UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING

IN CS

100+ Undergrad TFs

The Computer Science department at Harvard relies heavily on the work on undergraduate students to help teach nearly every class in the department.

A Difficult Job

Undergraduate TFs are expected to lead sections, grade student submissions, run Office Hours and more.

But ....

An amazing job! Teaching CS51 has been a highlight of my Harvard experience - I have learned so much about myself, and loved getting to teach others.

Training?

However, my research showed that training is sparse at best ++ many TFs reported feeling ill-prepared. Many TFs are first time-teachers, and are given little to no training before starting to teach.

Support?

Very few Bok Center resources even acknowledge the existence of undergraduate teachers, and there are no departmental resources allocated to undergraduate teachers.

Other Models:

At schools like Stanford, Berkeley and Princeton, for-credit classes exist such that undergraduate TFs can learn to teach... All new TFs enroll in a course on pedagogy together.

@ Harvard

Little to no resources exist to support undergraduate teachers. Imagine a world in which we invested in the development of outstanding undergraduate teachers, rather than expecting them to learn on the fly.

Conclusion

There is so much more that the department can do to help undergraduate TFs prepare for and flourish in a job that they love.

Actionable Recommendations:

1 - Develop a curriculum for Pedagogy x CS, preparing enrolled undergraduates to teach for the first time.
2 - Invest more heavily in support for undergrad teachers, and in developing a community across course staffs (ie: Slack).
3 - Harvard, institutionally, must acknowledge the contributions of undergraduate educators + invest in their development.