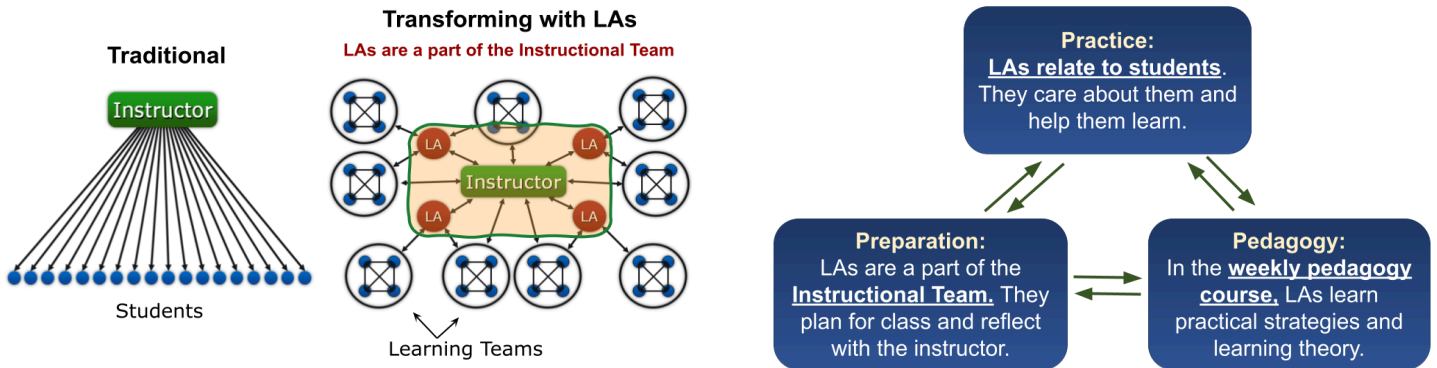# The Learning Assistant Model

Learning Assistants (LAs) are undergraduate students who serve on the instructional team in college-level courses across the world. The LA Model transforms the traditional power structure, allowing students to co-design the learning space and have voice in their educational journeys.

Traditional

Instructor

Students

Transforming with LAs
LAs are a part of the Instructional Team

Instructor

Learning Teams

Practice: LAs relate to students. They care about them and help them learn.

Preparation: LAs are a part of the **Instructional Team.** They plan for class and reflect with the instructor.

Pedagogy: In the **weekly pedagogy course,** LAs learn practical strategies and learning theory.

The Essential Elements of the LA Model

Practice: LAs facilitate discussions and activities in class, focusing on student thinking and understanding.

Preparation: Weekly meetings with instructors to plan classes and discuss student progress. LAs co-design with instructors and help implement class activities.

Pedagogy: LAs enroll in a special pedagogy course to support their development and growth as LAs, learning evidence-based strategies, student-centered and inclusive teaching practices, and practical strategies.

Evidence of Effectiveness of the LA Model

Over 100 research studies on LA Programs have demonstrated positive impacts on students and faculty!

Lower failure rates and higher retention in gateway courses

- Students in LA-supported courses experience lower failure rates and higher retention. Involvement in one LA-supported course reduces the likelihood of failing subsequent STEM courses by 60%.[1]

Improved course outcomes and learning experiences

- LAs notably improve outcomes for students from underrepresented groups, fostering a sense of belonging and accessibility in learning environments.[2]

Institutional impact

- LA programs align with accreditation goals and Quality Enhancement Plans, increasing graduation rates and institutional engagement.[3]

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[1] Data from 32,071 students across fifteen years, controlling for instructor effects. Alzen, Langdon, & Otero, 2018

[2] Van Dusen and Nissen, 2020; Sellami et al., 2017; Clements et al., 2022; Top, 2019; Hite et al., 2021

[3] Adelmann, 2024; Otero, 2015; Sabella & Van Duzor, 2013; Schick, 2018

Benefits of the LA Model

LAs rehumanize education and build connections

- LAs bridge the gap between students and faculty, making higher education more accessible and less intimidating.

- Students in LA-supported courses report LAs are more approachable than graduate TAs and professors, have "fresh" knowledge about the course, "care about me," and "figure out what I know without making me feel dumb."

- In addition to helping students with content, LAs provide general support to students on how to navigate the course, the institution, and how to access campus resources. Benefits extend to student wellness, a sense of belonging, equity, holistic advising, and development of STEM identities.[4]

Increased return on investment (ROI) for the institution

- Students who work on campus are more connected to the institution. LA experience cultivates leadership skills and provides significant returns by developing mentors and role models who contribute to their peers, the learning environment, academia, and the community.

- Incorporating LAs into restructured courses fosters enduring, high-impact, student-centered educational practices and promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, driving meaningful advancements for both faculty and institutions.[5]

> ## The LA Model is world-wide.
> The Learning Assistant Alliance supports the model's implementation globally, with over 3,700 members across 606 institutions in 32 countries.

The Learning Assistant Alliance (LAA) and Services We Offer

The Learning Assistant Alliance is an international community of faculty, administrators, staff, and researchers, dedicated to improving outcomes in higher education through the LA Model. Sign-up for a free account on the LAA website to gain access to a wealth of resources, shared knowledge, and experiences. To further collaboration and learning among community members, the LAA offers a variety of services (i.e. in-person and virtual workshops, institutional, regional and international conferences, engagement and community networking platforms, and program management software).

Reach Out and Engage with the LA Community!

Sign up for an account on the LAA Website: https://www.learningassistantalliance.org/ or email contact@learningassistantalliance.org to discuss how the LA Model can help you!

Key References

- "Transforming Undergraduate STEM Education: The Learning Assistant Model and Student Retention and Graduation," Feng, Close, Luxford, et al. 2025. *https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-024-09823-5*

- "A scoping review of literature assessing the impact of the learning assistant model," Barrasso & Spilios 2021. *https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-020-00267-8*

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[4] Top, 2019; Close, Conn, & Close, 2016; Nadelson & Fannigan, 2014
[5] LaBrake, 2019; Jardine & Friedman, 2017; McHenry et al., 2009; Goertzen et al., 2011