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Office hours: Fridays at 1:30 p.m.

## Laurena Bernabo, Ph.D.

**I am excited to talk to you about:** How to personalize your PLA experience! I teach Media Studies and most of the stories I heard were about faculty using multiple PLAs in large STEM classes. I forged my own path, and it has been very rewarding. I look forward to helping you figure out what works best for *you*.

### **MOST USED PLA MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES:**

Treating my PLAs like co-instructors whose special skill is having a student's perspective. When preparing for each class period, we discuss what they remember liking about the class, what would have been helpful, and how we can adjust our approach to improve student learning. Not only do they know the material, but they provide great insights into dynamic ways to teach and educate on the material including clarifying terms, coming up with learning activities, and more!

### **BIGGEST SURPRISE IN YOUR PLA MANAGEMENT AND MENTORSHIP:**

PLAs are up to the challenge. My first time with a PLA, I wasn't quite sure what to ask of her, and as a result she didn't do a whole lot. With my second PLA (who, like me, was raised by a teacher) I asked if she'd like to take on a more active role, and she dove in head-first. She was full of energy and enthusiasm, and she made teaching more fun than it had been in years!

### **MOST MEANINGFUL PLA MEMORY:**

I like to have my PLAs 'pass the torch,' so I'll take the outgoing and incoming PLAs out to lunch and encourage the outgoing PLA to give advice. Each of these lunches has offered a lovely opportunity to watch young women supporting each other and affirming their ability to be a leader in the program.

### **ADVICE FOR OVERCOMING ROADBLOCKS:**

Do your best to communicate openly and honestly. Maybe this is your first time using a PLA, and maybe it's your tenth time—there's no one right way to participate in this program, and it's okay (good, even) to experiment with your approach. Have a frank conversation with your PLA(s) about what you and they would like for them to do and be ready to revisit that conversation if you find room for improvement. Be open to feedback and offer guidance in return.

**GREATEST TRIUMPH IN YOUR PLA MANAGEMENT:**

I used to worry about how unique I was in my approach to having a PLA, but my third PLA won the PLA of the year award, and that was really affirming! For me and for her 😊

**WORDS OF WISDOM:**

This is your class, and they are a resource for improving your life, their lives, and the lives of your students. If something isn't working, adjust! Everyone wins.