

Learning Assistant Fellowship: High-impact practice that provides in-class learner support



Learning Assistant Program

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

LA Program Staff: Laurie Langdon, Betsy Feldman, Sarah Wise, Marshall Washington
Lead LA Mentors: Beau Cave, Victoria Davis, Alexandra Washburn, Sydney Young

LAs are key partners in ongoing course transformation that impacts student experiences and success

Learning Assistants (LAs) are undergraduate students who connect with and facilitate discussions among groups of students in a variety of classroom settings that encourage engagement. They are members of the instructional team.



LA-Supported courses involve opportunities for students to work together toward a learning goal, for students to articulate and defend their ideas, and for instructors to make instructional decisions based on what students say and do.

The LA Program Coalition

Provides financial and structural support including for program staff, teaching faculty, LAs, and LA Mentors:

- Office of Undergraduate Education (OUE)
- Office of the Provost
- School of Education
- Division of Natural Sciences
- Continuing Education Online Learning

Departments that provide LA stipends:

- Applied Math
- Astrophysical & Planetary Sciences
- Biochemistry
- Chemistry
- Communication
- English
- Environmental Studies
- Information Science
- Mathematics
- Molecular, Cellular, & Developmental Biology
- Physics
- Psychology & Neuroscience

AY 2025-26 LA-supported courses

College of Arts & Sciences	
Division of Natural Sciences	APPM: 1235, 1350/51, 1360/61, 2350/51 ASTR: 1010, 1020, 1030, 2600, 3400 BCHM: 4400, 4720, 4740 CHEM: 1113, 1133, 1400, 4511 ENVS: 1000, 1001 MATH: 1150, 1300, 1301, 2300, 2400
Division of Arts & Humanities	AHUM: 1825 ENGL: 2212, 3830, 4039
Continuing Education Online Learning	CE-ENGL: 3016 CE-HIST: 1011 CE-PSYC: 3303, 4443 CE-WRTG: 3020, 3030, 3045
College of Communication, Media, Design & Information	COMM: 3210 INFO: 1201, 2301

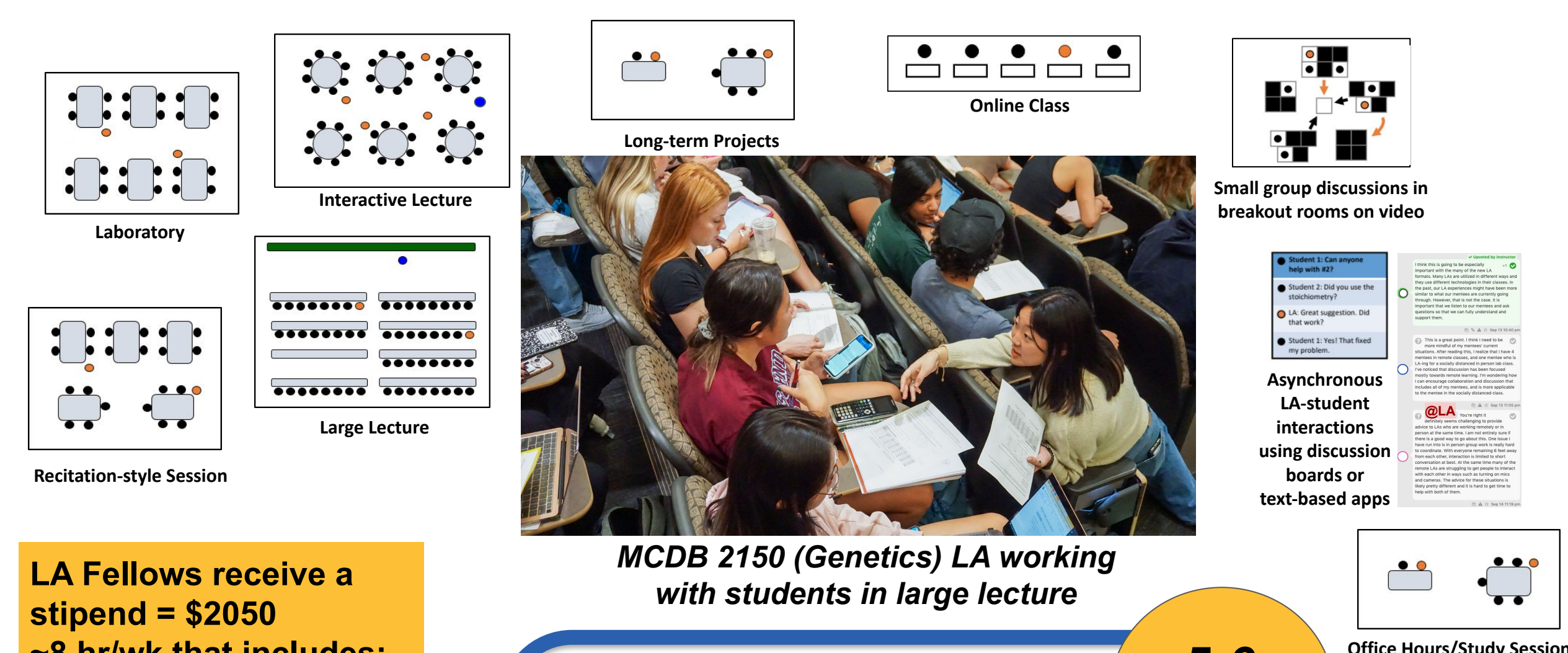
Vision of the CU Boulder Learning Assistant Model:

