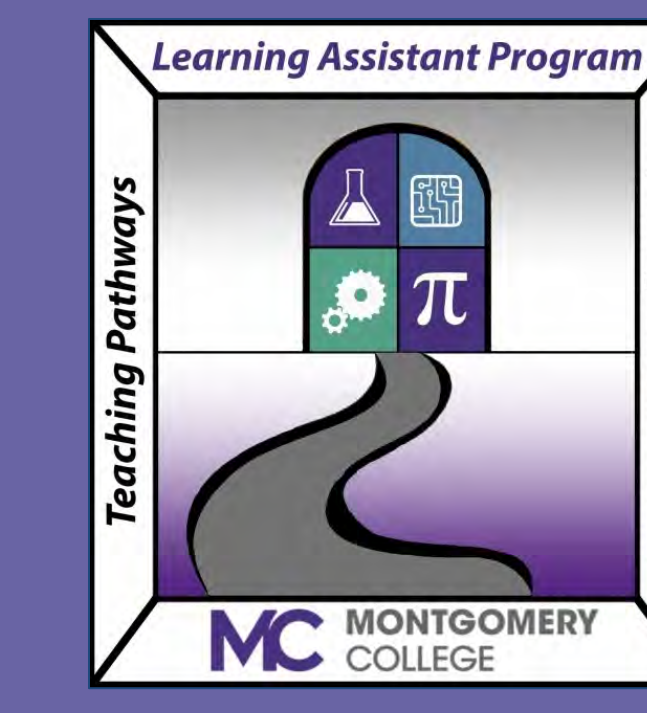


Trying on Teaching for Student Success: The Learning Assistant Program at a Two-Year College

Dr. Carolyn P. Schick, Montgomery College, Rockville, Maryland



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Learning Assistant Program at Montgomery College places experienced undergraduate students in the classroom to assist their fellow STEM students. It is modeled after the nationally recognized Learning Assistant program at the University of Colorado, Boulder and adapted for implementation in the Community College setting.

LAs develop a relationship with their faculty mentor and are embedded in the learning environment as they work with students in a collaborative atmosphere. LAs also lead study and review sessions for their students outside of class.

LAs are paid a stipend for assisting students for six hours per week during the semester.

www.montgomerycollege.edu/LAProgram

Learning Assistant Program Director:
Dr. Carolyn Schick, STEM Faculty Advisor, Chemistry



www.learningassistantalliance.org



THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE MODEL

Opportunities

- Focus on teaching provides high quality mentorship
- Students preparing to transfer stay engaged in STEM
- LAs serve as successful role models for their peers
- Collaboration with and transfer to other LA programs at four-year schools

Challenges

- Typical credit-based pedagogy course not optimal
- Smaller recruitment pool for upper level courses
- Obtaining grant funding and/or internal support

