

**External Review of Tutoring Services at Vincennes University**  
**Johanna Dvorak, Ph.D.**  
**June 2016**

**1-1. Opening Statement**

This external review of tutoring services at Vincennes University took place on June 8-9, 2016. This report will reflect the reviewer's interpretation of those discussions, as well as the documents presented as part of the AQIP evaluation process. It will follow the outline presented in the Vincennes University AQIP Report, which summarized the university's findings from a campus study and external surveys by various subcommittees.

The agenda below meets AQIP standards of 1.5 days for an external tutor authority to meet with campus administration, faculty, tutoring staff, and students about tutoring services.

**June 8, 2016**

- 8:00—Meeting in Board Room to introduce key people and overview of the visit
- 8:45—Tour of labs and meetings with lab personnel
  1. 8:50-9:30—Humanities
  2. 9:40-10:20—Science Lab
  3. 10:30-11:10—Math Lab
  4. 11:20-12:00—Walking Tour of Closed Labs
- 12:10-1:20—Lunch, Discussion of On-Line Tutoring
- 1:30-2:30— Meeting with Jasper Lab Staff
- 2:40-3:40—Meeting with Students: The Student Tutoring Experience at VU
- 3:50-4:40—Meeting in Success Center, with Staff and with additional lab tutors

**June 9:**

- 8:30-9:30—Meeting with Support Program Staff (COPE, Experience VU, Black Male Initiative, etc.)
- 9:40-10:30—Meeting with Faculty: The Faculty View of Tutoring at VU
- 10:30-11:30—J. Dvorak on her own, prepare Preliminary Findings
- 11:45-12:45—Luncheon and Preliminary Findings

**1-2. Inventory of Current Tutoring Services**

I toured the tutoring labs on campus, and met with staff, students and faculty. The structure of tutoring on campus is decentralized with various labs located primarily in the buildings where those subjects are taught. Professional and support staff members work in the labs; some also teach course sections. For example, in math, they also teach the co-curricular sections of the new math model courses. Most centers also have student tutors assisting in their labs. I was impressed with the number of staff you have to provide academic staff to students. The brochures and handouts I was given were very helpful.

The Tutoring job description (Business) and Professional Tutor Evaluation (COPE) were excellent. It is clear that your professional and support staff take pride in their work.

The labs/centers conduct one-on-one tutoring sessions, mostly on a walk-in basis; provide testing for various courses across the departments, and have computer labs for students to work on online. Other resources are available, and some study skills tutoring is conducted. The Academic Skills Center also houses staff which meets with students in the STEP program. The centers for Business/IT/Accounting, Psychology/Social Science, and Humanities/Reading and Study Skills (Academic Skills Center) were large and accommodating. The Writing Center, housed in a classroom, was not in use, so I could not determine if it meets your needs. Your support for technical students with hands-on tutoring is a great service.

You have a strong group of specialized support services for students: COPE, Experience VU, Black Male Initiative, STEP, and SWAG. Federal and grant guidelines are used to monitor some of these programs. While I didn't tour their spaces, the staff I met were dedicated and well versed in their missions and operations. All provide a vital role in access and retention of diverse populations. These staff members have a lot to contribute to your mission of raising student academic success at Vincennes University.

Your distance education online tutoring service and coaches in 13 libraries is well organized. The site in Jasper was an excellent example of a comprehensive service for students on a satellite campus. Access is being addressed through these sites as well as through *Blackboard Collaborate* virtual tutoring. This is a vital part of your academic support services since you have a large active military student body. It could also be extended to students in your EXCEL early college dual credit program.

As I follow the ASIP outline, I will include recommendations for each area. My first recommendation is that you consider centralizing tutoring services on your campus. Research supports a centralized vs. a decentralized model for college learning assistance. Researchers have found that a successful learning assistance program offers comprehensive programs and services to the campus community and is centralized under a single director. (Boylan, 2002; Boylan & Saxon, 2012; Maxwell, 1997) Currently, most campus learning assistance programs are decentralized, compartmentalized into departments focusing on specific subject areas, and do not provide comprehensive services to students (Arendale, 2010; Boylan, 2002; Saxon & Boylan, 2007). This results in an inefficient use of resources, confusion among students about the services that are available to them, and an overall haphazard approach to providing learning assistance to an academic community. (Saxon & Boylan, 2007)

Consolidation could be done in phases for your services which are not restricted by federal funding requirements, or for some of your components such as training, marketing, budgeting, and overseeing staffing and hiring operations. If this is not a consideration by Vincennes University, a Tutor Network of all tutoring professionals should designate a chair and meet on a regular basis to help coordinate tutoring as part of your retention mission. A Tutoring Network could establish better communication between units, work to eliminate duplication of services, and could also serve as a step toward centralization of tutoring services, when a Tutoring Advisory Board could be established. This advisory board can represent all tutoring constituents who work toward improved student retention.

## Space

Most of the tutoring spaces are in large rooms and appear to be adequate to provide the services except for the limited space in the math and science labs. The Academic Skills Center (Humanities), Psychology/Social Science Lab and Business and Computer Science Labs were spacious. Faculty and students like the convenience of having their lab near to their departments in their respective buildings, especially for testing services. One student said, "If there is a question about my test, they can easily find the instructor for clarification." The group of students in the focus group also liked going to the various centers, but were interested in the idea of another location on campus in the library.

