

WORKING WITH LEARNING ASSISTANTS

Add your institution name to your screen name, click the three dots at the top right corner of your zoom tile

laprogram.fiu.edu

LA Program is a **student-centered** evidence-based model

LEARNING ASSISTANT PROGRAM

STEM Transformation Institute, Florida International University

[The LA Program at FIU](#) ▾

[For LAs](#) ▾

[For Faculty](#) ▾

[Workshops](#) ▾

[News](#)

College of Arts, Sciences & Education

STEM Transformation Institute



[Best Practices and Student Support](#) ▾

[LAUNCHPAD Leadership Program for LAs](#)

AGENDA

- Essential Elements of the LA Model
- Break
- Designing your course to LAs

HOW THE WORKSHOP WORK

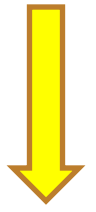
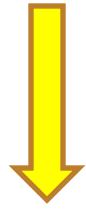
- Main Slides
- Groupwork Slide Deck: [CUE-T Groupwork Deck – Oct 20 2023.pptx](#)
- You will be able to tell where we are based on slide's color label

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY (FIU)

- **FIU is a Hispanic-Serving Institute**
- **~56,000 students, 61% of students are Hispanic**
- **400 Learning Assistants (LAs)/semester**
- **55 faculty**
- **11 Departments**
- **Impact on 10k student enrollments**
- **14 Active learning classrooms (48-270 each)**
- **LA Program expanded in 2015**

Active learning classrooms allow a variety of interactions between LAs and students





STEM Transformation Institute
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

LEARNING ASSISTANTS...

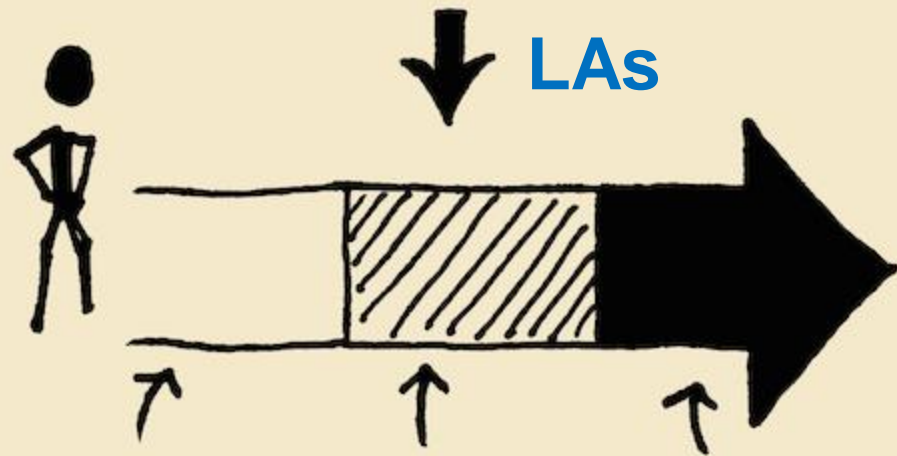
ARE NOT:

- Tutors
- TAs
- Graders
- Working only outside of class

ARE:

- They facilitate groups
- TAs help the teaching; LAs support the learning
- They can give feedback but should not have access to student grades in any way
- Working mostly during class

