How to support peer facilitators in a large introductory science course

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As enrollments are increasing at the University of Washington Bothell (UWB), many instructors are faced with the problem of how to keep the intimate feel and educational benefits of our historically small class sizes. One method being studied this quarter is using peer facilitators to help give students in a large introductory biology class more opportunities to actively use the knowledge they are gaining in lecture, as well as provide an intimate environment where instruction can be personalized. This method has many benefits for the students as well as the peer facilitators, if the peer facilitators are properly supported. We report in this poster our methods of supporting peer facilitators to ensure that they are positioned to be effective in the classroom. We will explain our use of blogs, online lectures, weekly preparation classes, and classroom observations as ways we support our peer facilitators. We hope to illustrate that this can be done efficiently, inexpensively, and may be scalable to other large classes at UWB.

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