THE

LEARNING

ASSISTANCE

REVIEW

N   C   L   C   A

National
College
Learning
Center
Association

About *The Learning Assistance Review*

Editor
Michael Frizell
Director, Student Learning Services
Bear CLAW (Center for Learning and Writing)
Missouri State University

Layout & Design
Samantha Austin
Missouri State University

NCLCA's Definition of a Learning Center
The National College Learning Center Association defines a learning center at institutions of higher education as interactive academic spaces which exist to reinforce and extend student learning in physical and/or virtual environments. A variety of comprehensive support services and programs are offered in these environments to enhance student academic success, retention, and completion rates by applying best practices, student learning theory, and addressing student-learning needs from multiple pedagogical perspectives. Staffed by professionals, paraprofessionals, faculty, and/or trained student educators, learning centers are designed to reinforce the holistic academic growth of students by fostering critical thinking, metacognitive development, and academic and personal success.

Editorial Board

Contents

Letter from the Editor

Mary B. Nicolini, author and former writing instructor at Broad Ripple High School in Indianapolis, Indiana, explains that many would-be writers lose their sense of security when they are students, causing their writing to skew impersonal, thus allowing authors to create distance between their private lives and the public ones. She writes:

> Something happens to student writers after about the fourth or fifth grade. All too frequently, the nine-year-old who enjoyed telling stories becomes uninterested in writing nine years later. It is almost as if the classroom moves from a secure, self-contained unit to a more impersonal, departmentalized one; student writers lose their sense of self. Imaginativeness and freshness decline. (58)

The sense of self Nicolini refers to relate to the private thoughts, feelings, and concerns of the individual. She later explains that many factors contribute to this phenomenon, including teachers who did not approach the task of teaching writing with "humility and sensitivity to the feelings of another person" (58). In addition, she explains, most writers are "on a search for [self]…if he finds himself he will find an audience…when he digs deeply into himself, he will find others who will read with a shock of recognition what he has written" (60). Though she also attributes the emotional consequences of puberty as having a detrimental effect on the student's ability to feel secure about writing, I'll skip an analysis of that part when referring to the works contained within this issue of The Learning Assistance Review. Instead, let's focus on the act of writing.

We find it easy to write when we are comfortable with the vehicle or the manner through which others perceive our words (one need only look at Facebook or Twitter to uncover that fact). When actors perform, they may be revealing their innermost fears and dreams to an audience, but they are hiding behind a "fourth wall"

what is understood by the audience. They are not the characters they portray, no matter how much of their personal beliefs are lent to the characters. In addition, their art is temporal, their performances existing during a certain length of time, and then are gone forever. Writing is not like that. Writing is an art that can last forever. It can be read by millions at any time, and can be distributed worldwide in the blink of an eye. The words we put on paper will reveal our thoughts, fears, and dreams long after we are gone. There is a certain comfort, and a likely dread, that accompanies this fact. Once written, my private self, no matter how artfully I try to mask it, is exposed in the writing (that is, if I allow others to read what I have written) and will remain so forever. Is it any wonder that some people fear the nakedness of publishing?

In my capacity as the director of the Writing Center at Missouri State University, faculty, staff, and students express their fear of writing to me on a daily basis. Though I spend at least four hours a day – and sometimes more depending on my publisher's deadline – every day writing, I tell them that it's never easy for me. I agonize over every word. I consider my voice, my reader, and even how the words look on the page. I spend hours critiquing my own work before finally turning it over to my editor (in the case of my publishing) or my graduate students, only to see it torn apart again. Writing is an art form, and if I ever feel like I'm good at it, I'll stop doing it and pursue another challenge. I think I can safely say that I'll be chasing the elusive "perfect paper" forever.

Thus, it is an honor to share with you the works contained in this issue, for these writers were brave enough to share their words with us. Thank you, Christine J. Anderson, Rebecca Day Babcock, Natalya Brown, Qijie Cai, Kathryn Denton, Kristen Ferguson, Jude Higdon, Jacqueline S. Hodes, Tammy James, Karen G. Johnson, Laura Kieran, Misty L. Knight, Kirsten Komara, Carrie L. Lewis, Gerardina Martin, Kellianne Milliner, Lama Bergstrand Othman, Linda Piper, Donna M. Sayman, and Frances Stewart.

Your Biggest Fan,

Michael Frizell, MFA
Editor

Reference

Nicolini, M. B. (1994) Stories can save us: A defense of narrative writing. *English Journal 83*(2), 56-61.

Exploring Sense of Community in a University Common Book Program

Kristen Ferguson, Natalya Brown, and Linda Piper
Nipissing University

Abstract

Many post-secondary common book programs purport to increase a sense of community on campus. This study explored whether a common book program at a Canadian university was able to create a sense of community among students. Results indicate that in-class discussions about the book, liking the Facebook page, attending the author lecture, and watching the author lecture on YouTube had significant impact on the sense of community among those who read the book. However, the program did not create an overall effect of a sense of community among first-year university students. Implications and recommendations for common book programs are discussed.

Books bring people together: that's the core idea of a common book program. A common book program is also referred to as a common reading program, summer reading program, or a one-book program; the idea is a group of people all reading the same book is hoped to inspire meaningful conversations and create memorable experiences (Dempsey, 2009). In common book programs at the post secondary level, first-year students usually read a common book prior to the start of the academic year, then participate in common book-related events during orientation (Ferguson, 2006; Grenier, 2007). The book may also be integrated by professors into classes, with the capstone event of the program often being a lecture given by the author of the book. Most colleges and universities cite similar goals of their common book programs for freshmen. The common

Kristen Ferguson | Nipissing University | kristenf@nipissingu.ca

goals follow:

- A common book promotes a community of students, faculty, and staff by providing a common basis for conversation and by making connections across disciplines (Ferguson, 2006; Fidler, 1997).
- A common book is a means to introduce students to academic skills that they will require in college and university (Ferguson, 2006; Fidler, 1997).
- A common book will enhance the social and academic lives of students, which, in turn, creates a sense of connectedness that positively affects student retention and recruitment (Ferguson, 2006; Fidler, 1997; Straus & Daley, 2002).

Nipissing University in Ontario, Canada, piloted a common book program during the 2010–2011 year. For the pilot project, all first-year students entering the Faculty of Applied and Professional Studies (consisting of Business, Criminal Justice, Nursing, and Social Welfare) were asked to read the award-winning novel *Three Day Road* by Joseph Boyden. There were two main goals of the program: to foster a sense of community and belonging through a common academic experience and to introduce new students to the level of critical thinking, literacy, and analysis necessary in a university environment. The goals changed slightly in 2011 to "introduce students in an academic way to literacy and critical thinking, and to provide students with some common intellectual ground to facilitate discussion and friendship" (Nipissing University, 2012). Since 2012, the program was expanded to include all first-year students in the university in all majors. In 2013, the year of this study, the common book was the young adult science fiction novel *Feed* by M.T. Anderson.

Sense of Community

To ground our understanding, we use the sense of community (referred to hereafter as SoC) theory developed by McMillan and Chavis (1986). According to McMillan and Chavis, there are four elements that define a SoC and all are necessary to have a SoC: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. Supported by the research indicating that participating in events outside of the classroom can build a SoC on campus (Elkins, Forrester, and Noel-Elkins, 2011; Tinto 1993), we

postulate that reading a common book and participating in common book events can involve all four of the elements of SoC as defined by McMillan and Chavis (1986). Through a common book program, students all read the same book (membership), could have a voice through participating in discussion and events (influence), could learn and experience personal growth through reading and participating in events (integration and fulfillment of needs), and could have an emotional bond with others through reading and shared events (shared emotional connection).

Colleges and universities have a vested interest in fostering a SoC among students. In their study of 4,000 undergraduates in the U.S., Jacobs and Archie (2008) report that a SoC positively impacts students' intention to stay at an institution. Jacobs & Archie (2008) also find that membership in fraternities and sororities, residence, and ethnicity influenced SoC among students and their intent to return to university. Tinto's work also demonstrates that SoC can influence first-year student completion (Tinto, 2012) and a sense of commitment to the university (Tinto, 1993, 2012).

Creating a SoC is the goal of many common book programs, and there is an assumption that reading of a common text can produce the effect of a SoC. For instance, Ferguson (2006) states, "Reading the same book brings people together as a community by creating common ground for discussion" (p. 8). However, there are few refereed studies that explore whether common book programs actually achieve this goal. Nichols (2012) found that honors students in South Dakota reported that a common book program enhanced their engagement with students in the campus community. Daugherty and Hayes (2012) report that engaged readers (students who read the common book) had higher perceptions of community connection than non-engaged readers (students who did not finish or read the book). Benz et al. (2013) report that at Fort Louis College, 82% of approximately 300 students surveyed felt that reading the common book made them feel like a "part of a larger community of readers, writers, and thinkers" (p. 27). However, not all common book programs are successful in achieving the goal of the creation of a SoC. In our previous research at our Canadian university, we found that the common book program did not create a SoC in its pilot year with

only 22% of all students and 31% of students who read the book feeling that reading the book and participating in the program made them feel like a part of the school community (Ferguson, Brown, & Piper, 2014). However, we did find that faculty members felt the program had the potential to create a SoC on campus in future years (Ferguson, Brown, & Piper, 2014).

In anecdotal reports, Cheston (2013) states that four post-secondary institutions in North Carolina have cancelled their common reading programs because the programs were not meeting their goals, including the creation of a SoC. Cheston (2013) spoke to the assistant vice president for academic affairs at Mars Hill, Jason Pierce, who stated that the program did not create a SoC: "'We found that [the summer reading program] didn't help to bridge any of those gaps,' Pierce said. 'They weren't having those conversations outside of class.' Many of the students—especially those who might have most benefited from it, Pierce said—didn't even read the book." (n.p.).

Based on the extant literature and our previous research, we were curious about the potential that exists in creating a SoC through common reading. The question guiding our research was: does reading a common book and participating in events related to the book contribute to a SoC among students?

Methodology

Because first-year students at Nipissing University are a large population for a study, we decided a questionnaire would be the most practical and appropriate method of data collection. Survey research allows us to collect data about the feeling and attitudes of the population as well as explore the relationships among the survey questions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Based on our literature review and previous research, we developed two basic hypotheses:

H1: The common book program created a sense of community among students

H2: Participation in in-class and out-of-class activities influences students' perceptions of a sense of community created by the common book program

Instrument

As SoC is a multidimensional construct, we developed a 30-

item inventory for SoC in the context of a common book program. Each potential respondent rated the degree to which they agreed with each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree) to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). The items covered the four factors for creating a SoC identified by McMillan and Chavis (1986)—membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. For example, "The common book program made me feel connected to my department" was a statement used to assess membership; "The common book program allowed me to contribute to my own learning," was used as a statement to gauge influence; "The common book program made me feel connected to other students in class," was a statement used to assess shared emotional connection; and "I learned more than I would have just reading textbooks," was a statement used to assess integration and fulfillment of needs. Items measuring demographic factors (age, gender, program of study, year in program) and participation in in-class and out-of-class common book related activities were also included in the questionnaire.

Data Collection

Our target population were the approximately 700 students taking first-year courses between March and April of 2013. We felt that an anonymous online survey would be the best method to maximize participation because university students are known Internet users. Potential participants were recruited through flyers, posters, Facebook and Twitter. Given that our target population consisted of students, we were not concerned about the threat of limited access to the survey affecting its external validity (Handwerk, Carson, & Blackwell, 2000). Of the approximately 700 potential participants, 159 (22.7%) questionnaires were collected, of which 112 (16%) questionnaires were useable for testing. While the response rate may appear low in comparison to paper-and-pencil or phone surveys, some studies have reported receiving higher quality data from online surveys due to lower item non-response and longer answers (Evans & Mathur, 2005). In addition, the demographic profile of the sample was comparable to the target population.

Data Analysis

New measurement scores for each dimension of SoC were

derived by calculating the arithmetic mean of the scores over the relevant items for the given dimension for each observation. Using the dimensional measurement scores, a composite SoC score was derived by calculating the arithmetic mean of the dimensional measurement scores for each observation. Therefore, in the construction of this SoC composite score, each dimension—membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection—was given equal weight. The measurement scores for each dimension were derived in order to assess the degree to which the participants felt the common book program had achieved that important element to creating a SoC. For example, a membership score of "5" would indicate that participants felt that the program created a strong feeling of belonging to the university, faculty or department and "1" would indicate that the participants felt that the program did not create a strong feeling of belonging to the university. Meanwhile, the composite score was derived to assess the degree to which participants felt that the common book program created or contributed to a SoC. Therefore, a composite score of "5" would indicate that participants felt that the program created a strong SoC and a composite score of "1" would indicate that the participants felt that the program did not create a SoC. The model showed high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.974, well above the suggested cut-off of 0.70 (Lance, Butts, & Michels, 2006).

Results

Participants

The data from the 112 useable questionnaires indicated that our sample was decidedly female (74.5%), young (57.9% were between 17 and 20 years of age), and at the early stages of their academic career (70.1% were in their first or second year of their program of study). The student population at the university is predominately female, with 72% of the student body identifying as female. The majority of participants were from Business (35%), English Studies (10%), History (9%), and Psychology (9%), which was consistent with the breakdown in the target population. Seventy-one respondents (63%) indicated that they read the common book.

Creating a Sense of Community (H1)

The measurement scores derived for the dimensions of SoC

had means below 3, except for integration and fulfillment of needs. The membership and shared emotional connection scores were the lowest, while the integration and fulfillment of needs score was the highest (see Table 1).

Table 1

Sense of Community

Dimension	All Participants (n=112)		Participants who read the Common Book (n=71)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Membership	2.4866	1.07061	2.4383	1.04995
Influence	2.7639	1.03619	2.7832	0.99351
Integration and Fulfillment of Needs	3.0547	0.89834	3.0812	0.86656
Shared Emotional Connection	2.6851	1.04044	2.6786	0.97067
SoC	2.7210	0.94359	2.7175	0.88596

The membership score suggests that participants felt that participating in the common book program did not increase their feelings of belonging to the university, their faculty, or their department. The integration and fulfillment of needs mean score suggests that participants were neutral on whether their participation in the common book program benefitted them individually in terms of their learning and personal growth. With a mean of 2.721 and a standard deviation of 0.9439, the SoC composite score suggested that the common book program did not create a SoC among participants. Note that the SoC composite score was slightly lower for the subsample of participants who had read the common book. The scores for membership

and shared emotional connection were also lower for the subsample of participants who had read the common book.

In-Class and Out-of-Class Activities (H2)

The common book was integrated into courses through class and group discussions, written assignments, student presentations, and exam questions. Out-of-class activities or events included viewings of films related to the themes found in the common book, attending the author's Skype lecture, visiting the common book program website, donating food, and following the common book program on Facebook. To test our second hypothesis, t-tests to compare means and regression were used to determine the relationship, if any, between participation in in-class and out-of-class activities and the SoC composite score. Difference of means t-tests were conducted for each in-class activity and out-of-class activity to determine if there were any significant differences in the mean SoC composite scores for respondents who participated or did not participate in these activities. Only those in-class or out-of-class activities for which there was sufficient participation were included in the t-tests and the regression model. The t-tests revealed statistically significant differences in the mean SoC scores for certain groups of participants. Specifically, the mean SoC composite scores were higher for respondents who had written assignments, participated in class discussions, attended the author's Skype lecture, or watched the lecture on YouTube. However, the regression model was a poor fit, suggesting that participation in class and out-of-class activities are poor predictors of SoC. The only significant predictor of SoC was whether or not the participant had read the common book. Table 2 shows the regression results.