VISUALIZING THE ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT



THINGS YOU CAN
DO ALL ON
YOUR OWN

THINGS YOU
CAN DO WITH A
BIT OF HELP

THINGS YOU CAN'T
YET DO, NO MATTER
HOW MUCH SUPPORT
YOU GET

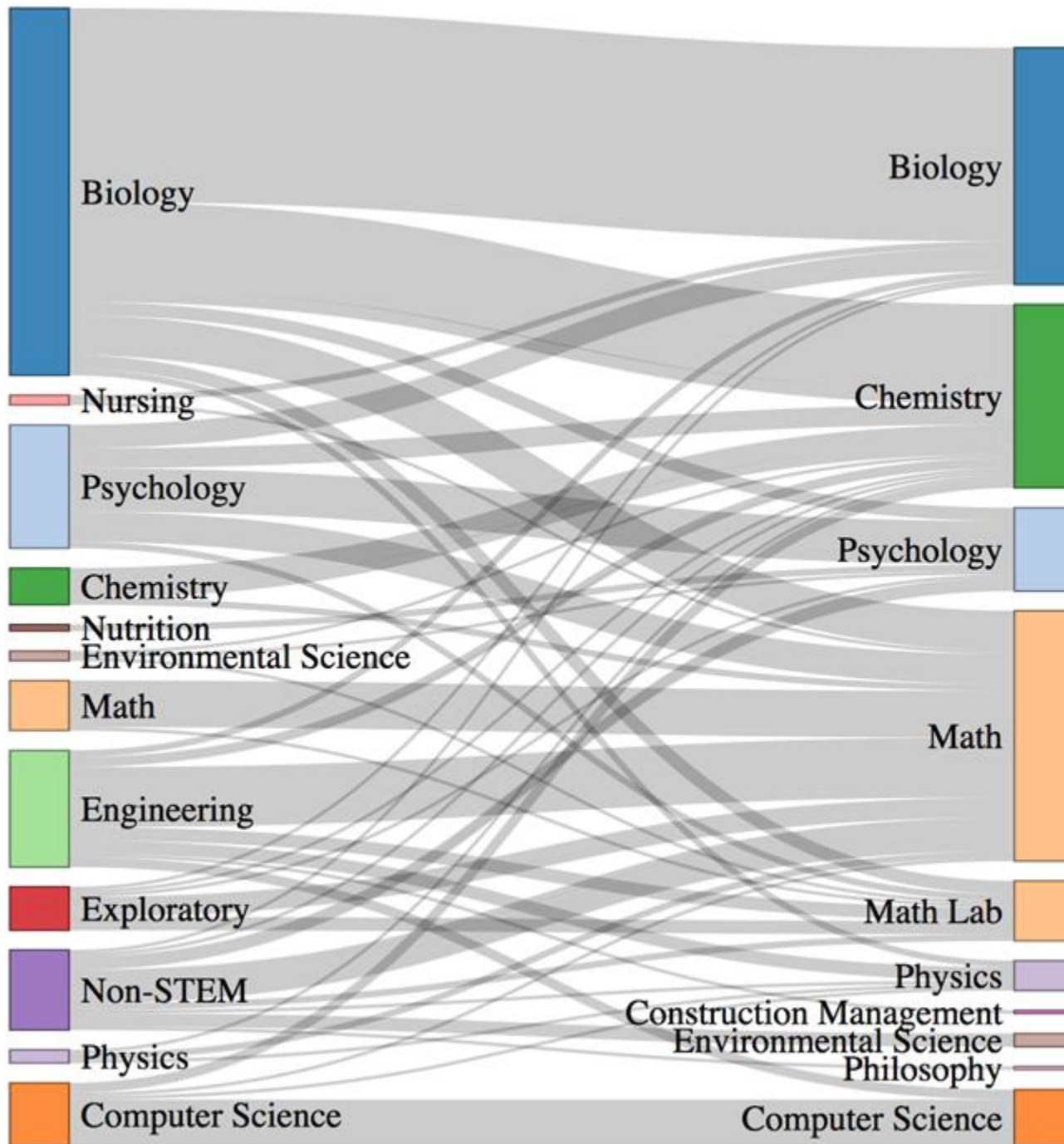
VERBALTOVISUAL.COM



IMPROVED LEARNING AND RETENTION

- Improved passing rates across courses at FIU and Nationally
- Improved Learning gains on concept inventories that measure gains in conceptual understanding
- What LAs do associates with gains in students' metacognitive awareness
- What LAs do associate with students believing in their ability to pursue careers in STEM (science identity) and their aspiration to stay in a STEM career (retention).
- LAs help students in class feel: safe, ok to make mistakes, noticed.

LAs' Major



The disciplines the LAs work in

LAs are often embedded in the departments of their major. They also have opportunities to explore different disciplines.

Spring 2018 cohort, N= 257 LAs

Credit: Luis Velderrama

With your institution team (if applies), describe your institution. Use the slide to summarize the following characteristics. Choose a spokesperson to share with the whole group. Also list your names & departments.

