

Peer Learning Assistants (PLAs)

Norris Armstrong

Department of Genetics, University of Georgia, Athens

Ashley Lall

Biochemistry and Molecular Biology major, University of Georgia, Athens

Walton Bray

Anthropology major, University of Georgia, Athens



PLA: an undergraduate student who, through the guidance of course instructors and a special pedagogy course, facilitates discussions among groups of students in a variety of classroom settings that encourage student engagement and responsibility for learning.

STEM Education Office Faculty Learning Community:

Biology

Biochemistry

Physics

Computer Science

Mathematics

Chemistry

Engineering

BIOL-1107

Who are BIOL-1107 PLAs?

- Have done well (B or better) in 1107 and/or upper level classes (usually 2nd year or above)
- Good interpersonal skills
- From multiple majors
- ~50+ PLAs over the past three years
- 25% (or more) participate for 2+ semesters
- All volunteer

What is a PLA's experience?

Pedagogy course for new PLAs (Pedagogy)

- Hybrid design – mixed online and F2F format
- Topics:
 - What does it mean to “know” something
 - Teaching vs. facilitating learning
 - Strategies to support learning
 - Barriers to learning
 - Equity in the classroom

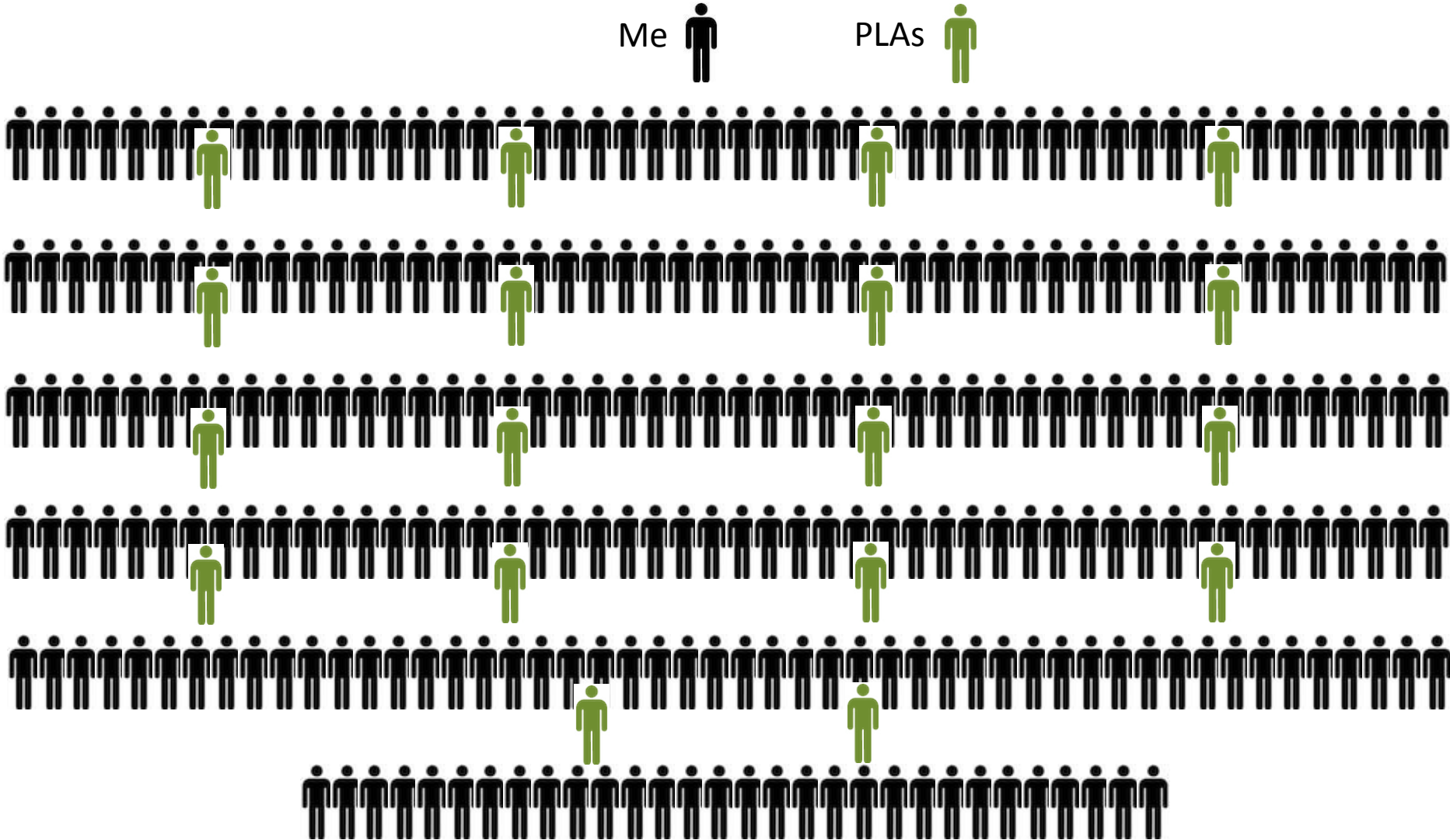
Weekly prep meetings with instructor (Content)