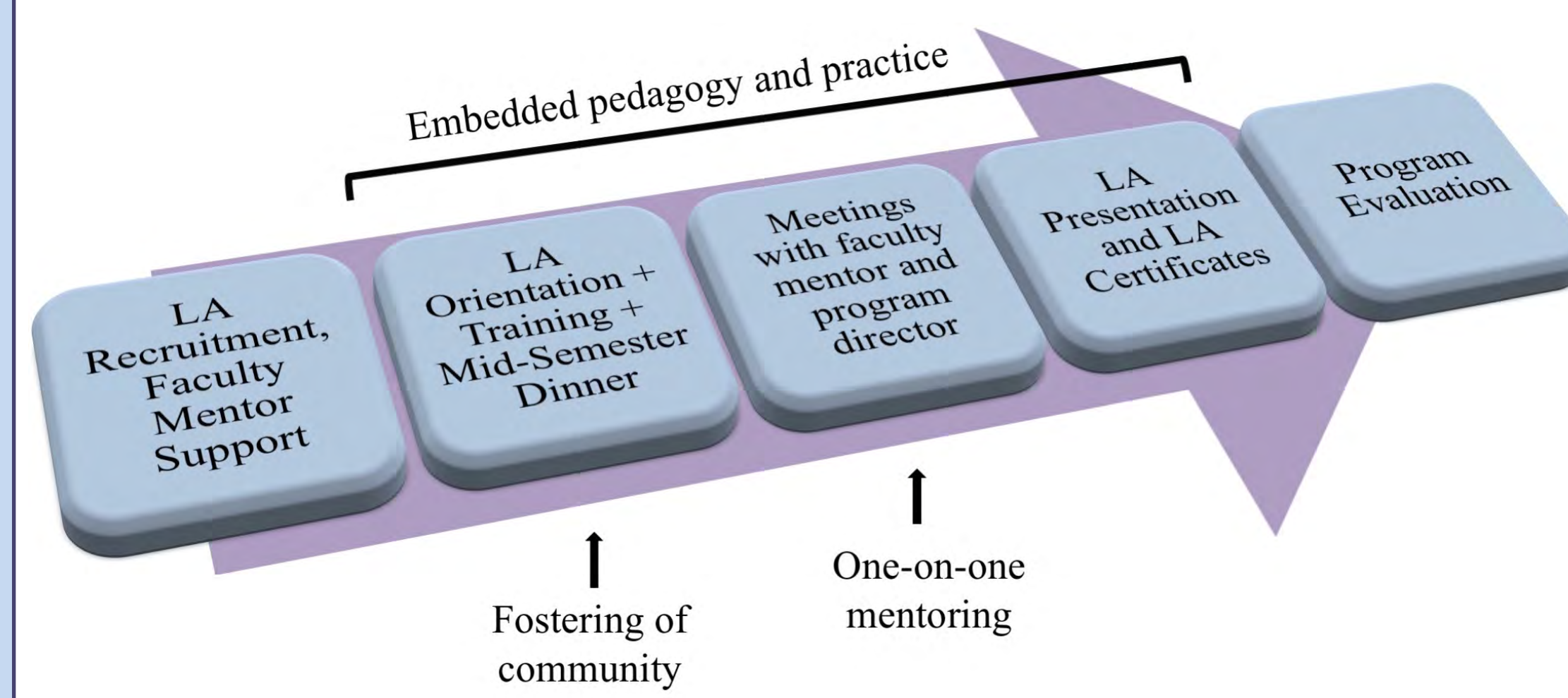
ABOUT MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

- A three-campus **community college** founded in 1946, based outside of Washington, D.C.
- One of the **largest undergraduate institutions in Maryland**, serving around 60,000 students (including both credit and non-credit populations)
- A **diverse institution**, with more than 160 countries represented and no majority race in the student population



LEARNING ASSISTANT OUTCOMES

~40 LAs each semester, ~\$1,100 stipend, 6 hours/week
All STEM and course levels supported college-wide



Student Impact

- Increased student success and lower DFW rates in LA-supported STEM courses.
- Positive student attitudes toward learning.

LA Impact

Increased benefits (content knowledge in STEM, confidence, study skills and more) plus increased interest in STEM teaching after LA experience.

Faculty Impact

Increased collaborative learning and student engagement happen as faculty mentors embed LAs in their learning environments.

Statement (student evaluations of LAs)	Agreement
The LA encouraged me to think.	96.7%
The LA encouraged me to participate and ask questions.	95.1%
I felt comfortable receiving support from the LA.	98.2%
I have learned more by having an LA in this course.	91.4%
The LA has increased my appreciation for the course material.	89.5%
The LA helped me succeed in this course.	96.5%

Peer-modeling

50% of LAs are from under-represented minority (URM) groups.
50% of LAs were in an LA-supported class in a prior semester.
97% of LAs have a GPA of 3.1 or higher.

LAs serve as peer-models for students in the class to be academically successful and/or want to become LAs themselves.

Having an LA has given me the comfort to learn.

