

Abstract Submitted  
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**Learning Assistant Program Pilot at Bowdoin College** KAREN TOPP, MADELEINE MSALL, Bowdoin College — Bowdoin College has recently implemented a new Learning Assistant (LA) Program for Liberal Arts Institutions. Our pilot project explores how the CU-Boulder model may work at small liberal arts colleges, where there are fewer education students and no (or rarely an) education course specifically aimed at STEM fields. In our model, several science faculty, led by a professor of education, met monthly with undergraduate LAs in a reading group to discuss research-supported innovations in science pedagogy. LAs for introductory mechanics attended classes and supported in-class group work and led mandatory one hour Learning Groups (LGs) for an assigned group of 6–8 students. LGs were designed to form supportive study groups with guided explorations of difficult topics. Resources for the LGs, provided by faculty, included tutorial explorations<sup>1</sup> of mathematical concepts and challenging problems. Our LAs act as ushers between legitimate peripheral learners<sup>2</sup> and the “center” of our particular community of physics practice. LAs have been excellent mentors to less experienced students and have deepened their understanding of both course material and the learning process. Feedback thus far from LAs is positive, with one (of ten) directly motivated to take an education class and others expressing high interest in learning more about Physics education. <sup>1</sup>For example, McDermott, Shaffer and the Physics Education Group (Prentice Hall 1998). <sup>2</sup>J. Lave and E. Wenger, Situated Learning; Legitimate peripheral participation (Cambridge U Press, 1991).

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