

Academic Success Center

2018-2019 Annual Report

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW	3
MISSION STATEMENT	5
STRATEGIC GOALS	5
STAFFING	6
TUTORING SERVICES	7
WORKSHOPS.....	11
COACHING AND ADVISING	12
STUDENT SURVEY	13
MARKETING.....	15
FUTURE PLANS	16

OVERVIEW

The Academic Success Center had its inaugural year during the 2018-2019 academic year, opening on the fourth floor of Thompson-Clark Hall. This new location situates academic support services in a central academic building alongside Disability Resources and provides students with common and private areas for studying and testing.



Tutors and tutees work on homework and papers during drop-in tutoring hours in the Academic Success Center on the fourth floor of Thompson-Clark Hall.

In addition to centralizing all tutoring services on campus, the Academic Success Center was charged with providing other forms of academic support and with leading Exploratory Majors, including academic advising.

With those goals in mind, the newly appointed coordinator hired approximately 30 part-time peer tutors. A basic training program, employment guidelines and policies, and drop-in and appointment schedules were established, and later, a leadership structure to provide accountability for the staff.

Meanwhile, the center began coordinating with others on campus, including faculty, coaches, committees and administrators, to determine other ways to support students academically. The coordinator served as a member of the CARE Team, a student referral committee that met weekly to provide support to struggling students. The sheer number of students being referred to the center for academic support from this committee demonstrated a clear need for additional support beyond subject-specific tutoring.

As such, the coordinator began conducting informal academic coaching sessions with students who sought out support with a range of academic needs, ranging from time management and organizational skills to note-taking and test-preparation help.

The Academic Success Center coordinator taught these same kinds of academic success skills to First Year students in Westminster 101, which is a part of the First Year Program. In working on this class with the First Year Program Coordinator and the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, the coordinator identified a need to offer widespread one-on-one coaching during the fall semester to help First Year students with their transition into college. Together, they developed a plan to hire Peer Success Coaches, who will work with a section of Westminster 101 students during orientation and then throughout the fall semester, starting fall 2019.

Students were also supported through the Academic Success Center through a range of other initiatives, such as:

- Targeted business and accounting tutoring in football required study hours
- Study groups led by Peer Tutors for specific courses, as needed
- Four academic workshops on topics such as research writing and study tips

Furthermore, the coordinator of the center attended the National College Learning Center Association's annual fall conference in Niagara Falls, New York, where she networked with others in the field and learned about current best practices and trends. She also consulted with the Academic Success Center's Advisory Committee, made up of staff and faculty members, and sought its support in a variety of other efforts, including:

- Developing of a mission statement and goals
- Submitting a request to the Lawrence County District Attorney for a monitor to be used in the center for presentations and for tutoring
- Hiring and working with an intern from Slippery Rock University's Student Affairs Master's Program
- Planning for and executing a webinar for faculty members focusing on ways to help students learn how to learn, and offering a related presentation to the Faculty Development Committee
- Presenting an update on the center to the faculty during its March meeting
- Initiating work on a federal TRIO grant with the Associate Academic Dean

MISSION STATEMENT

The Academic Success Center helps students to establish academic, professional and personal goals and to create a pathway for achieving success in those areas. The center provides services, resources and programs that reinforce faculty instruction, teach academic skills and strategies, and develop self-efficacy so that students can become successful lifelong learners.

STRATEGIC GOALS

- Support the College's commitment to develop intellectual curiosities and competencies to reason logically, evaluate critically and communicate effectively.
- Contribute to improving the College's first year retention rates.
- Conduct training for peer tutors that works toward meeting national certification requirements.
- Provide students who participate in peer tutoring with an opportunity to acquire skills and strategies needed to work toward independent learning.
- Collaborate with faculty and staff in creative ways to meet the academic needs of students.

STAFFING

Under the direction of Dr. Jeffrey Coker, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College, and Dr. Jamie McMinn, Associate Dean of the College and Assistant to the President, the Academic Success Center is led by Coordinator Jessica Shelenberger. She is guided by an advisory committee made up of members of the staff and faculty. The center's Peer Tutoring Services employed about 30 students who provided course-specific support for their peers.