The space, especially in the smaller Science and Math centers, is not conducive to both testing and tutoring sessions where the primary activity is talking. With a new math building and centers being built, I recommend having separate testing rooms in the center with observation windows and doors to keep out noise. I was told that the new space is no bigger than the current space. In planning for the future, review the new floor plan to see if testing can occur in private rooms. If not, consider another location for testing in your new space, or consider separate locations for math and science to allow for expansion. Consider finding more space before the building is completed. You could centralize testing services in another location (or use one of the current labs) to allow the current spaces to expand their tutoring services. If your new space is already set, you could expand tutoring services in another location, such as the library, allowing for quieter space for those working on the lab computers or testing. Some students in the focus group complained about the noise, especially when testing. There is a noise difference between social talking and tutoring session discussions. If students are required to go to the lab to do their homework, it could also become a time to chat instead of study as they "put in their time." While this could be controlled by the lab supervisors and individual tutoring can be done at lower volumes, the testing areas need very quiet space.

Your faculty survey noted a "lack of a central place for lab information to be collected and disseminated for both students and faculty." If you want to create new space for a one-stop hub for tutoring, the second floor of your library would be an excellent location and could also serve as a group tutoring space for a variety of subjects. Learning Centers across the country are moving their services to the library. Libraries have been experiencing fewer patrons since so many resources are available online. Collaborating with learning centers brings in more students and is an excellent atmosphere for studying. This would involve clearing the space of shelves, purchasing whiteboards, round tables and chairs, and possibly mobile Smartboards for the space. You could also create an office space for a director and support staff. Other centers could also benefit from purchasing *Smartboards* and whiteboards if group tutoring is located there. Collaborating with the library staff on space to allow for higher noise levels is essential.

### *Terminology for Locations and Services*

Some of your locations are called "Centers" and some are called "Labs." Lab was an early term designated for academic support; however, today 'Lab' is more often applied to "computer labs" where

students are using computer generated programs. In your case, you do have many computers in your locations, so “Labs” may be appropriate.

The term “Center” or Learning Center has been used most broadly for consolidated academic support services, but many names are used across the country. A list of names for college learning centers around the country can be found when searching “Learning Centers” at [www.lsche.net](http://www.lsche.net). We have named the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) learning center “PASS” which stands for Panther Academic Support Services since our mascot is the Panther. PASS has six separate locations on campus, but all are prefixed with “PASS” so students identify the service under one umbrella. We have a main hub in a central location on the first floor of the Library.

“Student Success Center” is a term which can encompass a broad array of student services which could include academic support services. (At UWM, it does not). Consider a more visible location for your Student Success Center. Ours is located on the first floor in a building adjacent to our Union and has become a hub for first-year and new transfer students to hang out, especially those who commute. It houses staff, 45 peer mentors during the academic year and 30 student summer orientation leaders. While I didn’t see your union, that could become a hub for this center, especially if you decide to add student mentors to your Student Success Center. Your current student space is not drawing enough students to the student space, perhaps because of the location on an upper level floor.

### **Tutoring Services**

Your major academic support services include walk- in tutoring, testing and computer labs, with some study skills coaching is also being offered. Online/virtual tutoring is offered in your Distance Education department. While these are all appropriate services; you could review and eliminate some duplication of tutoring services for the same courses by different units. You could expand your academic support to students by offering different types of tutoring.

#### *Online/Virtual Tutoring*

You already have an excellent online/virtual tutoring program for your distance learners. While I observed a wide array of services, your survey indicated a need that “all campuses, including remote sites, have access to tutoring.” Online tutoring could fill that need by expanding this service for both online and on-campus students to allow for expanded access during walk-in hours, evenings and weekends. Shanni Simmons and her team could share their expertise with staff, help train professional and peer tutors to use *Blackboard Collaborate*.

Our UWM center program developed an online tutoring training program using *Blackboard Collaborate*, which could serve as a model for your online tutoring service. Online tutoring now accounts for 10% of all tutoring for on-campus courses and student attendance at UWM since it was implemented in 2010. All on-campus tutors go through a 4-hour training program to enable them to provide both online and blended tutoring sessions using our *Smartboards*. A two-hour session is also offered to student support staff on campus. One advantage of online tutoring is that sessions are recorded and saved in *Blackboard Collaborate’s* archives for students to review. On our campus, archives are heavily used and are

especially helpful for students in developmental math courses, where they can again review each step of a math problem. We make our exam reviews available to everyone in the class even if they didn't attend the session. *Blackboard Collaborate* can make the archives public or just for the participants.

Regarding costs, you already have invested in the web conferencing technology, *Blackboard Collaborate*. Whether this would need additional staff or funding, consider offering training to on-campus faculty, academic support staff and peer tutors on how to use it to increase access to faculty office hours, online or blended tutoring sessions or one-on-one academic coaching sessions or other student support services. You could also increase funding for staff hours or personnel for online tutoring or online academic coaching/ career counseling services as it relates to the specifics of the grant. Walk-in tutors could log in and be available online as well as face-to-face during the day.

Invest in interactive whiteboards, such as *Smartboards* (either wall mounted or mobile) to allow more robust tutoring sessions. These also allow for internet connections, e-textbooks, drawing, and file sharing. Sessions can also be saved for students to review. *Smartboards* range from \$4,000-\$6,000 each.