There was an improvement in the model's fit when we examined the subsample of student respondents who read the common book. Participation in class activities and out-of-class activities were still not good predictors of SoC. Five of the ten participation variables were significant—using the common book in class discussions, liking the Facebook page, donating food at a common book event, attending the Skype lecture with the common book author, and watching the author's Skype lecture on YouTube. Table 3 shows the results of this regression.

Table 2

Sense of Community, In-Class and Out-of-Class Activities
(n = 97, F =1.787, R2 = 0.201)

	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic	p-value
Constants	2.502***	0.205	12.197	0.000
Read the Common Book	-0.561**	0.276	-2.033	0.045
Number of courses in which common book was used	-0.004	0.093	-0.041	0.967
Used in class discussion	0.308	0.254	1.212	0.229
Used in group discussion	0.148	0.248	0.599	0.551
Used in written assignments	0.243	0.307	0.792	0.430
Used in tests or exams	-0.129	0.248	0.519	0.605
Attended film viewings	0.366	0.303	1.208	0.230
Visited website	0.216	0.225	0.958	0.341
Liked Facebook page	0.126	0.198	0.634	0.523
Donated food	-0.314	0.241	-1.303	0.196
Attended Skype lecture	0.314	0.235	1.331	0.187
Watched Skype lecture on Youtube	0.48*	0.257	1.903	0.060

* - significant at the 10% level

** - significant at the 5% level

*** - significant at the 1% level

Table 3

Sense of Community, In-Class and Out-of-Class
Activities for Readers of the Book

$(n = 71, F = 3.058, R^2 = 0.359)$

	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic	p-value
Constants	1.876***	0.286	7.011	0.000
Number of courses in which common book was used	0.029	0.088	0.325	0.746
Used in class discussion	0.533**	0.260	2.049	0.045
Used in group discussion	0.039	0.221	0.177	0.860
Used in written assignments	0.061	0.287	0.212	0.833
Used in tests or exams	-0.194	0.230	-0.845	0.402
Attended film viewings	0.254	0.291	0.873	0.386
Visited website	-0.010	0.231	-0.042	0.967
Liked Facebook page	0.325*	0.193	1.686	0.097
Donated food	-0.504**	0.231	-2.182	0.033
Attended Skype lecture	0.518**	0.212	2.441	0.018
Watched Skype lecture on Youtube	0.542**	0.235	2.304	0.025

* - significant at the 10% level

** - significant at the 5% level

*** - significant at the 1% level

Using the common book in class discussions, following the common book program on Facebook, and attending or watching the author's Skype lecture had positive effects on the participants' perceptions of SoC. This was confirmed by t-tests, as survey respondents who participated in these activities had significantly higher mean SoC composite and dimensional scores. Those who donated food to the food bank had lower SoC scores. The number of courses in which the common book was used appeared to have no effect on the participants' perception of SoC. The difference between male and female SoC scores was not statistically significant. However, male students had higher shared emotional connection scores, and this difference was statistically significant at the 10% level. Neither the SoC composite score nor its dimensions varied significantly by age, year of program, or program of study.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our results indicate that the common book program at Nipissing University did not significantly contribute to an overall SoC among students taking first-year courses. Each dimension of McMillan and Chavis' (1986) theory (except for integration and fulfillment of needs) had a mean below 3, which would indicate that the students felt neutral on the impact of the common book program on SoC on campus. Moreover, the SoC composite score was 2.721 and shows the common book did not have an overall impact on SoC among the participants in our study. Our study adds to the already mixed results presented in the literature about whether common book programs promote a SoC on campus. The present study, our previous study with a different cohort of students (Ferguson, Brown, & Piper, 2014), and the anecdotal account of Cheston (2013) find that common book programs have no impact on SoC while the research of Nichols (2012), Daughterty and Hayes (2012), and Benz et al. (2013) found positive impacts from the common book programs on SoC. Since we found little impact of the common book program on SoC, it is unlikely that the common book program had an impact on first-year students' completion, their sense of commitment to the institution, or their intent to stay at the institution (Jacobs & Archie, 2008; Tinto, 1993; 2012).

As we found in our previous study (Ferguson, Brown, & Piper,

2014) and is reported in the literature (Daughtery & Hayes, 2012; Cheston 2013), students actually need to read the common book for it to make an impact. While 63% of students in our study read the common book, based on previous research (e.g. Daugherty and Hayes, 2012; Benz et. al, 2013) one would expect that if more students read the book, SoC scores might be higher. Paradoxically, we found lower SoC scores among those who had read the common book. We found that reading the common book, participating in class discussion, liking the Facebook page, attending the Skype lecture or watching this lecture on YouTube were significant predictors of SoC. The relationship between out of class activities and creating a SoC is supported in the research of SoC in higher education contexts (Elkins, Forrester, and Noel-Elikins, 2011; Tinto 1993). We found that whole class discussion was a significant and positive predictor of SoC while small group discussion was not. Perhaps a faculty member is needed to guide and facilitate small group student discussion. The film viewings were not well attended and did not impact SoC. Our results also indicate that technology and social media can have positive impacts on SoC and this is supported by an emerging body of literature on SoC, technology, and higher education (Rovai & Jordan, 2004). However, visiting the webpage had no impact on students' perceptions of SoC. While the effect was not statistically significant, using the common book for tests and exams had a negative relationship on students' SoC. Testing students on the book is a method to get students to read the common book; however, perhaps it takes away from an intrinsic sense of enjoyment of reading a book. Written assignments also had no impact on SoC perhaps for the same reason. While at first glance, the negative effect of donating food as a part of the common book program on the SoC score might seem counterintuitive, it is likely that those students who donated food to the local food banks as part of the program already possess a strong SoC or civic duty so that the common book program would be less likely to enhance a SoC among this group.

Since reading the book makes a significant impact on students and their perceptions of SoC, we feel that institutions implementing the common book programs make reading the book a priority. Perhaps reading the book could be mandatory in a required course or

time during orientation week could be devoted to providing students with time to read. Our results also show that the number of courses in which the students used the common book had no impact on SoC. Perhaps instead of a widespread initiative across all first-year courses, a common book program that is focused and used in particular classes could still meet its program objectives. It would also be worthwhile for future researchers and for schools to compare their common book programs and activities to other institutions where SoC created by the common book is high, such as at Fort Louis College. The manner in which common book programs are implemented vary widely from institution to institution. Some schools use the common book as an orientation activity driven by the student affairs department, while other institutions, such as Nipissing University, make the program academic by integrating the common book into courses (Ferguson, 2006; Grenier, 2007). Future researchers and schools implementing common book programs need to look at which model (if any model) is the most effective in achieving program goals such as SoC.

Cheston (2013) notes that common book programs could be a passing fad. Common book programs can be costly in terms of money and personnel hours, and if programs are not meeting goals such as creating a SoC, then perhaps common book programs should be discontinued. Proponents of common book programs claim that common books create a SoC and connectedness on campus (Ferguson, 2006; Fidler, 1997, Straus & Daley, 2002); however, there is simply not enough consistent evidence at the present to support this claim. While our study is limited by its small size, somewhat low return rate, and focuses on one post-secondary institution, we feel that schools implementing a common book program should evaluate common book programs beyond anecdotal evidence to see if the programs are meeting their program goals. We love the idea of books and reading bringing people together. However, if common book programs are not meeting their goals, schools need to make tough decisions about common book programs or realign program goals and assess the objectives of the program with measurable outcomes.

References

Benz, B., Comer, D., Juergensmeyer, E., & Lowry, M. (2013). WPAs, writing programs and the common reading experience. *WPA: Writing Program Administration—Journal of The Council Of Writing Program Administrators, 37*(1), 11-32.

Cheston, D. (2013, June 30). The end of summer reading? Disenchantment with freshman reading sets in across North Carolina. Retrieved from http://www.popecenter.org/commentaries/article.html?id=2867

Daugherty, T. K., & Hayes, M. W. (2012). Social and academic correlates of reading a common book. *Learning Assistance Review, 17*(2), 33-41.

Dempsey, B. (2009). One book, one community: One great idea. *Library Journal, 134*(14), 19-22.

Elkins, D. J., Forrester, S. A., & Noel-Elkins, A. V. (2011). Students' perceived sense of campus community: The influence of out-of-class experience. *College Student Journal, 45*(1), 105-121.

Evans, J. R., & Mathur, A. (2005). The value of online surveys. *Internet Research*, 15, 195-219.

Ferguson, M. (2006). Creating common ground: Common reading for the first year of college. *Peer Review, 8*(3), 8-10.

Ferguson, K., Brown, N., & Piper, L. (2014). "How much can one book do?": Exploring perceptions of a common book program for first-year university students. *Journal of College Reading and Learning, 44*(2), 164-199.

Fidler, D. (1997). Getting students involved from the get-go: Summer reading programs across the country. *About Campus, 2*(5), 32.

Fraenkel J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2003). *How to design and evaluate research*

in education (5th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill Higher Education.

Grenier, C. (2007). A survey of college freshmen summer reading programs in the United States. *International Journal of the Book, 4*(2), 77-84.

Handwerk, P. G., Carson, C., & Blackwell, K. M. (2000, May). On-line vs. paper-and-pencil surveying of students: A case study. Paper presented at the 40th Meeting of the Association of Institutional Research, Cincinnati, OH.

Jacobs, J., & Archie, T. (2008). Investigating sense of community in first-year college students. *Journal of Experiential Education, 30*(3), 282-285.

Lance, C. E., Butts, M. M. & Michels, L. C. (2006). The sources of four commonly reported cutoff criteria. *Organizational Research Methods, 9*(2), 202-220. doi:10.117/1094428105284919

McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology, 14*, 6-23.

Nichols, T. J. (2012). The institutional impact of honors though a campus-community common read. *Honors In Practice, 8*, 175-182.

Nipissing University. (2012, September 9). Fill your head with the Common Book Common Ground Program. *NU News.* Retrieved from http://www.nipissingu.ca/about-us/newsroom/Pages/Feed-your-head-with-the-Common-Book-Common-Ground-program.aspx.

Rovai, A. P., & Jordan, H. M. (2004). Blended learning and sense of community: A comparative analysis with traditional and fully online graduate courses. *International Review of Research In Open and Distance Learning, 5*(2).

Straus, M., & Daley, J. (2002). *Learning college initiative: Implementing a*

common book at your college. Houston Community College System. Retrieved from ERIC.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (2012). *Completing college: Rethinking institutional action.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Book Review: *Researching the Writing Center: Towards an Evidence-Based Practice*

Reviewed by Kathryn Denton

  The field of writing center research is one marked by questions. What constitutes research? Where does it fall along the theory-in-quiry-practice continuum? What are the qualities that characterize rigorous research? These questions form the backdrop of *Researching the Writing Center: Towards an Evidence-Based Practice.* Currently in the field of writing center studies, as Babcock, an associate professor of English, and Thonus, a writing center director, point out, lore and experience-based scholarship abound, as do philosophical and theoretical treatises on writing center work. Locally based studies, lacking a discussion of global applications or clear transferability, are also plentiful. What the writing center field lacks, the authors assert, is replicable, aggregable, and data-supported (RAD) research. Babcock and Thonus join a growing number of writing center scholars to make this point; the lack of data-intensive research, the authors and other scholars argue, has led to a field in need of invigorating: "Writing center scholarship is a young field, and the direction(s) in which we will grow depend upon the decisions we make today about the definitions of and the connections among theory, inquiry, and practice" (p. 3).

  Every few years, writing center professionals issue a battle cry to fellow writing center professionals to consider producing more rigorous research, pushing against locally produced knowledge as an endpoint in scholarship, since this knowledge, produced in a local setting, with findings isolated to that same setting, lacks field-wide

Kathryn Denton | University of New Mexico | kdenton@unm.edu

implications and impact. Throughout the first chapter of Researching the Writing Center, the authors provide ample examples of these calls to action. Yet the majority of writing center scholarship continues to tend towards lore and localized explorations of writing center work. As Babcock and Thonus point out, the effect is that "composition/rhetoric and writing center researchers need to do some 'serious researching' before we can sit at the head table (Harris, 2000) and be taken seriously by our academic colleagues" (p. 3).

Yet, breaking ground on research is difficult, especially when considering the already taxing work of the day-to-day operations of writing centers. Babcock and Thonus take a firm stance on the need to produce more rigorous research while simultaneously offering a supportive tenor in this book, a successful move that welcomes others to join in the production of research-based writing center scholarship. The authors do not position themselves as stern gatekeepers of the field, but rather mentors encouraging others to take up the cause of invigorating the canon of writing center research. Babcock and Thonus devote the first two chapters of Researching the Writing Center to set forth their argument for evidence-based, RAD writing center research. The remainder of the book is dedicated to the ambitious project of outlining scholarship in the field of writing centers that already qualifies as this type of research, and identifying future directions that can extend the relatively small research-based body of writing center work.

Invoking the role of supportive fellow professionals, Babcock and Thonus discuss evidence-based practice (EBP) as an achievable research orientation that writing center administrators can emulate. In chapter two, the authors point out that their aim is "not reinventing the wheel" (p. 23) but rather to put forth a research practice already established in other fields, in order to identify the potential applications to writing center research. Borrowing from the fields that employ evidence-based practice, Babcock and Thonus strive to define the practice for those new to this orientation. The authors contend that research needs to be based on empirical data, whether qualitative or quantitative, involve inquiry (the seeking of knowledge), and extend beyond a local context, opening inquiry to global contexts and applications (p. 4). This type of research will fill in the gaps inherent

in experience-heavy studies that currently dominate the writing center field. Lore describes current writing center practices; RAD research offers the opportunity to evaluate these practices and to point to future directions for exploration. Evidence-based practice, with its emphasis on data-supported inquiry, is one framework for writing center scholars to consider adopting. And the authors do not over-sell evidence-based practice; instead, after reviewing other fields that currently take evidence-based approaches, they offer a cautious argument for EBP research in writing center inquiry. Cautious, because some challenges arise in adapting EBP from the health sciences to writing center work, namely, the writing center field's discomfort with attaching "institutional" metaphors to writing center work, metaphors that may be neutral terms in the fields that employ them, but connote a lack of some kind when applied to work with student writers: "A plethora of publications in our field distances writing centers from metaphors such as clinic, hospital, prison, church, gas station, store-house, parlor, garret, and even center" (p. 31). Nevertheless, EBP is effective because of the array of practices it embodies, its history of application within the fields that employ it, and in its dual valuing of individual experience and aggregable research results, transfers well to writing center research. Furthermore, the evidence-based practic-es is versatile and adaptable to varied contexts, as becomes evident as Babcock and Thonus outline the differing research methods that fall within this broad category, including approaches as diverse as action research, ethnography, case study, and teacher research. The move away from reliance on lore and towards data-supported inquiry is a move that puts writing center scholarship more in line with the scholarship of other disciplines. In addition to elevating the work of writing center studies in the eyes of academia, empirical research is also essential in helping us to better understand the work we do, informing and influencing our practices.