Our vision is to efficiently build lasting capacity among faculty, courses, and departments for sustained offerings of high quality, learner-centered instruction. In these settings, every student feels included and valued and is comfortable accessing multiple forms of support inside and outside the classroom. CU Boulder students who serve as LAs and LA Mentors become effective leaders, teachers, and team members, prepared for the increasingly diverse and interdisciplinary workforce.



The LA Model* & CU Boulder LA Program Structures

*Established at CU Boulder in 2003



LA Fellows receive a stipend = \$2050
~8 hr/wk that includes:
• LA-student interactions
• Weekly prep meeting
• Individual preparation and reflection

LA-Student Interactions
LAs relate to students. They care about them and help them learn.

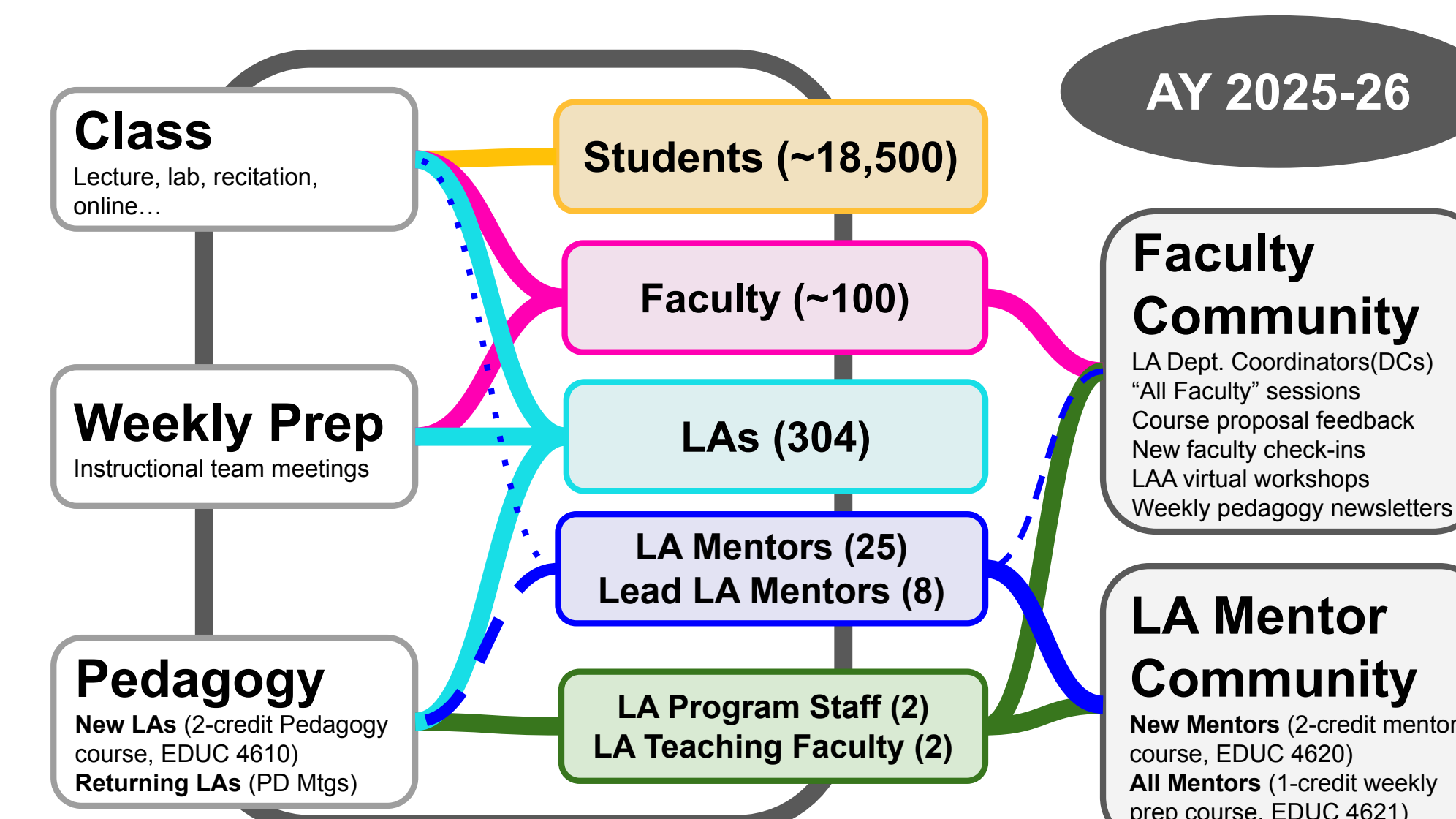
5-6 hr/wk

Weekly Prep Meeting
LAs are part of the instructional team. They reflect, plan for student interactions, and inform the instructor.

~1 hr/wk

Pedagogy Course
LAs meet weekly to learn practical strategies and learning theory.

