

**14<sup>th</sup> Annual**  
**transforming**  
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THE 2022  
VIRTUAL  
CONFERENCE

**Feb. 7- Feb. 18, 2022**

**Examining a Teaching Assistant Model for  
Online Courses**

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Feb. 7- Feb. 18, 2022

# Agenda

1. Background
2. TA Effectiveness Put to the Test
3. Additional Factors
4. Personal Experiences
5. Limitations
6. Conclusions
7. Q&A



# Background



- **California Baptist University (CBU)**

- Private, faith-based, liberal arts institution
- 40 fully online degree programs
- 5k+ students take online courses
- National adjunct pool

- **Question:** Is a Teaching Assistant model an effective method of delivering online courses?
- **Effectiveness** measured as instructor performance from student course evaluations.
- **Rationale for TA model in online courses:**
  - Increased influence of exemplary faculty
  - Increased engagement with students
  - Training ground for TAs
  - Aligning faculty with their strengths
  - Cost efficiency

# TA Effectiveness Put to the Test

- Data collected FA19, SP20, SU20, and FA20 semesters
- 20 FTF taught 58 online sections with TA(s)
  - Enrollment range 34-110
  - Courses included 1, 2, or 3 TAs
  - Average of 34 students per TA
- TA Experience Level
  - Adjunct instructor – 70% (N=110)
  - Training TA – 30% (N=47)
- TA Education Level
  - Bachelors – 3% (N=5)
  - Masters – 55% (N=86)
  - Terminal – 42% (N=66)

## TA Effectiveness Put to the Test

- Essential TA Expectations
  - Grading only
  - Timely calibration with instructor
  - Personalized feedback to students
- Effectiveness measured by comparing past course evaluation scores for solo section(s) with current TAed section
- Course evaluations on 5-point scale
- 47/58 (81%) TAed courses received equal or better evaluation scores (Mean difference score = +.70)
- 11/58 (19%) TAed courses received lower evaluation scores (Mean difference score = -.98)
  - Lower evals = poor instructor management (e.g., calibration); inadequate communication of expectations for TA.

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## Additional Factors

- Cost efficiency
  - Average of 11% cost savings
  - Finding a “sweet spot”
- Increased influence of exemplary, “rock star” faculty
- Perfect training ground for future instructors
  - Learn best practices
  - Can lead to independent teaching opportunities
    - Part-time and full-time
  - Reduces number of questions from new instructors



## Additional Factors



- Faculty get more engagement time with students
  - Less time grading, more time with students
- Sustainability
  - Leverage instructors with strong management and organization skills

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# Personal Experiences

## 1. Dr. Elisa Shepard

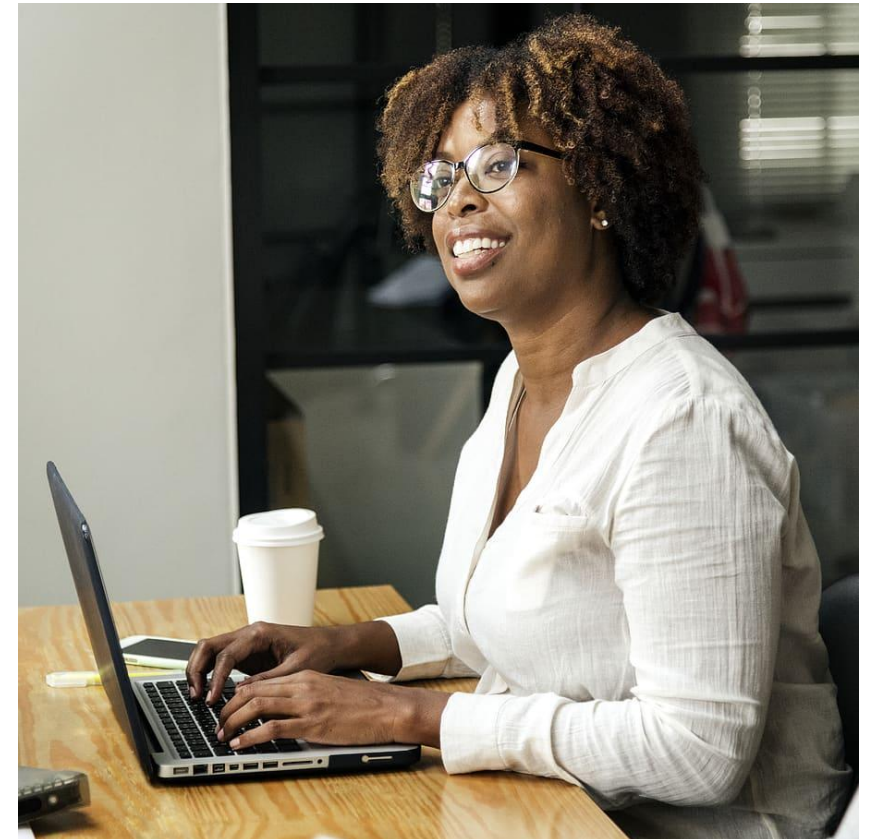
- Recently hired adjuncts and Training TAs
- Focus on training and adjunct readiness

## 2. Dr. Robert Shields

- Mix of seasoned TAs/adjuncts and Training TAs
- System refinement over time

## 3. Dr. Dirk Davis

- Repeat, seasoned TAs/adjuncts led to streamlined calibration







# Limitations



- Student perception of teaching assistant involvement
- Course complexity
  - Type and level of course
- Teaching assistant availability
  - Competing responsibilities
- Cost savings are not guaranteed
- Personality/disposition of teaching assistants

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# Conclusions



- Strong instructor management and organization is a must!
- Aligning faculty with their strengths is a Win-Win!
  - Leveraging teaching excellence and enhancing student experience
- Value of relational engagement
- Training adjuncts/TAs for future assignments
- Cost savings are a factor, but pale in comparison to other benefits

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Q&A

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# Thank you!



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