Institution Name:

Characteristics of your student population:

Institution strategic goals:

Do you have other peer learning models that might interface or complement the LA Program?

What do you hope to learn in the workshop?

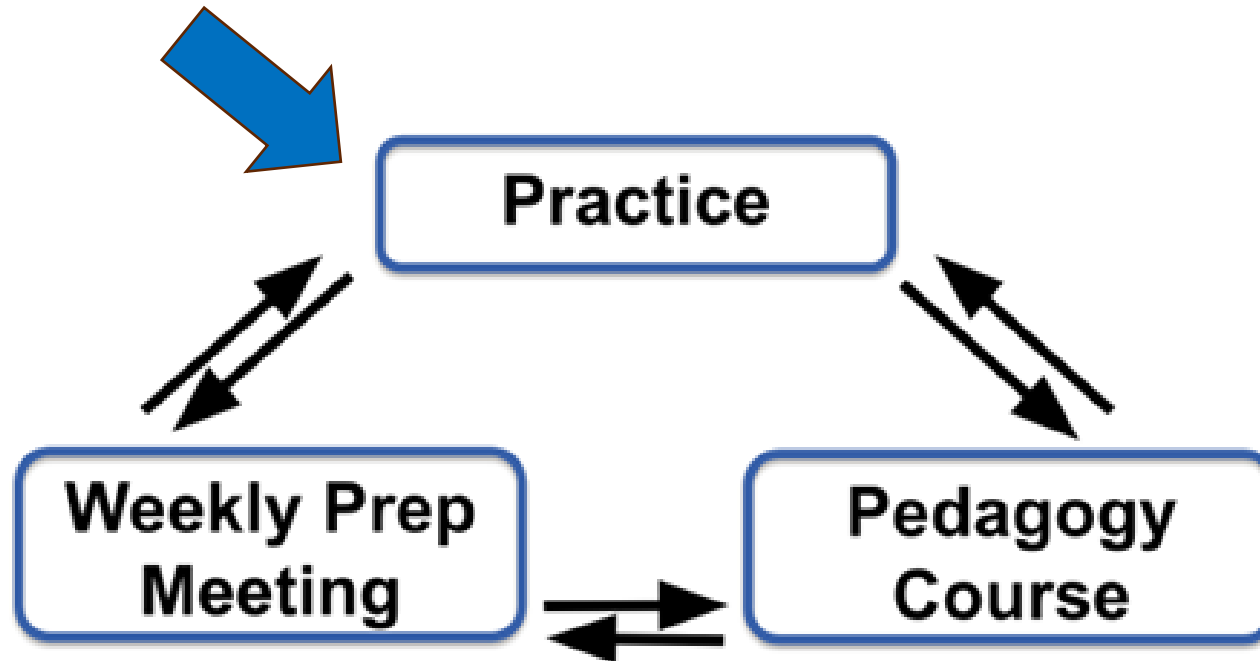
Your name(s) and department(s):

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE LA MODEL

- What is an LA?
- What elements are essential for an effective implementation?
 - Weekly planning meeting
 - LA Seminar



THE LEARNING ASSISTANT MODEL



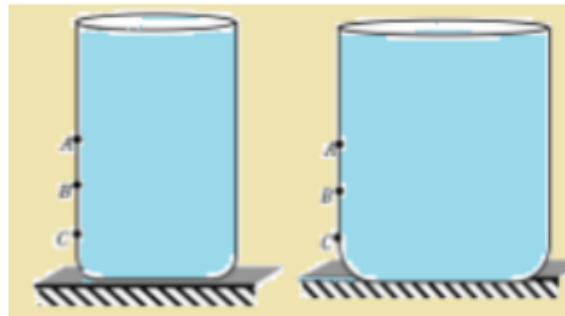
PRACTICE: CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

Try to answer these question on a piece of paper

Episode: "Depth" : **Task for students** (from *Open Source Tutorials in Physics Sense-Making*)

Two containers with small holes in their sides are filled to the brim.