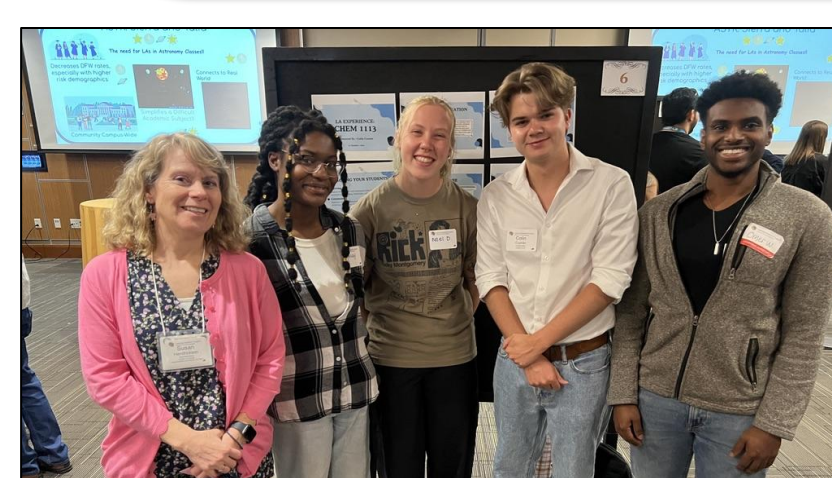
2-Credits



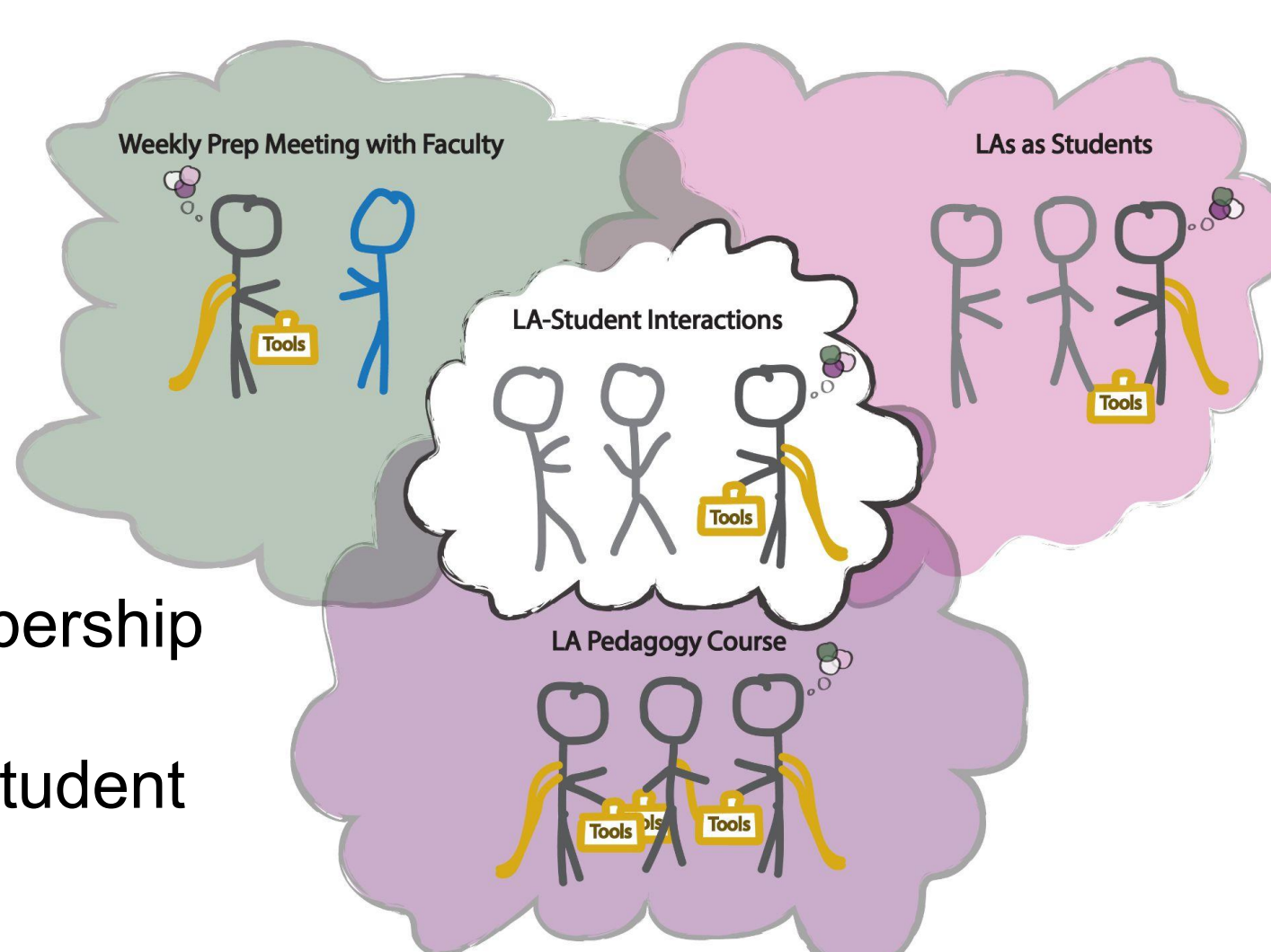
LA Pedagogy Course: Units

- 1) What to do**
Skills and strategies for supporting student learning
• Questioning and wait time
• Facilitating student-student interactions
• Compassion
• Listening
• How to give effective feedback
- 2) When to do it**
The purpose and impacts of education — how to help all students thrive
• Noticing and eliciting student ideas
• Formative assessment
• Learner-centered teaching
- 3) Why it matters**
The purpose and impacts of education — how to help all students thrive
• Belonging, motivation, and community
• Self-directed learning/ Metacognition
• Impacts of the LA Model in higher education

