Using Learning Assistants (LAs) Effectively

Kadian M. Callahan, Assistant Dean for Faculty and Student Success, College of Science and Mathematics

1

Session Objectives

- Become familiar with ideas for using LAs Effectively

- Understand how the LA program works

What are LAs?

Learning Assistants (LAs): undergraduate students who have been successful in a course and who work to support meaningful student learning during (and sometimes outside of) that course.

Prior Experience with Learning Assistants

Take a moment to reflect on experiences you may have had (or imagine experiences that you might have in the future) with learning assistants. Respond to the following on note cards (one response per side)

1. How have or might you use LAs in your courses?

2. What are some questions or concerns that you have regarding how to effectively use LAs to support student learning?

What Benefits do LAs Provide to Students?

➢Assist students in developing metacognitive learning strategies

➢Provide just-in-time academic support for students to address their individual learning needs

➢Provide support for developing "expert" ways of organizing knowledge

➢Promote greater self-efficacy and motivation

What Benefits do LAs Provide to Faculty?

➢Support active learning activities

➢Enable faculty to work more closely with students

➢Help faculty better understand students' learning challenges

➢Promote student motivation and engagement (making instruction easier)

➢Facilitate instructional changes

How are KSU Faculty Currently Using LAs to Support Student Learning?

➢ Working with individual or small groups of students at their tables or at the board

➢ Reviewing clicker questions, practice questions, or other exercises

➢ Teaching recitation or laboratory sections with a graduate teaching assistant or faculty mentor

➢ Facilitating online discussion forums and other online learning activities

➢ Holding office hours, study sessions, targeted learning skills sessions

Giving LAs Authority

In order for your LAs to be most effective, you must find ways to give them appropriate levels of authority. Your students must see your LAs as a resource to foster their success. You can help by:

1. Giving LAs materials for upcoming class meetings ahead of time, and meeting with them to answer questions and discuss how students will use the materials

2. Giving LAs specific roles in class where they are the focus of students' attention

3. Valuing LA contributions and ideas publically during class

4. Encouraging students to participate in LAs interventions, study sessions, or office hours

LA Hiring Process

1. Faculty identify and recruit LAs

2. LAs apply for the position(bit.ly/LA-Apply): Applications open a few weeks before registration for the upcoming semester - fall and spring only.

3. LA Program Administrator (Kadian) approves students who meet eligibility criteria

4. Faculty interview LAs and send selected candidate(s)' names to LA Program Administrator

5. LAs hired by HR

6. LAs work 8-10 hours each week for the duration of the semester:
   o Regular, weekly meetings with a faculty mentor
   o Attend class/labs/recitations, hold office hours, online discussions, etc.
   o New LAs attend weekly pedagogy seminars (2 hours)

10

Questions?

Questions	Answers
Can LAs help with grading?	LAs are not to "grade" assignments or provide anything that may appear to be a grade (e.g., numbers, letters, check/check minuses, etc.).
Are LAs allowed to create materials?	Yes, but nothing that will be graded in any way.
Do returning LAs need to reapply each semester?	Yes, but they do not need to re-take the LA Pedagogy Course
What if my LA does not work a full 8-10 hours each week?	LAs are only paid for the time they work and will keep a log of how they are using their time
Who is eligible to have an LA?	Faculty who participate(d) in a CSM or G2C faculty learning community
How many LAs am I allowed?	Student : Instructor/LA = 40 : 1