Although *Researching the Writing Center* offers a much-needed contribution to the field of writing center research, one minor cri-tique may be made regarding the quick transition that occurs after the second chapter. The book is laid out into roughly three parts, with the first two chapters setting the stage for EBP applications to writing center research. In chapters three though six, Babcock and Thonus

undergo the ambitious project of reviewing existing RAD-qualifying writing center research, and laying out the ways that these research findings provide insights into writing center work. These chapters are richly detailed and thorough, but without a transition to mark the new direction of the book, readers may need to take extra time to contextualize these chapters within the greater project of this book. The chapters themselves, however, are methodically organized. In their review of RAD-qualifying writing center research, Babcock and Thonus separate writing center practices into distinct themes, including institutional contexts of writing center work, the student populations that writing tutors work with, and the tutoring activities and strategies tutors draw on. The authors systematically review the research surrounding each of these areas; when they point to findings that challenge the predominant lore, they reinforce the imperative that writing center professionals check their assumptions. The implication of this approach is to shed light on the limitations of lore unaccompanied by RAD-qualifying research. Each time lore is elevated as the dominant word in the field, a practice goes unexamined. Exploring hunches and observations through research-based inquiry, however, has the potential to either confirm or to challenge what we currently accept as received wisdom. For example, much writing center literature describes nondirective tutoring strategies as the ideal model for tutors to employ; there is little conversation about the contexts in which this practice may be most effective. As Babcock and Thonus demonstrate, multiple existing RAD research studies suggest more directive tutoring may be more appropriate for some second language learner interactions (Thonus, 1998; Weigle & Nelson, 2004; Williams, 2004). The directive/nondirective tutoring example is particularly apt; in a 2015 publication of the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, Brooks describes how his lore-based "Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All the Work" rose to the status of fundamental text and has been anthologized in writing center sourcebooks and tutor training guides since its publication in 1991. Yet, as Brooks points out in his 2015 follow up piece, he intended to open a conversation on tutoring strategies, not to become one of the definitive voices on the topic, all the while offering little more than personal experience as his evidence. Brooks' reflection is telling; in most fields a work like his

would be a starting point for further inquiry, not a definitive work on the topic. Returning to the research studies outlined in chapters three through six, then, inquiry values exploration and multiplicities rather than definitive stances. The result of data-supported studies is a more energized field; these studies represent important contributions that can inform writing center practices, filling out the partial picture lore offers.

Researching the Writing Center takes another organizational turn in chapter seven, returning to the ways prospective researchers can apply EBT to their own scholarship. Recognizing the difficulties of breaking down a research project into its component parts, and of even formulating a productive research question, Babcock and Thonus start with the large, unanswerable question, What is a successful tutorial? Pointing out outcomes that can mark 'success', they then outline the various angles a researcher could choose to complement researchable questions regarding success. In the final chapter of Researching the Writing Center Babcock and Thonus offer one last chance at supporting prospective researchers. In this chapter, the authors move through the important work of returning to the writing center themes of chapters three through six, identifying the yet unanswered questions surrounding writing center research and pinpointing guiding research questions and accompanying research approaches and methodologies that would serve a researcher well.

Researching the Writing Center is much more than another call for writing center scholars to produce more rigorous research. Instead, Babcock and Thonus lead by example throughout this book. Essentially, this book can serve as a starter guide, modeling the way prospective researchers can gain entrée into the field of writing center research. Babcock and Thonus clearly lay out their case for EBP, and do so in a thorough and approachable manner. When the authors offer a review of current RAD-qualifying scholarship and follow this review by identifying the many gaps that exist in current research, they effectively demystify the application of this model for prospective writing center researchers. Most beneficially, the authors provide concrete examples of how writing center professionals can embark on a course of research that can contribute to the field of writing center.

Researching the Writing Center is essential reading for any writing center professional interested in joining the call for data-supported research. This work is unique among current writing center books in its ambitious scope. Babcock and Thonus answer their own call to research, doing so in a globally applicable way. The list of references alone that accompanies Researching the Writing Center is indicative of the dedication Babcock and Thonus demonstrate in moving beyond the typical call to action. The authors have done their own research, and have done it thoroughly. So when they argue that the current state of scholarship is sparse, their case is compelling. And while such an honest appraisal of writing center research could potentially have a negative impact on readers—if the current body of writing center scholarship is so lacking in rigorous research, what can I do?—Babcock and Thonus strike just the right tone, encouraging interested scholars to take on the call, and providing the resources and context we can use to get started on our own journey of performing data-supported, EBP research. This book is a much-needed contribution to the field of writing center work, supplying an important response to the research quandary scholars face. With its encouraging tone and ample examples of EBP research in action, it is bound to inspire others to take up the call, enriching the field of writing center studies in the process.

<div align="center">References</div>

Brooks, J, (2015). Reflections on Brooks' "Minimalist Tutoring". *The Writing Lab Newsletter*. 39(5-6), pp.10-13.

Educators' Perspectives: Survey on the 2009 CEC Advanced Content Standards

Lama Bergstrand Othman
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Laura Kieran
Drake University
Christine J. Anderson
Western Illinois University—Quad Cities

Educators who pursue an advanced degree or certification in special education must learn and master the Advanced Content Standards as set forth by the Council for Exceptional Children. These six content standards were validated by the CEC to guide educators through the process of assuming an advanced role in special education teaching or administration. The standards pertain to the knowledge and skills across six categories: Leadership and Policy, Program Development and Organization, Research and Inquiry, Individual and Program Evaluation, Professional Development and Ethical Practice, and Collaboration. Moreover, these standards are used in the evaluation of advanced preparation programs in a partnership process with the National Council for the Accreditation of Teachers Education (NCATE) (CEC, 2009). Therefore, these standards are a vital part of advanced teacher training. Universities need to thoroughly prepare their students to understand and apply the principles within each of the Advanced Content Standards.

Literature Review

In order to further focus the research questions as well as the subsequent survey questions (see Appendix A), the researchers conducted a literature review with search parameters related to special education teachers' practices and their knowledge and application of their professional standards. The researchers also included a review

Lama Bergstrand Othman | University of Wisconsin-Stout | othmanl@uwstout.edu

of standards in relation to rural and urban education, teaching students with high and low incidence disabilities, and teacher training. From this review, the researchers determined that there were three facets of effective training for special education teachers and administrators: knowledge of the professional standards, the implementation or practice of that knowledge, and the ethical decisions that professionals make in regard to implementing those standards.

Rural and Urban Education

One variable that might interfere with the results of this survey was the setting at which teachers were working or had previously taught. It was very important to study or rule out the impact of such variable on participants' responses, specifically because the demographic and financial differences exist between rural and urban school districts. When classifying a school district as rural, the class size, level of isolation, and the amount of district resources are typically taken into consideration. This becomes more complicated when school districts consolidate to share resources as enrollments and class sizes increase. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCER, 2007) indicated that rural schools constituted a third of the public school districts and served a fifth of all public school students. The Midwest has a high percent of rural school district compared to other regions of the country; therefore, these issues faced by rural school districts are germane to universities preparing teachers who will serve in rural school districts.

Declining enrollment in rural schools leads to a shrinking budget, which has been found to reduce the number and variety of classes offered to students, as well as provide fewer opportunities for professional development for teachers (Reeves, 2003). As for the financial characteristics, districts in rural areas are at a distinct disadvantage financially (Reeves, 2003). To further compound the issue, federal funding programs have traditionally given priority status to school districts with a large number of low-income residents; urban schools have been found to have higher rates of poverty that their rural counterparts (NCER, 2007) so rural schools often do not qualify for the same level of federal support as urban schools. Moreover, many services typically need to be maintained regardless of the size of a school district, such as: staff, transportation, food service, etc.

These services were found to be cost prohibitive in a small school (Reeves, 2003). According to Collins (2009), schools in rural settings faced many challenges related to the shortage of qualified personnel and a shortage in resources, including resources for professional development. Teachers in rural settings were paid less than their suburban and urban counterparts; "even after adjusting for geographic cost differences" (NCER, 2007, p. vi). As a result of the limited resources, school districts frequently have hired less qualified teachers in rural areas because of the short supply (Berry, Petrin, Gravelle, & Farmer, 2011). From this portion of the literature review, the researchers questioned if there would be a difference in teachers' self-ratings on the survey based on the setting in which they taught.

Experience and Professional Development

Another variable that might influence the results of this survey was the participants' level of professional development. It was very important to study the impact of this variable on participants' responses, as the issue of teachers' quality was one that received significant attention from educators, administrators and policy makers (Ingersoll, 2007). Educators who were engaged in advocacy activities of individuals with special needs were also highly experienced and well established professionals/teachers (Rock, Geiger, & Hood, 1992). Training was a key factor in preparing highly effective teachers (Billingsley, 2004). Further, participation in professional development activities helped teachers reduce their stress level in addition to feeling more satisfied with their jobs. Such participation ultimately contributed to teacher retention (Billingsley, 2004; Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001). It is therefore vital that teacher preparation programs provide teachers with effective training in the initial and advanced content standards.

One dominant theme across the literature, especially in the face of a shortage of qualified teachers, was the need for ongoing professional development support and programs (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Rude & Brewer, 2003). That theme included educating/training teachers to use: effective instructional strategies, methods and materials in academic curricula areas, cognitive behavior instruction, and behavior management strategies (Maroney, 2000), many of those are embedded in the CEC Standards, 2009. Mentors and professional

development are two options taken by school districts to support new special education teachers in their new settings and roles. Both of these options require the resources of time and money, release time from responsibilities or reimbursement for personal time spent. As previously noted, not every district has access to these resources that would be beneficial in increasing a new teacher's success in meeting the standards.

The purpose of this study was to investigate CEC members' practices, knowledge, and ethics as described by the Council for Exceptional Children's six advanced content standards (CEC standards 6th edition, 2009). The researchers designed the survey to study the following questions:

1. To what extent did participants agree that they possessed the knowledge, practices, and skills addressed in the CEC advanced content standards?
2. Is there a difference in the ratings between teachers working in rural settings in comparison to teachers working in urban settings?
3. Is there a relationship between the amount of teachers' experiences and their responses to the survey questions?
4. Is there a relationship between the number of educational conferences attended by teachers and their responses to the survey questions?

To that end, a survey of 24 questions was developed with four statements pertaining to each of the six standards.

Method

In order to create the survey tool, the researchers devised multiple questions related to each of the six 2009 CEC Advanced Content Standards; this resulted in 45–50 potential research questions. There was concern that participants would not finish the survey if it would take longer than 20–30 minutes to complete; therefore, the researchers pared the number of questions down to 24, or four questions per standard. See Appendix A (on page 35).

Using the central themes of knowledge, practice, and ethics; the researchers balanced the number of questions for each theme across the six advanced standards. Each standard had at least one question related to each theme, with a fourth question that was

similar in content to another question in that standard, but related to a different theme. For example, within the standard area of Programming for students, the researchers devised two similar questions:

1. I believe that special education programs should include a range of settings and services.
2. I contribute effectively in decisions about students' educational placements and related services.

The first question regarding a teacher's attitude toward special education programming was related to the ethics theme. The second question also deals with special education programming, but prompts the participant to rate personal efficacy which was categorized as a part of the practice theme.

The built in redundancies across the survey questions allowed for the researchers to evaluate the reliability of the survey tool using split-half reliability. Two of the researchers independently split the questions into a part A and a part B prior to the distribution of the survey. A comparison of the question distributions showed 100% agreement between the researchers in the division of the questions. The survey results contained 12 questions in each half and two questions from each of the six advanced standards. In addition, the survey contained an equal distribution of knowledge questions across each half. Part A contained five questions with the ethics theme and three questions with the practice theme; whereas part B contained three ethics questions and five questions related to professional practice. Participants were provided with a 5-point Likert scale (the spectrum ranged strongly agree to strongly disagree) for their responses, with the option of omitting any of the questions on the survey.

Before distribution of the survey, the tool was sent to five special education professionals to review the content of the questions. These professionals were selected based on their knowledge and experience in working with the CEC Advanced Content Standards. Feedback was obtained from each reviewer to ensure question clarity and content validity. Minor revisions were made to three of the questions to increase question clarity based on feedback from two of the reviewers. No further revisions were determined necessary; the questions were considered by the reviewers to be aligned with the standards.

The web-based survey was distributed nationally and internationally electronically via email by the Council for Exceptional Children to randomly selected members. The researchers also shared the link for the survey with principals and special education teachers within their region. The survey was self-administered by participants.

Results

The participants' years of teaching experience were varied: 8.5% of participants had 1-5 years of experience, 17% had 6-10 years of experience, 12% had 11-15 years of experience, 21% had 16-20 years of experience, 11% had 21-25 years of experience, and 30.5% had 26 or more years of experience. Only 5% currently teach on a provisional special education teacher's license. Participants with a Bachelor's degree constituted 16% of the sample, 60% of respondents had a Master's degree, and 24% had a Doctorate degree.

Research Question 1

To what extent did participants agree that they possessed the knowledge, practices, and skills addressed in the CEC advanced content standards?

Participants' overall agreement with the 24 statements associated with the CEC Advanced Content Standards 2009 ranged from 4.30–4.67 which correspond to "agree-strongly agree" on a Likert scale used for the survey. The mean of all responses was 4.49. ANOVA with repeated measures with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction, revealed that the mean scores for knowledge, practice, and beliefs were statistically significantly different ($F(1.892, 155.118) = 11.056$, $p<0.0005$).The partial Eta squared was .119. The effect size was small d=.196

Research Question 2

Is there a difference in the ratings between teachers working in rural settings in comparison to teachers working in urban settings?

Responses from participants who self-reported that they taught in urban or rural settings were compared across each of the six areas of the content standards. A t score was used to compare the mean responses of the two groups. The differences were found to be not significant with $p<.05$ for the pilot of this survey; in fact in the area of Professional Development and Ethical Practice there was the responses were found to be similar. Specific results are provided in

Table 1 below.

Table 1

Comparison of Urban and Rural Teachers' Responses

Standard	Urband Mean; SD	Rural Mean; SD	t score
Leadership Policy	4.64; .39	4.58; .42	.54
Program Development and Organization	4.67; .34	4.69; .40	.76
Research and Inquiry	4.43; .53	4.30; .55	.39
Student and Program Evaluation	4.37; .54	4.10; .75	.08
Professional Development and Ethical Practice	4.43; .57	4.42; .50	.97
Collaboration	4.55; .50	4.45; .52	.09

Research Question 3

Is there a relationship between the amount of teachers' experiences and their responses to the survey questions?

A Spearman's rank-order correlation yielded no significant correlation between teachers' experiences and responses to the CEC Advanced Content Standards, 2009.

Research Question 4

Is there a relationship between the number of educational conferences attended by teachers and their responses to the survey questions?

A Spearman's rank-order correlation was run to determine the relationship between the number of conferences attended and responses to the CEC Advanced Content Standards, 2009. There was a moderate, positive correlation between the number of conferences attended and the Student and Program Evaluation standard, which was statistically significant ($rs(81)=.307$, $p=.05$). There was a moderate, positive correlation between the number of conference attended and responses related to the Collaboration standard, which was statistically significant ($rs(81)=.344$, $p=.01$). Specific results are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Relationship between the Amount of Teachers' Conference Attendance and their Responses to the Survey Questions.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Attendance of Educational Conferences	-						
2. Leadership Policy	.212	-					
3. Program Development and Organization	.290**	.656**	-				
4. Research and Inquiry	.241*	.772	.680**	-			
5. Students and Program Evaluation	.307**	.732**	.567**	.634**	-		
6. Professional Development and Ethical Practice	.251*	.519**	.580**	.451**	.524**	-	
7. Collaboration	.344*	.550**	.647**	.616**	.590**	.468**	-

Note. ** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) * Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

Participants were asked to self-report statements that corresponded to the knowledge, practice, and beliefs related to the Students and Program Evaluation standard. There were moderate-sized significant correlations between participants' self-reporting on statements corresponding to Collaboration and Student and Program Evaluation standards in comparison to the number of conferences attended. A higher degree of agreement on the Likert scale was associated with higher number of conferences attended. Collaboration was one form of professional development. Sharing one's experiences, perspectives, and points of view with professionals who share similar goals was part of a reciprocal learning process. Attending and/or presenting at a conference provided the opportunity for sharing one's experiences in addition to learning about the experiences of colleagues. Attending and/or presenting at conferences is also con-

sidered a method to advance one's career and meet the expectations of promotions and/or tenure. The fact that only 5% of participants in this study currently teach on a provisional special education teacher's license, coupled with the fact that 24% have a Doctorate degree may have contributed to this significant correlation.