Audio Transcript Analysis Learner-Centered Theory Analysis LA Poster Session



Gen Chem II instructional team at LA Poster Session

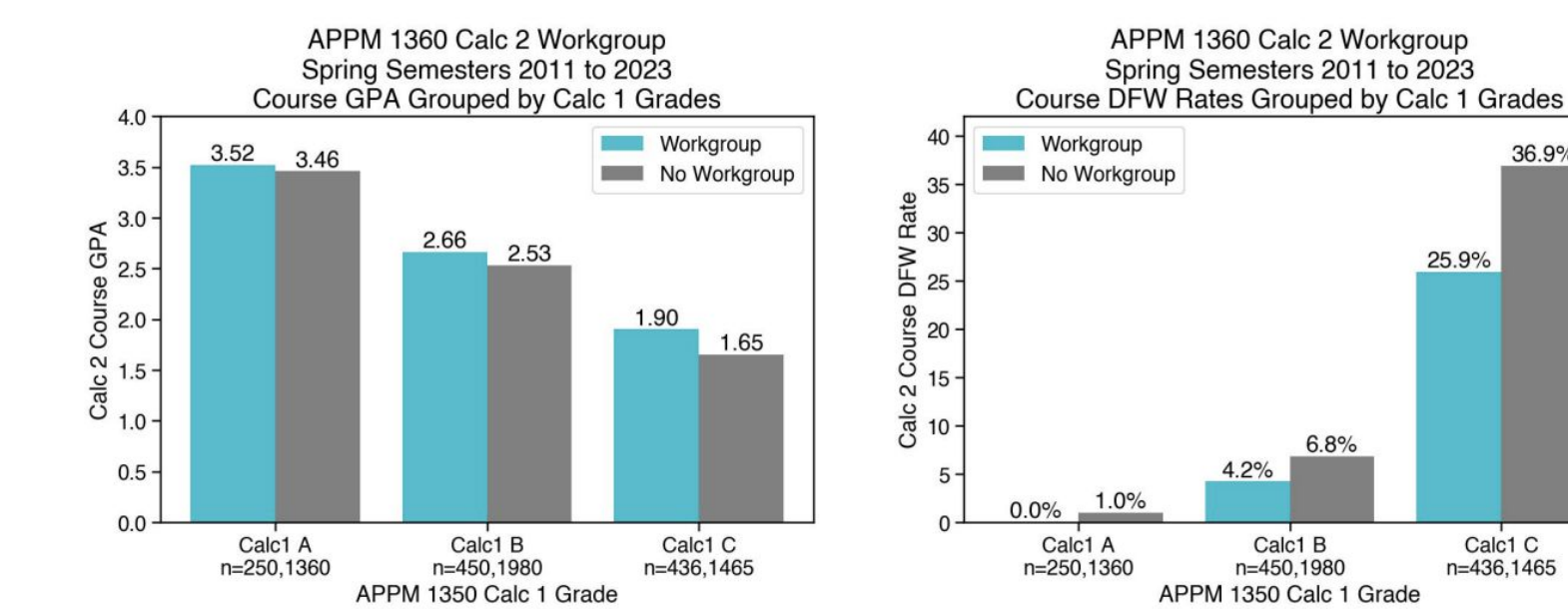


LAs act as boundary-crossers because of their recognizable membership in instructional, pedagogical, and student communities.

