

NOTES from Peer Learning Assistant Meeting

October 18, 2016, 3-4 PM – 508 Chemistry Bldg.

3:00 General Welcome and Introductions

Attendees: Erin Dolan and Kris Miller (Biology), Bill Dennis (Physics), Malcolm Adams (Math), Roshini Ramachandran (Chemistry), Julie Luft (Education), Kris Biesinger, Cole Causey, Tim Burg (OSE).

3:05 Program Updates

Departments were reminded that initiative funds have been allocated to their department and that purchases against these funds must follow UGA policy/procedures. Allowable expenses include faculty compensation, graduate assistant support, PLA pay, and the purchasing of resources supporting the course. Conference participation and professional development were discussed as potential legitimate expenses. If you have such an opportunity and the funds to cover in your budget, or if there is a question as to appropriate use of the funding, contact Tim Burg. Craig Weigert will attend the International Learning Assistant Conference in Boulder beginning this coming weekend. He will share his experience with the team upon return.

3:10 Spring Semester Plans Departmental Faculty
(Planned implementation for PLAs, enrollment number, number of PLAs, pedagogy plans, etc.)

Courses to be offered with PLAs for the first time in Spring 2017

Mathematics

Malcolm shared the following details for MATH 2250:

- 6 sections
- 2 PLAs per section
- 3 instructors
- 19 students per class section (maximum)
- Course includes class 5 days a week and the last day will be conducted by the two PLAs utilizing worksheets and activities created by the instructors.
- Students will spend approximately 5 hours a week – 2+ hours including class time and meeting with the instructor, 2 hours attending two other class sessions and possibly some homework grading.
- Interest in the generic pedagogy course was indicated and Malcolm will talk more about this with his two colleagues.
- Students will be paid.
- Interested in help with recruitment

Physics/Astronomy

- Bill Dennis spoke to his course for spring, PHYS 1112:

- 180 students in large lecture hall in SLC
- 9-10 PLAs anticipated
- Would be interested in having these students assist in class but also conduct an additional problem solving session – a learning center type of session
- Is interested in having all 10 attend the generic pedagogy course
- Very interested in help with recruitment
- Students will be paid for the help in the class

Chemistry

- Norb Pienta was unable to attend so details on his course will be added later.

Changes for spring offerings of any current courses

No members of the existing offerings were able to attend so these were not discussed.

Biology

Engineering

Computer Science

Other Discussion -- pedagogy course and other initiative considerations:

- Julie raised the question of how we are ensuring diversity of PLAs as there is diversity in the classes that are supported. Faculty present spoke to how this is being addressed in their area.
- Julie also asked if there might be a need to consider pulling students from broader than the major – i.e, might engineering students serve well as PLAs in physics? At the present time the number of interested students or diversity of applicants did not appear to be a concern; however, this strategy will remain an option if broader solicitation appears warranted.
- Questions were raised about assessment. Tim indicated that the OSE is in discussions with Logan Fiorella in Educational Psychology and Erin Dolan and Julie Luft about what can be implemented as a more consistent approach. Currently different courses are doing different things in addition to the DFW rates that will be reviewed after the term concludes. Biology has had a CTL review, Physics has an attitude survey that they have used in the past and will continue to use. More information will be shared in future meetings about this topic.

3:30

PLA Recruitment Discussion/Option

Draft application review and feedback

- Cole shared the types of questions that were used to solicit PLAs for Norris this semester and indicated that the OSE could create Qualtrics surveys to be used by departments as an application to select interested students. The submissions can then be sorted and provided to the faculty members in a spreadsheet aid in the review and selection process students. To do this, OSE will need the following:

- Prerequisite courses and grade range allowable for completion of the requirement (A, B, C?)
- Other requirements – other questions to be added.
- Details to be shared with the students associated with specific requirements depending upon the course to ensure they understand the commitment before submitting the application. Some of this can become a preface to providing the link to apply.
- Confirmation of the class times and days and other requirements so students are not applying for something they later determine isn't something of interest.
- Julie suggested that some type of Likert scale that asked students to offer their opinion of what learning is in order to separate those students who are more oriented toward learning is studying hard from those who think learning is building conceptual understanding. Perhaps a question from a Learning inventory might be used. This could be an element that helps narrow the eligible candidate pool if needed.
- The OSE is willing to create the survey and to assemble the application submission data, but the department will be responsible for disseminating the opportunity to relevant student groups in order to solicit applications.

3:50

PLA Learning Community – Sustaining the Conversations

Topics for discussion:

- The volunteer interest that has been expressed by some students who are serving as current PLAs was discussed. There is a UGA student contract that should be reviewed by legal with the details of the student work included. At a minimum the interested 'volunteer' student would reapply and should have completed a pedagogy course and served previously as a successful PLA.
- If the student wishes to repeat the pedagogy course for credit, then there is not an issue in having them work again as the credit course becomes a type of contract.
- We talked about the generic pedagogy course and the 2-credit practicum course that is being developed for Chemistry students. This is a model that could be implemented by all departments to address the practicum portion of the PLA experience. All agreed that if the Chemistry course clears the curriculum committee and then is able to get experiential learning credit associated with it, this would be an attractive model to follow.
- It was brought to the attention of the group that Georgia Tech uses PLAs and they don't pay them the first time they serve; pay comes in subsequent terms.

Next Meeting(s)

Kris to send out Doodle Poll.

4:00

Adjourn