How Do Learning Assistants Spend Their Time During Class?
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Introduction
There is substantial evidence that active learning is more beneficial for students than traditional lecture. However, how can an instructor implement active learning? One method is using Learning Assistants (LAs). North Dakota State University, University of Colorado Denver, and Florida International University have teamed together to research what LAs do and how they help facilitate active learning.

Research Question:
How Do Learning Assistants Spend Their Time During Class?

Definitions
Active Learning – System of teaching
Achieved via:
• Discussion
• Worksheets
• Group Activities

Learning Assistants – High-achieving undergraduates chosen by faculty that:
• Facilitate peer discussion
• Guide students during group work
• Encourage reasoning skills

COPUS (Classroom Observational Protocol for Undergraduate STEM) - Protocol for measuring what is going on in class

TPI (Teaching Practices Inventory) - Survey for instructors to gauge various classroom activities

LA Daily Logs - Survey for LAs to gauge classroom activities

Data Sources
• COPUS Data
• LA Daily Logs
• TPI Data

Analysis
• Analyzed LA daily logs - looked for trends in the amount of minutes spent on activities
• Created course descriptions based on COPUS data
• Identified COPUS Profiles based on COPUS data
• Looked at time LAs spent with students in both the COPUS and the TPI

Methods

Results

Course Descriptions
• Description of active learning activities done in class, what the LAs do in the classroom, as well as what the instructor does during active learning frames and traditional lecture frames.
• Helps view classes in a concise, simple format.

Amount of Time Frames LAs Spent with Students

What LAs Do in the Classroom

COPUS Profiling

What the LAs see (Daily Logs)

Conclusions
• Revise the LA Daily Log to capture more information on what LAs are doing in class
• Continue with course descriptions and COPUS profiling
• Work with LA Cams (cameras placed on LAs to capture what is going on in class)
• Gauge faculty perceptions of LAs

Future Work

References

Acknowledgements

Triangulation
We can verify what the instructor says (TPI) with:
• What the observer sees (COPUS)
• What the LAs see (Daily Logs)

Course Descriptions

Amount of Time Frames LAs Spent with Students

Classroom: COPUS Profile

Number of Time Frames

0 5 10 15 20

Course A Course B Course C Course D
Section Name
COPUS TPI

Control

LAs With Students:
• The TPI slightly overestimated the amount of time frames LAs spent with students in comparison to the COPUS.
• Most LAs spend their time in the classroom working on one on one with students or walking around the room.
• Occasionally, LAs spend time in the classroom simply waiting, which can be correlated to standing by as the instructor gives instructions or other administrative tasks.

LAs In The Classroom:
• The most important function of the LA is to provide feedback about how class went and how students learn.
• The least common activity for LAs is to co-create materials.

Course: COPUS Profile

Group Work

Teaching Practises Inventory

Student-Centered Peer Instruction

Student-Centered Peer Instruction

Weekly

Bi-Weekly

Monthly

Never/No Answer

Course

A

B

C

D

References


Smith, P. K. (2008). The Use of COPUS to Study Pre and Post Reading Instruction. 1411, 1-11

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