LAs have boundary-crossing superpower (represented by their cape) and a set of tools beyond just content knowledge or pedagogical skills, that they add to a carry with them throughout LA-student interactions (white), instructional team weekly preparation meetings (green), and LA Pedagogy Course (purple), and their own coursework as students (pink).

Students

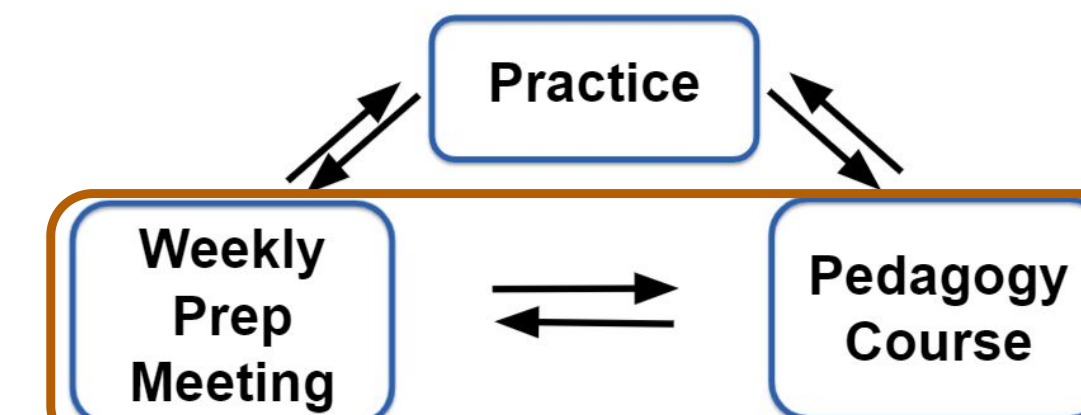
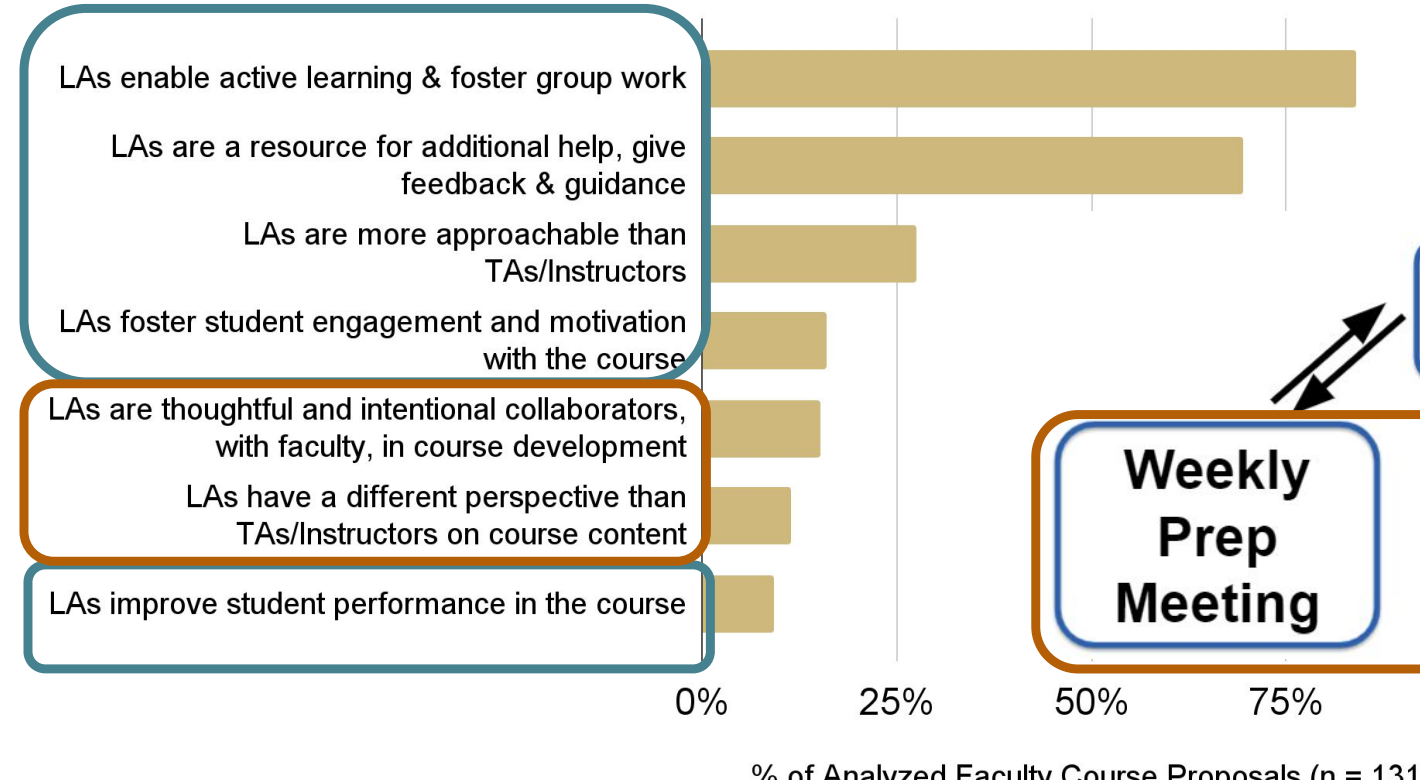
Students in LA-supported APPM calc 2 workgroups earn higher grades and are less likely to fail (controlled by calc 1 grade) (2023)



