

April 27, 2011

Dear Undergraduates,

For the past several semesters, the Physics Department was able to offer a number of "Learning Assistant" positions to undergraduate physics majors would help with lower-division classes. These positions partnered upper-level majors with graduate assistants and faculty, and the undergraduate assistants performed a variety of tasks ranging from help in the laboratories, helping students with homework in recitation sections, and assisting with in-class problems during lectures. Next year, the Physics Department will be able to continue and even expand this program, and we would like you to consider applying for one of these positions.

The benefits of doing one of these internships are four-fold: (1) one never learns material as well as when one is teaching it; all the faculty say this, and it's really true. By working on the instructional team for one of the lower-division classes, you will significantly reinforce your knowledge of mechanics, E&M, waves, etc, and this is obviously a benefit as you go through the upper-division classes and take GRE exams, etc. (2) You will be acting as mentors to newer physics students and helping build the community of learners in this department; our newest students will really benefit from your 'senior statesman' guidance and advice, and you will undoubtedly enjoy getting to know more of the class here in the department besides the two or three people you may study with most frequently. (3) you will greatly improve the instruction of lower-division courses because you know the struggles that students face better than any of us faculty; we value input from experienced undergrads like yourselves on what's hard, what's easy, etc. (4) such positions are unusual in any department and a good resume builder in a variety of future job or graduate application contexts; what future employer wouldn't take note of a junior or senior in whom the faculty placed their trust?

Those interested should submit:

- a short letter stating their interest and reasons for wanting to be a Learning Assistant
- a brief CV showing which physics courses have been taken here at UT
- available time slots and a list of classes you would be interested in being an LA for the Fall 2011 semester (assuming you've already registered for classes); if you would like to be considered as an LA for PHY303K or L, please also indicate which sections (see the course schedule) you would be available for
- the names of two faculty who can be contacted about your academic record or previous teaching/mentoring/work experience.

These should be delivered to Lisa Gentry no later than May 20, 2011. Applicants can be either a current physics major or an alumnus/alumna of the lower-division physics classes (301, 302, 303, 315, 309, 316, 317, 319/355).

For first time LA's, in the Fall you will have to enroll in a section of NSC 109 (SMNR: INQUIRY-BASED TCH METHS). There will be two of these: unique number 47345 Th 4-5 and 47350 T 5-6.

I very much hope you will consider this significant opportunity to contribute to your own education and the educational mission of this department. If I can aid in your consideration of this idea, I am happy to meet with you to answer questions, etc.

Sincerely,

Greg O. Sitz
Professor of Physics and Undergraduate Advisor