- Using a dashed line, sketch the path you think the water from each hole will take when it leaves the container.
- Where do you think the water will squirt out the hardest, and where the most weakly (or will it be equal)?
- What causes the water to squirt out more strongly from some places than from others? Explain the idea that you think should guide your predictions from now on.



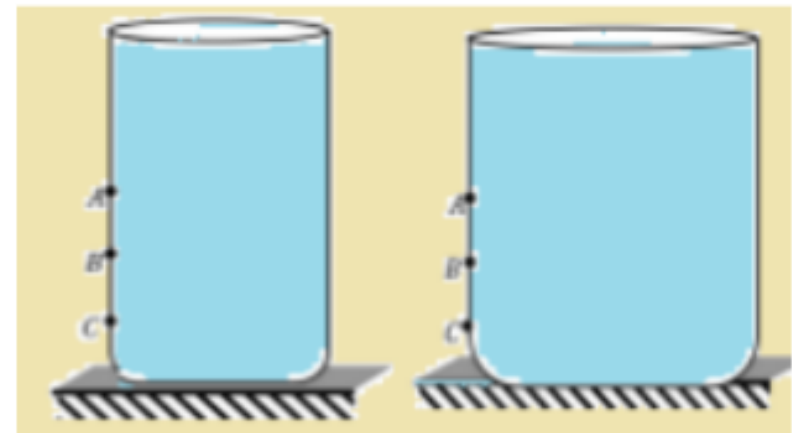
Episode: "Depth" : **Task for students** (from Open Source Tutorials in Physics Sense-Making)

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B. Where do you think the water will squirt out the hardest, and where the most weakly (or will it be equal)?

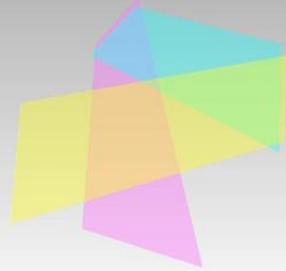
C. What causes the water to squirt out more strongly from some places than from others? Explain the idea that you think should guide your predictions from now on.



PRACTICE: CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

What have you noticed about the interaction with the LA?

How could we create these interactions in a remote class?



Periscope

Looking into learning

in best-practices physics classrooms

physport.org/periscope

Episode 101: “Depth”



*Filmed at the University of Maryland
using Open Source Tutorials*



Engaging the culture, changing the world®
Seattle Pacific
UNIVERSITY



PhysPort.org



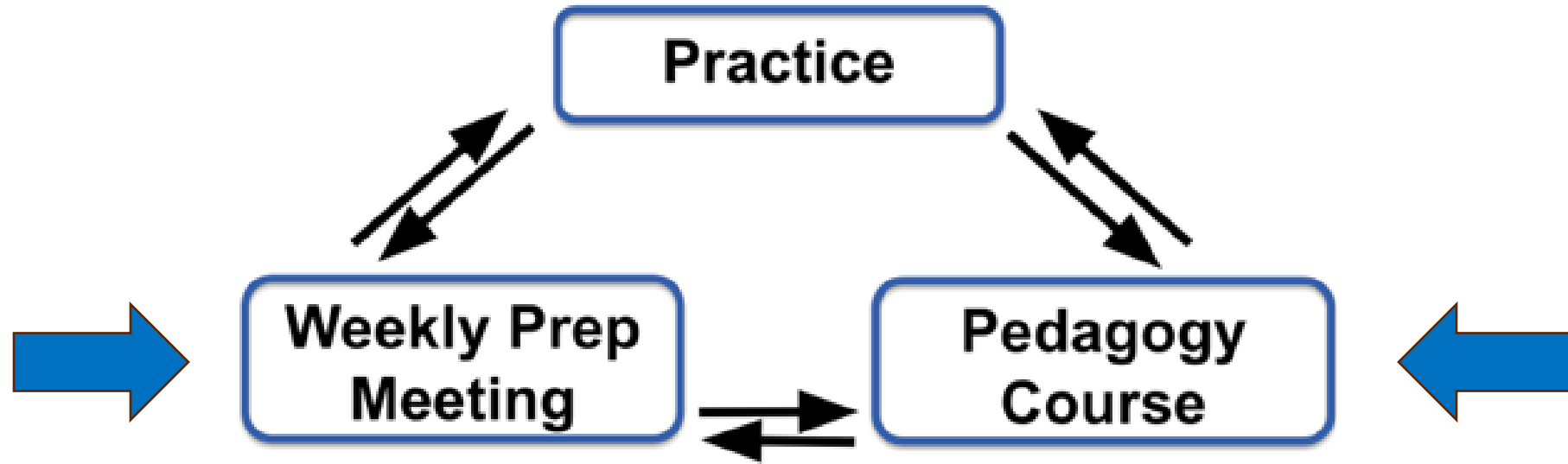
Supported in part by
NSF Grant No. 1323699

