Select & prepare students serving in support roles

Strategically selecting and preparing students for support roles–such as peer mentors, tutors, or teaching assistants–strengthens both the learning environment and the broader academic community. When well-trained and equipped, these student leaders enhance peer learning, foster inclusive classroom cultures, and help create sustainable support systems that improve student success and retention.

When selecting students for support roles, consider:

1. Encouraging promising candidates from various backgrounds and prior experience levels to apply.

2. Establishing formal selection criteria for all candidates.

3. Using criteria beyond GPA or grade in the class, such as evidence of interest in teaching, a teaching demonstration, and an in-person interview.

To effectively prepare students to serve in these support roles, consider:

1. Providing mandatory training (possible formats include a 1-credit class or recurring seminar, a daylong retreat, offering portions of the training online).

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2. Discussing topics related to teaching computing and to creating a positive learning environment for all students.

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3. Creating a community of students in support roles who can share advice, support, and mentor each other.