

Notes for Peer Learning Assistant Meeting

November 7, 2016, 3-4 PM – 508 Chemistry Bldg.

3:00 General Welcome and Introductions

Attendees: Norris Armstrong and Mike McEachern (Biology), Craig Weigert and Andrei Galiautidinov (Physics and Astronomy), Malcolm Adams (Math), Chuck Kutal (Chemistry), Julie Luft (Education), Brad Barnes and Thiab Taha (Computer Science), Kris Biesinger, Cole Causey, Tim Burg (OSE)

3:05 General Program Updates

The group was asked to provide feedback regarding availability to attend a PLA workshop on February 17, 2016. With possibly one exception, the attendees felt they could work their schedule to accommodate this opportunity. Craig strongly encouraged participation as he had just participated in the International Conference and observed and interacted with our invited presenter, Valerie Otero. He gave her high marks for knowledge and energy.

Potential dates for the 2017 STEM Institute were discussed. Based on venue availability and potential conflicts with other national meetings, Tuesday, March 28th was identified as a good choice.

3:10 International Learning Assistant Conference Update

Craig provided a short but comprehensive overview of the conference elements he felt would be of value to our group. Among them were the following:

1. Join the Learning Assistant Alliance (<https://learningassistantalliance.org>) as there are many resources that can be found there. The site is in the process of being updated, so some features are not yet fully available or functioning.
2. Boulder uses tools that are planned for expansion to solicit applications from students and from faculty who wish to use Las in their sections.
3. LASSO is an online assessment tool that allows you to create an assessment that your class takes online and the Alliance will produce reports for you. They are also interested in aggregating data from all participating institutions to help further understand/promote value of learning assistants.
4. Craig responded to a number of questions regarding the assessment tools, but agreed to obtain more information on this service.
5. The Resources section on the Alliance website provides step-by-step guides on using LAs.
6. Craig reiterated the importance of the three key elements to producing a successful LA experience - Pedagogy Training, Weekly Content Preparation, Practice.
7. Be as specific as possible in what you can gather to demonstrate impact of using PLAs in the course (beyond DFW percentages).
8. Periscope is another useful resource. While physics centric, there are many components that may be of value (from a *how to do it* perspective).

3:20 Pedagogy Course Updates

Non-credit option – Cole provided a candid perspective regarding the difficulty in getting students to participate actively and regularly in a course that is not taken for a grade or credit. He also shared that the interest level of the student in taking a pedagogy course may be aligned with the year the student is

in school. Surveys he has administered suggest that sophomores are more interested in the potential value of the credit than seniors who are almost finished with their coursework.

For credit BIOL 3910 – Julie indicated this course will be offered again in the spring for Biology PLAs although a few changes are anticipated. Expanding the enrollment capacity to 24 and adding two more face-to-face sessions are planned.

For Credit FCID 3100 – Chuck updated everyone on the status of this new one-credit pedagogy course that is available to any discipline. The course now appears in Athena and has two sections of 20 each. It was recommended by the group that student access should be permission of the department and Chuck said he would make that modification. The 810#s and MyIDs will be collected from PLA applicants to identify those who have permission to register. Should there be more interest, a third section will be established. For Chemistry students, Chuck has also created CHEM 3700 which will be valued at 2 credits and aligned with the practicum experience PLAs provide in the classroom. Chuck has discussed having this course be given the experiential learning recognition with Linda Bachman and will complete the application soon. Other departments are encouraged to consider this approach toward recognizing the practicum portion of the PLA experience.

Craig indicated that most of the programs discussed at the Institute pay their learning assistants. University of Colorado does as do others. Conversation ensued as to the cost of running such a program and Julie Luft agreed to obtain more information for the group. Also discussed briefly was the issue of credit and whether or not a student wants more credit. HOPE may be a factor in this consideration.

UPDATE – Julie received and shared the following information regarding program funding:

CU - Denver-

Here at Denver, we initially started by using Noyce and some internal grant funds. We then secured funding from the provost through the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to run the program up to an expansion size, which we are doing now. Costs include not only LA stipends, but also scholarship money for the pedagogy course, administrative support, faculty professional development, and director stipends. We are currently at about 60 LAs/semester in 8-12 courses across Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Math.

In terms of LA stipends, we pay new LAs \$1500/semester and returning LAs \$1200/semester. The higher pay for new LAs is meant to help offset the cost of the required 2 credit pedagogy course. I'm happy to answer any more specific questions about what we allocate for faculty PD, admin support, etc. if you are interested.

CU– Boulder-

In general, we started entirely grant funded and now are fully provost funded. The program has grown on our campus from 20 LAs per year in 4 departments (2001-2003) to 380 LAs in 13 departments, which is what we hire now. The current program cost is approximately \$680K/year (which includes staff, director, and technological development), which amounts to \$48.00 per impacted student. We have data to support claims about student learning outcomes, persistence to graduation, and retention in gateway courses. The International Learning Assistant Alliance is working to provide support in multiple forms for universities new to using LAs as well as to share information and strategies among thriving programs. For example, Cornell only uses LAs in the physics department. They used to pay a stipend to LAs but ran out of PhysTEC funds so moved to a credit-only model. I asked what happened and Rob Thorne said, “The number of applicants went down but the quality of applicants went up.” So there are

many models throughout the nation as well as models for using LAs for collaborations with community colleges. CU Boulder and the other members of the LA Alliance have much to share and we are happy to support you in any way we can. You can find some support resources at: <https://sites.google.com/a/colorado.edu/la-resources/> ... note that we are always in the process of updating materials!!

Brad broached a key question regarding the initiative –are we going to ask that our PLAs take this training in the spring? Craig reinforced the importance of the pedagogy element. Chuck reminded everyone that this was an expectation we outlined in the proposal to the University System –that all students would receive some type of pedagogy training. Discussion was held on what exactly should be the expectations of such a course and how would the content specific insights be accommodated. Several spoke to the weekly meetings with the faculty members to help connect the pedagogy with the actual classroom expectations.

3:30 Spring Semester Plans
(Review table for accuracy)

- *Mathematics*
- *Physics/Astronomy*
- *Chemistry*
- *Biology*
- *Engineering*
- *Computer Science*

This section was NOT discussed during the meeting due to time; however, everyone was asked to review the matrix distributed with the agenda and send any corrections/updates to Cole Causey.

3:40 Recruitment Updates

Cole distributed the draft Qualtrics recruitment application forms to those who had indicated they wished to have the OSE help with this process. Others who have not requested such can still be served. Cole reiterated that faculty need to get the link along with perhaps a note that includes all of the general information associated with this opportunity out to prospective students this next week and to include a deadline for submission. Registration is open so selection of the PLAs for next term needs to be made soon. OSE will assemble the information from the submissions and provide in an organized spreadsheet to faculty who will make the final selections.

As of Thursday, 11/10, survey links have been shared with all departments. Those with Qualtrics accounts have also been granted admin access to their surveys.

Several suggested that as we begin to create recognition around what is meant by PLA, we'll want to have information sessions, have experienced PLAs talk to classes with prospective PLAs, and perhaps create some marking materials/strategies.

3:50 Other Topics from the Group

Cole will send out a Doodle Poll for a meeting in December. At this time Logan Fiorella will discuss assessment.

4:00 Adjourn