Coordinator: Jessica Shelenberger

Academic Success Advisory Committee:

Dr. Jamie McMinn
Dr. Craig Caylor
Dr. Sararose Lynch
Dr. Kristianne Kalata
Ms. Jamie Kohler
Ms. Faith Craig

Peer Tutors:

Marie Barnard
Ashley Berman
Zoe Cable
Autumn Cejer
Devin Cheplic
Elaina Chapnell
Chase Collison
Annika Erdely
Hannah Fell
Montana Ferita
Zach Fryda

Allison Hampton
Sarah Harris
Skyler Hayes
Lindsay Heinz
Sam Hockenberry
Mariah Hoff
Hannah Hunter
Tyler Jeffreys
Shania Kennedy
Meghan (Maggie) Long
Maggie Manolis

Michaela Marini
Mackenzie Marino
Jess Nelson
Tsubomi Poley
Gabe Roman
Carli Sebest
Jacob Staub
Cassie Stevens
Julie Yesko

PEER TUTORING SERVICES

With the help of several students who had worked in previous years as tutors on campus for either the Learning Center or individual departments, Peer Tutoring in the Academic Success Center started on a limited basis on September 4.

By September 16, a staff of 30 Peer Tutors was hired and a full schedule of drop-in tutoring and appointment tutoring was opened to campus. All-campus emails, flyers, and word-of-mouth promotion by faculty, staff and coaches helped drive students to attend tutoring sessions, and attendance grew steadily throughout the fall semester. Additionally, several tutors served as Teaching Assistants in four sections of SCI 100, a study skills remediation course offered for students in STEM classes.

Setmore, an online scheduling platform, was used to schedule one-on-one tutoring appointments. Links for this scheduling system were included on the center's website as well as in the menu bar of Desire2Learn, Westminster's Learning Management System. Students were able to search for a tutor by subject, choose a tutor based upon his/her availability, and schedule an appointment after creating a profile. This online platform not only allowed the center to track the appointments of individual students, but also to create weekly reports of the number of students seeking individual tutoring appointments. Furthermore, the platform allowed tutors track and comment on individual appointments, such as indicating cancellations or no show appointments.

Peer Tutors were required to attend four trainings during the academic year. The topics of these trainings were:

- Tutoring foundations
- The 12-step tutoring cycle
- Bloom's taxonomy
- Helping students with learning disabilities.

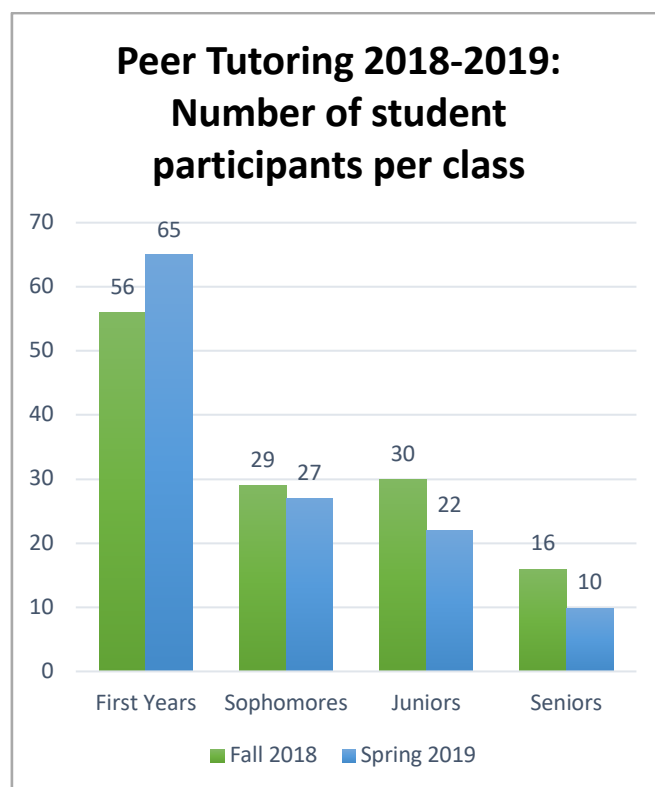
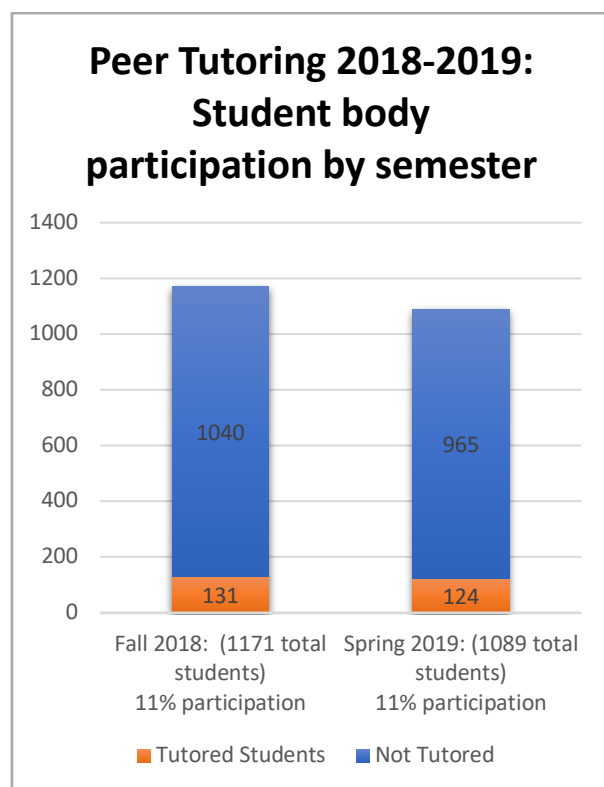
In January, the coordinator appointed four of the current Peer Tutors to leadership roles. Three team leaders were charged with assisting with day-to-day operations of the Tutoring Services and with providing leadership and a point of contact for a small group of tutors. A Senior Tutor not only lead the group of Team Leaders, but also assisted the coordinator of the Academic Success Center in a variety of administrative tasks. These leaders assisted with:

- Launching social media accounts
- Creating and leading two workshops
- Drafting a tutoring handbook
- Implementing a residence hall tutoring event
- Establishing a regular tutoring session for students in two sections of BIO 135-Microbiology.

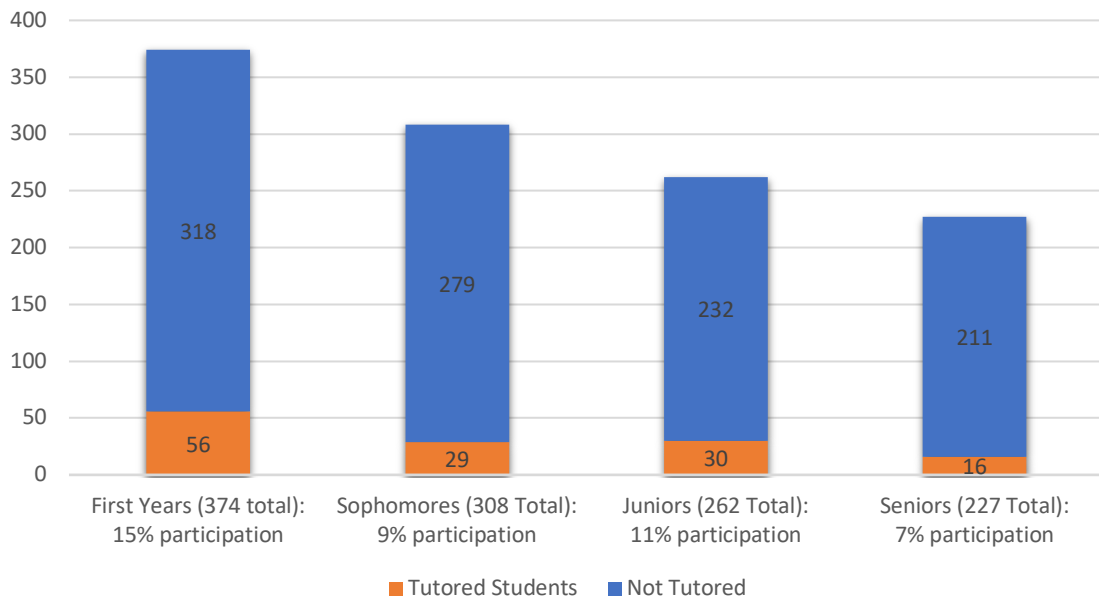
By spring semester, attendance at one-on-one appointment tutoring had overtaken the number of attendees at drop-in tutoring. Overall, though, both the number of students who attended tutoring and the overall number of tutoring visits increased, from 242 individual tutoring sessions in AY 2017-2018 to 824 individual tutoring sessions in AY 2018-2019. A total of 11 percent of the student body made use of tutoring services in the fall and spring semesters.