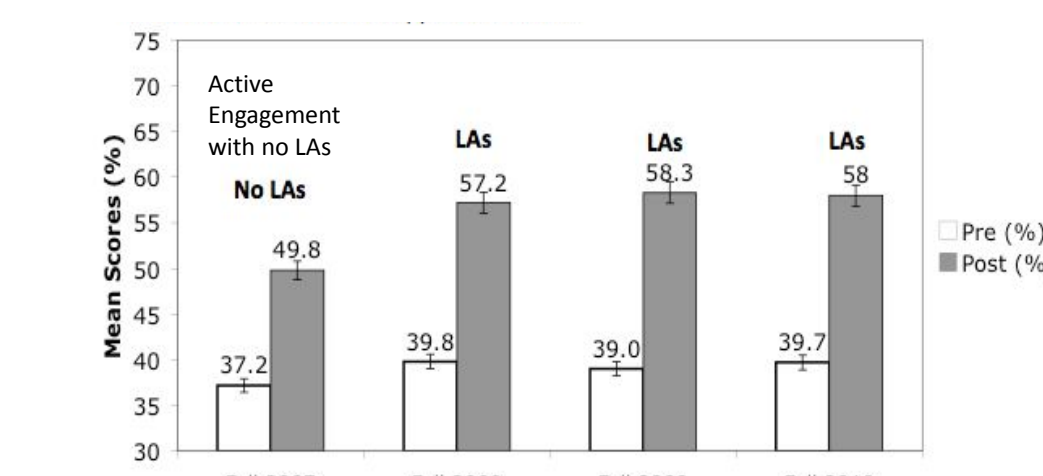
Spring 2023 unpublished data from Silva Chang in APPM at CU Boulder

