

*Seminar Program*  
*The Science of Teaching: Evidence-Based*  
*Approaches in Biology Education*

**UC San Diego**  
Biological Sciences

## Discussion section structure: how does it impact students?



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**10:00 – 10:50 AM**

**Kavli Auditorium**

**Zoom link: <https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/91297685409>**

**Abstract:**

Discussion sections are scheduled course meetings where a subset of students are led by a teaching assistant (TA), typically in smaller groups where students engage in discussions and problem solving, with goals of increasing access to instructional support and promoting student sense of belonging. However, little work has been done exploring teaching practices used in discussion sections, and the relationships between teaching practices and student engagement and experiences. In this talk we will share how we 1) characterized the designs of discussion sections across a multitude of biology undergraduate courses, 2) determined the relationship between teaching practices and student engagement (attendance and interactions with the instructional team) and student sense of belonging and 3) identified features of discussion sections that students perceive as helpful or unhelpful for their learning. We will share quantitative and qualitative survey results from 4000+ student responses in Spring and Fall 2023. Our findings offer insight into the variations of ways discussion sections are used in large biology programs and provide data to inform future discussion section design.

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