A number of charts follow, demonstrating the tutoring attendance, by semester, by class and by subject. A few highlights from these charts include:

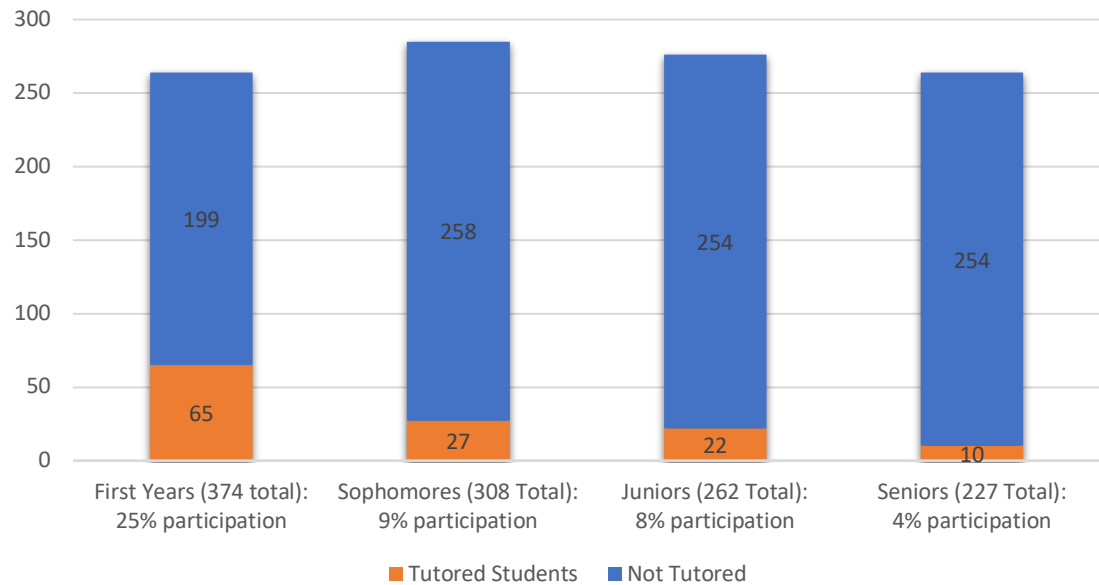
- More students sought out tutoring in the fall than in the spring, a historical trend demonstrated by data from the former Learning Center that dates back to 2009.
- First-year students sought out tutoring more than students in other classes, with 25 percent of the first-year students receiving tutoring support during the spring semester.
- The most popular tutoring subjects across the academic year were math, biology, writing, chemistry and Spanish.
- While more students attended drop-in tutoring over appointment tutoring in the fall, those numbers flipped for the spring semester, suggesting that more students learned about and made use of the appointment scheduling system, which is more flexible in terms of choosing a specific tutor and a certain time to meet.