If you wish to extend access evenings and weekends when your centers are not open, or offer tutoring in subjects which you have difficulty hiring tutors, consider purchasing hours from an online tutoring service. My preference is *NetTutor*, offered through Link-Systems International in Tampa, FL. Cost depends on the number of hours purchased, but ranges from \$24-\$30 per hour. You determine the courses, hours they can offer the service, and the number of hours per student per semester. Purchased hours do not expire, and they provide free marketing services. Contact Julie Daniels, jdaniels@link-systems.com for more information and see [www.nettutor.com](http://www.nettutor.com) for details.

### *Group Tutoring*

Consider offering a group tutoring service. Choose courses for group tutoring which are the highest DFW risk and the highest demand if funding is limited. These generally are the STEM courses, especially algebra, calculus, chemistry, physics, anatomy and physiology, and statistics. At UWM, we offer weekly groups for all courses we serve. Offer these in addition to your walk-in tutoring service. Groups meet weekly at the same time for one hour blocks (or 50 minutes). Group size can vary, but ideally would be for 3-5 students plus the tutor. The advantage is that students get to know others in their group, discuss study strategies in addition to course content, and help stay on track throughout the semester by discussing questions and reviewing the course material on a weekly basis with their peers. Some students register for two sessions per week as needed.

Some campuses which have large lecture courses have found *Supplemental Instruction (SI)* to be effective. ( See: <http://info.umkc.edu/si/>). However, with your low professor/student ratio, I believe group tutoring would be a better option. Group tutoring varies from *Supplemental Instruction* in that the tutors do not attend class, and students must register and are held to meeting during that hour each week. They can be dropped after 3 absences. Group tutoring works well with peer tutors who have recently completed the course and earned an A, A- or B+ in the course. There is more structure to group tutoring with the attendance policy in place. The *SI* model does not require attendance.

Expenses for this project would be 1) training current staff to conduct groups, 2) investing in an online scheduling system, and 3) hiring peer tutors. While this may involve a reassignment or change of duties for some professional staff, I think a more robust student tutor staffing effort would help to develop student leaders. Costs could be saved by tutoring scheduled groups as opposed to providing walk-in assistance in most areas. Students in your focus group indicated that they liked to work with their peers- if they were knowledgeable.

At Vincennes, staff could be assigned to hire, train, supervise and evaluate peer tutors. Professional and support staff could do walk-in and group times. Peer group tutors should be paid at a higher rate than minimum wage (we pay \$9 an hour to start). Depending on demand, student tutors could conduct an average of 10 groups a week at various times for groups of 3-5 students. The advantage is that peer tutors only are responsible for expertise in one or two courses rather than a variety of courses.

### *Walk-in Tutoring and Testing*

Walk-in tutoring plays a role in academic support, particularly in the STEM fields and in composition. Review your methods for conducting walk-in tutoring. Is it primarily used for homework help? Is the tutor helping to instill the overall theory and method, not just a solution to a particular problem? While an answer to a question is beneficial to the student when stuck on a problem, it may not translate to another problem. Are students being led to find their own answers? Since I didn't observe many tutoring sessions, I don't have a sense of the quality. Training and evaluation are keys to keeping your service at a high quality. Group tutoring can also help students see the big picture from week to week.

Testing seemed to be a very large service in your centers. Review your testing policies. Should it be offered for everyone or used primarily for students with disabilities? Are your labs taking over a function which could occur within the classroom? If test times are individualized, are students waiting until the last minute to take them? Some students said that they liked going to the labs to take the tests because they could get tutoring right before they took the test. That may be an unexpected outcome of promoting short term memory only or prompting specific answers. Check to see how well testing is monitored. Could a student overhear an answer since they can hear tutoring sessions? It is not easy to monitor tests and conduct a variety of other services in the same space.

## **Staffing**

### *Director and Professional Staff*

I believe that centralizing the operation of your centers under one Director of Academic Support Services would be a beneficial step you could take at Vincennes University. While I saw a great deal of effort to provide academic support to students through all your programs and departments, you could benefit from a leader who could coordinate your efforts and help move the process forward. This could take the form of one operation, combining several centers which are not grant funded, or overseeing a collaboration of the various centers with a centralized function. The Director would provide leadership, coordinate a mutual operational structure; standardize staffing, training, and evaluating functions; and enhance communication and marketing efforts.

You have a lot of staff who are devoted to assisting students academically, and I would recommend that one of your staff be considered to be promoted to this position. While it might be beneficial to have an external search, the benefit of an internal search for this position would be that this individual knows the professionals across campus and could work well with all learning support staff and faculty to develop a team approach to strengthening your tutoring services.

Funding could enhance their current position salary because of new responsibilities, or preferably it could be a newly created role. I would recommend that this position eventually be a base-funded position on your campus. A Director of Academic Support Services could make a greater impact especially in the areas of strategic organization, creating high expectations across services, budgeting, staffing structures and practices, marketing, and professional development/tutor training.

The Academic Support Services Director could work with administration to review the current staff positions to help standardize duties, wages, and practices of current staff positions. Some staff could benefit from having a more structured path to moving up in the profession by creating full time learning center specialist positions for those who are interested and have shown outstanding work.

