

TAs in the Virtual World: A Win-Win-Win-Win

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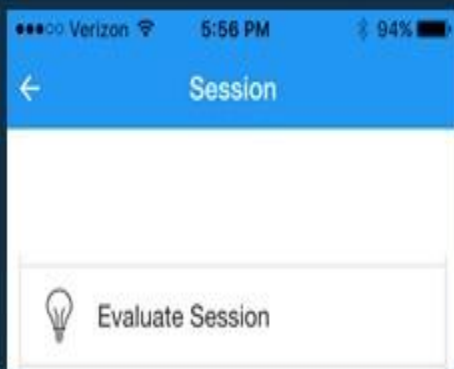
WALDEN UNIVERSITY

A higher degree. A higher purpose.



Session Evaluations Contest

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Learning Outcomes

- Determine the impact the TA project had on undergraduate student persistence, engagement, and retention.
- Determine the benefits the TA project had on students, TAs, faculty, and administration.
- Develop an understanding of TA best practices from the student, TA, faculty, and administrative perspectives.
- Model a virtual TA program based on implementation and lessons learned.

The Setting

- Walden University, accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, began serving working adults who wanted to earn a doctoral degree in 1970.
- Today Walden has over 50,000 students with over 16,000 in 25 different doctoral programs.
- With over 100,000 alumni spanning the globe Walden continues to live its mission of effecting positive social change.

The literature confirms/OLC 5 Pillars....

1) Learning Effectiveness

- Frequency of TA/student interaction is positive and significant predictor of student engagement (Stang, 2014)
- TAs in classroom result in higher student performance (Crowe et al, 2014)

2) Scale (Cost Effectiveness and Commitment)

- 76% students felt TAs were a cost effective way to provide a quality education; TAs allowed for increase in enrollment and increase in revenue (Gatlin, Alexander, 2010)

The literature confirms/OLC 5 Pillars cont.

3) Access

- Students reported valuable assistance in courses with TAs (Gordon et al, 2013)
- 100% of students reported receiving quicker feedback in courses with TAs (Gatlin, Alexander, 2010)

4) Faculty Satisfaction

- 93% of faculty felt TAs helped them and increased feedback rate; 69% of students reported faculty were able to concentrate on course content (Gatlin, Alexander, 2010)

5) Student Satisfaction

- 93% of faculty felt a TA increased student satisfaction (Gatlin, Alexander, 2010)

Background Information

- School of Health Sciences (SHS)
- 3 UG Degree Programs
 - BS Health Studies
 - BS Public Health
 - BS Healthcare Management
- All Faculty- Terminal Degree
- Classes:
 - 6-weeks long
 - Average ~24 students
 - HLTH 1000; PUBH 1000; HLTH 1005
 - HLTH 2110; HLTH 3110; HLTH 3115; HLTH 4300

Recruiting

- **Job description is sent out via Student Communications to all SHS Ph.D. graduate students:**
 - **Ph.D. Health Services**
 - **Ph.D. Public Health**
 - **Ph.D. Health Education & Promotion**
- **Criteria: Must be enrolled as a graduate student during one-year commitment.**
- **Pay: \$500/month**

Onboarding: MyLearn Training Modules

13 self-paced modules from Bb's Coursesites covering:

- FERPA
- Academic integrity
- University policies
- Working with adult learners
- Engaging diverse learners
- Facilitating online discussions
- Building community
- Providing feedback and grading
- Disability Services
 - Certificates of completion were uploaded into gradebook

Onboarding Continued

- Orientation Meeting with Program Director
- Individual meetings with mentoring faculty members

Issues

- Role between graduate student and “faculty” member
- IT had to create a “workaround” outlining steps to navigate between the two different portals.

Division of Course Responsibilities

| Assignment | Faculty Member | TA |
|---|--|--|
| Application: #1 (week 2) article review social determinants #2 (week 4) evaluate online info. #3 (week 5) health org, non-profit, agencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade all assignments • Review TA grading of Week 4 Assignment • Grade all assignments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review faculty member's grading and feedback • Grade all Week 4 assignments • Review faculty member's grading and feedback |
| Weekly Discussions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to 2/3 of students • Enter weekly grades | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to a minimum of 10 students • Review faculty member's grading and feedback |
| My Health Journal | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade all |

Student Persistence and Retention

Data: Sample

| Course N sizes | Control Group (Courses with no TA) | | | | Test Group (Courses with TA) | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 201610 | 201630 | 201650 | 201670 | 201710 | 201730 | 201750 | 201770 |
| HLTH1000 | 47 | 43 | 66 | 63 | 54 | 75 | 77 | 76 |
| HLTH1005 | 42 | 70 | 54 | 68 | 38 | 76 | 68 | 68 |
| PUBH1000 | 10 | 29 | 13 | 0 | 16 | 20 | 8 | 0 |
| OTHER | 0 | 0 | 68 | 178 | 0 | 0 | 65 | 160 |

This analysis was done at the course level to see if TAs made a difference in next term retention and grades.

Retention into next term

| Courses | Course with TA | Course without TA |
|------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| HLTH1000 (n=501) | 75% | 72% |
| HLTH1005 (n=484) | 81% | 78% |
| PUBH1000 (n=96) | 86% | 75% |
| OTHER (n=471) | 83% | 88% |

- A chi-square test of independence was calculated comparing courses with or without TAs.
- No significant relationship was found ($\chi^2(1) = .042, p > .05$).
- Enrolling in the next term appears to be independent from whether or not the student had a TA in the previous course.

Final Grades

| Grades | W | F | D | C | B | A |
|---------------------|----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| Courses without TAs | 1% | 13% | 4% | 12% | 22% | 48% |
| Courses with TAs | 1% | 14% | 5% | 12% | 27% | 42% |

- A chi-square test of independence was calculated comparing grades of students in courses with or without TAs.
- No significant relationship was found ($\chi^2(5) = 9.174$, $p > .05$).
- Having a TA in the course appeared to be independent from the final grades students earned.

Learning Outcome Assessment

| Artifact | Pre-TA Grades | Post-TA Grades | Pre-TA Failures | Post-TA Failures |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| HLTH 1000 Discussion 5 | 79.3% | 82.5% | 9.6% | 8.3% |
| HLTH 1000 Discussion 6 | 76.7% | 81.2% | 12.4% | 8.5% |
| HLTH 1005 Discussion Week 2 | 90.9% | 93.3% | 4.5% | 3.3% |

Win-Win-Win-Win

Perspectives from:

1. Administration

2. Faculty

3. TAs

4. Students



End of Course Evaluations

Sent out by Program Director

- TA End of Course Evaluation
- Faculty Member End of Course Evaluation
- Students' End of Course Evaluation

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/>

Best Practices

- Emphasis is Engaging Communications

1. Clarity

- Introductions
- Requirements
- Assistance

2. Confirmation

- Follow-up correspondence & feedback
- Layers of interactions/exchanges

Best Practices

3. Consistency

- Maintenance of communications & coursework
- Blending of faculty/TA educational methods to sustain student involvement

4. Commitment

- Critical thinking skills
- Develop scholarly voice
- Display of support

Small Group Activity

- Identify what courses (at risk) could benefit the most from having a TA
- How would you recruit TAs?
- What current resources do you have to recruit and what would you need?
- How would you train TAs and what resources do you have to help with this? What would you need?



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