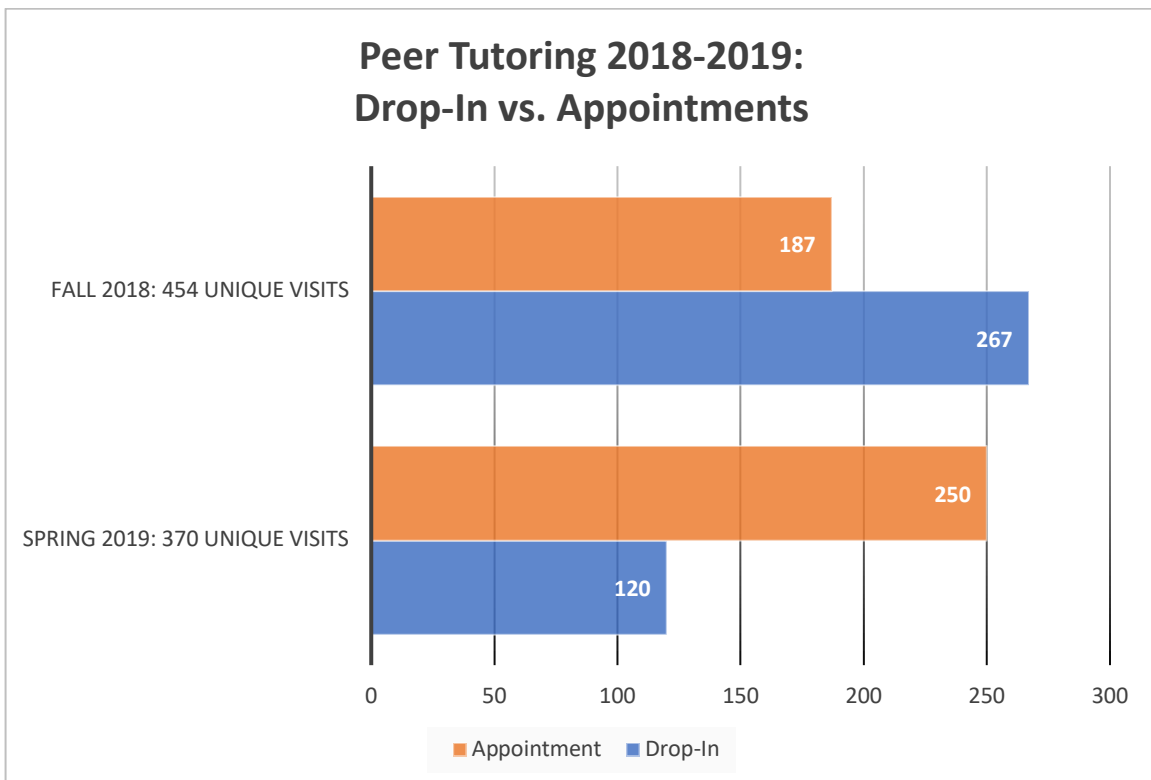
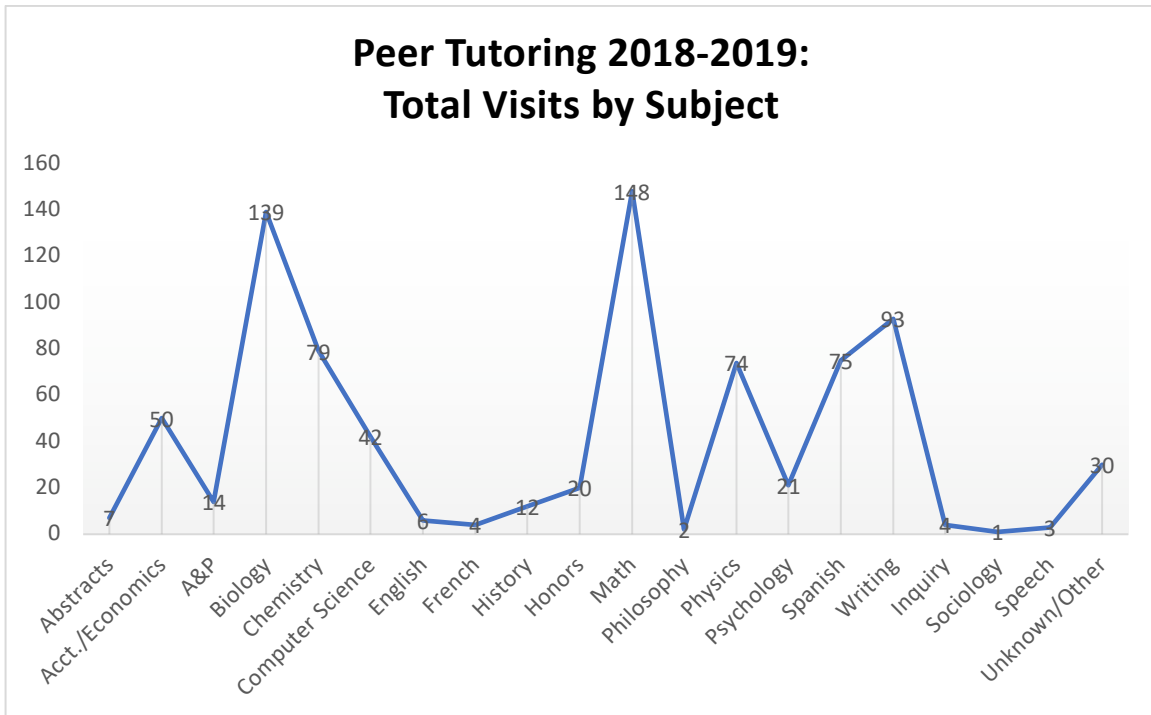


