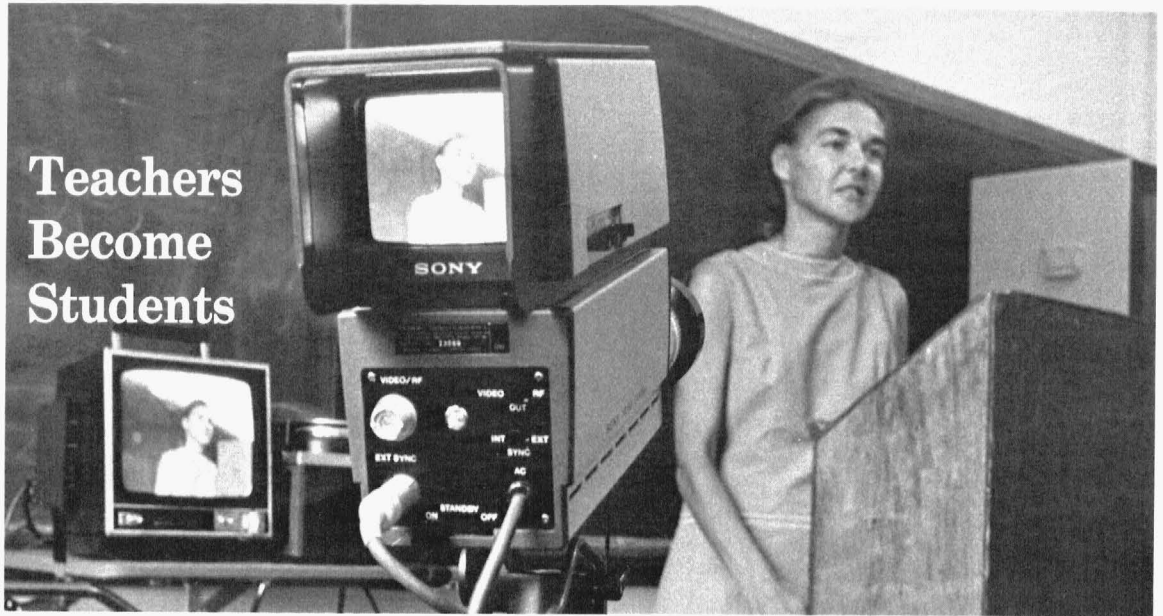


Tit for TAT

Teachers Become Students



"Your classroom situation is as follows: the degree to which the teacher dominated the discussion is 0.71; the degree of student participation is 0.21; the frequency of encouragement is 0.41."

Thus "Hal" the computer has analyzed the "verbal interactive behavior" (VIB) in a classroom to show a teacher how to improve his classroom effectiveness. This computer supported measurement in VIB is a major breakthrough in effort to improve the quality of higher education. The technique is one of many devices being employed by the College of Education's Center for Educational Improvement in its Graduate Teaching Assistant Training program (TAT).

Teaching Assistants Training, originally established to aid those inexperienced graduate teaching assistants, has catered not only to their needs but to those of associate and full professors involved in teaching on the undergraduate level.

Robert G. Combs, an associate professor of electrical engineering, finished the TAT program last spring, and has been implementing some of his newly-learned techniques in engineering classes. He has seen a "drastic change" in the reaction of his students.

Combs told his students what he expected of them; then guided them toward a system of independent study. "Unfortunately, this wasn't like the system they were used to. Some of them felt a little uncomfortable." But now, Combs says, he is beginning to get a "positively charged attitude," although, "it's been a long, slow frustrating process."

Rating the verbal interaction between teacher and student and a process of self-analysis stress methods of involving teacher and student more directly in the learning process. Particular emphasis is put on involving the guy who sleeps in the back row, the one educators call the "passive recipient."

Norris D. Fox, TAT program coordinator, says the program is aimed at getting instructors to tell students what is expected of them, and then to get those instructors to "devise test methods that accurately measure these ob-

jectives." In other words, says Fox, "Education should not be a guessing game."

As an aid to self-analysis each member of the group is asked to present a five-minute segment of one of his classroom lectures. Performances are video-taped and played back for discussion and suggestions for improvement.

TAT instructors try to help enrollees see the learning process of grading and try to determine equitable standards in order to eliminate unreasonable and inconsistent grading practices. They learn to keep the anxiety level in the classroom low so that the learning process is not impeded. The general aim is to make the teaching assistant more sensitive to the needs and feelings of undergraduates.

Dr. Edward R. Ames, assistant professor of veterinary medicine, had been teaching three years when he enrolled in TAT last year. As a result of his experiences there, Dr. Ames initiated a learning experiment in his own classes. He released students from regular lectures during the latter half of the semester and directed small discussion groups in which the student was "responsible for his own learning."

"In a professional school," says Dr. Ames, "if we give all the students the time and the motivation, they can all learn the material on a mastery level." He says the TAT program gave him the "psychological support" to make what to him was a rather drastic change in procedure.

TAT is 2½-years-old. Originally, the idea for the program was that of John C. Thibault, chairman of the department of classical languages. "Although the program is offered on a purely voluntary basis," says Thibault, "I sort of push all my inexperienced teaching assistants into taking it."

When Thibault's idea became a reality, he went through the program himself. "It was extremely worthwhile."

After 13 years of teaching, he changed some of his methods. "I became much more conscious of what I was doing in the classroom. I know now how to be objectively fair in an examination.

"Just because you have a PhD does not mean you are a teacher," he says. □