#### *Increase salaries/responsibilities for professional and support staff*

Review professional and support staff salaries in all of your tutoring services. Some of your programs are grant funded and pay more per hour than others. However, some professional or support staff need to teach classes to earn enough to support the work that they do. Conduct a review of staff salaries for both professional and support staff across your programs and come up with an equitable plan. Ask what the difference is between duties of the two designations, professional and support. What is paid hourly and what is paid as salary? Move some staff members to full-time learning center specialist positions in order to give them more responsibility, especially if they have earned Master's degrees. Raises are incentives for those who have had excellent performance reviews. Learning specialists could be responsible for hiring, training and evaluating student tutors, and could also tutor some of the time themselves. Teaching the co-curricular courses could be an option, but shouldn't be seen as the only way they can earn a decent salary, as some are putting in very long hours, especially in the Math Lab. Pay incentives would help staff who see academic support as their profession, allowing them to rededicate themselves to this important work of retaining students. Some of your professional staff, such as retirees, may prefer to keep limited hours, which should be honored. Your students really liked working with professional and support staff.

#### *Student Tutors and Mentors*

Student tutors must meet standards of no lower than a B+ in the course (preferably an "A"), maintain a 3.0 gpa, and demonstrate content knowledge and excellent communication skills as demonstrated in an interview. They should have 2-3 references, with one recommendation from faculty or instructional staff in the field they wish to tutor.

Vincennes President Dr. Johnson was interested in learning about our peer mentoring program as you are examining ways to assist the transition for incoming students and improving your retention into

their second semester. Perhaps your new grant could fund a pilot project of peer mentors who might work under the direction of Gaye Walthall in your Student Success Center. Mentors do not make as much as tutors on our campus- \$7.75-\$8.00. These jobs should start above minimum wage as there is more responsibility involved, especially in planning and facilitating group sessions. Mentors are responsible for an assigned group of students—40-50- who they maintain contact with via email, events, one-on-one meetings. Our peer mentors are primarily for first-year students, but some now assist transfer students with a higher ratio of 1 to 75.

### **Additional Services**

#### *Academic Coaching*

Academic coaching is the new buzz word for learning specialists and advisors who specialize in helping students with academic and career exploration, college study strategies, and adjusting to college. Learning centers around the country are getting more involved in academic coaching, success coaching, counseling, and professional advising efforts. Some campuses use their learning center as the hub of dedicated learning specialists and counselors to serve students. University of Texas at Austin's Sanger Learning Center is a good example: [www.utexas.edu/ug/slc](http://www.utexas.edu/ug/slc).

You already incorporate this into your services, but you could add funding to this area by coordinating your efforts across campus and train peer mentors and tutors to assist as well. This could be housed from your Student Success Center or under the direction of a new Academic Support Director.

Some technologies can assist this process, such as *Mapworks*, by using student surveys to get students' input on specific issues, such as finances and family concerns, problems with certain courses, and lack of college study strategies. Tutors, especially, can incorporate study strategies into their sessions. Time management, test preparation and test taking strategies, note taking and textbook reading skills are key topics.

All tutors could be trained to incorporate college study strategies into their sessions and refer stressed students to the student health center counselors so that student academic coaches are not handling concerns beyond their ability level.

*Innovative Educators* also offers *Student Lingo*, on-demand Students Success video workshops on a variety of topics: Academic and Career Exploration, Personal Management, Learning to Learn, Success Strategies, Reading and Writing Strategies, and Online Learning. Free trials are available.

#### *Student Mentoring Program*

I was asked to elaborate on the Mentoring program at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM). The term "mentor" has been defined on different campuses in different ways. Some use the term "mentor" in place of "tutor," perhaps because tutoring can carry a remedial connotation which may dissuade some students from taking advantages of tutoring services. In my experience, using different names for tutors may draw some to use tutoring, but confuse others. Mentors at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee do not have a tutoring role. Mentors assist students in making a transition their first



semester, then also are used during the recruitment phase, primarily in the spring, to contact prospective students. They use email, phone banks, and other social media to reach incoming first-year and transfer students.

The UWM Student Success Center has a website which serves as a “one-stop-shop” for prospective and incoming students seeking services. These are some highlights from their website: [www.ssc.uwm.edu](http://www.ssc.uwm.edu)

#### Purpose

- To better connect new students to UWM and other students during Orientation programs.
- To provide positive mentoring to new students throughout the academic year.
- To contribute a sense of UWM community, pride, spirit and tradition.
- To provide student perspective and leadership in shaping UWM campus initiatives.
- To represent the best of UWM at on and off-campus UWM sponsored activities and functions.

#### Overview

There are two main roles within the SSC Student Staff program:

During the summer at New Student Orientation, Orientation Leaders will lead small group discussions, assist students with the registration system, and help them find classroom locations. Orientation Leaders will also welcome the families of new students and inform them about student life at UWM.

The other component to the program extends beyond the summer to the following academic year. They work with an assigned group of students and the SSC staff to accomplish goals set by UWM which ultimately help build a better campus community.

#### *Employment Requirements*

Most mentors are also Orientation leaders in the summer. But the positions can be separate. Both positions require a minimum 2.5 GPA. Students must be a full-time student to apply. Behavior/Conduct records in University Housing and the Dean of Students Office will be checked when making hiring decisions. These records may or may not impact the final hiring decision.