Educational conferences provided teachers with the opportunity for professional development and networking. Conference attendance is selected as a quantitative measure of professional development and collaborative opportunities since research shows a variety of benefits gained from these activities (Van Garderen, Hanuscin, Lee, & Kohn, 2012; Bryant, Linan-Thompson, Ugel, Hamff, & Hougen, 2001). As the number of special education students served in the general education classroom has increased the need for professional development of both general education and special education teachers also increased, specifically in the knowledge and practice of instructional strategies and assessments for the unique needs of students with disabilities (Van Garderen et al., 2012; Nougaret, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 2005). Educational conferences and other forms of teacher development encouraged teachers to stay current with evidence-based practice.

Participants' levels of agreement with the statements related to the CEC Advanced Content Standards ranged from *agree* to *strongly agree*. This study did not investigate evidence of practice; instead, it solicited participants' self-reporting on statements that can be classified into three domains: knowledge, practice, and beliefs. The means of sustaining effective instructional practices and minimizing the gap between theory and practice have been the center of debate among researchers. Although some may argue that changing practitioners' beliefs comes prior to practice, others argue that the change follows practice as the success or failure of a practice alters or shapes practitioners' beliefs (Gersten & Domino, 2001; Gusky, 1986; Smylie, 1988). In either situation, the researchers examined the existence and extent of gaps among the three domains entailed in the survey's statements. The mean scores for knowledge, practice, and beliefs were statistically significantly different. Statements corresponding to "practice" domain had the highest mean followed by the "belief" domain, and lastly the "knowledge" domain. However, although the ANOVA

showed that the means were significantly different, the effect size was small d=.196, meaning that generalization of the significant differences among the means was invalidated by the small effect size.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the small sample size (N=83). Increasing the sample size decreases the sampling error and hence would strengthen this study with a possibility of revealing a much larger effect size than the one obtained. In addition, like any other self-reported study, the results were limited to participants' perceptions, which could be subjective and hence inaccurate. Along with entertaining teachers' opinion of their own knowledge, practice, and belief, it was also important to empirically investigate these domains.

In conclusion, the researchers developed a quality survey for the study of teachers' practices, knowledge, and ethics as described by the Council for Exceptional Children's Advanced Content Standards (CEC Standards, 6th Edition, 2009). The survey disclosed the degree to which participants were knowledgeable practitioners in advocating for students with special needs as envisioned by the CEC standards. The split half reliability test proved the survey tool to be reliable. The survey tool was found to have construct and content validity by the survey review panel prior to electronic distribution to participants. Participants' overall agreement with the statements related to the CEC 2009 Advanced Content Standards fell between "agree-strongly agree" on a Likert scale used for the survey. The researchers believe that expanding this initial pilot study by increasing the number of participants is needed to further understand special educators' current status and training needs. Such knowledge should inform the practice and policy of higher education, local education associations, and area administrators.

References

Berry, A., Petrin, R., Gravelle, M., & Farmer, T. (2011). Issues in special education teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development: Considerations in supporting rural teachers. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 30*(4), 3-11.

Billingsley, B. (2004). Special education teacher retention and attrition:

A critical analysis of the research literature. *Journal of Special Education, 38*, 39-55.

Bryant, D. P., Linan-Thompson, S., Ugel, N., Hamff, A., & Hougen, M. (2001). The effects of professional development for middle school general and special education teachers on implementation of reading strategies in inclusive content area classes. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 24*, 251-264.

Center for the Study of Small Rural Schools. (n. d.). What is a rural school? Retrieved from http://cssrs.ou.edu/resources.htm

Collins, T. (1999). *Attracting and retaining teachers in rural areas.* Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural and Small Schools.

Council for Exceptional Children, (2009). *What every special educator must know* (6th ed.). Arlington, VA: Author.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2001). The challenge of staffing our schools. *Educational Leadership, 58*(8), 12-17.

Gersten, R., & Dimino, J. (2001). The realities of translating research into classroom practice. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 16*(2), 120-130. Retrieved from http://search.ebscohost.com

Gersten, R., Keating, T., Yovanoff, P., & Harniss, M. (2001). Working in special education: Factors that enhance special educators' intent to stay. *Exceptional Children, 67*, 549-567.

Ingersoll, R. (2007). *A comparative study of teacher preparation and qualifications in 6 nations.* Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Maroney, S. A. (2000). What's good? Suggested resources for beginning special education teachers. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 33*(1), 22-27.

Mastropieri, M. A. (2001). Is the glass half full or half empty? Challenges encountered by first-year special education teachers. *Journal of Special Education, 35*(2), 66-74.

National Center for Education Statistics (2007). *Status of education in rural America.* Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

Nougaret, A. A., Scruggs, T. E., & Mastropieri, M. A. (2005). Does teacher education produce better special education teachers? *Exceptional Children, 71*(3), 217-229.

Reeves, C. (2003). *Implementing the No Child Left Behind Act: Implications for rural schools and districts.* Naperville, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

Rock, S. L., Geiger, W. L., & Hood, G. (1992). CEC's standards for professional practice in advocacy: Members' attitudes and activities. *Exceptional Children, 58*, 541–547.

Rude, H., Brewer, R. (2003). Assessment of professional development systems: Improving rural special education services. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 22*(4) 20-28.

Smylie, M. A. (1988). The enhancement function of staff development: Organization and psychological antecedents to individual teacher change. *American Educational Research Journal, 25*(1), 1-30.

Van Garderen, D., Hanuscin, D., Lee, E., & Kohn, P. (2012). Quest: A collaborative professional development model to meet the needs of diverse learners in K-6 science. *Psychology in the Schools, 49, 5*, 429- 443.

Whitaker, S. D. (2000). Mentoring beginning special education teachers and the relationship to attrition. *Exceptional Children, 66*, 546-566.

Wise. A. (2001). Creating a high-quality teaching force. *Educational Leadership, 58*(4), 18-21.

Appendix A

Survey: *Investigating teachers' practices, knowledge, and ethics as described by the Council for Exceptional Children's six advanced content standards (CEC standards 6th edition, 2009)*

	Stongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
I am aware of research-based practices that support students with exceptional learning needs.					
I believe that students with exceptional learning needs can be taught to achieve their full potential.					
I believe that special education programs should include a range of settings and services.					
I encourage colleagues to attend professional development related to instructional practices and behavior management strategies.					
I am aware of different intervention techniques to support students at all levels of instruction.					

I strive to stay current on instructional techniques and behavioral strategies.				
I make data-based instructional decisions for each student.				
I follow legal guidelines related to the selection and administration of non-biased formal assessment tools.				
My classroom reflects the minorities and a cultural diversity similar to the neighborhood community.				
I provide families with information pertaining to the rights of individuals with disabilities.				
I understand how to build consensus and resolve conflict.				
I possess the knowledge necessary for effective collaboration and consultation.				
I promote high expectations for individuals with exceptional learning needs.				

I advocate for appropriate resources for students with exceptional learning needs.					
I contribute effectively in decisions about students' educational placements and related services.					
I stay current with knowledge regarding instructional techniques in different learning environments.					
I understand special education research methods.					
My knowledge of research and evidence-based practices informs my instruction.					
I have knowledge of the theories that govern educational assessment.					
I use current assessment methods and tools to evaluate students with exceptional learning needs.					

I believe the least restrictive environment supports individualized special education services.					
I understand my responsibilities related to ethical and professional practice.					
I believe I have the responsibility to involve families in the collaborative process.					
I collaborate with general education teachers, parents, and administrators effectively.					

Go For the Win: A Collaborative Model for Supporting Student-Athletes

Jacqueline S. Hodes, Tammy James, Gerardina Martin, and
Kellianne Milliner
West Chester University

Abstract

Intercollegiate athletics is a transformative component in the structure of many institutions of higher education. Campuses benefit from the inclusion of athletic sporting events in assorted ways, and student-athletes are at the core of the events. Their academic success is essential to the success of the team. Studies show college athletes benefit from increased academic support and highly effective academic and social interventions. This article describes a unique, collaborative model for supporting college athletes at a Division II campus. The authors describe the contributions from each area, outline the collaborative model, and make recommendations for further study.

Keywords: Athletes, Academic Success, Highly Effective Practices

Introduction

Intercollegiate athletics began in 1852 when a crew race was held between Harvard and Yale (Rentz & Howard-Hamilton, 2011). Currently, college athletics are an integral part of most higher education environments. According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (2014), over a half million students participate in intercollegiate sports in Division I, II, and III programs each year. Student-athletes contribute to the vibrancy of campus communities. The academic success of student-athletes is essential to the success of the individual team and campus athletic programs. West Chester University (WCU), a Division II institution, has created a unique, collabora-

Kellianne Milliner | West Chester University | KMilliner@wcupa.edu

tive model for supporting our student-athletes academically, socially, and personally.

The Case for Supporting Student-Athletes

At post-secondary institutions, student-athletes are in a classification all their own. They are often the ambassadors of universities and colleges across the country and the faces we associate with various legacies. Athletics is often referred to as the "front porch" of the institution and our student-athletes are the hosts (University of Washington, 2012; McCollum, 2009). They are students in the classroom and athletes on the field. Depending on the institution, student-athletes are often contracted with the school through various scholarships. The population of student-athletes is diverse, and they bring with them diverse needs. As diverse as this population may be, many student-athletes come to the post-secondary education experience ill-prepared for the rigors they may now endure. Three such concerns about college level student-athletes are (1) increased academic demands and new expectations; (2) managing the transition from high school to college: and (3) time management.

Student-athletes are students first. This idea may be lost to some student-athletes, as well as others on- and off-campus, who enroll in college for the first time. They arrive on campus with dreams of hard practices that will prepare them for the long seasons ahead. They dream of wins and championships. What some may fail to realize is they enter college for an education and athletics is another means to accomplishing such. Student-athletes often require more help than the average student because they have less time to complete the work and assignments. In some cases, student-athletes may not be prepared for the course load as the prior preparation they have received is not the same as students in the general population on a campus.

Students with diagnosed learning issues have an even greater academic risk. Coaches and faculty may perceive a learning disability is really a result of poor preparation in high school. Lombardi (2008) states it is imperative for advisors and learning specialists to work with the athletes as they come into the college setting and determine early on if the student-athlete is at an elevated risk for academic issues. Athletic departments must work closely with the academic

support system on campus to ensure students receive the best opportunities to succeed not only on the field of play, but also in the classroom.

The transition from high school athlete to college or university student-athlete is a challenge in and of itself. All of a sudden, non-classroom time otherwise spent with friends and socializing is consumed with functions related to one's athlete status, such as tutoring, team meetings, practices, appearances and other mandatory events. The demands made on student-athletes are ever increasing. No longer do they just represent themselves and their families as they did in high school. Now they represent thousands of students, professors, coaches, administrators and alumni stakeholders. Their actions and words are tied to the legacies of those who graduated before and any inappropriate behavior can set off a firestorm (Hill, 2001). Student-athletes may feel distracted by the pressure of being in the public eye. The expectations and demands made on them can seem daunting.

Student-athletes will spend on average anywhere from three to six years in a collegiate setting. Umbach (2006) encourages institutions to put an academic support system in place to teach or at least inform the student-athletes of time management techniques and to instruct them in beneficial ways. Options for managing one's time include study group sessions, using a structured schedule or planner or finding a note-taking buddy in class. One essential intervention is to advise student-athletes of the importance of managing time in order to succeed.

From their first day on campus, student-athletes at the Division II level are required to meet specific academic benchmarks in order to continue their participation in athletic competition. These academic benchmarks help to support the student-athlete in maintaining progress toward graduation at the institution. Currently, all student-athletes must pass, at minimum, six credit hours each semester and average at least 12 credits per semester of attendance, to be calculated each fall. They must maintain a cumulative grade point average of a 1.8, 1.9 or 2.0 depending on academic year. In the Fall of 2016, these benchmarks will increase to nine credits each semester, earning 24 credits each year (as opposed to averaging 12 throughout

the career), and a 2.0 minimum cumulative GPA. Students who do not meet these benchmarks are not eligible for competition or travel. These academic success targets are the first step in supporting the student-athlete.

West Chester University

West Chester University is located in the center of Pennsylvania's thriving Brandywine Valley. Established in 1871 as a Normal School for training teachers, the University has grown to include comprehensive programming through its five academic divisions: the colleges of arts and sciences, visual and performing arts, business and public affairs, education, and health sciences. In 1981, with the passage of the State System of Higher Education bill, WCU became one of the 14 universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE).

Over the past decade, WCU has experienced rapid growth and is currently the region's fourth largest university. In Spring 2014, 12,948 undergraduate students and 2,119 graduate students pursued studies in 100 undergraduate and master's degree programs (WCU, 2014). WCU has a number of articulation agreements with other institutions, including all 13 PASSHE institutions and a number of community colleges. During the 2013-2014 academic year, 1,884 transfer students continued their degrees at WCU (WCU, 2014).

WCU has grown from a local state school to a much more selective public institution. In 2013, WCU received 13,438 applications, accepted 6,922 (51.5%), and enrolled 2,292 first-time first-year students (17% of applicants) (West Chester University Fact Book, 2013, p. 21). Approximately 13% of students are from out-of-state. The 2013 Freshman Academic Profile includes a high school GPA of 3.53 and a combined SAT of 1079 (West Chester University Fact Book, 2013, p. 11). The student body is 61% female and 39 % male. Nineteen percent are underrepresented minority students (West Chester University Fact Book, 2013, p. 31).

WCU supports an NCAA Division II athletics program, with 24 intercollegiate men's and women's teams. With 545 student-athletes in 2013-2014, WCU has one of the largest Division II programs in the country (US Department of Education). During the 2013-2014 Season, WCU qualified three teams for national semi-finals in their

respective sports and seven programs reached the conference finals (WCU View Book, 2014, p. 19).

WCU's new Strategic Plan, *Building on Excellence,* contains the WCU Values Statement, which states WCU is committed to upholding the values of academic achievement, integrity, service, equity, collaboration, stewardship, creativity and innovation (WCU Strategic Plan, 2013, pp. 4–5). The Strategic Plan encompasses five broad themes which support the fundamental goal of the institution—education. Those themes include Academics, Enrichment, Sustainability, Engagement and Diversity (WCU Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 7). Each theme has established priority goals, objectives and outcome measures for a three-year period of time.

Increasing or maintaining retention and four-year and six-year graduation rates is important and essential for most post-secondary institutions. WCU's overall first- to second-year retention rate is 87.9% for those students admitted in 2013. The six-year graduation rate is 66.9% for those admitted in Fall 2008.

