

Using Learning Assistants as a peer learning model to increase student success in Principles of Biology laboratory sequence

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She has

been working on incorporating evidence-based teaching practices, which has led her to focus on developing course-embedded undergraduate research experiences (CUREs). Dr. Showalter is currently one of the program coordinators for the learning assistant program at Clayton State University.

Dr. Paul Melvin is an Associate Professor of Biology at Clayton State University. He earned a PhD in Biology from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, with a focus on environmental toxicology and endocrine disruptors. He teaches courses in molecular biology, general biology, and leads study abroad programs to the Bahamas and Costa Rica.

Goal of the Program

Peer learning models have many benefits, especially within STEM fields (Talbot et al. 2015). One effective peer learning model uses learning assistants, who are students embedded in a course that provide support for student learning in their assigned course, serve as a role model for succeeding in the course, and create an atmosphere of belonging among students. The Department of Biology at Clayton State University developed a Learning Assistant Program with three main goals in mind: 1) support faculty by helping them introduce more active learning in the classroom, 2) mentor learning assistants by helping them develop strong pedagogical skills that strengthen their identity as teachers and scientists, and 3) support learning in the classroom.

Description of the Program

We built the program initially by incorporating learning assistants into our Principles of Biology laboratory courses, which are course-embedded, undergraduate research, experiential