#### *Job Descriptions*

**SUMMER Orientation Leader:** Orientation Leaders (OL) engage and welcome new students and their families at the New Student Orientation (NSO) and Transfer and Adult Student Orientation (TASO) programs during the summer months. Orientation leaders lead groups of new students through the program, give tours, implement evening social activities, and help students register for classes during our Orientation Programs. Especially positive, enthusiastic, school spirited and motivated students are encouraged to apply. This position has a live-in component from late May until early August. Room and partial meals will be provided.

**ACADEMIC YEAR Peer Mentor:** Peer Mentors are charged with helping new students acclimate to campus. Duties include: contacting and engaging students via phone, email, face-to-face and in some

cases within Learning Community (LC) courses throughout the year, assisting students in accessing campus resources, and making referrals to staff in a variety of areas to support students in their academic, social and emotional success as college students.

### **I-3. Survey of Faculty Expectations for Student Use of Tutoring**

Faculty members were very supportive of tutoring during their focus group and gave good insight on concerns and areas for improvement which I am addressing in respective sections. They are most concerned about ways they can help to improve student attendance, increased access for tutoring, the need for more tutors, and tutor training, especially in the Writing Center and labs where training should include limits to tutors' assistance to avoid co-dependency behaviors.

Your survey indicated that 61% of the faculty believed they had sufficient information about tutoring services. This could be improved through better marketing and communication. Faculty communication with tutoring personnel is important so that tutors are conveying correct content, and students' points of misunderstanding are being shared back to faculty. Faculty supported a centralized hub for disseminating tutoring information. A Director of Academic Support could coordinate a faculty network team which would meet regularly to discuss initiatives/services. Another method could be an electronic portal for faculty/staff and mentors to communicate and share ideas with each other.

Below is a summary of ideas and recommendations from the faculty focus group:

#### Challenges: Student Body and Student Attendance

- There has been a drop in use of tutoring services
- More students can get service type jobs and see their short term goal of making money as more important than putting in enough time to study.
- They need to learn delayed gratification in order to persist and obtain a degree for a better paying job/career
- Faculty referred students to the respective labs, but some said that students didn't attend
- Most agreed that students waited until the last minute to go for help

#### How Faculty are Supporting Tutoring:

- Faculty made referrals to the Center. One referred students who had a C or below to use the center.
- One asked the students to have a rough draft conference and two one-on-one meetings for two essays
- One faculty held classes in the writing center
- One faculty took each class to the academic skills center to show them how to use it
- One faculty required students to attend the center two days a week for two hours – students have to sign in
- One required one hour a week for 15 hours per semester; she checked their attendance at midterm so they don't put all of their hours in at the end of the semester

- One faculty member gave the students 5 bonus points for going to a tutor for up to 80 points. These had to be stretched out over the semester, not just at the end. They kept a log in the lab which was signed off by the tutor.
- Some volunteered to work in the centers during their office hours (Composition)
- For lower level math courses, students were assigned hours in the Math Lab
- Faculty gave the students small stakes assignments like a workbook page which the tutor could check as a way to get the students to go to the lab.

#### Faculty Support for Tutors

- Faculty knew that some of the tutors do an excellent job of not making a student feel stupid, drawing them out, making the student do the work.
- Recognized that tutoring is a complex job and requires skill
- They recognized there is a different dynamic when you are not evaluating them for a grade and they can develop a more personal relationship with a tutor

#### Some Concerns/Recommendations

- Finding qualified peer tutors as it is mostly a 2-year campus
- A need for extra help in the Writing Center
- Students who don't go- how do you encourage them to want it?
- Students who wait until the last minute to go for tutoring- they never think they need the help until they fail at midterm
- The tutor knowing the protocol of what the instructor wants – in composition especially
- Need for tutors to know the purpose of the writing assignment and the level of assistance the faculty wants – ie—grammar and punctuation assistance?
- Knowledge of APA style in the Writing Center—they know MLA style but not APA style
- Only two professional tutors are in the center—sometimes they have to leave to go teach a class
- The tutors level of knowledge may not be as high as needed (ie lower level math)
- Training is needed for tutors. Example: for English, use a mock demo paper critique; Questioning techniques to use leading questions
- Challenge of students sitting and waiting at peak times; one faculty member assisted when he was in the center
- International students may need more help.

#### Some Considerations/ Ideas for Improvement

- Ethics- tutors should not doing the work for the student or prompting them when giving a test or coaching them to answer the questions vs. understanding the material
- A balance is needed between the faculty helping the student or sending the student to a lab. Does the student feel rejected/defeated by the referral because of the perception that the faculty couldn't help?
- Make the centers look attractive with the latest technology- nice headphones, eliminate old TV monitors. Make the spaces appealing and comfortable. Add more tables and chairs for group discussion. Make sure we are comparable to our peer institutions.
- Faculty could make appointments with students for 20 minutes each on rough drafts- so that they get to know each other on a personal basis.
- Have a more centralized vs. decentralized structure for academic support services

- Hold some other types of tutoring in addition to walk-in
- More Marketing is needed
  - Communication is a key
  - Students need to know where to go to get help

#### **I-4. Collect or Track Student Use of Tutoring**

Looking at the usage data, it appears that roughly 25-29% of the students use the services. You are committed to increasing student use of tutoring services. Because your survey indicated that data collection is inconsistent, purchase or develop a standardized attendance tracking system for all of your labs/centers. You have developed some good systems in your Math and Science labs, but will need to have a committee work together to investigate these and commercial systems for the best cost and system to meet your needs. See also what might be available in conjunction with your current systems.