My learning experience was greatly enriched because of the LA, and I don't think I would've understood the material that well without his assistance.

The LA was close to my age, understood the struggle, and motivated me to be better.

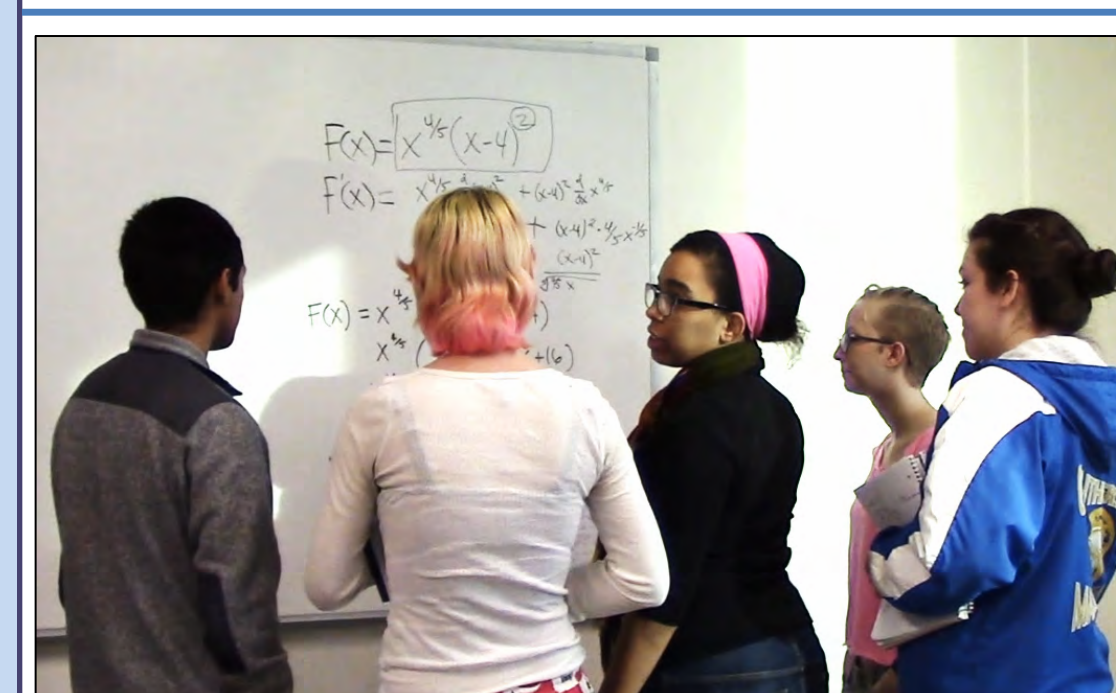
Mentorship

50% of LAs have taken a class with their faculty mentor prior to being an LA.

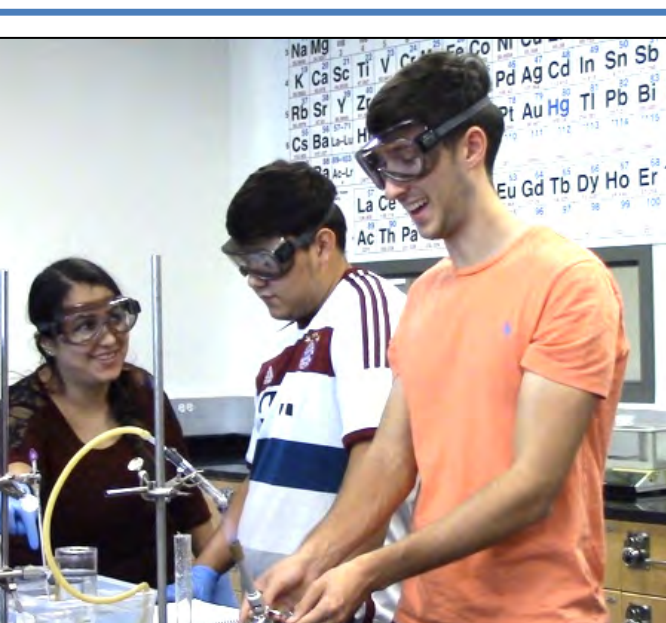


Some of my favorite moments with my LA were the long discussions we had that ranged from career paths, family, her adjustment process to living in the U.S., and social issues.

