Glassboro Public Schools

MEMO

Date: July 6, 2016

To: Mark Silverstein, Ed.D. Superintendent

From: Danielle Sochor, Chief Academic Officer

Re: Board Meeting
July 27, 2016 board meeting

Requesting Board Approval for two Rowan students, Kyle Louis and Dondre Reed, as Learning Assistants in Reiner Schmidt's Physics classroom for three hours per week at a time to be decided between the Rowan students and Mr. Schmidt. The placement would be from September 8 through December 20, 2016.

DMS/bg

Rowan University

June 15, 2016

Dr. Danielle Sneathen, Principal
Glassboro High School
550 Bowe Memorial Blvd.
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Dear Dr. Sneathen,

As we have previously discussed, Rowan University has launched a program through the Physics Teacher Education Coalition (PhysTEC), with the goal of increasing the number of physics education majors in the southern New Jersey region. This program involves providing early teaching experiences to physics undergraduate majors by embedding them in physics classrooms. Currently, the University is employing a dozen undergraduate Learning Assistants, placing aspiring teachers in physics classes on the university campus. Research clearly shows that students who are embedded in high school classrooms have more realistic teaching experiences and greater changes in disposition to becoming physics teachers. We had great success last spring placing Jesse Kosior as a Learning Assistant in Reiner Schmidt's physics classroom, and we propose that the University place Kyle Louis and Dondre Reed as Learning Assistants during the fall of 2016, each for three hours per week. The Learning Assistants would observe instruction and provide student assistance during group work sessions. The time for each placement would be mutually agreed upon by the two LAs and Mr. Schmidt before beginning. Also, this placement would coincide with the university fall 2016 semester, running from Sept 1 through Dec 20. If you would like, staff members from Rowan are available to meet at Glassboro High School to discuss further details related to Learning Assistant placements.

The PhysTEC team includes Dr. Karen Magee-Sauer (PI), Dean of Rowan's College of Science and Mathematics, Dr. Trevor Smith (Co-PI), Departments of Physics & Astronomy and STEAM Education, Dr. Issam Abi-El-Mona, Department of STEAM Education, Dr. Philip La Porta, Department of Physics & Astronomy, and Mr. Patrick Chestnut, Teacher in Residence within the Department of Physics & Astronomy.

We are attaching additional information related to Learning Assistant roles and responsibilities that are provided by the broader PhysTEC organization (www.phystec.org). Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Trevor I. Smith

Trevor I. Smith
Assistant Professor

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Physics Teacher Education Coalition

Learning Assistants

Learning Assistants are talented undergraduates who enhance student learning in large enrollment courses by making them more collaborative, student-centered, and interactive. In the process, Learning Assistants are given an early teaching experience.

The specific roles that Learning Assistants take on can vary between courses, but all programs share certain features that distinguish them from more conventional teaching assistantships:

- Learning Assistants for a particular course are recruited from among the top students who recently completed that course.
- Concurrent to teaching, Learning Assistants participate in a low/no-credit pedagogy course that develops their pedagogical content knowledge.
- Learning Assistants are encouraged to enter a teacher certification program, and generally must do so if they wish to continue working as Learning Assistants in subsequent semesters.

Selected Learning Assistant Resources

Valerie Otero, Steven Pollock, and Noah Finkelstein. "A physics department's role in preparing physics teachers: The Colorado learning assistant model, in Teacher Education in Physics," edited by D.E. Meltzer and P.S. Shaffer.

Learning assistant program at the University of Colorado Boulder

Gay Stewart, "Undergraduate Learning Assistants at the University of Arkansas". APS Forum on Education Newsletter, Summer 2006.

More on Learning Assistants »

Learning Assistant Strategies

Decide how your Learning Assistants will enhance your courses. Learning Assistants can serve in a variety of different roles, including:

- Facilitating small-group learning in recitations and help sessions, using Socratic dialogue.
- Guiding work in lab sections
- Facilitating small-group interactions during lectures, e.g. in conjunction with clicker questions.

Develop or adapt a course where Learning Assistants gain pedagogical content knowledge. A well-designed course makes the difference between a Learning Assistant program and a traditional teaching assistantship. Many programs adapt the University of Colorado's course, which covers effective teaching methods, findings from physics education research, and use of technology in classrooms. See http://laprogram.colorado.edu for more information.

Develop a pathway to enable Learning Assistants to advance. Advancement gives Learning Assistants status within the program and among their peers, and encourages them along the path toward teacher certification. Experienced Learning Assistants can mentor and supervise novices.

» View more strategies for Learning Assistants

Learning Assistant Workshops

More information on past LA workshops: Past Learning Assistant Workshops

More information on LA programs, including upcoming LA workshops: Learning Assistant Alliance

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