I have gone through this process several times using both commercial products and in-house systems. Currently UWM is going through another change from an in-house system because they just started to use *Student Success Collaborative* and *Grades First* as part of this tracking system. We found that while in-house systems appear to be more secure, our staff devoted an extraordinary amount of time working with IT to develop a tracking program. The cost of staff hours should be factored into the total cost. The most common commercial tracking systems for tutoring are *TutorTrac*, *WOnline*, and *Accutrak*. Because of rapid changes in technology, these should be investigated for their latest features. A way to get user feedback is to check the archives of “Irnasst,” the learning assistance listserv. See <https://lists.ufl.edu/archives/Irnasst-I.html>.

#### **I-5. Review of How VU Markets Tutoring Services**

There are a number of ways to increase access and marketing of tutoring services. You indicated that you already see posters, Facebook, university websites, campus newsletters, presentations at student orientations, flyers, brochures, and email campaigns. Review these methods to be sure they are current, and which are getting the best response. This could be a centralized mission for all tutoring programs.

You have a website page which lists your Tutoring and Labs, but I had to search for it. A tab for “Academic Resources “under “Services” would help, not just under “Vincennes Campus.” Consider developing your Student Success Center website (and app) with all of your services across campus for an online “One-Stop Shop” for students. You should have a site with links to websites for all of your academic support and student success sites. Gaye Walthall has already created a document for this.

There are also several learning center websites to model which have been given awards by NCLCA which are listed on [www.lcshe.net](http://www.lcshe.net) or at [http://nclca.org/FChrist\\_Award](http://nclca.org/FChrist_Award) . The UWM PASS site is an example at [www.pass.uwm.edu](http://www.pass.uwm.edu). We have found short YouTube videos about our services to be very effective. Brochures, bookmarks to be handed out in classes, direct emails to students, and social media marketing

are all effective. Mentors on our campus spread the word about our services to new and transfer students and often bring their mentees to the centers for assistance.

PASS at UWM has developed Virtual Learning Centers by creating LMS “Course” Sites for each of our tutoring areas: Math; Science; Business and Computer Science; Humanities; and Social Science. Students who can use tutoring are enrolled by course sections into these respective sites and are emailed directly about services such as exam reviews. These email campaigns have been very effective. They also show students how to join online tutoring sessions.

The message is very important as students may be coming from high school with a “remedial connotation of tutoring. At UWM, we tell incoming students that college tutoring is “for students who find a course challenging or want to ensure their ‘A’.” Thus we are emphasizing the popularity of tutoring, the positive results, and the difference between high school and college tutoring.

UWM promotes its services at New Student Orientation talks to students and parents, class visits, tabling at events, etc. Our brochure is a ‘PASSport’ with all the services listed. UWM also lists services on a “One-stop Website,” a common website for Student Success Services, and an extensive website of our own: [www.pass.uwm.edu](http://www.pass.uwm.edu). We embed a lot of *YouTube* videos to explain services to students. We use online registration forms for student tutor employment and for registering for weekly group tutoring through our website.

Integrate Labs and Center spaces into your New Student Orientation sessions so that students are introduced to these spaces during NSO; doing so may increase the likelihood of new students using these resources. The Scavenger Hunt which Gaye Walthall spoke of does help students familiarize themselves with your learning spaces across campus, (despite one student’s opinion who only wanted to “hang out” at in the theater department). The more exposure and comfort level which students experience, the more likely they will take advantage of academic support services.

## **I-6. Review of Tutoring Training**

When large scale research in the 1990’s found that “tutoring with training” is a key factor in improved retention (Boylan, Bonham, Bliss & Saxon, 1995; Boylan, Bliss, & Bonham,1997), tutoring programs across the country began to emphasize tutor training.

Tutor Training is an essential component for successful tutors. Training can also be offered by staff by following the *College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) Tutor Training Guidelines*. Our tutors attend 10 hours of training each semester. They are certified at each of three levels after each 10 hours and 25 hours of tutoring. We have incentives for raises for certification levels, outstanding performance, and length of service. See [www.crla.net](http://www.crla.net) for specifics on tutor certification. Innovative Educators has an online tutor training program called Tutor Lingo. Check [www.innovativeeducators.org](http://www.innovativeeducators.org) for costs. There has been a free trial. AT UWM, tutors attend a half-day training before school begins and meet twice monthly to complete their 10-hour training. Level 2 is taught as a hybrid course, and Level 3 is conducted as an independent study.

Peer Mentor and Orientation Leader Training (based on UWM's schedule)

- Spring Training (Required for all positions): One 2-Hour Class for 6 weeks during the spring semester
- Orientation Leaders: One week in early June: Training and Preparation prior to summer orientation
- Peer Mentors: Four-day training before the Fall Welcome Week

A good way to build community between programs and among peer tutors and mentors would be to conduct mutual group training sessions and a common orientation. It would take buy-in and planning from the coordinators of the programs. It was mentioned that COPE tutors are trained. The Jasper center used elements of CRLA training. While I do not know the level of training of all of the programs, share training expertise across programs to ensure quality across the board. Focus should be on topics which are relevant to all peer leaders. Coordinators should have the autonomy to organize discipline specific trainings as well. *CRLA* also has training guidelines their Mentor Certification under the "Certifications" tab at [www.crla.net](http://www.crla.net). Both tutors and mentors can be recognized at an end of the year ceremony for achieving the training requirements and outstanding work. Even if these don't bring raises, these awards can be listed on their resumes.