Peer Tutoring 2018-2019: Fall participation by class



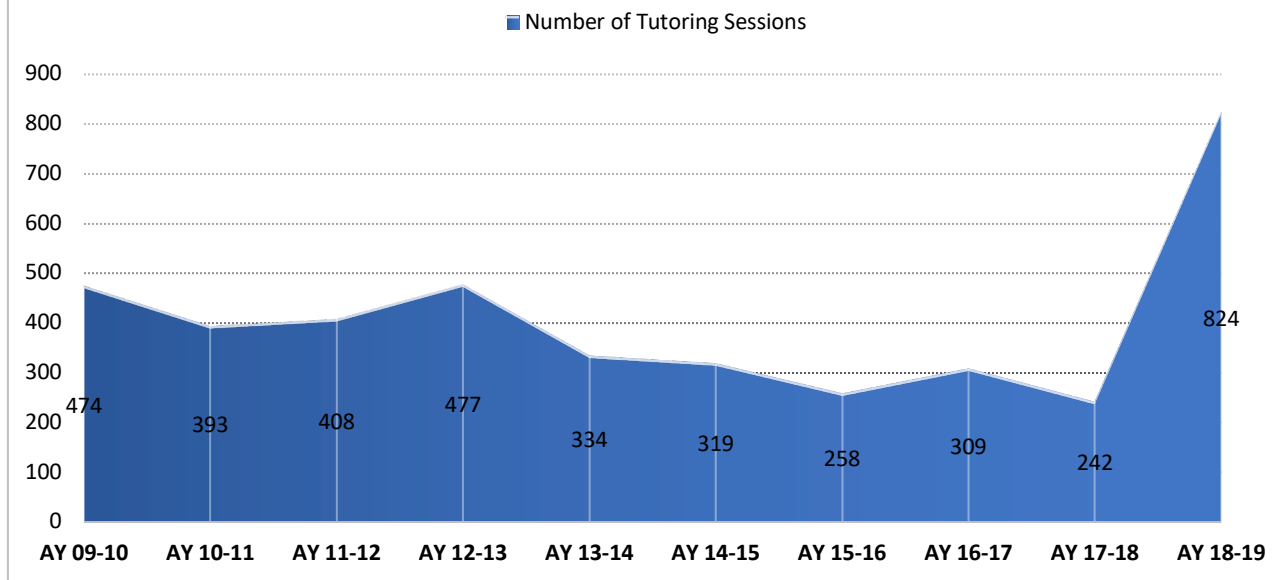
Peer Tutoring 2018-2019: Spring participation by class





Peer Tutoring: 2009-2019

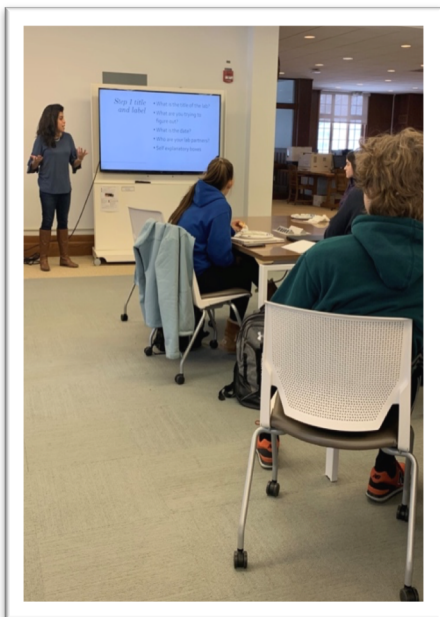
Total Tutoring Sessions per Academic Year



WORKSHOPS

In order to make best use of campus resources, the Academic Success Center coordinator worked with a variety of groups and leaders on campus to organize academic workshops throughout the year.

- “StuDYING: A Halloween-themed Workshop,” was organized in conjunction with the Honors Program. Held from 8-9 p.m. October 24, the workshop offered study tips and a peer-review writing sessions tailoree to students in humanities or STEM majors.
- “Writing your Best Lab Report” was organized by Beta Beta Beta, the national biology honors society. Held from 11:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m. March 6, it provided specific ways to improve lab report writing.
- “Student Research 101” was held from 7-10 p.m. March 20, and was led by Peer Tutor Team Leader Zach Fryda and others in Beta Beta Beta. This hands-on workshop paired upperclassmen with other students beginning research.
- “No Sweat Speeches: A Workshop for Speakers of All Kinds,” a combined effort of Lambda Pi Eta, the national communications honor society, the Drinko Center and the Academic Success Center, was offered from 12:45-1:45 p.m. April 9. It was targeted toward students participating in URAC or who would be delivering speeches for final projects and presentations in their classes.



