Learning Assistant Program

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Learning Assistant Program

• Learning Assistants are undergraduate students who work with faculty to create collaborative learning environments

• Modeled after a successful program developed at University of Colorado, Boulder

• The Learning Assistant Program began at Rutgers in 2011 in 5 courses, and now is partnering with 50 courses
Practice: How can faculty use LAs?

Learning Assistants placed in:

• Lectures: assist instructor by facilitating discussions
• Labs: team-teach with TA
• Recitations
• Study Groups
  – LA leads supplemental study group that students have the option to join

in-class support
LA Program Model

- LAs have weekly contact time with students
- LAs take a 300-level, 3-credit pedagogy course
- Weekly staff meeting with course instructor(s) and TAs
- Ongoing training and professional development
- Earn a stipend
Pedagogy Course Overview

• Designed to develop LAs’ understanding of the role of a peer educator

• Through this course, students learn how to:
  – facilitate small-group learning among students
  – ask effective questions and engage students in dialogic discourse
  – design student-centered activities
Pedagogy Course Topics

• Questioning techniques
• Qualities of effective teachers
• Conceptual change and misconceptions
• Mental models
• Cognition and metacognition
• Cooperative Learning
• Content Literacy
• Constructivism
Instructor-Led Staff Meetings

• Faculty have weekly meeting with their LAs
• Discuss course content & classroom structure
• Give and receive feedback about student learning
**Essential Elements of LA Model**

**PRACTICE**
(LAs facilitating active and collaborative learning among students in the classroom)

**PEDAGOGY**
(3-credit, 300-level course)  
(RLC Peer Leader training modules)

**CONTENT**
(Faculty-led, weekly staff meeting in each course, with TAs)
Some courses using LAs

- Chemistry of Life
- Intro to Computer Science
- Separation Design Processes
- Islamic Civilization
- Microeconomics
- Discrete Structures 1 and 2
- Introduction to Biomedical Engineering
- Concepts of Physics
- Astronomy and Cosmology
- Extended Analytical Physics
- Analytical Physics
- Physics for the Sciences
- Organic Chemistry
Maybe your course will be next?
Staff & Services

• Director of Integrated Academic Support Programs
  – Program Coordinator

• Services to departments & faculty
  – Coordinate LA applications, interviewing, hiring
  – Employment on-boarding and weekly payroll
  – Coordinate assignments, schedules
  – Maintain employment records
  – Teach pedagogy course and provide training
My Background

Ph.D. in Mathematics Education; Teachers College, Columbia University
M.S. Biomedical Engineering; Rutgers University
M.S. Mechanical Engineering; Tufts University

Teaching Instructor of Mathematics (2011-2015)
Engineer for Hewlett Packard (5 years)
LA Program Opportunities

Faculty Applications
November to January

LA Course Assignments
February

Undergraduate LA Applications
February to March

LA Interviews & Hiring
March to May
Questions?

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