WRITE SOME THOUGHTS (ABOUT THE DEPTH VIDEO)

What have you noticed about the interaction with the LA?

How could we create these interactions in a remote class?

THE LEARNING ASSISTANT MODEL



ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE LA MODEL

Content planning meeting

- Weekly
- Faculty-LA Team
- Student difficulties with the content
- Learning strategies
- Facilitation techniques and guiding questions

LA Seminar

- 1 credit at FIU; No cost for CUE-T.
- Collaborative, equitable, inclusive learning
- Metacognitive thinking
- Design thinking

10 min break

IMAGINE YOUR COURSE WITH LAS

PART 1

THE IMPACT OF WORKING WITH LAS ON FACULTY

- In groups, examine 2 or 3 of the faculty answers to the following question – see slide
- Be prepared to share what do you hope the impact would be in your class?

THE IMPACT OF WORKING WITH LAS ON FACULTY

Can you describe the impact of working with LAs on you personally and your teaching? (You can describe the impact on LAs and students but please mention the impact on you)

"LAs in my classroom has been a lifesaver for me. I love doing active learning, but with the amount of students and the time each student requires attention, it would be impossible for me to teach the class the way I have it if it wasn't for LAs. I also love the experience of mentoring LAs and some of my LAs have stayed with me for 3-4 years (until they sadly graduate). I think the LA-faculty relationship can be benefit to both and since my passion is teaching and learning, I like to be able to share that passion with others. "

THE IMPACT OF WORKING WITH LAS ON FACULTY

Can you describe the impact of working with LAs on you personally and your teaching? (You can describe the impact on LAs and students but please mention the impact on you)

"Having LAs has helped me get "inside" feedback, so I know of issues or topics to discuss/reinforce. I also have learned a lot about great activities and fun ideas to get the students engaged, and I love that I can send things to the LAs that they can share with the students, such as research or job opportunities and events."

THE IMPACT OF WORKING WITH LAS ON FACULTY

Can you describe the impact of working with LAs on you personally and your teaching? (You can describe the impact on LAs and students but please mention the impact on you)

"Since this will be the first time I will be teaching a course fully online, it is important to me that I get feedback from students and LAs are great at giving me feedback from their experiences with other courses."

THE IMPACT OF WORKING WITH LAS ON FACULTY

Can you describe the impact of working with LAs on you personally and your teaching? (You can describe the impact on LAs and students but please mention the impact on you)

"Working with LAs has allowed me to introduce activities that involve open-ended questions, group projects that require written feedback. Additionally, I always consult with my LAs when I want to implement new activities or projects to ensure I take their perspective and opinions into account. That has saved me a lot of failed attempts."

THE IMPACT OF WORKING WITH LAs ON FACULTY

Can you describe the impact of working with LAs on you personally and your teaching? (You can describe the impact on LAs and students but please mention the impact on you)

"Because of LAs I have been able to move my in-person teaching to be completely active learning. I have virtually no lecture and all group work. With the LAs in my class, I do not feel pressured to be everywhere at once and can take my time with the students with whom I am working."

IMAGINE YOUR COURSE WITH LAS

PART 2

DESIGNING YOUR COURSE WITH LA

- Examples of classroom structures
- Examine 2 examples
- Create/review your own
- Prepare to share
- First individually and share with a partner

DESIGN YOUR COURSE WITH LEARNING ASSISTANTS

Please describe, in a few sentences, what a typical week of work in your course will look like with the addition of LAs in your class, include pre-class work, in-class activities, and any LA-facilitated activities.