In both the current PASSHE and WCU strategic plans, there is a call to increase student success, specifically among underrepresented and low-income students. In 2011, PASSHE revised performance funding for the 14 state system institutions. The conceptual framework for the revised performance funding program identifies four primary drivers to assist in shaping the future direction of individual universities and the PASSHE system as a whole (Board of Governors, 2011, p. 49). The performance funding indicators include both mandatory and optional indicators. Universities must use the following two measures to determine student success: Degrees Conferred and Closing the Achievement Gap (for Pell recipients and underrepresented minority students). They may also choose from a number of measures to gauge student success, including the measure of Student Persistence (second- to third-year retention rate and third- to fourth-year retention rate) which has been chosen by WCU (WCU, 2014).

Student-Athletes and Academics at West Chester University

In Spring 2014, of the 368 first-year student-athletes, 178 (48%) were conditionally admitted. Conditionally admitted students enter the University in two ways: (1) through the summer bridge Academic Development Program (ADP) or (2) as special admits who

only enroll in 12 credits for their first semester.

The Spring 2014 headcount of students shows 67% of second-year students and third-year students and 70% of fourth-year students were conditionally admitted. In Fall 2014, 52% of first-year students, 65% of second-year students, 73% of third-year students and 63% of fourth-year students were conditional admits. The six-year graduation rate for those admitted in Fall 2007 is 67%, 2% lower than the overall student rate of 69%. These numbers indicate academic intervention is critical for first-year student-athlete success, as well as maintaining student success for all student-athletes through the implementation of high-impact practices.

Supporting Student-Athletes through Collaborative Efforts

Our institutional efforts to support the academic success of student-athletes have resulted in a multi-layered approach. As we have discussed above, many reasons exist for supporting the academic success of student-athletes. As a mid-sized public, state-system institution, WCU has faced extreme budgetary issues over the past decade. Shrinking financial support from the state of Pennsylvania has forced University leaders, faculty, and staff to be thoughtful and creative in continuing to offer programs, services and interventions to help students retain enrollment and graduate. This approach to supporting student-athletes is a true collaboration, one where the challenge of compromise has been met and the outcome of students' success is evident.

To support student-athlete success, a variety of services and interventions, both individual and environmental, needed to be in place and coordinated in a more seamless fashion for student-athletes to access and utilize. First, the Department of Health and the Department of Athletics already had measures in place (such as athletic mentors and a course specifically for student-athletes) to support student-athletes but were not coordinating support with the Learning Assistance and Resource Center (LARC). Second, the demand from student-athletes who needed or wanted academic support, such as those on academic probation, Early Alert and/or continued probation, were overwhelming the staff at the LARC and the three academic mentors provided by the department of athletics. Third, students in the higher education counseling program were seeking

out field experiences in both athletics and the LARC.

Coordinator of Academic Support Services for Student-Athletes

As discussed, student-athletes have a great need for assistance in navigating the complexities and demands of their student-athlete role. It is vital a coordinator be at the helm of organizing, planning, staffing, implementing, and advocating for an academic program encompassing all areas affecting the academic success of student-athletes. Currently, the Department of Athletics at WCU is administered by three people who are charged with coordinating all aspects of the department, including but not limited to event management, fundraising, NCAA compliance, facilities management, operational and scholarship budget oversight, personnel, equipment management, student-athlete support and academic services.

In order to focus on academic success for student-athletes, a dedicated coordinator for academic support services was engaged. A faculty coordinator was appointed from the Office of the Provost to monitor student-athletes' academic progress through mid-semester progress reports, direct communication with professors/academic advisors and compiling grade reports at the completion of each academic semester. The coordinator also assists supervising the Athletic Mentors who meet with at-risk and ineligible student-athletes. The coordinator serves as the athletic department liaison with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities and with the LARC. Finally, the coordinator creates and maintains a comprehensive database of student use of support and tutorial services and prepares reports accordingly.

Student-Athlete Academic Course

Leadership/Lifeskills for Student for Athletes (HEA 208) is currently offered as an elective through the Department of Health and is designated specifically for first- and second-year student-athletes. This course is designed to provide student-athletes with basic life skills and leadership training to become successful students at WCU. Contents of the course include, but are not limited to, time management, study skills/habits, academic planning, campus resources, stress management, healthy lifestyle practices (including nutrition, alcohol use, tobacco use and drug abuse), goal-setting, decision-making, conflict resolution, team building and community advocacy.

Athletic Mentoring

The Academic Mentoring Program exists to provide services to student-athletes who may be at-risk academically or are deemed to be in need of services to help navigate academics at the college level. Two graduate assistants and at least one intern meet weekly with students in the program. There is a commitment to hiring mentors who have worked with student-athletes or participated in athletics during their post-secondary experience. The mentors serve as liaisons between coaches, professors and student-athletes. This increased communication is essential to the success of the program. All student-athletes are mandated to (1) attend all academic success meetings; (2) obtain a tutor; and (3) attend study hall at the LARC on campus. The Academic Coordinator meets on a weekly basis with the mentors to discuss all student-athletes in the program and specific issues that may arise.

Counselor Education Program

The WCU Counselor Education program offers a Master of Science degree in Higher Education Counseling/Student Affairs. The programs are accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), which ensures students who successfully complete the degree are eligible for licensure as Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC).

The approximately 100 current students pursuing the M.S. in Higher Education Counseling/Student Affairs have varied career aspirations. Many students wish to work in traditional student affairs areas, such as residence life and housing, leadership, orientation, multicultural affairs, judicial affairs and student activities, to name a few. Others are more drawn to exploring positions in career development, academic advising, disability support, and mentoring.

As part of the curriculum, students must complete 700 hours of field experience. The field experience requirements include one 100-hour practicum and two 300-hour internships. Students are encouraged to obtain other field experience on a volunteer basis or paid through graduate assistantships. The varied field experience opportunities allow for students to be competitive in the job market upon commencement. In an alumni survey, of those who responded and were actively seeking positions, 65% reported employment within six

months post-graduation (WCU, 2014).

Many students choose to complete some or all of their field placement experiences at the LARC. The students are eager to take the skills they learn in the classroom and effectively apply them to assist students who are on academic probation, continued academic probation and early alert status. Each semester, the director and assistant director of the LARC provide supervision to 10–14 graduate students. Each graduate student is provided with a job description which includes (1) meeting individually with students on continued probation and Early Alert; (2) developing and implementing a group to address academic concerns of students in general or for a specific population of students (i.e., athletic teams); and (3) participating in a comprehensive pre-semester training. In the pre-semester training students are provided with general information about the University and the various resources available, which allows them to be effective counselor practitioners as they meet with students. Helping students navigate a large bureaucracy is one way to ensure student success.

Learning Assistance and Support Programs

The Learning Assistance and Resource Center (LARC) at WCU houses the tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, and Early Alert programs, as well as a variety of other programs to help further the mission of the Center, which is "…to provide quality academic support services which help students become independent, active learners who achieve academic success. The LARC aims to promote cognitive development in a diversity of student populations through assessing and teaching the affective skills necessary for achieving academic and personal learning goals" (LARC). To support this mission, the LARC collaborates with other departments, including the Department of Athletics, to function as an area of academic support. The LARC has held study hall for several student groups, including a Supervised Homework Assistance program for the developmental program and the Athletic Study Hall for the Athletic Mentoring Program.

The LARC supports the Athletic Study Hall by offering space, graduate students to run the study hall, and tutors to support the academics in high-risk courses, such as math and chemistry. In 2013, study hall was piloted as a part of the Equity Scorecard recommendations and as a program under the Student Success Network created

by the Provost to help solve issues of access, retention and graduation. The program was a mild success and was refunded. With the additional planning, the program increased by 400%.

During Fall 2014, 63 students were enrolled in the athletic mentoring program and were required to attend four to six hours a week of study hall. Seventeen students were added mid-semester to the program. For the 80 students enrolled in the program, the average number of hours attended over the semester was two per week and the average number of hours completed for the semester was a total of 32 hours per student. The Athletic Study Hall had a total of 2,334 contact hours for the Fall 2014 semester. A total of 46 students completed between 28–70 hours during the fourteen-week study hall program.

Recommendations for Replicating the Program

This unique collaboration on one university campus does not have to be an anomaly. The program does not need to be replicated in the same way in order to be effective. The key to the success at WCU was three-fold: 1. keeping student-athlete success at the forefront of the conversation, 2. finding possible and mutually beneficial solutions to each area involved, and 3. breaking down silos so as to not duplicate services. The program at WCU requires very little budgetary support. Below are considerations for those wishing to reproduce this collaborative approach.

1. Determine where the program should be housed. The physical space is as important as the host division or department. Housing the program in one common physical area is best and most convenient for students. Although it might make sense to house the program in an athletic facility to assist student-athletes, we found it was more effective to house the program in the LARC, as it is centrally located on campus and in the same building as our main dining hall. The LARC staff has access to and is familiar with the campus resources student-athletes might need. They can quickly connect them with individual resource personnel.

2. Remember to be data-driven. It is imperative to have access to data about student-athletes from your institution-

al research office as well as your department of athletics. The significance in understanding your student-athlete is in relation to the average student is central, and collecting your own data about the student-athletes--their needs, the frequency of contact, their satisfaction of the support, their academic progress, and of course, their learning, is a crucial element.

3. Find and hire academic mentors. WCU is fortunate to have a graduate program in higher education counseling, which provides many interns to serve as academic mentors. Other graduate programs, such as social work, psychology, education, etc., may be open to providing student interns to serve as academic mentors. Serving as an academic mentor may be a professional development opportunity for resident directors or new professionals in student affairs and student services fields. It may also be an excellent opportunity for tenure-track faculty to engage in a service opportunity on campus. Regardless, training and supervision of academic mentors is an essential part of the program.

4. Have clear conversation about how decisions will be made about the program. Is one person or department in charge of the program or is it truly a collaborative venture? Regardless of the answer, it is critical to have regular conversations with the various departments participating in the program.

Conclusion

Student-athletes benefit from navigating the complexity of higher education with support. For many students, the complicated bureaucracy of higher education is a difficult maze to navigate. The need to support student-athletes is clear. We need to support them both on and off the playing field. The next time you cheer on a student-athlete as they dribble down the court, swim the lap or perfect a perfect routine, try to see more than just the athlete. Try to see the complexity of their lives—conditioning, practice, classes, studying, working, playing their sport and having an age-appropriate college

experience. The support we can offer these students will assist them in their success while in college and beyond.

No single entity can address and solve the multiple social, emotional and behavioral needs of collegiate athletes, much less offer all the programs and services for academic success. Therefore it is imperative the colleges and universities develop interdisciplinary approaches to coordinate efforts to meet these needs.

References

Board of Governors. (2011). Board of Governors' quarterly meeting agenda. *PASSHE State System of Higher Education.* Retrieved from http://www.passhe.edu/inside/bog/BOG%20Agendas/01-2011%20Agenda.pdf

Hill, K., Burch-Ragan, K. M., & Yates, D. Y. (2001). Current and future issues and trends facing student athletes and athletic programs. *New Directions for Student Services, 2001*(93), pp. 65-80.

Learning Assistance and Resource Center (2015). LARC. Retrieved from http://www.wcupa.edu/ussss/larc/

Lombardi, A. (2008). Student athletes learning issues. *Monograph Series*, pp. 43-47.

McCollum, D. (2009). New UCA president taking front-porch philosophy with athletics. *Log Cabin Democrat.* Retrieved from http://thecabin.net/news/local/2009-07-25/new-uca-president-taking-front-porch-philosophy-athletics#.VK6_mHvPo90

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2014). Investing where it matters. Retrieved from http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/investing-where-it-matters

Office of Institutional Research. (2014). Spring 2014 headcount enrollment by program, gender, and race/ethnicity. *West Chester University.* Retrieved from http://www.wcupa.edu/infoservices/oir/documents/Spring2014HeadcountbyAcadPlanandDemo-

graphics.pdf

PASSHE. (2014). Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. Retrieved from www.passhe.edu.

Rentz, A.L., & Howard-Hamilton, M. (2011). Student affairs: An historical perspective. In Zhang, N. Editor (4th Ed.), *Rentz's student affairs practice in higher education.* Springfield, IL: C.C. Thomas., pp. 30-62.

Umbach, P., Palmer, M., Kuh, G., & Hannah, S. (2006). Intercollegiate athletes and effective educational practices: Winning combination or losing effort? *Research in Higher Education, 47*(6), pp. 709-33.

University of Washington. (2012). A winning experience. *Center for Leadership in Athletics.* Retrieved from http://sites.education. washington.edu/uwcla/blog/petersmn/athletics-front-porch

US Department of Education. (2014). The equity in athletics data analysis cutting tool. *US Department of Education.* Retrieved from http://ope.ed.gov/athletics/InstList.aspx

West Chester University. (2014). West Chester University. Retrieved from www.wcupa.edu

West Chester University Strategic Plan. (2013). West Chester University strategic plan. *West Chester University.* Retrieved from http://www.wcupa.edu/StrategicPlanning/

West Chester University Fact Book. (2013). West Chester University fact book. Retrieved from http://www.wcupa.edu/infoservices/oir/documents/Factbook2013final2revisedJuly112014.pdf

WCU View Book. (2014). West Chester University of Pennsylvania information guide. *West Chester University.* Retrieved from http://www.wcupa.edu/_ADMISSIONS/SCH_ADM/documents/

Viewbook2014-2016.pdf

Developing an Early-Alert System to Promote Student Visits to Tutor Center

Qijie Cai, Carrie L. Lewis, and Jude Higdon
Minnesota State University, Mankato

Abstract

An early-alert system (MavCLASS) was developed and piloted in a large gateway math class with 611 freshman students to identify academically at-risk students and provide alert messages. It was found that there was significant association between the alert messages students received and their visits to the university's tutor center. Further, the achievement of students who visited the tutor center was improving over the semester. Evidence from the study suggests that an early-alert system focused on personalized feedback from instructional staff correlates with the help-seeking behaviors of at-risk students in large gateway classes.

Keywords: early alert; tutor center; large gateway course; math

Large classes of between 100 and 1000 have become common in higher education (Smith et al., 2005). Literature shows that large classes present many challenges to teaching and learning, including poor student engagement and low satisfaction (Gibbs, 1992). To address these challenges, much of the literature focuses on adapting the instruction mode from content-centered lectures to learner-centered activities. While effective classroom activities are critical, it seems self-evident that learning is optimized when students are also engaged in positive learning behaviors outside of the classroom, such as seeking help from the tutor centers. It is especially important for students from large courses to use the tutor centers, because the opportunities they get help directly from the instructor are so limited due to the

large class size.

However, at our university, there was no formal mechanism to motivate students to seek help from the tutor center, Center for Academic Success (CAS). Additionally, there was no systematic process to track and assess the effects of CAS on student performance.

To address the above challenges, we developed an early-alert system, called Maverick Comprehensive Learning Analytics Support System (MavCLASS), to encourage students to visit CAS. The Mav-CLASS project was just piloted in a large-cohort gateway class: Math 098 Intermediate Algebra. The purpose of this study is to explore the patterns of student visits to CAS under the MavCLASS intervention and assess the relationship between the tutoring services provided by CAS and student performance in Math 098.

Interventions to Increase Tutor Center Use

Academic Tutor Centers are one method of improving student achievement and retention rates (Thompson, 2007). These centers often operate on an as-requested basis, where the onus is on the student to initiate contact. There are many factors associated with students' willingness to seek help from the tutor center, including students' motivation, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991), as well as many environmental factors (Lee, 2007).

