Implementation and Assessment of a Learning Assistant Program at Georgia State University

PI: Joshua Von Korff, Assistant Professor of Physics, GSU (jvonkorff@gsu.edu)
Co-PI: Suazette Mooring, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, GSU (smooring@gsu.edu)

Executive Summary

We propose to implement the Learning Assistant (LA) model at Georgia State, a program which recruits students to guide one another’s learning. As a diverse and interdependent community of teachers and learners, Georgia State benefits when students can help one another. The nine-year-old, nationally replicated LA model program provides academic benefits to both guides (LAs) [1] and learners [2] and encourages LAs to pursue careers in education [3]. Our target course, Physics 1112K, is already taught in an innovative format where faculty instructors guide groups of students in discussions about physics. In such an environment, more guides mean more discussions. Simultaneously with their instructional responsibilities, LAs will attend weekly pedagogy lessons, co-taught by both PIs, to prepare them for this guiding role. Dr. Mooring intends to develop a parallel program in the chemistry department (see our other STEM proposal); our collaboration will enable us to cross-pollinate and perfect both programs and to perform basic research. We will assess the LA program's effectiveness by measuring students' GPAs and test scores. We will disseminate our results at the next USG STEM conference and at Physics Education conferences. We will also publish our work in general and discipline-based educational journals.