Learning Assistants Pilot – Fall 2015—Preliminary Report

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Research Questions:
1. What instructional practices are associated with Learning Assistants?
2. Does the inclusion of Learning Assistants in course design benefit students, and are there differential effects for certain groups?
3. How effective is the LA model in non-STEM courses?

Qualitative Data (Field Reports)

In discussion sections, LAs
- Engage students in discussion (e.g., lead small groups)
- Run educational activities (e.g., game show themed group quizzes)
- Support TAs in instruction
- Provide native language support for ESL students

In lectures, LAs
- Enable lecturers to implement small-group activities (not present in comparison courses)
- Average lecture size is 292.7

In W39A, LAs
- Provide individual feedback to students in one-on-one tutoring sessions throughout the quarter
- Offer social support and build trust with students
- Attend class once a week
- Average class size = 19

Quantitative Data

Grades
- Overall, students earn higher grades in courses with LAs compared with courses without LAs
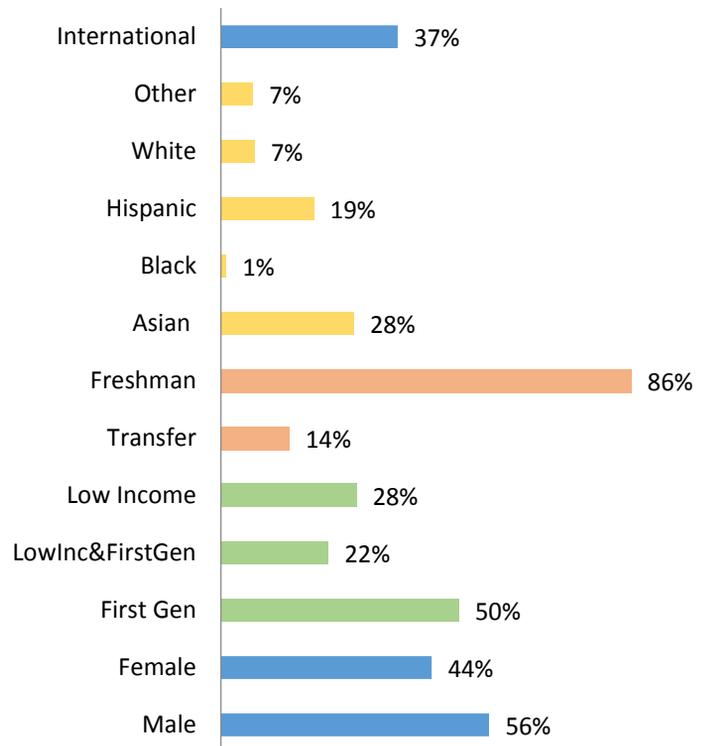
Observations
- Lectures with LAs include group work
- Lectures with LAs had increased faculty-student interaction

Student Surveys
- Between courses with LAs and those without, students exposed to LAs rated **both** TAs and LAs as more instrumental in generating understanding and stimulating interest in course content
- Between LA and non-LA courses, students rated TA support as comparable to LA support for both stimulating interest and generating understanding

Demographic Data

- International: 37%
- Other: 7%
- White: 7%
- Hispanic: 19%
- Black: 1%
- Asian: 28%
- Freshman: 86%
- Transfer: 14%
- Low Income: 28%
- LowInc&FirstGen: 22%
- First Gen: 50%
- Female: 44%
- Male: 56%

Benefits and Discussion
1. Group work may be one of the ways that LAs successfully engage students in large lecture courses.
2. Higher survey scores for interest in course and understanding of content correlate with average higher grades.
3. When comparing student ratings of TAs in non-LA courses and those of LAs in the pilot, comparable ratings suggest that LAs may be a cost-effective way to increase engagement.

Future Data (Winter/Spring 2016)
- Conduct additional observations and surveys
  - Econ 100B/100C and Writing 39A
- Complete and analyze interview data for students in LAP during Fall 2015
- Collect data from previous years to control for instructor effects

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