Bosco (2012) suggests that interventions designed to increase the frequency with which students seek help should begin early, follow up with students at several points in the semester, and dialog about specific challenges and strategies relevant to the students. Bosco's argument echoes with the perspective that personalized help could be effective ways to increase graduation and retention rates among college students (Capaldi, Lombardi, & Yellen, 2006).

The emerging "big data" and analytics technologies in higher education have provided new tools for developing personalized advising interventions. Student data can potentially inform university staff and faculty on students' performance and provide students a mechanism by which they could involve themselves in developing more positive learning behaviors, such as seeking help from the tutor center (Hrabowski III, Suess, & Fritz, 2011). Dringus (2012) suggests that student data must be "measurable, visible and transparent" if it is to be valuable in informing academic interventions (p. 98). This

maps to broader theories of feedback and feedback interventions, which emphasize, among other things, that feedback must be seen by the recipient to be "legitimate, trustworthy, knowledgeable, and likeable" (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002, p. 168).

Given this background, we felt that a successful early-alert system would have to include components that provide ongoing, personalized feedback about student performance. Additionally, it would need to suggest clear actionable items so that students understand what to do to improve their performance.

The Maverick Comprehensive Learning Analytics System (MavCLASS)

The MavCLASS project was piloted in the course Math 098 Intermediate Algebra in Fall 2013. The goal was to create a system to allow faculty and graduate assistants (GAs) to view students' performance in greater detail and develop personalized feedback to encourage learners to seek help from CAS for course improvement. The project had three components: standard-based formative assessments, data dashboards, and personalized alert messages.

When designing the course, the instructor worked with an instructional designer to create weekly standards students were expected to achieve, and then organize the course content and assessments around these standards. With this approach, each assessment (e.g., homework, quiz, test) was associated with a few specific course standards so that faculty and GAs could quickly identify the specific standards students needed to work on.

The data dashboard worked across two assessment systems, including the university's Learning Management System (LMS) that provided exam and class participation scores and a publisher system that managed assignments and quizzes (Cengage's WebAssign). These data were cleaned, analyzed and displayed in colors of green, yellow, or red for the instructor and GAs to review. The colors were determined based on algorithms defined by the instructor to reflect student assessment achievement levels. Students who got the yellow and red colors were identified as in the cautionary and danger of failing and would receive alert messages from the GAs of the course.

The alert messages were sent out to students within 1 week after the assessment scores were published on their dashboards.

The message began from a standardized script: It told students their current status on the assessments and encouraged them to seek help from CAS. The GAs were then instructed to manually customize the alert messages and send them out to students. Since each assessment was associated with a few specific standards, by looking at the dashboard, the GAs could quickly identify the course standards the student was struggling with, and therefore, they could explicitly point out to students the associated learning materials they should work on, including the lecture notes, textbook chapters and exercises. In the alert message, the students were instructed to bring these suggested learning materials to CAS so that there was a clear focus during the tutoring sessions.

Research questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Under the MavCLASS intervention, is there any pattern of student visits to CAS?
2. Is there any relationship between the alerts and students' visits to CAS?
3. Is there any relationship between the student visits to CAS and their achievement?

Methods

Data Collection

Three types of data were collected from the 611 students who took Math 098 in Fall 2013: the alert message data, the student achievement data, and the CAS visit data. The alert message data were collected through MavCLASS. In Math 098, students who performed below the standards on any assignment, quiz or exam would be considered as at-risk students. Their scores on these assessments would be displayed in yellow or red and the alert messages were sent out to these students. We reviewed the scores for all types of assessments in MavCLASS to identify the recipients of the alert messages, as well as the dates when the alerts were sent out.

The student achievement was mainly measured by the four high-stake exams in this course. Students took these exams at Week 5, Week 9, Week 13, and Week 16 of the semester. Student performance data on the four exams were retrieved from MavCLASS.

The CAS visit data were collected at the end of the semester.

The data identified the students who visited CAS for Math 098 in Fall 2013 and the time and date of their visits.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process included the following steps. First, relationships were established among the three sets of raw data based on the student identification information. Data was subsequently anonymized and rescaled by converting the student assessment scores to the accuracy rate (i.e., the total of points earned divided by the total of points possible). Microsoft Excel Version 14.4.1 and IBM SPSS Statistics 20 were used to conduct various descriptive analyses and t test.

Results

Research Question 1: Patterns of CAS Visits

Figure 1 shows that 478 students (78.2%) from Math 098 received alert messages. This means that these students did not meet the standards on at least one assessment of the course and were encouraged to visit CAS to seek help. Among these students, 81 visited CAS, but 397 did not. 133 students (21.8%) received no alert messages throughout the semester, suggesting that they performed above the standards on every assessment. Twelve of these higher-performing students still visited CAS, even if they were never prompted to do so by MavCLASS.
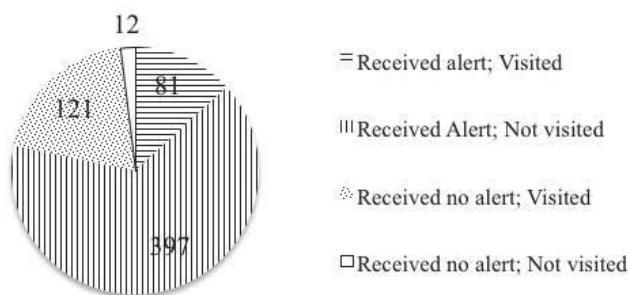

Figure 1. MavCLASS students divided into four groups.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the students' CAS visits in Fall 2013. From Week 6 to Week 9, when the students took the first

and second high-stake exams, 581 alert messages were sent out and there were 145 visits to CAS, representing 45% of the total visits throughout the semester. Between Week 10 and Week 13, 598 alert messages were sent. In contrast, only 38 CAS visits occurred during that time, representing 11.7% of the total visits.

This pattern indicates that the students were much more engaged in help-seeking in the second quarter of the semester (i.e., between Week 6 and Week 9). Despite the increase in the number of alert messages in next four weeks, the students did not visit CAS as much as they did prior to Week 9. This finding is consistent with previous research (Bevitt, Baldwin, & Calvert, 2010), which has confirmed that early assessments and interventions (e.g., alert mes-sages) are effective methods of engaging students in positive learning behaviors, such as seeking help from the tutor centers.
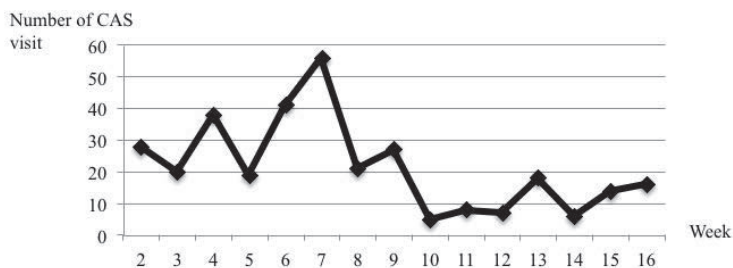

Figure 2. Number of CAS visits by week.

Research Question 2: Relationship between MavCLASS and CAS Visits

A t-test was conducted between students who received alert messages and students who did not receive any alert to determine whether there is any difference in their visits to CAS. Table 1 in-dicates that the difference between the two groups is significant ($p < .01$). Because the students received the alerts when they failed to meet the standards on at least one assessment, the t test results could be interpreted in at least two ways. First, the students with lower assessment outcomes tend to visit CAS more often. Second, the students receiving the alerts are more likely to visit CAS. Admittedly, based on the current data, it is premature to determine any causal relationship between the alerts and the students' visits to CAS. But these findings are consistent with the notion that even the simple

notification interventions (e.g., letting students know their assessment grades) may lead to positive changes in student learning behaviors (Jayaprakash, Moddy, Lauria, Regan, & Baron, 2014).

Table 1

t Test between Students Who Received Alerts and Students Who Did Not

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Number of CAS Visits	Equal Variances assumed	15.106	.000	2.169	609	.031*
	Equal Variances not assumed			3.101	436.991	.002**

Note. *p<.05, two-tailed. **p<.01, two-tailed

Research Question 3: Relationship between CAS Visits and Achievement

In Math 098, the students took four high-stake exams throughout the semester. Student achievement on these exams was compared between two groups. Group 1 consists of 518 students who did not visit CAS. Group 2 includes 93 students who visited the tutor center.

Figure 3 shows that, the Group 1 students achieved nearly 70% of accuracy rate on Exam 1, but their performance was continuously declining on the subsequent exams. For the Group 2 students, their average accuracy rate was about 63% on Exam 1, but slightly increased to nearly 65% on Exam 2. After that, their accuracy rate decreased to 64% on Exam 3 and to 57% on the final exam.

Generally, Group 1 had better performance than Group 2 on these exams. However, the achievement gap, as reflected by the difference in the average accuracy rate between the two groups, was nearly 8% on Exam 1, but was getting closer and closer. Eventually, the two groups had about the same performance on the final exam. The t test shows that the difference between the two groups was significant (p <.005) on Exam 1 but no significant between-group difference was detected on the other exams. The diminishing trend

of the achievement gap is more clearly reflected in Figure 4, which presents the students' z scores. On the first exam, the gap between the two groups was about .33 standard deviation (SD). But the gap was getting much closer on the following exams and got to less than .03SD on the final exam.
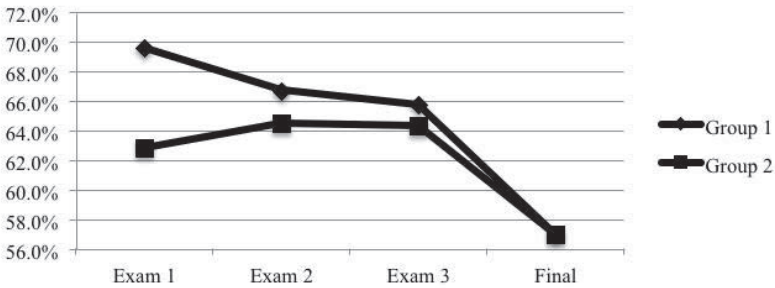

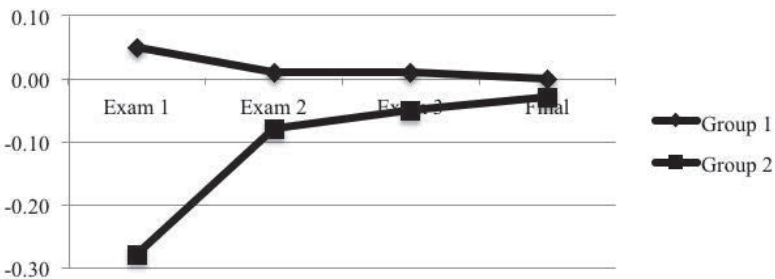*Figure 3.* Average accuracy rates of Group 1 and Group 2 students.

Figure 4. z scores of Group 1 and Group 2 students.

The two groups of students were further divided into four subgroups based on whether they received any alert messages. As mentioned earlier, students who never received any alert passed all the course assessments, and therefore, were considered higher-performing students. Students who received the alert messages failed at least one assessment, and were identified as lower-performing students. As the Figure 5 suggests, among the higher-performing groups, students who visited CAS generally had higher achievement than those who did not and their final exam scores were increased from the earlier exams. In contrast, the performance of higher-performing students who did not visit CAS was decreasing across the four exams.

A similar pattern was found for the lower-performing groups. Students who visited CAS were more than .4SD below the class's average level on the first exam, but they were making improvements and increased their achievement by over .2SD at the end of the semester. However, the other subgroup, the lower-performing students who did not visit the center, did not make any progress. Their performance was around .2SD below the average level for each of the exams over the semester.
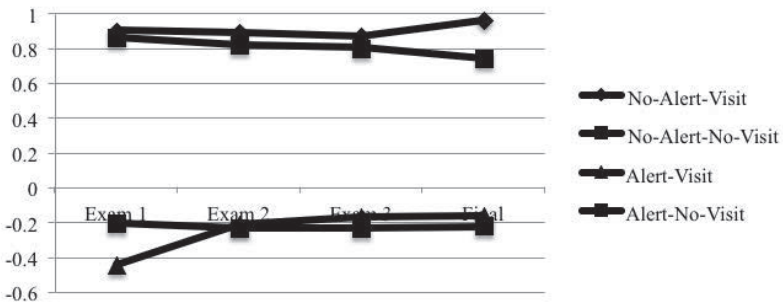

Figure 5. z scores of four subgroups of students.

Discussion

Results from this study, along with the previous studies (Bevitt, Baldwin, & Calvert, 2010; Colby, 2004), indicate that it is important to provide students with meaningful assessments and feedback early in the semester in order to encourage their use of tutor center for academic improvement. As Pistilli and Arnold (2010) point out, often students do not understand how well they are performing in a class until it is too late to make any positive changes.

This study also suggests that early interventions have the potential to positively impact student academic performance through increasing help-seeking behaviors. In this study, the early-alert system seems positively associated with the student visits to CAS. This finding is consistent with the work at Purdue University, which shows that the use of relatively simple notification can have a significant impact on student behaviors which can lead to improved achievement (Jayaprakash, Moddy, Lauria, Regan, & Baron, 2014).

Another contribution of the study is that it has built connections between the students and the tutor center at the university.

Many institutions provide services tailored to their student needs, such as various tutoring sessions. Unfortunately, these services are often underused by students who could benefit from them the most (Tinto, 2012). The intervention piloted in this study has the potential to address this issue by identifying the academically at-risk students and sending alert messages on an ongoing basis to connect the tutor center with those students.

Additionally, the personalized alert messages received by students could potentially drive the content of these tutoring sessions, making them more productive and manageable, particularly for those students in large gateway classes. The rise in achievement for those students who sought help from CAS would seem to indicate that, in general, students who seek help from CAS are able to improve their academic achievement.

Limitations

As with any study, limitations existed with this study. Due to the unavailability of the CAS visit data from the previous years, the causal effects of MavCLASS were unable to be determined. Since CAS does not have any records before Fall 2013, it is not yet possible to track the students' CAS visits over time to see whether there is any difference before and after the MavCLASS implementation.

Another limitation of the study is that only 15.2% of students sought help from CAS for their math course, but the current data cannot help us understand why the majority of students did not visit CAS. Researchers find that, students' psychological constructs, such as self-efficacy (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997) and goal orientations (Newman, 1998) may play a role in their help-seeking behaviors. These factors will need to be considered in the next phase of the project so as to design effective interventions. For example, we could send customized feedback messages that match students' goal orientations to better motivate the students to use the tutor center.

Conclusion

In this study, we piloted the MavCLASS intervention in a large gateway course. MavCLASS functioned as a systematic mechanism that established direct connections between the students and the tutor center (i.e., CAS) at the university. Additionally, the study generated empirical evidence regarding the pattern of the student visits

to CAS across the semester and the relationship between the student achievement and their CAS visits. As discussed above, the findings echoed with previous studies and provided implications for the design and implementation of feedback interventions that increase the visits to the tutor center.

References

Bevitt, D., Baldwin, C., & Calvert, J. (2010). Intervening early: Attendance and performance monitoring as a trigger for first year support in the biosciences. *Bioscience Education E-journal, 15*, doi: 10.3108/beej.15.4

Bosco, M. A. (2012). Improving retention rates: One college's stride toward improvement. *College and University, 88*(1), 2-8.

Capaldi, E. D., Lombardi, J. V., & Yellen, V. (2006). *Improving Graduation Rates*. Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis Inc.

Colby, J. (2004). *Attendance and attainment*. Paper presented at the fifth annual conference of the Information and Computer Sciences, University of Ulster.

Dringus, L. P. (2012). Learning analytics considered harmful. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 16*(3), 87-100.