The Writing Center may need more specialized training. Following protocol by faculty is essential, and plagiarism is a big concern. The International Writing Centers Association website provides a wealth of information: [www.writingcenters.org](http://www.writingcenters.org).

#### *Increase Professional Development Opportunities*

The *Council of Learning Assistance and Developmental Education Associations (CLADEA)* fills a need in our profession since most academic support programs on campuses are small. Much can be gained from attending, networking, and hearing presentations by other successful programs. Because these associations differ but overlap somewhat, I recommend allocating funds to allow staff to attend different conferences; then they could share information they have learned with each other. Costs for these conferences are already on most websites, but generally the cost is about \$1200-1500 per person, depending on the travel expenses. Some preconference sessions can also be valuable.

The new director should be sent to the *National College Learning Center Association* Conference in Tampa in September (see [www.nclca.org](http://www.nclca.org)) and their Institute next June to connect with leaders in the field of Learning Assistance across the country. Other professional staff could also benefit from attending, such as Sarah Armstrong from the Science Resource Center. The *NCLCA Institute* cost is about \$2000 maximum for the week.

Math Staff would benefit most from attending the *National Association for Developmental Education (NADE)* conference next March in Oklahoma City. They have the most sessions regarding new models for math instruction and math academic support. See [www.nade.net](http://www.nade.net).

Other beneficial associations include the *College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA)*, especially for those teaching and supporting reading courses. They also have training for their tutoring certification program. Its annual conference is in Louisville this November. See [www.crla.net](http://www.crla.net).

The *Association for the Tutoring Profession* will be held in Kansas City in late March next spring. Professional tutors could be certified by attending their conference. See [www.myatp.org](http://www.myatp.org).

The *Distance Teaching and Learning Conference*, held in Madison, WI, August 9-11, 2016 (and yearly) is an excellent conference for those involved in distance education, such as your Dean Shanni Simmons. See <https://dtlconference.wisc.edu/> for more information.

*NCLCA* and *ATP* have online webinars on learning assistance and student success throughout the year as well. *Innovative Educators* also has several webinars on a variety of tutoring topics. Costs vary from \$50 to \$375 per webinar. Details are on their websites: [www.nclca.org](http://www.nclca.org) and [www.innovativeeducators.org/](http://www.innovativeeducators.org/). All association memberships include publications which are also very helpful; some offer institutional memberships. CRLA started a professional mentoring program in March which pairs seasoned professionals with newer professionals. To register, see [www.crla.net](http://www.crla.net).

For those who provide tutoring for composition, the International Writing Centers Association holds yearly conferences, summer Institutes, and publications at [www.writingcenters.org](http://www.writingcenters.org).

I also have done training at various campuses for both on-campus and online tutoring, if that is of interest to you. I would welcome an opportunity to return and assist you in any way as you develop your tutoring services.

#### **I-7. Survey/Focus Group Study of Student and Tutor to Determine Services Used, Desired, Offered, and Other Issues such as Labs, Access, Hours, etc.**

This was a group of 15 students who used various services across campus. Some had just graduated, and two used the services and were also tutors. Two joined the group via Skype from the Jasper campus.

Space:

- They liked having the different areas on campus to go.
- The fact that they were spread out didn't bother them as they knew their way around.
- They liked the convenience of the different locations. They were open to having tutoring in the library, but they didn't have strong opinion about it.
- They suggested getting a map for students to find all of the areas. Suggestions for distribution: where they register their vehicle, in the residence halls, or in their assignment book.

What They Liked Best:

- They especially liked going to the Math lab.
- They liked the Academic Skills Center
- They really liked the fact that tutors could explain the material so that they could understand it more easily.
- They liked all the tutors who were there- they could learn easier with them.
- One person liked the fact that she could stay in the Science Center for as long as she wanted.

#### What They Didn't Like:

- They thought that there should be more people on hand, as the tutors didn't always get to them promptly. One person didn't like it when she had to hold up her hand and wait a long time to get her question answered in the Math Lab.
- They didn't like it when there was socializing in the room as they were working on their homework or especially when they were testing
- They didn't like it when they had to take tests and it was noisy. It was hard to concentrate.
- They could also hear the teacher talking in the classroom adjacent to the Math Lab.
- One person wanted help for social science in the Social science Center where it wasn't offered.
- One student didn't like the scavenger hunt to find the services, but she also liked her niche in the theater and seemed unwilling to leave her area; she liked that they set up some study space there, including a place for informal study groups
- They didn't like that while they were working with a professional tutor, that tutor had to leave to go teach a class.

