The SI program employs paid undergraduate students who work with faculty and conduct exam review sessions. Students commit approximately 10 hours per week (cost $3500/semester). Both programs have grown substantially over time and attract strong student interest. The programs are very popular and have received great feedback from both undergraduate students and faculty. Students participating in these programs do not have gradebook (HuskyCT) access and students receive appropriate training, including FERPA compliance.

(3) Dr. Daniel Burkey (Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs, College of Engineering) presented on the Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) program within the College of Engineering. Established in 2014 during a period of enrollment growth, the program initially included both for-credit and paid options but later transitioned exclusively to a paid student labor model. Students preferred a paid model over a credit-based approach. UTAs are vetted, required to complete asynchronous training modules, and must reapply each semester. The number of UTAs is based on departmental needs and available funding. UTAs work approximately 9-10 hours per week at an average cost of $2,500 per student per semester. Their responsibilities are explicitly limited. For instance, UTAs may not independently teach classes and may only assist with grading low-stakes assignments. However, UTAs have access to the course gradebook (HuskyCT). The program currently supports approximately 100-120 students annually across multiple majors, though participation is expected to decline due to the elimination of college-level financial support.

Conclusions and Issues Identified

Based on the discussions, the committee reached the following conclusions and identified the following:

(i) Undergraduate instructional support programs are used across the university and can provide pedagogical and professional benefits when clearly structured and appropriately supervised.
(ii) Considerable variation exists across colleges and programs with respect to compensation models (credit vs paid), funding sources, training requirements, and oversight mechanisms.
(iii) Access to gradebooks (HuskyCT not Peoplesoft) is a major concern and underscores the need for clearly defined training requirements and safeguards.
(iv) Faculty involvement in supervising UTAs and SI students may increase instructional workload without corresponding recognition or compensation.
(v) There is concern that UTAs could potentially reduce graduate assistant opportunities, leading to a decreased number of graduate students.

Suggestions to Move Forward

Considering these findings, the committee suggests that the Senate Executive Committee to work with the Provost's office to develop policies regarding instruction by undergraduate students:

(i) To establish an umbrella title for undergraduate students serving as teaching or instructional assistants to distinguish them from graduate teaching assistants.
(ii) Develop institution-level guidance that clearly defines UTAs permissible roles, responsibilities, with explicit guidance related to HuskyCT.
(iii) Establish baseline training requirements applicable across programs, with particular emphasis on FERPA compliance.
(iv) Acknowledge and document faculty workload associated with the supervision of UTAs.
(v) Support UTA programs while ensuring the availability of graduate assistant positions.

Additional Suggestions from SEC

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) reviewed this report and agreed with its findings, adding the following additional recommendations:

(i) The development and delivery of a robust training module for all students participating in a UTA experience in addition to accessible resources for both students and faculty to support this programming

(ii) The development of appropriate constraints for when this type of support is appropriate to be used so as not to compete with Graduate Assistants and to ensure undergraduate students do not have access to sensitive information, such as potential FERPA concerns

Report Recommendations passed unanimously by voice vote during the November 2, 2026 Senate meeting