Gibbs, G. (1992). Control and independence. In G. Gibbs & A. Jenkins (Eds.), Teaching large classes in higher education: How to maintain quality with reduced resources (pp. 37-59). London: Kogan Page.

Hrabowski III, F.A., Suess, J., & Fritz, J. (2011). Assessment and analytics in institutional transformation. *EDUCAUSE Review, 46*(5), 14-28.

Jayaprakash, S. M., Moody, E. W., Lauria, E. M., Regan, J. R., & Baron, J. D. (2014). Early alert of academically at-risk students: An Open Source Analytics Initiative. *Journal of Learning Analytics, 1*(1), 6-47.

Karabenick, S. A., & Knapp, J. R. (1991). Relationship of academic help seeking to the use of learning strategies and other instrumental achievement behavior in college students. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 83*(2), 221-230.

Lee, C. J. (2007). Academic help seeking: Theory and strategies for nursing faculty. *The Journal of Nursing Education, 46*(10), 468-475.

Newman, R.S. (1998). Students' help seeking during problem solving: Influences of personal and contextual achievement goals. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 90*, 644–658.

Pintrich, Paul R., & Schunk, Dale H. (2002). *Motivation in Education: Theory, Research, and Applications.* Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Merill Prentice Hall.

Pistilli, M.D., & Arnold, K.E. (2010). Purdue Signals: Mining real-time academic data to enhance student success. *About Campus, 15*, 22–24.

Ryan, A.M., & Pintrich, P.R. (1997). Should I ask for help? The role of motivation and attitudes in adolescents-help seeking in math class. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 89*, 329–341.

Smith, A. C., Stewart, R., Shields, P., Hayes-Klosteridis, J., Robinson, P., & Yuan, R. (2005). Introductory biology courses: A framework to support active learning in large enrollment introductory science courses. *CBE-Life Sciences Education, 4*(2), 143-156.

Thompson, J. L. (2007). *First-generation college students: Their use of academic support programs and the perceived benefit (Unpublished doctoral dissertation)*, University of North Texas, TX.

Tinto, V. (2012). Enhancing student success: Taking the classroom success seriously. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education, 3*(1), 1–8.

Book Review: *Tell me How It Reads: Tutoring Deaf and Hearing Students in the Writing Center*

Babcock, R. D. (2012) *Tell me how it reads: Tutoring deaf and hearing students in the writing center.* Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.

Reviewed by Jack Trammell

The Learning Assistance Movement which first gained national momentum in the 1970s now has the benefit of more than half a century of theory and practice upon which to draw (ASHE, 2010). As a result, there are increasing numbers of resources and both qualitative and quantitative studies that address very special learning needs, theories, and applications. Such is the landscape in which Rebecca Day Babcock's "Tell me How it Reads" examines the unique combination of deaf and hearing students interacting in the Writing Center.

Babcock, who describes herself as a postmodernist and a social constructivist, makes effective use of qualitative research methodology to examine the intersections between deafness, hearing, language, disability, and tutoring. For readers who are more interested in neurology or clever research design, the author would refer them to more specific sources; instead, she spends more time reminding those of us who have been in the learning assistance field why we are here, and the degree to which the unpredictability of human behavior is a constant. There is science behind what we do, of course, but there is also a highly subjective experience that varies widely from context to context, and can be captured in important ways through a rich, reflective narrative that lets the voices of our students speak for themselves.

"Tell me How it Reads" is very simply about people learning to write, some of them deaf or hearing impaired. Babcock restates

Jack Trammell, Ph.D | Randolph-Macon College | jtrammel@rmc.edu

it this way: "They [like all students] learn the literary practices of an unfamiliar discourse community. More specifically…the use of standard American English" (p. 184).

Babcock uses grounded theory in this investigation, with coded analysis of in-depth interviews tempered by her own extensive experience, to study the shape and discourse of tutoring sessions with a special emphasis on students who are hearing impaired or deaf. She has a low-key but very effective grasp of what Foucault would call the 'governmentality" of the tutoring session—the need to challenge assumptions that some might consider to be self-evident—and to bring to bear a comprehensive set of questions about how language and language empowerment are constructed (Tremain, 2005). For those hoping to find concrete answers and suggestions, she cites that the major differences in this specialized kind of tutoring are "communication mode and certain foci of content and practice" (p. 165). But she also makes it clear that there are no easy answers, any more than there are for other challenging situations. If there is one single factor that does jump out, Babcock suggests that the interpreter "may be the most important factor in the tutoring equation" (p. 165) for these partnerships.

The lack of any easy answers takes the reader full circle back to the history of learning assistance itself. More than a half a decade of quantitative and qualitative research has shown us repeatedly that generalizability in learning assistance is difficult—the one size fits all solution seldom translates into a pedagogical panacea. Instead, we are often left to reflect upon the tutoring (and mentoring, etc.) experience as something that remains highly individualistic, highly contextual, and with a language-related umbilical cord tying it to previous and future learning experiences.

Whether your center tutors deaf students or not, Babcock's work encourages us all to be more reflective about our "literacy work," and to employ research techniques that expand learning assistance possibilities for another fifty years. This is a book well worth reading for a variety of professional reasons, and will tell you another way that "it reads."

References

ASHE. (2010). History of Learning Assistance in U.S. Postsecondary Education. *ASHE Higher Education Report, 35*(6), 23–54.

Tremain, S. (2005). Foucault, governmentality, and critical disability theory. In S. Tremain (Ed.), *Foucault and the government of disability* (pp. 1-44). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

I still Need My Security Teddy Bear: Experiences of an Individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Higher Education

Donna M. Sayman
Wichita State University

Abstract

Understanding the needs of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their post-high school experiences is a new and widely under-studied area of research (MacLeod & Green, 2009). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of a young woman with ASD in her journey following high school graduation to the world of work and higher education. Problems for individuals with ASD in higher education are examined, and suggestions are given for university support for better recruiting and retaining these individuals. The results of this study will give practical strategies, support, and accommodations for professionals in higher education.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, transition, case study, self-determination.

Background

On Jillian's (a pseudonym) first day at her new school, her teachers were concerned that she had not attended any of her assigned classes. After an extensive search, we found her hiding in the restroom refusing to come out until after-hours when all of the other students had left. I first met her when her aunt, and now legal guardian, brought her to register for her 7th grade year. A bright, seemingly happy, young lady with vibrant blue eyes and curly blonde hair, Jillian seemed at ease with adults, but underneath there was a noticeable nervous apprehension at starting a new and uncertain journey in her life. State workers had removed her from her biological mother due to abuse, and she moved across the

---

Donna M. Sayman | Wichita State University | donna.sayman@wichita.edu

state to live with her aunt. As her case manager for special education in her 7th and 8th grade years, I transferred from the middle school to the high school when Jillian began her freshman year and also taught language arts for students with disabilities. Since I had been in her life for so long, I felt responsible for providing her with the best transition information possible.

This paper explores Jillian's experiences following graduation from high school as a young woman with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The year after her graduation, I interviewed her each summer for three years. Insightful information emerged from the interviews as I sought to better understand how her Individual Education Plan (IEP), a written document developed for students with disabilities eligible for special education services, adequately prepared her for major life transitions following high school graduation. Although enrolled in a local community college and engaged in full-time employment during the course of the interviews, she still experienced the same feelings of confusion and loneliness she felt while in high school. Ultimately, she dropped out of college because she lacked the self-advocacy skills necessary to be successful. It saddened me to realize that, even years after her high school graduation, Jillian still felt the same isolation she experienced during her teenaged years. I wanted to understand Jillian's experiences and discover why she struggled through much of her time in higher education. Perhaps this honest glimpse into her life story will offer hope to other students with ASD and the educators who work with them. It is hoped that the results of this study may provide professionals in higher education the means to better accommodate for the specific needs of individuals with ASD.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to understand the experiences of a young woman with ASD and the navigations she made transitioning from public high school to adulthood. These individuals are distinctive in their strengths and weaknesses; therefore, a focused study was imperative to identify factors that may be of concern for people with ASD (Scharoun, Reinders, Bryden, & Fletcher, 2014; Schwartz, Sandall, Garfinkle, & Bauer, 1998). Results of this study may help to identify what is working and what are the gaps in support for matriculation to higher education, finding employment, and independent living. A thoughtful exploration of Jillian's experiences may assist future

educators in developing more pragmatic and realistic transition goals that better prepare students with disabilities for adult life. Additionally, this study may highlight the need for communication between families and the university. This research was guided by the following questions: How does a young woman with ASD negotiate the journey into post-high school life? How does she negotiate the journey into higher education? What supports and accommodations were most beneficial for her? What further needs would inform educators in the development of transition plans to better assist the individual in achieving success in the adult world?

Individuals with ASD and Higher Education

The most recent edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5 (DSM-5)* folds all the previously named subcategories of autism into the one umbrella term of *Autism Spectrum Disorder* (ASD) (APA, 2011; Autism Research Institute, 2012; Wolf, Brown, & Bork, 2009). Understanding individuals with ASD is a growing field of study, yet the disorder still remains "shrouded in confusion and mystery" (Hesmondhalgh, 2010, p. 32). Individuals with high-functioning ASD were once classified as having Asperger's Syndrome. While some argue that people with high functioning ASD fall within the mild continuum of the disorder, Raymond (2011) cautioned, "mild does not mean 'not serious'" (p. 7). Further elaborating these terms represents decades of debate among researchers, parents and educators. While definitions of ASD remain fluid and complex, typical characteristics include normal or above-normal cognitive functioning and limited interpersonal skills, including poor eye contact, diminished facial recognition, awkward body movements, challenges interpreting body language, impaired social interactions, and difficulty with organization.

Transition and Post-High School Success

Effective secondary transition planning for students with disabilities in PreK–12 grades plays a critical role in their post-school success (Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2008). However, findings from several groundbreaking research studies on disabilities and life success, such as the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study (SEELS), determined those students labeled ASD had the poorest outcomes in employment, advocacy, and social skills (Wagner, New-

man, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005). It is therefore best practice for teachers to embed transition goals within the student's IEP, thus developing these skills for post-high school success across the curriculum. Such goals should be based on the student's strengths and needs by providing a coordinated set of activities engaging a wide range of community resources. This strategy is built on a backwards design to prepare the student for the world of adulthood. Although well-established in the literature, how this design strategy looks in actual practice is often a nebulous, ever-changing ideal. Despite an influx of legislative and curriculum-based approaches, post-school outcomes for individuals with disabilities lag far behind their nondisabled peers, resulting in devastating consequences (Barnard-Brak, Lechtenberger, & Lan, 2010; Higbee, Katz, & Schultz, 2010). Raymond (2011) found that special education may inadvertently promote a lifetime of learned helpless behavior if self-advocacy and social skills are not embedded within the IEP. In light of the many documented historical inequities in special education, it is imperative for educators to focus on ensuring IEP goals are well-established and incorporate a wide continuum of services so students have every opportunity for success upon graduation. Although all students need practical transition planning for life after high school, it is especially critical for students with disabilities. Researchers have discovered that for persons with a disability, the outlook for employment is far bleaker than for their nondisabled peers. The U.S. Department of Labor (2011) estimated the unemployment rate of individuals without a disability to be 9.1%. However, for those with a disability, the unemployment rate stands at 14.8%. According to Disabled World (2011), the most current statistics concerning poverty and disability are quite disheartening. They estimated almost 21% of the population aged 16 and older with a disability live below the poverty level compared to 11% of the population age 16 and older without a disability. This translates to a median earning of $18, 865 for those individuals with a disability compared to $28,983 for individuals without a disability.

Students with Disabilities and Higher Education

Although the numbers of students with disabilities are growing in post-secondary education, these students are also at the highest risk for dropping out of college (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010). Higbee et

al. (2010) discovered that approximately 11% of college students reported a disability. These numbers may be depreciated due to the low rates of self-disclosure. Several reasons were given for the reticence of individuals to disclose their disability: difficulty navigating the process in higher education, lack of advocacy training, and reluctance to appear different. Wessel, Jones, Markle, and Westfall (2009) reported that 53% of students with disabilities earned a college degree compared to 64% of students without disabilities. Barnard-Brak et al. (2010) discovered that one reason for this high attrition rate is a "lack of understanding" (p. 412) by the universities concerning the diverse needs of students with disabilities. This is most evident in the absence of training that faculty and staff in higher education receive regarding students with disabilities. Full inclusion into college life is not a reality for most students with disabilities in higher education (Higbee et al. 2010).

Theoretical Frame

Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory (SDT) is an effective framework for understanding the post-high school experiences of individuals with ASD. This lens examines critical concerns of how people are able to pursue and accomplish their basic psychological needs. SDT delineates the concept of motivation within human development through its unique approach to goals-directed behavior. Similar to other frameworks of motivation and self-efficacy, SDT embraces the idea that individuals have an innate, natural propensity to develop a sense of self (Deci & Ryan, 2002). SDT states that myriad societal factors may either support or impede that development. Detailed within the subset of motivation are three basic needs essential for healthy human development: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Competence refers to a feeling of effectiveness within one's environment. This is coupled with independence, self-reliance, and experiencing a wide range of opportunities for self-growth. Relatedness refers to a connection to others and the feeling of being an integral part of a community. Autonomy, which differs from independence in SDT, refers to a self-perception concerning one's own behavior that incorporates values, interest, and expression.

SDT and Special Education

SDT was first applied to special education in the early 1990s

as an outcome of federal mandates pertaining to transition planning (Wehmeyer et al., 2007). Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, and Wood (2001) stated that self-determination was one of the most important topics in special education because "the right to make one's own decisions about life and future is viewed as an inalienable right by American adults without disabilities and yet has only recently been recognized for adults with disabilities" (p. 219). At its core, self-determination is an issue of social justice. Although adults with disabilities have made some advances in the social realm, they still lag behind their peers without disabilities in several areas such as employment, matriculation to higher education, and independent living (Mustian, Mazzotti & Test, 2013).

Decades of research on SDT and individuals with disabilities have produced a stout research base generating instructional models, curricular materials, and assessment instruments (Chambers et al., 2007). *The Functional Theory of Self-determination* developed by Wehmeyer et al. (2007) emphasized both defining self-determination and mandating that self-determined behaviors must be explicitly distinguished and taught according to the real-life application to the individual. Essential characteristics of self-determined behaviors emerge through the development and acquisition of these multiple interrelated elements: choice making, decision making, problem solving, goal setting, risk taking, and self-advocacy. Students with disabilities who learn these fundamental attributes have greater success in adulthood. These findings are verified in numerous studies, including research by Carter, Lane, Pierson, and Stang (2008), who concluded that SDT skills must be taught both in general and special education classrooms because so many of today's youth lack the skills to become independent, self-determined adults. The authors found that inclusion into general education classrooms for those with disabilities may offer more opportunities for self-determination. It is therefore crucial that general education teachers be aware of self-determination skills, since 70% of students with disabilities receive at least one core academic class in a general education class and 83% in elective courses. According to Carter et al., general education teachers report they frequently teach a component of self-determination in their classroom, but this instruction may not be differentiated for students with disabilities.

These skills may also be taught through informal, indirect instruction. SDT examines the psychologically based approach to attainment of these skill-sets and is deemed the most appropriate lens for this study because it was possible to recognize the issues, barriers, and strengths involved in Jillian's transition to adult life.

