Peer Learning Assistants (PLAs)

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**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 2\textsuperscript{nd} 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?