- Discuss course plan for the week, learning objectives
- Guidance for (*and from*) PLAs

Interaction with groups of students (Practice)

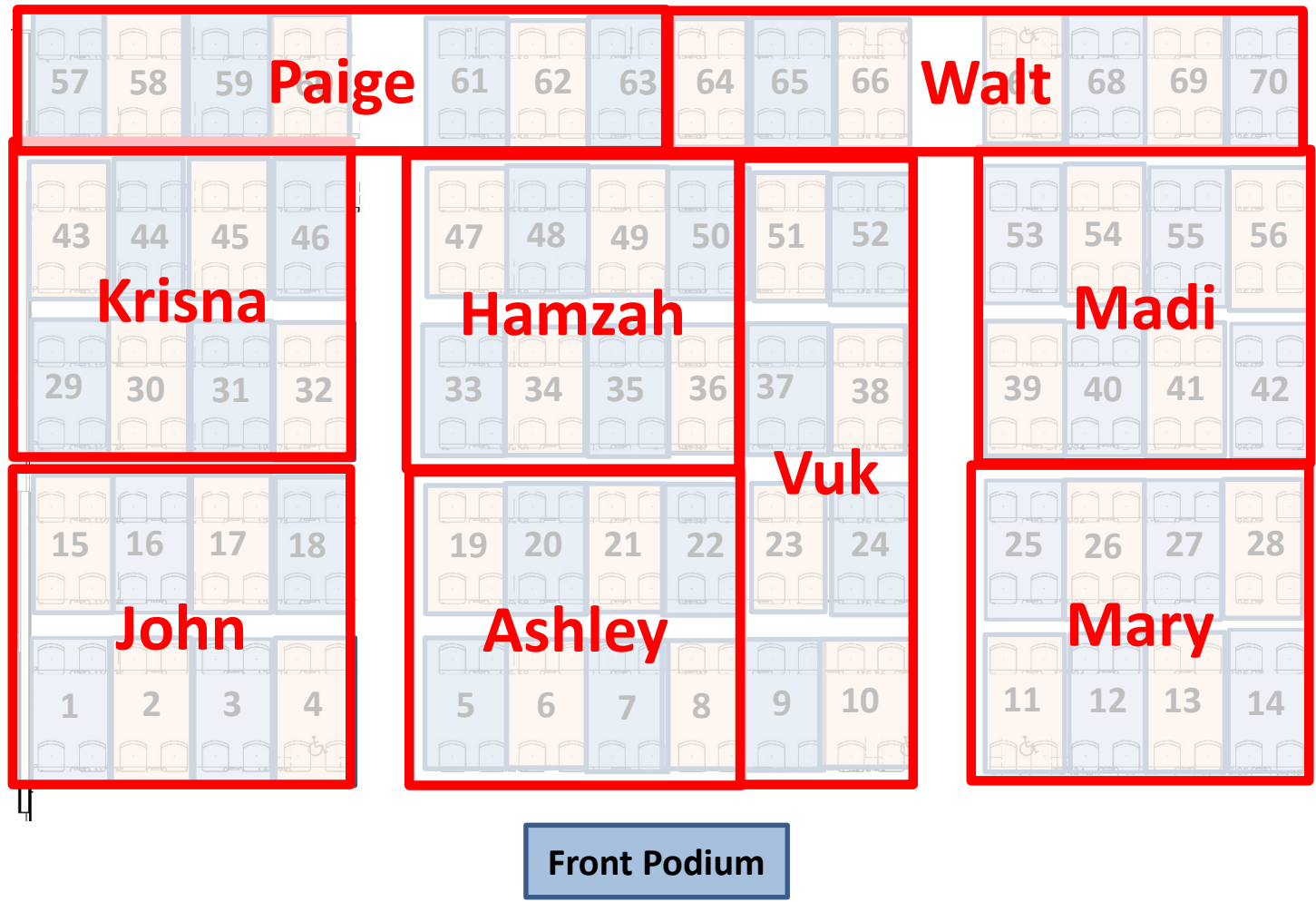
How are PLAs used?

- students need to practice using and applying concepts
- Need feedback on their efforts



How are PLAs used?

- Students sit in groups.
- Each PLA helps a subset of the class as the students and actively work on sample problems, case studies, etc.



Questions?