#### Tutors:

- Some had their favorite tutors
- They really liked the professional tutors—sometimes they felt that the peer tutors weren't as helpful or knowledgeable. There should be more consistency in the quality of the tutors in patience, willingness to help, and knowledge of subject matter.
- Some liked having a peer tutor more because they felt comfortable asking him/her questions and sharing how they were doing in the course more easily.
- The Humanities tutors went at a helpful pace.
- The two students were also tutors believed that they had really gained a lot from being a tutor.
- Sometimes a peer tutor couldn't go up as high in their mastery of course material (organic chemistry)
- Both non-traditional students (one at the Jasper campus) felt that they wouldn't have been able to get through without the help of their tutors, This was echoed by a written statement about Daniel, the online math tutor.
- One ESL person didn't like the fact that they wouldn't help with punctuation in her paper.

#### Testing:

- They liked the convenience of doing the testing in these centers. If there was a question about the test, they could often track down the teacher to clarify it.
- They liked the idea of a separate room for testing because of the noise. They liked that the testing was in the same area because they sometimes reviewed with a tutor before taking the test.
- The Jasper Center did have a separate room for testing, which worked well

#### Technology

- They didn't understand how to use *Blackboard* when they started...they had a hard time adjusting to how to navigate it to do their work.
- They complained about the Wi-Fi when taking their tests online; sometimes they were kicked out and couldn't complete a test. This was a big concern to several students.
- They were open to online tutoring for the hours of availability, but were a bit reluctant about how to use it and if they would get kicked out.



### Groups

- They were open to the idea of working in groups; some already were in informal study groups.
- Some were in a PLTL group and liked solved problems together

### Student recommendations:

- They recommended that more tutors were hired.
- They would like to have more times when they could get tutored—evenings and weekends
- Also some subjects were not available- organic chemistry.
- Some wanted more than one time a week in the Academic Skills Center.
- They would like more space for informal study groups
- Students recognized that some of the academic support professionals are working long hours/compensating for their low pay by teaching some classes, and they worried about burnout after long hours for so many weeks.

### **I-8. External Tutor Authority**

My title is Director Emerita, Educational Support Services at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I directed Panther Academic Support Services (PASS), from 1995-February 2016. Previously, I was the Tutoring Coordinator and Reading and Study Skills Lecturer, then Instructional Program Manager for the UWM's Tutoring Component for 10 years in the Department of Learning Skills and Educational Opportunity. I have been an external reviewer for four other campuses. My CV is attached for more specific information about my qualifications. I currently do research and consulting in my own consulting business, Educational Research Consulting, LLC., PO Box 444, Cedarburg, WI. 53012.

### **I-9. Recommendations for improving student access to and use of tutoring services**

My recommendations have been made throughout this document. Below are the highlights.

#### **Strengths Summary**

I witnessed an impressively broad array of tutoring opportunities across disciplines, departments, and programs for student development and academic support.

The student focus group I interviewed indicated that tutoring provided a strong foundation for their academic success. The two tutors also said that they had a very positive experience and developed leadership skills. Faculty showed strong support for tutoring, ranging from referrals to mandated tutoring sessions.

The successful development of many academic support spaces for students is impressive as is the number of staff employed to support students academically.

#### **Summary of Recommendations**

I recommend that you take steps in the direction of consolidation. Carefully consider pros and cons through strategic planning. If your staff likes the status quo, careful planning and good marketing can increase buy-in for this process. Budgets and positions are affected as well. Hire a Director of Academic Support Services to help unify and centralize tutoring services. Start with standardized hiring, and evaluation practices. Collaborate on training and marketing services to ensure quality and to attract more students with greater access opportunities. Online/virtual tutoring has great potential for access.

Develop a wider array of academic support services, such as online tutoring, group tutoring and academic coaching. Invest in technology such as interactive whiteboards and purchase more furniture to encourage collaborative learning. Consider a one-stop space for tutoring services and expansion.

Increase opportunities for sharing resources and practices. Make intentional links to institutional goals and strategies and tie-ins to goals and objectives of your TRIO programs and other specialized services.

Assessment is a key factor in your strategic planning. Once you have your attendance tracking solidified, you can then start to compare grades of student participants vs. non-participants. The *CAS Standards for Learning Assistance Programs* recommend that learning centers provide evidence gathered to create strategies for improvement of programs and services. You have a baseline with the ASIP Report upon which to build.

### Resources

Build and continually expand shared resources that administration, academic support staff, faculty and can adapt and employ to remain engaged in the field.

- The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) lists standards for Learning Assistance Programs. See: <http://www.cas.edu/> or download the document at [www.nclca.org](http://www.nclca.org).
- The John N. Gardner Institute's Foundations of Excellence Program helps colleges and universities develop strategic plans to enhance learning and retention in line with the institution's philosophy and mission. See <http://www.jngi.org/>
- Essential Readings of the Council of Learning Assistance and Developmental Education Associations: <http://www.cladea.net>
- Learning Support Centers in Higher Education: <http://www.LSCHE.net>
- Learning Centers of Excellence, a guideline for developing outstanding learning centers. See [http://nclca.org/LCs\\_of\\_excellence](http://nclca.org/LCs_of_excellence) for criteria.

### Conclusion

Vincennes University has several strengths to draw upon: a residential, commuter, and online student body; an engaged faculty, a caring staff, dedicated administrators, good facilities, and the desire for institutional excellence and student success. I hope that this external review of your tutoring services will inform your discussions and planning as you move forward with your student success initiatives. I would be happy to elaborate on any recommendations in this report and follow up with you as you move forward with decisions and planning.

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