

# CSU Learning Assistant (LA) Program

## Spring 2023 Newsletter (March 2023). Issue 2

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Our discussions on teaching and learning in the past few weeks included **wait time**, how to leverage **open and closed ended questions** and how we can support **instructional partnerships** between LAs and the instructors they work with. LAs also researched effective teaching and learning in their respective disciplines. While we tackle the overarching ideas around effective teaching and learning in the pedagogy course, we know that learning is context dependent and our LAs are constantly connecting the overarching ideas to their specific discipline assignments.

### Discussion on Open and Closed Ended Questions

One idea to create better community and discussion in the online pedagogy course came from music LA, Lennay, who suggested some synchronous zoom discussions! For the open and closed ended question unit, students had the option to meet on Zoom or participate asynchronously via the Moodle discussion board. While the discussion boards on Moodle have provided opportunities for rich, informative conversations, synchronous sessions are special – it was great to see smiling faces and engage together in real time.

The pedagogy class students cited the importance of open-ended questions to promote critical thinking and discussions. They also described how open-ended questions provide an instructor with a better understanding of student knowledge. Participants also explained how, sometimes, closed-ended questions, with a single answer have a place – If a teacher needed to assess facts. Many in the discussions also connected these readings to the reading on wait time and how different types of questions influence wait time.

### Time to submit Faculty Course Proposals!

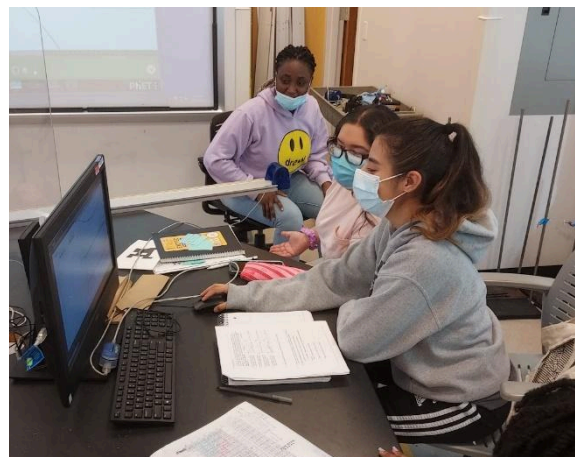
**Faculty:** Interested in working with an LA in the Fall?  
**Now is the time to submit a Faculty Course Proposal (FCP). [DUE April 15<sup>th</sup>]**

Head to [learningassistantalliance.org](https://learningassistantalliance.org) to submit! OR scan the QR code.

Need help? Have Questions? Reach out to Mel and Andrea and we can chat!

**Students:** Interested in being an LA?  
**Applications open after April 16<sup>th</sup>.** If

you have a faculty member you would like to work with, please reach out to them and encourage them to submit a faculty course proposal.



## Adaeze's Field Notes

Our Spring 23 LA Mentor, **Adaeze Olikagu**, supports both new and returning LAs and assists in the LA Pedagogy course that all new LAs take. In addition to LAs, we also have students from other majors who intend to pursue education or simply have an interest in education. Adaeze is a senior, majoring in Biology with two years of experience working as an LA in a variety of Biology and Chemistry courses.

In the pedagogy course students were asked to find, read, and analyze a journal article about teaching and learning in their discipline.

This past week Adaeze summarized some of their insights. With participants from Music, Education, Biology, Chemistry, Psychology, Criminal Justice, and Computer Science the information broadened our understanding of how best to support our diverse learners!



### *Here are some of the insights from the LA Pedagogy students:*

**Active learning approaches in physiology:** “More active approaches to learning, such as team-based learning, case-based learning, and flipped classrooms, make it easier for students to retain information. Utilizing mnemonic devices is a creative way to learn a challenging course such as Anatomy.” – Martasia, Anatomy and Physiology

**Problem based learning in online chemistry classes:** “The use of problem-based learning in both face-to-face and online courses is effective because it promotes critical thinking, problem solving skills, and content knowledge. Online classes, especially, take a more passive approach, which makes it difficult to students to focus. PBL can be a useful tool to promote active engagement in these classes.” - Vanessa, Chemistry

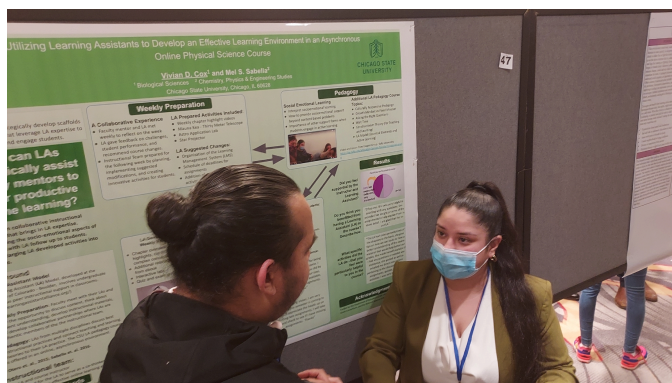
**Multimodality in music education:** “Multimodality allows meaning to be created through different modes, such as gestures, sound, video, and text. It should be incorporated into music education since it allows children to develop a deeper understanding and connection to music. It also provides a more interactive space for students to express themselves.” - Lennay, Music Education

**Equity in biology education:** “Classroom equity is an important factor to consider while implementing active learning strategies. Students who make up a class are often at different levels of understanding and interest in the course content. Instead of utilizing a one-size-fits-all approach, equitable teaching strategies can be useful to ensure that every student in a class is carried along. Wait time, open-ended questions, think-pair-share, and culturally relevant examples are examples of equitable teaching strategies that have been instrumental in encouraging student participation.” - Trinity, Biology

## Cool CSU LA Stuff!



CSU held its Learning Assistant Appreciation session, where LAs, faculty mentors, and program coordinators from a variety of disciplines, ate doughnuts, celebrated our LAs, and chatted about the LA Model and how it serves as an effective and inclusive teaching and learning strategy.



At the 2023 Illinois LSAMP symposium, CSU LA Vivian Cox presented a poster on leveraging LAs in online classes, winning 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the poster session for STEM Education. At the symposium, CSU LA Mentor Adaeze Olikagu and faculty mentor Mark Erhart participated on an instructional partnership panel with colleagues from Morton College and the University of Illinois - Springfield. The panel was moderated by CSU LA Korvell Russell.



## Professor Red Lhota surveys their students!

This is the second semester Professor Red Lhota is leveraging LAs in their classes and this semester they are working with two LAs in Chemistry. Here are some of the student comments about LAs Karoline and Vanessa in the Chem 1000 and Chem 1400 classes.



### [Our LA]

- [is] very good at making us think for ourselves so we can do the same work when she is not present;
- has been really helpful. When it looks like you are confused, she steps in to help;
- helped me realize I am not in this alone and it's ok to ask for help or make mistakes;
- helps explain in a different perspective than the professor;
- [does] an amazing job of breaking everything down;
- would inspire me by drawing comparisons from her struggles when she took the class;