Students participated in academic workshops held throughout the 2018-2019 school year. On the left, biology major and Beta Beta Beta member Jessica Garcia Ramirez leads a discussion on what makes a good lab report during “Writing your Best Lab Report” in March. On the right, students work during a peer-review writing session for STEM majors at the “StuDYING” workshop in October.

COACHING AND ADVISING

Academic Coaching

In addition to tutoring, the coordinator met with students who were either referred by faculty or coaches or who sought out academic help on their own. Most of these students struggled with time management, organizational skills, study habits, and other skills essential for student success. Relying heavily upon the practices found in Dr. Sandra McGuire’s *Teach Yourself How to Learn*, the one-on-one meetings focused on metacognitive strategies for learning, Bloom’s taxonomy, the study cycle and developing a growth mindset.

While many of the students who came for these voluntary academic coaching sessions attended just once, about a dozen made regular appointments throughout the academic year. The tracking of these students was problematic, however, due to the number of referrals being made in a variety of methods, and because the center lacked an intake form for the students upon their arrival.

Anecdotally, however, the coordinator saw improvement in several first year students who attended regular academic coaching sessions, including one female athlete who increased her GPA from a 1.5 GPA in the fall to a 2.5 GPA in the spring, and another male athlete who improved from a 1.7 GPA to a 2.4 GPA.

This kind of improvement — as well as evidence from other institutions using academic coaching — suggested that incorporating coaching into the First Year Program could benefit students making the transition into their first year of college. Working with the First Year Program Coordinator and Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, the coordinator developed a Peer Success Coaching program that will launch in the fall of 2019. The goal of this program is to not only to assist in retention of first year students, but to also to help develop communication and leadership skills in the Peer Success Coaches.

As such, team of 14 Peer Success Coaches were hired in April. They will work during First Year Orientation to help a group of students in an Orientation Group/Westminster 101 class to adjust to life at Westminster, as Orientation Leaders have done in past years. But that work will continue throughout the fall semester, as they work with the Westminster 101 instructor to lead the class and to provide one-on-one support for each of the students in that class.

Advising/Exploratory Majors

As the head of the Exploratory Major, the coordinator was also tasked with advising students who have not yet declared a major. Prior to the beginning of the school year, the coordinator divided a list of 32 Exploratory Majors among a variety of professors to lighten the advising load in her first year, leaving her with about 13 advisees. That list would fluctuate throughout the year, as students changed majors from and to Exploratory.

In addition to advising responsibilities, the coordinator also attended several admission open house events throughout the academic year, representing both the Exploratory Major and the Academic Success Center. Further, the coordinator initiated work on improving the websites for Exploratory Majors and for the Academic Success Center as a whole, changes that will be completed in the summer of 2019.

Early in September, the academic chair of the Student Government Association (SGA) asked the coordinator to help him launch an exploratory major mentoring program, in which upperclassmen would be paired with first year exploratory majors. Despite repeated invitations via email and in person, few exploratory majors showed interest in the program, and by late October, the idea was abandoned by the academic chair. Although this effort proved unsuccessful, providing a supportive community for Exploratory Majors should be an area of focus for the upcoming academic year.

STUDENT SURVEY

In order to receive feedback on the services offered by the Academic Success Center — primarily tutoring — the coordinator compiled a survey on the Survey Monkey website,

modeling it upon similar surveys from other college learning centers and success centers. The survey was distributed at the end of the fall and the spring semesters via email link to all students who visited the center.

The survey included three sections of questions, with one focusing on the tutoring experience, another highlighting the overall work of the Academic Success Center, and the third exploring the respondent's outcomes following use of the services in the Academic Success Center. There also was an open-ended question seeking ways the center could be improved.

Of the 131 students who received tutoring in the fall, 10 students responded to the survey. The number of respondents dropped by half in the spring, with just 5 of the 124 students completing it.