Faculty

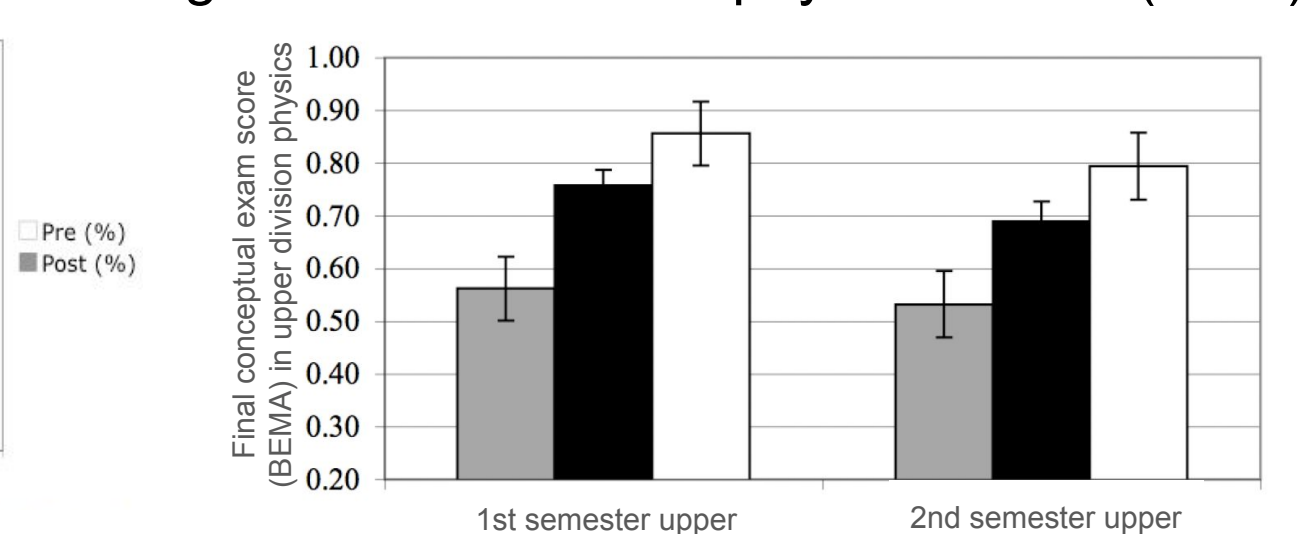
Reasons Faculty Requested LAs during AY22



LA-support increases learning gains in general chemistry beyond active engagement alone (2010)



Students show lasting learning gains in junior-level physics course, from working with or being an LA in intro-level physics course (2007)



"This semester, I intentionally focused on **creating more structured opportunities for student-student interaction** and on **leveraging LAs as facilitators of science communication** rather than simply content helpers. In-class activities were redesigned to require discussion, explanation, and justification of ideas, with **LAs prompting students to articulate their reasoning to peers and ask follow-up questions**. Over the semester, I observed that **discussions became more productive** and student participation more balanced, with fewer voices dominating and **more students willing to speak up**."

— CHEM Faculty reflecting on their Fall 2025 semester goals

LAs

"I definitely feel myself growing as an LA, as the way the program is set up makes it very easy to practice the concepts we learn in our real-world interactions. I also feel myself growing as a student because I'm learning so much about how people learn, which I think is a pretty cool bonus!"

Skills New LAs report developing



After LAing this semester I have grown by...



Returning LAs continue to grow and develop

"I have constantly had to **grow in my communication skills**, not only in conveying my own ideas, but **ESPECIALLY in listening to others**. When having 1-on-1 or group discussion, it is paramount to not fall into certain types of listening-like predictive-and to try and understand what the other person is saying, not just what you want them to say or think they will say." ~ LA Mentor

"Thank you so much for taking the time to observe our recitations and for **providing such detailed and valuable feedback**. I truly appreciate your outside perspective and your commitment to helping our instructional team grow." ~ ENVS Faculty in response to LA Mentor observation feedback

LA Mentors

% Fa25 New LAs who "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" with the statements, "After going through the one-on-one mentoring sessions and observation with my LA Mentor..."

- 92% I feel more confident in my ability to set meaningful goals.
- 97% I feel more confident in my approaches to my LA-Student Interactions.
- 95% I have new ideas about how to utilize pedagogical techniques.
- 98% I feel that I received specific, relevant, feedback about how I can approach my LA-Student Interactions.
- 98% I feel supported by my LA Mentor.
- 89% I have a better idea about how what I'm learning in the LA Pedagogy Course can be utilized outside of my LA Role.
- 98% I feel like my LA Mentor challenged me to consider alternative approaches to my LA-Student Interactions.
- 98% I felt like my LA Mentor could relate to my experiences as an LA.