ABSTRACT: In 1973 Illinois State University initiated a campus-wide program in which junior and senior undergraduates were selected to assist faculty teaching freshman-sophomore courses. One or more Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) positions were assigned to all but three departments in the university. Although similar in purpose to smaller programs at other institutions, the sheer size of the program at Illinois State posed a variety of unique questions about administrative procedures, acceptance, and effectiveness, which are answered in this report. In general, the program was deemed highly successful by the faculty and student assistants and has been continued and expanded.

The tradition of using graduate students as teaching assistants is well established. Only within the last decade, however, has the undergraduate's potential also been recognized, and then somewhat cautiously. At a handful of universities and colleges across the country a few bright, highly motivated undergraduates reportedly have made substantial contributions as teaching assistants to their own and other students' learning (Smith, 1974). In general, the undergraduate students in these programs are carefully selected and trained and used by an instructor to provide tutorial or remedial help, lead small group discussion sections, or grade examinations. The rationale for their involvement usually includes some reference to increased personalization of instruction at a minimum cost, the reduction of the teacher-student communication gap, and the personal advantages to the student assistants.
The Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) Program at Illinois State University was established by the Office of Undergraduate Instruction during the 1973–1974 academic year. Similar in intent to the programs elsewhere, the program at Illinois State differed significantly in size. Through an allocation of $65,000 for the academic year, 60 UTA positions were made available to the academic departments throughout the university during the first semester; the number of positions was expanded to 80 during the second semester. The program was designed to involve junior-senior undergraduate students as assistants to the faculty teaching freshman-sophomore courses in the University Studies (general education) program, particularly in the large-section University Studies courses.

Is size, in fact, a significant dimension for such a program? Are the administrative problems qualitatively comparable to smaller programs? The program was undertaken on a trial basis to discover answers to these and other important questions. Although Illinois State had the hindsight benefits of other programs and some experience of its own from the previous year, during which a few undergraduates were used as tutors or discussion leaders in several special instructional improvement projects, no knowledge was available of what would happen when an average of 70 positions was made available—especially during this period of financial belt tightening. This is a report of the first year’s experience with the program.

**ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE**

Each academic department was invited to submit proposals for allocation of UTA positions, describing the proposed use of each position or the functions to be performed by the UTA. University-wide guidelines specified that time devoted by the student UTA should not exceed 10 hours per week and that UTA positions should be structured that would improve instruction as well as provide an opportunity for qualified undergraduates to learn through participation in teaching. Routine clerical duties were not to be performed by UTAs. One other university-wide guideline stipulated that the faculty member was in charge of a course utilizing undergraduate teaching assistants and retained the responsibility for course content and grading. Where UTAs were assigned the task of grading quizzes, laboratory manuals, or other student assignments, the course student should have the right to request a review of the grade by the faculty member.