Most notably, 100 percent of the respondents said they either agreed or strongly agreed that tutoring not only helped them improve their overall course grade but also that tutoring contributed to their academic success. Further, 94 percent of the respondents said that they either agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the assistance they received in the Academic Success Center.

The survey also showed that most students sought help for homework assignments/problems and preparing for a quiz/exam. Professors and friends — word of mouth — was the most common way students learned about the help offered in the Academic Success Center. The chart below lists all of the answers in response to the one open-ended question, "What could be done to improve the Academic Success Center?"

Response date	Answer
12/2/18	Have more physics and math tutors
12/23/18	Provide a schedule for what subjects will be present at each drop in tutoring session by email each week!
12/4/18	A better check in system
12/5/18	Have someone for Spanish more than Tuesday and Sunday
5/2/19	Designate tutors for specific classes like organic chem so that students can look for tutors that are willing to tutor the class that they need help in.
5/8/19	Have more employed tutors.
5/8/19	More understanding of student needs.
5/8/19	I noticed that if a student schedules 2 appointments back to back with the same person it is not easily communicated that they are NOT rescheduling. Sometimes I would do this and wait 30 minutes or so for them to show up. These larger appointments were scheduled this fall for me because I was really struggling in a course and a quick chat was not long enough for the amount of questions/help I needed.
5/8/19	Market it better.

Response date	Answer
5/8/19	Everything was good.
5/14/19	Offer more drop-in hours.

Based upon these answers, as well as the overall feedback from the survey, the coordinator will evaluate ways to better communicate the services and promote the tutors to the student body. Additionally, a new check-in system should be developed that will not only make it easier for the students to sign in, but will allow the center to more efficiently track usage.

MARKETING

While establishing a comprehensive Peer Tutoring program was a main priority for the coordinator in the first weeks of the fall semester, so too, was establishing a new brand for the Academic Success Center. It was important to communicate to the campus how the Academic Success Center differed from the Learning Center, where it was located, and how best to refer students to its services.

Following an announcement from the Academic Dean in August, the coordinator first sent a series of emails to faculty, staff and students; these targeted emails emphasized various aspects of the center to the given audience. Mass emails were sent periodically throughout the year to highlight new initiatives or events and changes in hours or availability of tutors.

In addition to the emails, the coordinator spoke to various groups on campus at the beginning of the fall semester, ranging from all first years during orientation to the academic support staff, individual departments, and particular teams and classes. Later in the school year, the coordinator also spoke to a number of sororities and fraternities, to the Faculty Development Committee, and presented a report to the faculty during its March meeting.

Flyers were also posted throughout campus advertising drop-in and appointment tutoring and special events. Included in some of these flyers were QR codes, which could be scanned by students' cell phones, taking them straight to the appointment website. Once social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) were setup in January, those platforms were also used to promote our services, special events, and introduce the Peer Tutor staff to campus.

The also center attempted to reach new students through the following promotional events:

- A "College Conversation" event was hosted by the center in October in conjunction with Disability Resources, drawing a large crowd of faculty, staff, administrators and students.
- The center was a part of the Wellness Center's "Wellness Wednesdays" event in February, offering students information about tutoring and academic coaching.

- “Midterm Munchies” was held the week before spring midterms, in which themed snacks were provided during drop-in tutoring.
- With the cooperation of tutor leadership and residence life staff, drop-in tutoring was moved to residence halls during the “ASC Drop-in Tutoring on the Road” in March.

FUTURE PLANS

With little time to plan before the start classes, many of the coordinator’s efforts during the 2018-2019 academic year were reactionary. In order to shift to a more proactive approach in the center, it’s critical for the coordinator to use the summer months of 2019 to address concerns that arose during the past year, and also to organize administrative protocols, programming, and training plans for the 2019-2020 academic year.

Some of the priorities for next year include:

- Developing a computer-based check-in system for tutoring and academic coaching to improve student tracking data.
- Improving tutor training protocols, such as an online course and tutor boot camp before classes, in order to work toward receiving the College Reading and Learning Association’s Tutor Training Program Level 1 Certification.
- Establishing a schedule of workshops earlier in the academic year and investigating ways to incentivize attendance at them.
- Collaborating with faculty to develop additional academic support strategies for individual classes and departments.
- Creating opportunities for Exploratory Majors that engender community between those students, as well as connections to resources on campus that will help them in their major investigation.