

I have been a Learning Assistant for Dr. Chiu's Engineering Physics courses for about two semesters now. I feel that Learning Assistant's are a vital part to students experience in the introductory physics courses for the reasons I will address in this report.

While I have missed a few lectures throughout my time as an LA, I feel that attending the lectures is important, not only for the LA's but also (and even more so) for the students taking the course. In Dr. Chiu's class, clicker questions are asked in every lecture, and if the students are confused or not sure where to start, the LA's can quickly give insight on the question at hand. There have been numerous times throughout the semester where I have explained a certain concept to a student who may not have understood something that was said (for whatever reason) during the lecture.

This semester my office hours were not as populated as last semester. I'm not sure why this is the case. I feel office hours are extremely important. The way 303K/L MI runs office hours is extremely convenient and I believe every class should have something like this. Students often complain that they would rather LA's hold "on ground" office hours, but in the past there hasn't been a great turnout. This could be because of time conflicts or even laziness of the students to have to walk across campus to meet the LA. That's why online office hours are convenient. One can receive help and guidance through a computer.

As for the TA sessions, the way 303K/L is run requires more manpower than one TA can deliver, so I feel LA's are central to these sessions. With 3 people on ground, students are sure to receive all the help they need. I feel the role of the LA should be to stimulate thought in order to be able to solve the problem at hand. This is also a great time for the students to get to know the LA's, which is important. This way the students are more comfortable asking for help in the future. I have actually made a few friends in the class because of these discussion sections. They see that someone that is going through the same things as them (The LA's) actually has a grasp on the material that is covered, so it makes the course seem less intimidating.

I have not really had to meet with students outside of class this semester. Sometimes when I bump into students outside of class they ask me about study habits and things of that nature and I always make sure to thoroughly explain how I studied for this course. I have noticed that this gives them a boost of confidence since the way I studied is often the way the students are studying for the course. I am often in the PMCL and if I see a student working on the homework I usually go see if they need help. Other than that, I have not had to schedule to meet with any students outside of class or office hours. Last semester I met with students several times though. Usually the meetings were to discuss better study habits.

Overall I think the LA program is necessary for students to really learn physics. I think that students can look up to LA's as a sort of mentor, and this makes the class seem less intimidating. Intro physics at UT is portrayed as something that is impossible, so when the students see that someone like them has done well in the course, their confidence is boosted and I believe this is necessary for students to actually even want to learn the material.