

Notes from Peer Learning Assistant Learning Community Meeting

January 24, 2017, 4-5 PM – 508 Chemistry Bldg.

- 4:00 **General Welcome and Introductions** Tim Burg
- In attendance: Brad Barnes, Thiab Taha (Computer Science); Craig Wiegert, Bill Dennis, Andrei Galiautdinov (Physics and Astronomy); Malcolm Adams, Bobby Benim, Gary Iliev (Mathematics); Kris Miller, Norris Armstrong (Biological Sciences); Chuck Kotal (Chemistry); Tim Burg, Cole Causey (OSE)
- 4:05 **Program Updates** Tim Burg
- Budget / Procedures – Tim reported that funding information for next year is not yet known. Norris and others mentioned that we need to decide how to spend remaining funds from the current year. There was discussion about the need to standardize the compensation model for the PLAs. Norris suggested asking UGA to cover the tuition of the PLAs' pedagogy course. Tim mentioned the possibility of creating some type of certification model, as well as a tie in to experiential learning.
 - Mid-Year Report – This was provided to Sheila Jones at USG prior to today's meeting. Results from the first semester of implementation were generally good. Craig emphasized the importance of following the three-pronged approach of pedagogy, content, and practice. There has been significant growth going into the second semester. Malcolm asked about pre and post measurement options. *Update – for pre and post assessments, members of the LA Alliance use discipline-specific concept inventories. We will continue to refine a standard instrument that can be administered across all courses to measure generic impact. This will only be an end-of-semester survey.* It was mentioned that we also have a couple of PLAs who are students in another course supported by PLAs. This might provide some interesting insight. Tim has submitted an IRB for data collection.
- 4:10 **General Overview / Snapshot of Current Semester** Cole Causey
- Recap of Recruitment and selection – Recruitment for spring started a bit late during fall 2016, around the time of finals. Each department received more than 50 applicants, with the exception of physics. A standard Qualtrics application was used, but tailored to each specific course in terms of prerequisites. Cole provided triage review of applicants for Norris. All other departments handled their own selection from the application reports. Norris suggested adding a text-entry question regarding previous work/leadership experience. There was general consensus that the recruitment process should begin earlier in the semester, particularly moving from fall to spring. It was agreed that recruitment for fall should begin prior to initial registration dates. This would be early April.
 - Overview of current implementations – There are currently over 60 undergraduates participating as PLAs this semester, compared to 28 during fall. Engineering is not participating during spring. Math and Physics are starting implementation for the first time. Chemistry is building upon previous experience using 'student interns' and is now following the PLA model. PLAs in biology are taking Kris' pedagogy

course. PLAs from other departments are taking FCID3100. 36 total PLAs are enrolled in two sections of the latter, which is being taught by Chuck and Roshini.

4:20

Content and Practice – Departmental Overview

- BIOL1107 – Norris has 9 new PLAs, in addition to 5 or 6 returning from last semester. Two of the veterans are serving as PLA leaders, a new tier in the model. In response to student feedback from fall, PLAs are supporting each class meeting. One quarter of the semester will not be taught by Norris, and he is working on plans for how to deploy PLAs during that portion of the term. Norris Armstrong
- CHEM1312/1412 – Chemistry is supported by 12 new PLAs and 3 veterans. Two of these veterans are working as part of a new partnership with Athens Technical College. PLAs for Chemistry assist graduate TAs in labs. Six lab sections are supported by *two* PLAs, in addition to the supervising graduate TA. Chuck Kotal
- CSCI1301 – Brad recapped that he is using a fully-flipped model that includes daily reading quizzes covering material students are expected to have reviewed prior to class. Three PLAs support class meetings in a SCALE-UP classroom, additionally supporting lab sections with a supervising graduate TA. Brad Barnes
- MATH2250 – The three faculty for MATH2250 are collaborating on their models generally, with some idiosyncratic differences. 2 PLAs per class support 19 students. In general, one meeting out of five per week is led solely by the PLAs. Gary mentioned a dropoff in attendance during the PLA-only day, and may counter that by randomly attending those meetings himself. He mentioned a small drawback in the classroom itself, particularly a lack of whiteboard for whole-class collaboration. Kris mentioned that there was a SCALE-Up style room in Biology that might be available. Malcolm is making attendance mandatory. PLAs lead the Thursday class, with students grouping into 3-4. For the other class meetings, one PLA attends MW sessions, with the other attending TF meetings. Bobby uses Tuesdays for ½ lecture / ½ PLA-supported activity, with Thursdays being led solely by the PLAs. Adams, Benim, Iliev
- PHYS1112 – Bill’s course is supported by 7 PLAs for ~150 students. Part of the class meetings is devoted to lecture. PLAs support activities during which problems are projected at the front of the class. PLAs are assigned an area of the course to monitor. Students do not have assigned seats. The worked problems are not turned in. This class meets in one of the SLC’s large auditoriums. Bill Dennis
- PHYS1211 – Dr. G reported that ‘it has worked beautifully’ so far. Four PLAs support 24 students each, in a Physics lecture hall divided into three segments. Students have assigned seats, and attendance is mandatory. Thursdays are devoted to conceptual lectures. Tuesdays are used for PLA-supported problem solving. PLAs help generate the problems to be worked. PLAs are working approximately 4 hours per week. Andrei has graciously shared his PLA content with the group: <https://www.physast.uga.edu/ag/phys1211-1111> Links on the bottom of that page contain the materials from the current spring semester. Andrei Galiautdinov

4:40

Pedagogy Overview

- BIOL3910 – This course is meeting on Fridays most weeks, and is dedicated to PLAs for biology. Based on student feedback from fall, more face-to-face meetings have been added for this semester.
- FCID3100 – Chuck and Roshini are teaching two sections of this course that meets one hour each week. PLAs come from CHEM, CSCI, MATH, and PHYS. There has been good value in the perspectives from multiple disciplines and learning environments. Cole is also providing support for this course, and will be supplementing content to cover key aspects identified by the biology group from fall.

Kris Miller

Chuck Kutal

4:50

Input for Upcoming Events

Group

- What would you like to see addressed by Dr. Otero during the February 17th presentation / workshop? – Please share any specific requests to Cole: jccausey@uga.edu
- Please register for events if you haven't already:
Morning Presentation: <http://ctl.uga.edu/events/the-learning-assistant-model-as-acatalyst-for-institutional-change-and-inst>
- We will check with Eddie Watson to monitor registration figures. Hopefully we will be able to open this presentation to our PLAs, logistics permitting.
Afternoon Workshop: <http://ctl.uga.edu/events/engaged-learning-in-foundational-courses-thelearning-assistant-model-and-th>
- The afternoon workshop will serve as our February meeting of the PLA Learning Community
- STEM Institute / Morning Conference– We would like to devote a 30-minute concurrent session during the morning conference to share our experiences so far in implementing PLAs. A panel including faculty and PLAs would be ideal. Please let us know if you would like to be part of this presentation, or if you would like to nominate one or more of your PLAs to serve on the panel. This will be the morning of Tuesday, March 28th. Registration for the STEM Institute will open during the week of January 30th. Details will be shared.
- STEM Institute / Afternoon Workshop – On the afternoon of March 28th, afternoon workshops will follow the morning conference. One workshop will be devoted to the PLA group. This will serve as an extended meeting of our Learning Community, during which faculty will have more time to share their experiences and lessons learned. Lunch will be provided.

5:00

Adjourn