

The RU-NB Learning Assistance Network

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Abstract:

The field of learning assistance operates with a unique set of standards, best practices, and specialized knowledge, but is often vaguely defined at the institutional level, which can lead to communication gaps, inequity, and career stagnation. Few formal education programs specializing in this area exist and career pathways are ambiguous, leading professionals to collect a multitude of certifications and trainings at their own expense, without guarantee of advancement. At large universities, common challenges in this field can be magnified by decentralization, often resulting in significant differences in pay, promotion, and job responsibilities across comparable roles for both professional and student staff. The RU-NB Learning Assistance Network will be a formal network of professionals who exchange resources, standardize practices, collaborate on professional development, and share their expertise. This initiative aims to better professionalize and stabilize staffing for learning assistance positions and ultimately better serve students with accurate and timely information, effective referrals, and consistently high-quality services.

Key Steps & Timeline:

- **Stage 1 (Spring '23- Spring '24): Increase Communication & Opportunity**
- Create shared Canvas site
- Inventory learning assistance services
- Implement Professional Development Series
- Propose local/institutional conference
- **Stage 2 (Fall '23- Spring '24): Professional Development Plan**
- Identify discrete set of skills & competencies for LA professionals & map to opportunities
- Develop cost-effective formal training
- Implement mentor matching program
- **Stage 3: Standardization of Practice**
- Make existing certifications accessible
- Design job templates to share across units

Future Directions:

- **Stage 4: Formalize & Expand the Work**
- Propose graduate program concentration
- Implement official pay scale for student

Effectiveness Measures:

- **Goal: Better serve RU-NB students**
- Measurements: a) Utilization metrics for communication platforms. b) Reports of effectiveness collected from network participants. C) Engagement on Canvas platform
- **Goal: Further professionalize and stabilize staffing**
- Measurements: a) Surveys of network participants to measure job satisfaction, clarity of role expectations, and professional development activities
- **Goal: Increase availability of opportunities**
- Measurements: a) Number of opportunities provided through the network to all participants b) Participation in professional development
- **Goal: Increase sense of belonging & community**
- Measurement: Surveys of participants

Engagement Plan:

- Engaging the network: Canvas site, luncheons, workshops, group certification & training, conference
- Engaging the administration: collaborative proposals from across units with shared vision and needs

Primary Stakeholders:

- Learning assistance professionals
- Student employees
- Student service users
- Administrative offices overseeing learning assistance services

Theory of Change:

