



April 2024

Dear Briggsie,

Thank you for considering applying to be a Undergraduate Learning Assistant (ULA) in our College!

The long-standing ULA program has benefits to students, ULAs, and faculty. Students benefit from near-peer mentoring within our learning spaces. ULAs support allows faculty to incorporate best-practice pedagogies in our learning spaces. Finally, the ULAs themselves benefit from close contact with faculty, opportunities for leadership, and sustained attention to fundamentals of the discipline. If you are interested in continuing these benefits in the College, please do apply to be a ULA.

On the following pages you will find information about the six goals we have for the ULA program in our College. These goals help us shape the program now and moving forward. Then there is information about the job descriptions for all courses supported by ULAs - the responsibilities and breakdown of hours. Additionally, information about how each faculty group makes hiring decisions for ULAs for that course is listed.

We hope this document helps provide clarity and transparency about ULA work in the College.

Go green!

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## ULA@LBC - Program Goals

Last updated January 2023

**What are ULAs? What do they do?** Undergraduate Learning Assistants (ULAs) are a type of near-peer instruction. As originally conceived, this model was designed to “stimulate instructional change in classrooms and shift attitudes among students, teachers, and administrators to adopt evidence-based teaching methods” (Barrasso, 2021). Unique to the LA Model, LAs primary role is to support student learning during classroom instruction. This work informs and is informed by preparation meetings with other members of their course teaching team and ongoing pedagogical development.

**What is the significance of the ULA Program in Lyman Briggs College?** In Lyman Briggs College (LBC or “Briggs”), we have had ULAs since the 1960s. ULA work is deeply integrated into Briggs courses. In the Fall 2022 semester, 78% of the course sections\* and 78% of the seats offered were supported by ULAs. In the same semester, 65% of the Briggs faculty teaching were working with ULAs in at least one of their courses. The overwhelming majority of Briggs courses and instructors engage the ULA program.

For many [LA programs](#), the goals are to 1) enable course transformation to include more evidence-based practices, 2) decrease rates of students receiving Ds, Fs, or withdrawing), and 3) recruit more K-12 teachers. In LBC, many of our courses have already undergone significant transformation. Therefore Briggs’ goal for our LA program is to continue and build upon our evidence-based and learner-centered course practices. An additional goal of the Briggs ULA program is to create leadership experiences for our students with broad applications beyond their time in LBC. Our program goals thus include goals impacting the College, the faculty, the ULAs, and students in courses supported by ULAs.

### **Program Goals:**

#### **Goal 1: Implement safety protocols and evidence-based practices in undergraduate courses.**

Here “safety” encompasses both University campus policies (e.g. mandatory reporting and Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct) and lab safety standards (e.g. chemical and biological safety standards where applicable). “Evidence-based practices” includes research-based course designs in Briggs classes (i.e. studio physics, flipped lectures, course-based research experiences) as well as course environment practices like inclusive and learner-centered teaching practices. The College and supervising faculty have a responsibility to ensure that all ULAs are aware of these protocols, and policies, and are prepared to implement them in their course context.

#### **Goal 2: Increase representation in undergraduate course leadership.**

As members of instructional teams, ULAs are a part of course leadership. While the College strives to increase representation at the faculty level as a long-term goal, an additional strategy to diversify the course leadership representation is through the hiring of ULAs. The nimble and short-term hiring of ULAs allows for a swifter increase in representation in College course leadership. The supervising faculty have a responsibility to be attentive to equitable hiring practices as they make ULA hiring decisions. The College has a responsibility to increase and assess access to ULA job opportunities.



**Goal 3: Increase pedagogical efficacy for the ULAs.**

For ULAs to be effective in supporting student learning, they must be effective in their pedagogical practices. This includes developing a foundational understanding of how learning works and a capacity to identify and handle issues of inclusion in their classrooms. The responsibility to foster pedagogical efficacy among ULAs lies both with the College (for knowledge of and reflection about general best-practices) and the supervising faculty (for ongoing mentoring / feedback, and discipline-specific pedagogical content knowledge).

**Goal 4: Provide ULAs with opportunities to explore teaching careers and develop transferable skills.**

While most Briggs students come to the College intending to pursue a health profession, the ULA experience is a venue for leadership development for them. ULAs can explore teaching as a career and/ or as a set of highly-valuable transferable skills. Both the College and supervising faculty have the responsibility of framing the ULA work as a professional development opportunity.

**Goal 5: Develop ULAs interest, competence, and recognition in the disciplines.**

While many ULAs work in courses different from their major or disciplinary interest, in their ULA work they can develop their scientific or professional identity. In the literature, science identity incorporates interest, competence, and recognition in a field. One example of “competence” is how many senior ULAs note that their MCAT exam preparation is reduced in the field where they ULA due to the ongoing deepening of understanding that happens when you are deeply involved in helping someone else learn. Cultivating academic interest, competence, and recognition is a joint responsibility between the College and supervising faculty; the ULA program directly contributes to this.

**Goal 6: Improve student satisfaction and success in gateway courses.**

ULA work has been shown to increase student satisfaction, course pass rate, and belonging in STEM communities (Alcalde & Nagel, 2018; Alzen, et al., 2018; Clements, et al., 2022). Thus to live into our College goals related to student success, we will continue to implement and innovate ULA practices in the College. By focusing on gateway courses, we can maximize the impact of the ULA program in the College. Thus implementing and maintaining excellence in the ULA program is again a joint responsibility between the College and supervising faculty.

\*For the science and math courses, a section is one recitation or lab section. For courses without recitations or lab sections, one course is one section.

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## Mathematics

### MTH103 College Algebra

#### Job Description:

Assist instructor with in-class (during lecture) activities, staff the math help room, assist with grading, attend weekly meeting.

Hour-by-hour breakdown per week:

- In-class assistance: 1 hour
- Staff math help room: 2 hours
- Grading: 1 hour
- Weekly meeting: 1 hour

#### How hiring decisions are made:

Must have completed LB 117 or higher. Important positive factors in hiring decisions include high grades (3.0 or higher in all relevant mathematics courses), previous experience as a ULA or tutor, interest in the teaching profession, declared as math major or minor or a related major/minor in the mathematical sciences, strong references from LBC mathematics instructors, available to staff time slots that need to be filled, strong responses to application prompts.

### LB117 Functions and Trigonometry

#### Job Description:

Lead weekly recitation, staff the math help room, assist with grading, attend weekly meeting.

Hour-by-hour breakdown per week:

- Lead recitation: 1 hour
- Staff math help room: 2 hours
- Grading: 1 hour
- Weekly meeting: 1 hour

#### How hiring decisions are made:

Must have completed LB 118 or higher. Important positive factors in hiring decisions include high grades (3.0 or higher in all relevant mathematics courses), previous experience as a ULA or tutor, interest in the teaching profession, declared as math major or minor or a related major/minor in the mathematical sciences, strong references from LBC mathematics instructors, available to staff time slots that need to be filled, strong responses to application prompts.



## **LB118 Calculus I**

### Job Description:

Lead weekly recitation, staff the math help room, assist with grading, attend weekly meeting.

Hour-by-hour breakdown per week:

- Lead recitation: 1 hour
- Staff math help room: 2 hours
- Grading: 1 hour
- Weekly meeting: 1 hour

### How hiring decisions are made:

Must have completed LB 119 or higher. Important positive factors in hiring decisions include high grades (3.0 or higher in all relevant mathematics courses), previous experience as a ULA or tutor, interest in the teaching profession, declared as math major or minor or a related major/minor in the mathematical sciences, strong references from LBC mathematics instructors, available to staff time slots that need to be filled, strong responses to application prompts.

## **LB119 Calculus II**

### Job Description:

Lead weekly recitation, staff the math help room, assist with grading, attend weekly meeting.

Hour-by-hour breakdown per week:

- Lead recitation: 1 hour
- Staff math help room: 2 hours
- Grading: 1 hour
- Weekly meeting: 1 hour

### How hiring decisions are made:

Must have completed LB 220 or higher. Important positive factors in hiring decisions include high grades (3.0 or higher in all relevant mathematics courses), previous experience as a ULA or tutor, interest in the teaching profession, declared as math major or minor or a related major/minor in the mathematical sciences, strong references from LBC mathematics instructors, available to staff time slots that need to be filled, strong responses to application prompts.



## **LB220 Calculus III**

### Job Description:

Lead weekly recitation, staff the math help room, assist with grading, attend weekly meeting.

Hour-by-hour breakdown per week:

- Lead recitation: 1 hour
- Staff math help room: 2 hours
- Grading: 1 hour
- Weekly meeting: 1 hour

### How hiring decisions are made:

Must have completed MTH 235 or MTH 299 or higher. Important positive factors in hiring decisions include high grades (3.0 or higher in all relevant mathematics courses), previous experience as a ULA or tutor, interest in the teaching profession, declared as math major or minor or a related major/minor in the mathematical sciences, strong references from LBC mathematics instructors, available to staff time slots that need to be filled, strong responses to application prompts.

## **STT231 Statistics for Scientists**

### Job Description:

Lead weekly recitations, grade peer writing assignments, assist in grading exams and homework,, hold office hours and review sessions before exams.

Hour-by-hour breakdown per week:

- Lead recitation: 1 hour
- Staff math help room: 2 hours
- Grading: 1 hour
- Weekly meeting: 1 hour

### How hiring decisions are made:

Must have completed at least one stats course beyond STT 231. Experience working in the statistical learning center and/or familiarity with core statistical tests such as the chi-square tests, ANOVA and inference for linear regression is considered.





## Science and Society

### LB133 Introduction to Science and Society (FS24, Record)

#### Job Description:

Assist students in in-person discussion:

- Encourage participation of all students during a discussion. Notice who is contributing, who is being talked over, and who is not being included.
- Explain why participation and discussion are so important for learning.

Assist learning in groups:

- Encourage group work by asking questions directly to students who are not engaged with the group.
- Share your experiences by talking about challenges you faced that may be similar to those of your students and how you overcame them.
- Explain the importance of group work in learning.

Assist learning in professionalization challenges:

- Facilitate small group or whole class discussions of professionalization challenges about reading strategies, effective study practices, setting goals, managing a calendar, and using MSU platforms like Eli Review and D2L.
- Promote group bonding by initiating conversations about daily life and activities as well as the class material.

Assist learning in writing workshops:

- Help students to understand the assignment guidelines, learning objectives, and assessment criteria.
- Gather questions from students.

ULA role / responsibility	Approximate hours each week
Weekly meeting with instructor	1
Supporting in-class activities	2
<u>Office hours and correspondence with students</u>	<u>2</u>
Approximate total hours each week:	5

For Fall 2024, Dr Record is teaching two sections of LB133 both of which can have ULA support. Preferably, this is one person working ~7 hours each week, but could be two folks working ~5 hrs / week.



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How hiring decisions are made:

Must have completed LB 133. Preference for having completed a section with “curiosity colloquium” meetings on Fridays. An interest in helping students improve their writing is essential. Strong writing skills are an asset, but not a requirement. Recent experience with writing in a classroom setting is important (lab reports, essays, and D2L discussions all count!)



## Biology

### LB144 Organismal Biology & LB145 Cellular and Molecular Biology

#### How hiring decisions are made

Hiring Process Qualifications for student applying to be a Biology Undergraduate Learning Assistant (ULA) at LBC

Minimal requirements for application to be a LBC Biology ULA.

- Students must have a MSU GPA of 2.75 or higher
- Students must have completed both LB144 and LB145 before starting as LA.
- Applicants best qualified to serve as LAs for LB144 and 145 are students who completed both courses and did well in both courses. Doing well in \*both\* is desired (averaged GPA 3.0 from two courses or higher).
- Applicants must be able to work 10 hrs/week and willing to serve as LA for both LB144 and LB145.

Biology ULA Interview process

- 15-week interview#1: Qualified applicants were observed while enrolled as a student in Biology 1 (LB144) both in lecture and lab by their instructors. Those that exhibited understanding of topics, and good social skills working with/mentoring others, were noted by faculty and staff of the course.
- 15-week interview#2: As you might predict, once again, qualified applicants were observed while enrolled as a student in Biology 2 (LB145) both in lecture and lab by their instructors. Those that again exhibited understanding of topics, and good social skills working with/mentoring others, are noted by faculty and staff of the course and some are recruited to apply to be a Biology LA.

Biology ULA selection criteria/qualifications used to select the best applicants

- A high MSU GPA, and strong grades in LB144 and 145 are good, but other qualifications are equally important.
- Returning experienced LA's, who have done well in the position, are given priority for rehire.
- Students who are currently Lyman Briggs majors get priority over those who are not.
- Students who will be living in Holmes Hall tend to get priority over those living off-campus.
- A confidence and comfort with terminology and laboratory experiments is very important for both Lab and Lecture LAs.
- A confidence and comfort working with other students; slowly and patiently giving them support, is extremely desirable for both Lab and Lecture LAs.
- Demonstrating comfort and confidence with laboratory tools, with scientific thinking, in particular with helping others learn biology are important qualifications for being for both Lab and Lecture LAs.
- Lab LAs for biology ideally are applicants who did well as a student when completing those particular lab experiments. (for example: applicants who experienced the "The Bird lab" or "Avida-ED lab" when they were students in the course are considered better qualified and thus selected for a job running the "The Bird lab" or "Avida-ED lab" (this is a big consideration if in the upcoming year courses will once again be using the "The Bird lab" or "Avida-ED lab").



- Lecture LAs for biology ideally are applicants who experienced the lecture topics, readings, homework, and pedagogies used in courses that will be offered in the upcoming year, and hence are considered better qualified to be a lecture LA for those courses (for example, if Profs X&Y use online Evo-Ed.com modules throughout the semester as a form of textbook, and students perform case studies during each lecture, applicants who experienced that as a student are far better qualified to serve as an LA for those courses in the upcoming year).

## Job Description

Job Description for students working as a Biology Learning Assistant at LBC for the LB144 and LB145 courses (Introductory Biology, Lyman Briggs College)

*Course and context:* LB144 and LB145 are introductory biology courses, taken mainly by science majors, most in various biological fields (90%+ of LBC students major in a Biology field). The main content goals of these classes are to provide an introduction to concepts in organismal and cellular & molecular biology. In addition, skills goals include developing science processes, teamwork and communication skills. Each course consists of a lecture and lab component. LB144 consists of a 48-student lecture (80 min, twice a week) and 24-student lab (170min, once a week) sections. LB145 consists of a 48-student lecture (80 min, twice a week) and 24-student lab (110min, twice a week) sections. The teaching team consists of 1 professor, some undergraduate learning assistants and sometimes a graduate teaching assistant too.

*ULA Training and Preparation:* LAs participate in a pre-semester training session that covers general pedagogical concerns and tools (How to create an inclusive classroom, how to communicate effectively etc.) and content specific training (biological safety, hazardous safety training, course content and structure-specific training). In addition, LAs attend weekly meetings to plan and prepare for the coming week. Weekly meetings focus on reflecting on the past week, discussing general approaches to facilitating student learning, such as “how to ask probing questions, how to resolve team conflicts, how to promote student participation etc.” as well as content specific learning strategies like common student misconceptions and struggles.

*Learning environment:* Introductory Biology (LB144 & 145) courses are reformed and often flipped lecture and lab experiences using evidence-based teaching methods to assure actual learning occurs, not just teaching. Where the focus tends to be on professional practice (ie. skills) like experimental design as well as communication. And in lecture the teaching sometimes lasts longer topics/chapters, spending more time talking about a topic, rather than covering material quickly. Laboratory experiences are designed to train students for entry into a professional research setting. They too tend to focus on practice of scientific thinking and skills of design (i.e. “doing biology”) in semester-long projects, rather than many different 3hr long “cookbook” labs that briefly expose students to traditional methods.

*The Roles of the ULA:* Here are examples of things you will do. Since you would have taken 144/145 as a student you will have observed LAs doing this in lab and in lecture.

- facilitating group discussions / in-class lecture and lab activities
- carrying microphones to each student who asks or answers a question, so they are heard.
- randomly picking from a deck of name cards to engage everyone.



- providing feedback to students, including help on research projects and biology content, administering quizzes etc.
- providing training and practice to students so they succeed on written and verbal exams
- help co-teach in lecture, during active learning exercises circulate the room and directly interact with student groups, clarifying instructions, posing questions, and guiding thinking
- leading 5-minute "journal clubs" during lecture or lab. Anytime students are challenged to evaluate a figure from a publication, the ULAs often take the lead guiding students in the discussion.
- in the laboratory, in addition to preparing equipment and supplies, LAs assist the students in idea development, project completion, and provide support in a number of roles inside and outside the course.
- The LAs act as role models for the students in the class, which has been found to be especially important for women and non-majority students.

Often a LA will work in BOTH lab and lecture, sometimes they will focus on just lab or just lecture.

Example time breakdown for ULAs from LB145:

#### Regular Weekly Time Commitments for Lecture ULAs

1. In-class Instruction	3.0 hours
2. Prep Time	2.0 hours
3. Prep Meeting	1.0 hour
4. Outside class Grading/OHs	4.0 hours
TOTAL	10.0 hours

#### Regular Weekly Time Commitments for Lab ULAs

1. In-Lab Instruction	4.5 hours
2. Prep Meeting	1.0 hours
3. Prep Time/Grading	3.5 hour
4. Open Lab Office Hours (OHs)	1.0 hour
TOTAL	10.0 hours

Note: These are general breakdowns of potential weekly time commitments. These may vary somewhat from instructor to instructor.



## INQUIRE

### LB155 Introduction to Quantitative Science and Research

#### Job Description (lecture + lab):

The INQUIRE ULA are hired to assist with the lecture, labs, workshop, field trips, and other social events. The ULAs are hired for either 5 or 10 hours each week. The ULAs duties are assigned in a way that balances the duties and the needs of the course. The responsibilities may include a combination of the following duties:

- Support 1- 2 lecture sessions each week
- Support 1- 2 lab sessions each week
- Co-Lead 1 - 2 one hour workshop session each week
- Hold 1 - 3 hours office hour each week
- Assist in grading assignments
- Attend a 1 hour LA meeting each week

Examples of weekly assigned hours:

#### **5 hr assignment -lab**

Support lab session	2 hr
Attend ULA meeting	1 hr
Co-lead 1 workshop	1 hr
Office hours	1 hr

#### **10 hr assignment - lecture**

Support 2 lecture sessions	2 hr
Attend ULA meeting	1 hr
Assist with grading	2 hr
Office hours	3 hr
Co-lead 1 workshop	1

#### **10 hr assignment - lecture AND Lab**

Support 1 lecture sessions	1 hr
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Support 1 lab session	2 hr
Attend ULA meeting	1 hr
Assist with grading	2 hr
Office hours	2 hr
Co-lead 2 workshops	2 hr

### Job Description (lecture + recitation):

The INQUIRE ULA are hired to assist with the lecture and recitation. The ULAs are hired for 10 hours each week. The ULAs duties are assigned in a way that balances the duties and the needs of the course. The responsibilities may include a combination of the following duties:

- 2 hours of lecture/week
- 1 hour recitation/week
- 1 hour emails & prep/week
- 1 hour grading (banked)/week
- 1 hour LA meeting/week
- 2 hours office hours/week
- 2 hours mentoring/week\*

\*this mentoring component is new (FS24). While I haven't nailed down the specifics, LAs will serve as the mentor for their recitation section's students (20 students).

### How hiring decisions are made:

We look for students who have demonstrated their understanding of the course material, and who also are active members in their assigned teams. Special consideration is given to students who have taken the LB 155 course. Candidates are expected to take one of the set of courses:

- LB 155 and LB 171 or CHM 141
- LB 171/171L, LB 172/172L or their equivalents



## Chemistry

### LB171 & LB172 General Chemistry I & II Lecture

#### Job Description:

The chem lecture ULA responsibilities are as follows:

- Support a lecture section 2-3 times a week
- Run 2-3 recitation sections each week.
- Attend a 1-hour weekly LA meeting with the Profs
- Hold 1-3 office hours each week
- Help grade the quizzes / exams

This is 8-12 hours of ULA work each week depending on if it's a week with or without quiz grading. Unlike lab ULA work, we cannot offer half-time ULA work on the chem recitation / lecture team. While we technically hire one semester at a time, there is a highly valued pattern of the fall chem lecture / recitation ULAs remaining on the chem lecture / recitation team in the spring.

#### How hiring decisions are made:

Gen chem lecture ULAs are usually former gen chem lab ULAs. We look for lab ULAs who are interested in being a lecture LA, available at the times we need, and we think would be particularly effective in supporting students problem solving work.

### LB171L & LB172L General Chemistry I & II Lab

#### Job Description:

Folks are hired for either 5 hrs / week or 10 hrs / week. These hours work out to be “spent” roughly as follows:

Half-time chem lab LAs (5 hrs/week)	Full-time chem lab LAs (10 hrs/week)
1x 3-hour lab each week	2x 3-hour lab each week
1x 1-hour LA meeting each week	1x 1-hour LA meeting each week
1x 1-hour office hour *every other* week On an off week this hour is used for prep and/or “banked” for giving feedback on student work	1x 1-hour office hour *every* week
	2 hours used for prep and/or “banked” for giving feedback on student work





You could also get involved in prepping the chemicals and consumables for lab each week. This is called “lab prep.”

After folks are offered chem lab spots, one of the chem lab faculty sends out an availability survey to the hired folks 1-2 months before each semester to figure out folks availability for each lab session and interest in prep work.

### How hiring decisions are made:

We look for chemistry lab ULAs who are interested in being a chem lab LA, have completed relevant coursework (i.e. LB171, LB172, LB171L, and LB172L, and those who think or demonstrate ability to be particularly effective in supporting a collaborative laboratory work.

## **LB271 Organic Chemistry I Lecture**

### Job Description:

The Organic Chemistry Lecture ULA responsibilities are as follows:

- Support a lecture section 2-3 times a week
- Run 2 recitation sections each week.
- Attend a weekly LA meeting with the Prof(s)
- Hold 1 office hour each week
- Help grade the quizzes / exams

This is 6-10 hours of ULA work each week depending on weekly quiz grading or if there is exam grading. Unlike lab ULA work, we cannot offer half-time ULA work on the chem recitation / lecture team. While we technically hire one semester at a time, there is a highly valued pattern of the fall chem lecture / recitation ULAs remaining on the chem lecture / recitation team in the spring.

### How hiring decisions are made:

We look for organic chemistry ULAs who are interested in being a lecture LA, available at the times we need, have completed relevant coursework (i.e. organic chemistry I and II), and those we think would be particularly effective in supporting students problem solving work.



## Physics

### LB273 Physics I & LB274 Physics II

#### Job Description:

The typical physics ULA responsibilities (for LB273 and LB274) are as follows:

- Support a synchronous studio section of introductory physics for 4-6 hours each week (this may be across multiple sections or multiple days within a single section). During class ULAs mediate small and large group discussion and support empirical investigations.
- Attend a weekly synchronous 1.5 hour prep meeting with the instructional team
- Hold 1 helproom hour each week
- Support the asynchronous grading of weekly homework activities each week (~ 1 hour per week)

This is 8-10 hours of ULA work each week depending on grading assignments for the week. While we technically hire one semester at a time, there is a highly valued pattern of the fall physics studio ULAs remaining on the physics ULA team in the spring.

#### How hiring decisions are made:

We look for studio physics ULAs who will be active participants in the instructional team, have completed relevant coursework (i.e. both semesters of introductory physics), and who we think would be particularly effective in supporting students in problem-solving and conceptual group work. We give preference to ULA applicants who are interested in working 8-10 hours per week and working both fall and spring semesters. We also seek to hire ULAs who are interested in being a future teacher and/or are interested in pursuing a physics major. Since a significant part of the job requires attending class sessions synchronously, we also must consider student availability during the hiring process.



## Miscellaneous

### LB270 Medical Terminology

#### Job Description:

LB270 is an asynchronous, 7-week course offered only in the summer with optional online synchronous open house and office hour meetings. Student work has two foci: (1) ~1,100 medical terms supported by the online homework system and assessed via D2L exams, and (2) several writing assignments focusing on the usefulness of medical terminology in lay and medical contexts.

The responsibilities of the Undergraduate Course Assistant (UCA) will include the following duties:

- 1 hr weekly meeting with course instructor (via Zoom),
- 1 hr weekly of office hours (via Zoom),
- ~1 hr each week of answering student questions via email, back channel (GroupMe, etc.), or D2L discussion board, and
- ~7 hours saved for giving feedback on writing assignments in weeks when those are due.

Because the work for LB270 is so heavily skewed towards giving feedback (grading with a rubric and Prof support), we are calling this role a “Undergraduate Course Assistant” and not an “Undergraduate Learning Assistant.”

#### Hiring Practices:

It is required to be available via Zoom and email for the full 7-week term.

Preferences will be given to students (1) who took LB270 and scored well, (2) students with prior experience as an Undergraduate Learning Assistant.