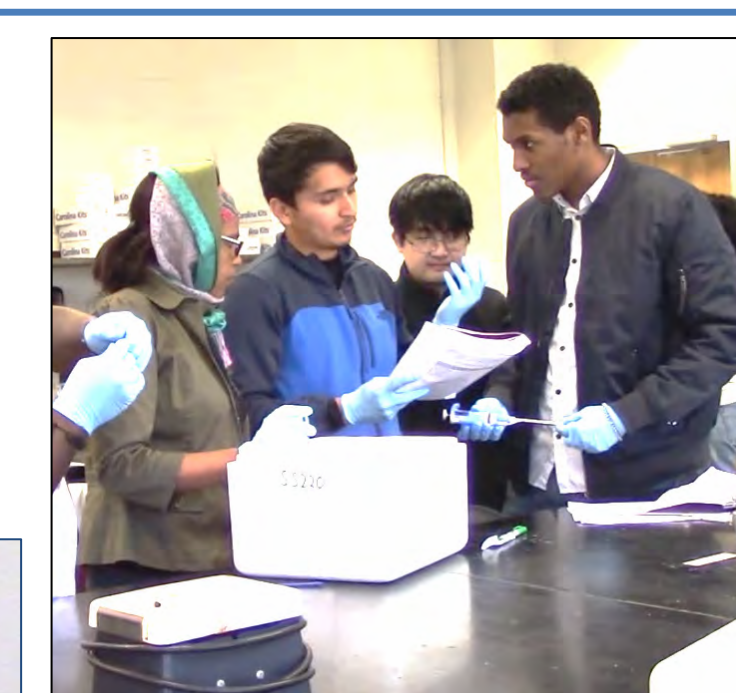
I look forward to mentoring my LA every semester. It's incredible to see the confidence of the LA grow over the course of the semester, and such an advantage for students in courses with high DFW rates to have a role-model to interact with.



LA (center) guiding students in a math flipped classroom



LA (left) assisting a student in class



LA (center) working with a student group in biology lab

LA (center) supporting students at a study session

LA (left) working with students in chemistry lab

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PERSPECTIVES

Student Perspective:

“My LA was excited to teach and didn't make work seem like a chore. She was easy and fun to talk to, and it made me feel comfortable to ask questions.”

- student in class

Learning Assistant Perspective:

“Working as an LA allowed me to grow as a person. I have greatly improved my communication skills and I created an amazing bond with my students. I have a deeper understanding of both chemistry and biology, and that will definitely help me in the future. I have learned that each student has their own way of understanding the material, and I am grateful that I am able to assist each and every one of them.”

- former LA

Faculty Mentor Perspective:

“Having an LA in the course created a strong sense of community among students and it was wonderful to watch the students learn from the experiences and knowledge of a peer mentor. It was a win-win situation for everyone. The LA's guidance and support helped students increase their understanding of the course material while the LA strengthened her own knowledge and confidence by exploring the joys and challenges of teaching.”

- Faculty Mentor

LA Program Perspective:

“There are approximately 40 Learning Assistants at Montgomery College each semester in all disciplines of STEM. It's inspiring to watch the LAs grow as they try on teaching, deepen their knowledge in STEM, build presentation and confidence skills, and form friendships with other LAs through dinner gatherings and training events. Each LA also paves the way for other students in the class to want to be an LA, getting more students excited about a future in STEM teaching. As embedded classroom support, the LAs help directly with student success in STEM classes at Montgomery College.”

- LA Program Director