Take a few minutes individually, to write an answer or review you answer in the faculty application

DESIGN YOUR COURSE WITH LEARNING ASSISTANTS

Please describe, in a few sentences, what a typical week of work in your course will look like with the addition of LAs in your class, include pre-class work, in-class activities, and any LA-facilitated activities.

Examine 2 examples and get ideas.

Add to your design if applicable.

Once you have it, share with a partner

EXAMPLE 1: 36 STUDENTS, 1 LA

- My class meets in-person on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11a-12:15p, this semester we have 36 students and I have one LA. In our weekly meetings, my LA and I go over the material from last week - what went well, what could change - and then discuss the upcoming lectures for the week and the activities we'll do. At the beginning of each class, the LA gives a brief discussion called "LA Observations" - they can talk about anything including things to pay attention to in the lectures, tips for studying, or things they observed last week and want to share (e.g., tendencies for students to focus on the wrong concept, etc.). Each class I have about 10-15 iclicker questions and 1-2 activities, during which the LA and I walk around and discuss concepts with each group.

EXAMPLE 2: 295 STUDENTS, REMOTE

My class meets remotely every Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00-12:15, this semester we have 295 students enrolled. I meet with my learning assistants every Monday from 12:00-12:30 to go over the assignments and learning activities the students will be working on for the week. Once we begin class on Tuesday I will lecture and engage the students with i-clicker questions throughout the lecture and give them opportunities to engage and ask questions. Midway through the lecture, I will break the students out into breakout rooms where each LA is assigned to, and in those breakout rooms, the students work with their LAs and their peers to complete the in-class activity. Once a few minutes have gone by we come back to the main room on ZOOM and I finish up the lecture. Once the lecture is complete they will be given another in-class activity and be broken out into breakout rooms again. Once they are finished we all meet up in the main room once again and this is where any students who still need some clarifications ask me questions and we stay together as long as they can after class.

EXAMPLE 3: 140 STUDENTS

Both sections of my course meet in-person two times per week, 75 minutes each session. One section has 196 students, the other one has 140. Students are expected to watch recorded lectures and/or complete assigned readings before each class. The first 15 minutes of class the students complete a closed reading quiz and they're allowed to use their notes (not the book or the web). After that, we review the quiz questions with the lowest averages and that's followed by a question-driven discussion. Every class (when there is no exam) students work in groups to answer either critical thinking questions polled with clickers, or a worksheet activity based on primary literature data. In both cases, LAs are critical to guide the students, answer clarification questions, and catch misconceptions. There is one group project during the last 3 weeks of the semester where the students receive initial feedback from me and the LAs before they have to submit their finalized work. Outside of class, the LAs hold Help Desk sessions every day of the week (different LAs each day), and the host a chat group with their assigned groups (3 to 4 groups per LA, four students per group).

EXAMPLE 4, 40 STUDENTS

My class sessions will meet Mo/We 2-3:15 PM and 3:30-4:45 PM. If enrollments are like this semester, I anticipate enrollments in the upper 40s in both sections. I typically have my one-hour meeting at the beginning of the week (so likely Monday morning or early afternoon in this case). We will discuss material and in-class projects for the week, covering both sessions. LAs will prepare for each session by completing the in-class project during their prep time, and ask me any questions. During each session I will deliver a brief lecture followed by a flipped class session with students working on their projects. LAs and I circle the room and assist teams as questions arise. LA office hours are agreed upon at the start of semester and students can visit those hours. LAs also have access to our Discord server for the class and will be able to answer questions that way as well.

EXAMPLE 5: 45 STUDENTS

My class meets twice a week from 5 to 7:10p.m with about 45 students.

Students read the classnotes in group and reflect on concepts. My learning assistants and I go around the class asking questions to different group and asking them to explain their understanding of the materials. If Students have questions or concerns, we address them. Different groups can volunteer to present their work. After the reading materials, we distribute learning activities and might collect some at the end of class.

