The STEP Learning Assistant Program: Students Supporting Students

Introduction

The STEP Program facilitates faculty-student partnerships to create classroom communities that enhance student learning. While the impact of LAs on enrolled students is well-known, how LAs are affected is less known. We are engaged in four, ongoing, complementary research projects aimed at understanding the impact of the STEP Learning Assistant (LA) Program, on the Learning Assistants. Projects include evaluating effects of the LA program on student motivation, perception of teaching, desire to teach, and trends between pedagogical training and career goals. Another project is aimed at developing an LA-centered database through which future research can be supported and conducted.
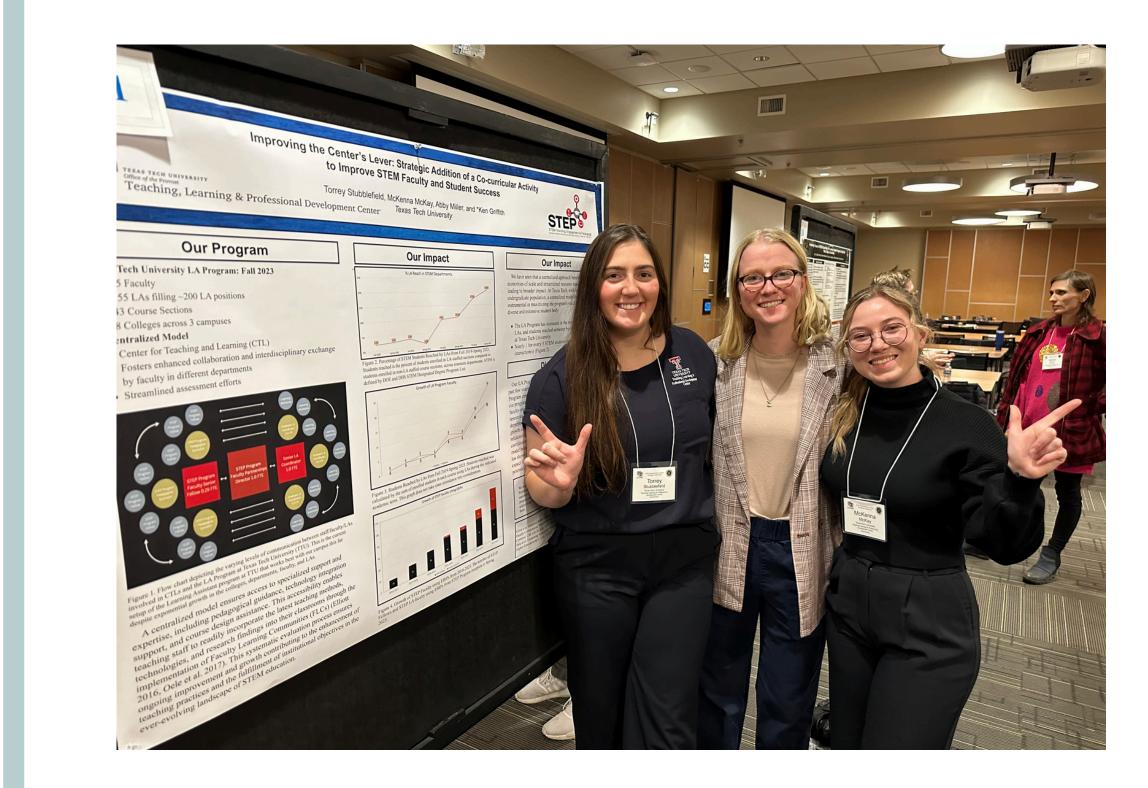
Faculty Voice

"I am proud of the disciplinary diversity of these students. We are supporting projects by STEM students, students from the School of Music, and students from the Rawls College of Business. Another point of pride is seeing former LAs return to the STEP Program as graduate students to help our current cohort of LAs with their research. So many facets of this work comes full circle."
-- Ken Griffith

Team

Faculty: Ken Griffith, McKenna M. McKay, Abigail J. Miller
Students: Rose Carilli, Cassandra O'Pry, Chinomoso Okafor, Ivana Raj, Cassidy Wheeler

Goal(s)

1. **Assess LA Impact on Motivation and Teaching Perception:** Examine how program participation influences motivation, teaching perceptions, and career interest.
2. **Analyze Pedagogical Training and Career Aspirations:** Explore links between pedagogical training and career aspirations of LAs.
3. **Develop a Comprehensive LA Database:** Build a database to facilitate future research on LA outcomes.

Student Voice

"I hope to gain a deeper appreciation for research methods and learn to apply these insights to my own work. This rare opportunity offers a unique learning experience beyond traditional classes or jobs. The hands-on nature and feedback from conducting research have been invaluable for my growth."

---Cassidy Wheeler

To Date Progress

To date, we have initiated four research projects examining the impact of the STEP Learning Assistant (LA) Program on LAs, focusing on motivation, teaching perceptions, and career goals. Additionally, we are developing an LA-centered database to support future research. We aim to publish findings and equip LAs with transferable professional skills.

TrUE Transformers

| My Top 3 Transformative Priorities | Support Multiple Undergraduates | Intentionally Recruited Underrepresented | Potential continuation post-grant |