GROUP SHARE

PRE-SEMESTER STEPS:

GETTING LEARNING ASSISTANTS TO YOUR CLASS

- Advertise to your students
- Select --- tips --- interview
- Hire (through the grant)

ADVERTISE

- LA Application link: https://fiu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bJktJ22z6W6P23c
- Email– Email script provided
- In-class announcements
- Share our institutions page: <LAprogram.fiu.edu>

SELECT YOUR LAS:

- Review LA Applicants: What Makes a Good LA?
- Interview Prospective LAs

What LAs needs to know to join

LA commitments

LA Seminar

All new LAs are required to take the LA seminar (SMT 3931) during their first semester as an LA. LA seminar is a pedagogy course that covers various aspects of teaching that LAs use to support students.

Weekly Planning Meeting

Choose a time for weekly planning meetings and ask students to confirm availability.

Attendance

LAs are required to prepare for and attend every class session and planning meeting.

Additional Duties

Optional outside of class office hours and/or LA-lead review sessions

Individual LA preparation

LA Position

(Recommendation)

First-time LAs (New) work 7h a week, including LA seminar (2h)

Returning LAs work 6h a week.

Hours breakdown: Class time (3-4h), weekly planning meeting (1h), Individual prep (1h), other duties (...)

LAs don't grade, can give formative feedback.

HIRE

- Hiring Requirements and Restrictions for student employees at your Institution
- Takes Time
- Remind LAs to enroll in LA Seminar (SMT3931)
- Follow up with LAs

LA Implementation

Advertise to your students

Ask them to apply (CUE-T LA Application)

Review applications (PICK-LA)

Interview and select - by Nov 1

Communicate with your LAs

Set up time for weekly planning meeting

Remind New LAs to enroll to the LA Seminar

LA Recruitment Email (example)

Greetings,

I would like to congratulate you for your academic excellence and invite you to join my LA team in Summer/Fall semester 2023.

Learning Assistants (LAs) are undergraduate students that facilitate student learning during problem-solving sessions in large and small courses. They take a specialized seminar about how people learn and meet weekly with the professor.

Together, they form a cohesive team that supports students' interest, motivation and learning.

LAs lead change at FIU and work across many disciplines: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Psychology, Music, Architecture, Engineering, Computer Science, Philosophy and more. If you are interested in applying, please complete an application. The deadline for application is October 16 . The LA program will still accept applications after this date, however, if you are interested in becoming an LA in the summer, please apply as soon as possible.

Here are the application links: [TBD]

If you would like to learn more about the LA program, please visit the LA Program Website . For general questions about the program contact laprogram@fiu.edu.

Looking forward to your application,

Your Prof.

LA Recruitment Email (CUE-T)

Greetings,

I would like to congratulate you for your academic excellence and invite you to join my LA team in Spring 2024.

Learning Assistants (LAs) are undergraduate students that facilitate student learning during problem-solving sessions in large and small courses. They take a specialized seminar about how people learn and meet weekly with the professor. Together, they form a cohesive team that supports students' interest, motivation and learning.

LAs have shown to lead change at many universities across the nation and work across many disciplines: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Psychology, Music, Architecture, Engineering, Computer Science, Philosophy and more. As the first team of LAs on our campus, we anticipate to have a large impact on our students. As an LA you will be working with computer science professors as part of an NSF grant.

If you are interested, please submit an application. The deadline for application is October 16. We will still accept applications after this date; however, if you are interested in becoming an LA in the coming semester, please apply as soon as possible.

Here are the application links: [TBD – CUE-T LA Application]

If you would like to learn more about LA programs and what LAs do, please check the website of our partner institution FIU: <http://laprogram.fiu.edu>. Please note that our grant has a special LA Application link (above).

Looking forward to your application,

Your Prof.

SUMMARY

- Essential elements of the LA Model – Complete the Faculty Application submission
- We didn't discuss how to assess your classroom – baseline measurement is important to get before the LA implementation is starting.
- Pick LA – a tool for equitable hiring, LA Applications (TBD)
- Follow-up with Dr. Delgado, CUE-T Faculty Fellow
- Follow-up workshops (TBD)