Jillian's Case

As individuals with ASD are so unique and distinctive in their strengths and weaknesses, I determined a focused study was essential to identify factors of concern and to offer insights regarding the in-depth complexities of lived experience. Jillian seemed like a perfect case for this study because of my relationship with her as her teacher for six years. While the strengths and weaknesses of people with ASD differ significantly, social interaction difficulties and repetitive behavior are common characteristics that cause difficulties in independent living. Her case provides an important example of the struggles that other young adults with ASD may encounter. I was interested in Jillian's case for its similarities to the experiences of others with ASD, but also for the deep insights gained from better understanding the singular ways she navigated the complexities of adult living.

Participant

Jillian was diagnosed with ASD while in high school at a rural public school district located in the Midwest. Previous psycho-educational testing in the 7th grade found her eligible for special education services based on the category of Other Health Impaired (OHI) due to severe anxiety, depression, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Her last re-evaluation in the 11th grade indicated ASD with a secondary diagnosis of anxiety disorder and ADHD. She graduated from high school three years prior to the first interview. She identified her ethnicity as Caucasian, and currently lives with her adopted mother and father in a farmhouse several miles from the small community where she attended school.

Similar to many individuals with disabilities, Jillian experienced a long line of unsuccessful jobs after high school and changed majors twice at the Career Tech School, though she eventually completed a certification in computer design. At the time of the first interview, she was enrolled in summer classes in preparation for full-time matriculation at a local community college. Between the second and

third interview, she was able to get a first-time job coach from the vocational rehabilitation services. This person came to her place of employment and assisted her in communication skills. She dropped out of the community college she had been attending for two years prior to the third interview.

Data Sources

Data consisted of transcripts from semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews conducted over a span of three consecutive years. Data analysis was accomplished through the use of open coding, line-by-line analysis, identifying themes, and categorizing subcategories until themes emerged. I then identified indigenous themes through analytic processes of constant comparison, data coding, analytic statements, and descriptive analysis. Field notes and transcribed interviews were analyzed in tandem to provide validity to the interview. The process of open coding as identified by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) was conducted through a second reading of each transcript for the purpose of identifying preliminary categories, themes, and events. During the course of the interviews, questions were often answered by the participant in the form of stories or personal vignettes. These stories were also labeled into data sets according to their themes. Rubin and Rubin (2005) detailed how a participant's stories are powerful tools for pursuing participant meanings. Triangulation procedures to assure trustworthiness of the study included a convergence of multiple data sources—such as a comparison of field journals—member check, and peer debriefing. Jillian was sent a copy of each typed transcript and gave input on the content.

Themes

Several compelling themes emerged as Jillian told her stories. Through all three interviews there seemed to be an inability to articulate her disability. Coupled with this powerlessness was an equally troubling realization that she could not perceive how her difference impacted every aspect of her life. The second major theme was socialization, followed by the third theme of autonomy. At times, these themes seemed to dovetail, weaving in and through each other, creating a tightly woven mosaic representative of Jillian's world.

Understanding of Disability

When first asked to identify the disability category that made

her eligible for special education, Jillian's response was, "I think it was autism, but I'm not sure." Subsequent interviews revealed a persistent, contradictory understanding of her disability. For example, during the second interview when asked the same question, her response was, "I don't know that I ever knew. I think my mom just told me I was going to be in special ed." By the third year, however, she seemed to have developed a growing perception of her disability as evidenced: "I have…what is it my mom said…We went through the vocational rehab, and they said I have low scale Asperger's or something. They used big fancy words that my mom understood and I didn't."

This inability for Jillian to name her disability resulted in failure to advocate for her needs while in college and during employment. Sadly, a review of her IEP revealed that these skills were not a part of her high school transition goals. It also emerged that Jillian did not understand the specific learning accommodations and modifications available to her, as was exemplified when she attempted to describe her struggles in math while enrolled in college: "I said that I had a math disability to see if I could use different colored paper or something." Although the use of colored paper is appropriate for some individuals, Jillian had never utilized this particular accommodation. Calculator use was listed as an accommodation in her middle and high school IEPs, and yet she equated this to cheating in college: "He said [the professor] that he would not let us use a calculator because we need to depend on our brains. But I cheated and used a calculator anyway!" Most surprisingly, her mother, a long time special education teacher, enforced the professor's view: "If she sees me sitting at the kitchen table using a calculator, she says, 'Does Mr. T. let you use a calculator?' 'No, Mommy.' 'Then put it away.'… 'Yes, mommy.'" It seemed that the tutor hired to assist her in math had a better grasp of Jillian's needs, as she allowed her to use a calculator. According to Jillian, she did this "because most of these problems I can't do in my head, and she gave me a calculator." Evidently, an accommodation she used for many years in high school did not translate to college. A skewed understanding of disability was apparent up through the third interview when she proclaimed that to succeed in college she needed to "Study more! Only I am going to force myself to be motivated

to study." It is critical to understand the majority of individuals with ASD have normal or above normal intelligence. For Jillian, the issue was not needing to study more, but knowing how to organize her notes and to study effectively.

Troubles with organization and submitting her assignments on time seemed to be the prevailing reasons why Jillian was not able to do well in her classes. In her third interview, Jillian stated, "I am not motivated if it is not in front of me, then I don't really think about it." Citing her lack of organization as the reason for finally dropping out of college, she continued throughout the third interview, "I think if I could write down, 'Hey, I have homework in this and I have to do this,' then I think I'll be better." Referring to herself as lazy, she proffered a lack of motivation for studying as another excuse for her college failure: "I just wasn't motivated to study. I have to get off my lazy butt and do this." However, by the third interview, she was beginning to appreciate her strengths and needs. She articulated that "My math probably was the hardest, that was probably the worse but I just didn't want to do it." Another accommodation utilized all through middle and high school was the use of an organizer, but this also did not translate to college.

Perhaps her increasing maturity or the intervention of the vocational rehabilitation coach assisted her, because, by the third interview, Jillian was able to articulate the beginnings of self-understanding: "I always knew I was different from other people, just because I could tell by the way I interact with them." When asked if knowing about her disability helped her, she responded, "What it means to me, basically, it helps explain why I have trouble connecting to people. I think different than other people." This statement represents a prodigious move forward for Jillian in her ability to self-advocate. It signals that she is finally able to recognize who she is and appreciates her unique strengths and may be ready to initiate the process of self-disclosure and advocacy.

Socialization

Difficulty interpreting social skills is a common characteristic for many individuals with ASD and this was certainly true for Jillian. While in middle school, she would often hide in the restroom if she felt overwhelmed. Other maladaptive behaviors included laughing

too loudly and at inappropriate times, withdrawal, unawareness of personal space, inappropriate smiling, and incongruous eye contact. Freedman (2010) stated that although individuals with ASD seem to choose being alone, they often report that they are lonely. Jillian exemplified this as she stated her preferred social activity is playing video games, reading, or staying home and playing with her dogs. Although she never stated that she was lonely, it seemed as though she did not know how to make friends or how to reach out to others. When asked whether she participated in any social activities in college, she responded that she would not attend any event unless her friend came with her. When asked why this was so, she responded, "I think the more people there are, the more scared and nervous I get. I just sit there and am quiet. I don't talk to anybody. I just sit there." As Freedman posited, it is especially difficult for these individuals to overcome social challenges after years of rejection, loneliness, and isolation. As with many individuals with ASD, they are accurately aware of their awkward social interactions. This is not something the person can easily change, but there are specific skills that personnel in higher education can do to assist the person with ASD. These will be discussed in a later section.

With direct instruction, this skill-set can be internalized. The vocational rehabilitation coach provided Jillian with explicit on–the-job-training for occupational socialization, and the difference was remarkable. Her manager and co-workers learned code words to assist her in more socially acceptable behavior: "Where before they would yell, 'Jill, SHUT UP!' They would get mad and I would think, 'I won't talk.' Now they say, 'Okay, calm down…lower the level a little bit.' I guess she explained it and they understood it."

Strengths

During every interview, I kept a field record of impressions, notes, and thoughts. It was amazing to me how much Jillian had grown during the years since we first met. These small steps were encouraging her to be a strong, independent young woman realizing her dream of happiness in adulthood. Some specific instances during the interviews succinctly demonstrate strengths in higher education, occupational success, and social skills.

Shortly after her work with the vocational rehabilitation servic-

es, Jillian began to develop more confidence and an elevated sense of self-esteem. Between the second and third interview, she started working at a job she really enjoyed. The difference in her success between this job and other short-lived ones was that a vocational rehabilitation coach taught both her and her manager the various nuances of ASD. This transformation was clearly demonstrated in her words about her life changes since the previous interview. She said, "I think I'm braver." She also gained the self-awareness to identify that although she was gaining confidence, it needed to translate to advocating for her needs: "I was braver in my classes, but I wasn't as brave to ask for help. I should have asked for more help, especially when I started having trouble. I thought, 'well, I think I'll be okay'…and I wasn't." Another accommodation she established in college was taking a friend with her to talk to a professor, which gave her the confidence she needed to overcome her fears: "I still need my big security teddy bear." Additional signs of self-awareness for Jillian included her disclosure to her current employer that she had difficulty with money, and allowing the vocational rehabilitation coach to come to her job to train her management and peers about her disability: "After she talked to them, I noticed they, they didn't treat me different, but they would step in and ask if I needed help." This allowed her the safety of making mistakes without withdrawing, and to develop confidence in herself: "I started changing because I started asking for help more." Growing confidence equated with deeper self-actualization: "I'm not ashamed of my disability, but I don't want to broadcast it because I am afraid that people will treat me different. I'm different, but I'm NOT! I'm the same kind of person as you." Finally, she was able to envision a bright future: "I think I can go away and live by myself and be just fine. I might get a little homesick, but I think I'll be okay."

Best Practices, Strategies, and Supports

Students with ASD face enormous challenges as they move from the highly structured parent/teacher supported environment of high school into the adult world. Here they encounter the daunting task of having to advocate for themselves, seek assistance from many agencies, and navigate an overwhelming situation, often with limited communication and social skills. Themes from this study examined through an SDT lens are: competence/understanding disability, relat-

edness/socialization, and autonomy.

Competence

If individuals with disabilities are unable to understand their differences or to identify their strengths and needs, they will never be able to adequately self-advocate. MacLeod and Green (2009) observed that, like Jillian, many individuals with high-functioning ASD are identified later in life. Indeed, Jillian was not able to correctly identify her disability until she was 24 years old. Higbee et al. (2010) offered several reasons for the reticence of individuals to disclose their disability, but the consequences for secrecy are steep. Although she never explicitly stated as such, Jillian could tell that some of her professors at the college considered her as different, defective: "Some teachers, they don't mean to, but they are just so used to what they are teaching and it's so obvious to them and so their answers just kind of come out like they think you are stupid." Sadly, she talked of several instructors who made her feel alienated: "Sometimes, when I would ask questions, just the way… his voice… I guess, would kind of make me feel stupid." Referred to by Higbee et al. (2010) as "marginalization of language" (p. 10), this describes the oppressive ways faculty use demeaning language in their classroom, which works to segregate those with learning differences. For the vast majority of university professors, this is unintentional, but for individuals with ASD the ability self-identify themselves as having a difference may be hindered by many factors: fear of being isolated, embarrassment, perceived lack of support, communication difficulties, or low self-esteem, among others. Brockelman, Chadsey, and Loeb (2006) discovered that college students often reported negative reactions from their professors when they disclosed their disability. Their research indicated that faculty members were interested in working with students with disabilities, but many professors revealed they were not knowledgeable in how to provide accommodations or differentiate curricula.

Increasing self-awareness

Wehmeyer et al., (2007) outlined the importance of teaching students with disabilities self-determination skills. Students who are taught self-determination techniques have more positive outcomes in their adult lives than those students who are not taught these skills.

This process should begin as early in the educational process as possible. For faculty and staff in higher education it is critical to be aware of the characteristics of individuals with high-functioning autism due to these individuals' reluctance to disclose their disability. Other tips include:

- Wolf et al. (2009) recommended that all university personnel be trained to recognize certain typical characteristics of ASD, such as poor eye contact, impulsivity, or being a very literal thinker.
- Camarena and Sarigiani (2009) suggested that faculty use extended time or a flexible time schedule for completion of assignments.
- Faculty should also allow flexibility in taking tests, such as breaking a test into smaller units or allowing the student to choose which sections of a test to complete. It is important to note that faculty do not need to change the overall rigor of their courses, but should be aware of students' individual strengths and needs (Wolf et al., 2009).
- Preference assessments can be given to the entire class so all learners are aware of their specific learning styles, i.e. tactile, visual, auditory, etc. This is a great first day assignment that can also assist in peer interactions and may assist individuals reluctant to disclose their disability the safety to talk about their academic strengths and weaknesses. This informal tool could contain such questions as: Does the student learn best with a lecture, small group, or hands-on activity?
- Frequent breaks are necessary for individuals with ASD. This gives the individual an opportunity for movement, which can help with restlessness, but also offers a chance to process all of the sensory input that has occurred in the classroom.

Relatedness

Emotional and social functioning are behaviors not easily acquired by individuals with ASD. Deshler and Schumaker (2006) suggested three areas of concentration for social skills acquisition: teaching positive behavior supports, instruction in specific social

skills for employment, and self-advocacy and advocacy training. Taylor and Seltzer (2011) said that individuals with both ASD and secondary psychiatric disorders, such as Jillian, had limited independence and diminished social functioning in adulthood compared to those with only an ASD identification. Additional post-high school supports for these students are critically needed to assist them in their transition. This was true for Jillian, as she realized occupational success only with the help of the Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) job coach. Since many people who need VRS are not eligible, or are placed on a lengthy waiting list for services, skills for transition to adult life must also be explicitly addressed in the IEP. Students need to be aware of the laws regarding their rights to accommodations and modification. The next step is to understand what unique accommodations work for their strengths and weaknesses, coupled with self-advocacy behaviors.

Increasing relatedness

Students with disabilities should also be taught to understand the unique accommodations necessary to address individual strengths and needs.

- VanBergeijk, Klin, and Volkmar (2008) suggested the use of a personal digital assistant (PDA) for a visual representation of an organizer.
- Audible alarms, hard copies of class notes or lecture slides, breaking down large assignments into more manageable chunks, and assistance with abstract terms are also helpful for many students with ASD (Wehmeyer et al., 2007).
- These evidence-based accommodations can easily be called upon in numerous situations in which a student might find him or herself. In the high-stress world of higher education, it can be especially critical that institutions construct a structured environment for ASD students in order to counterbalance the social difficulties they encounter.

Faculty awareness of the unique needs of individuals with ASD is crucial to their success in college. Many difficulties in the classroom may be the result of misinterpretation of ASD characteristics. For example, these individuals have limited response to facial cues. This may be construed as rudeness or disinterest by the professor (Wolf

et al. 2009). Most universities do not provide training to faculty and staff about dealing with students with learning differences. Some ways to assist them may be through the dissemination of fact sheets or through small workshops from the university Office of Disability Services (ODS).

- A Specific strategy for personnel in higher education is to avoid the use of absolute terms like always or never (Wolf et al. 2009).
- Remember that individuals with ASD may be reluctant to ask for clarification, so it may be helpful to reinforce difficult concepts in multiple ways, i.e., tactile, visual, auditory, etc. It is also supportive to ask students to reiterate ideas in their own words.
- Higher education personnel can also assure that they maintain clear directives and rules and provide plenty of advance notice if there is any change in the syllabi or coursework.
- Break the class time into small dyads or triads for the students to peer teach what has just been taught. Smaller groups may be more comfortable for individuals with ASD to ask for clarification on topics and also serve to encourage social interaction. It is critical for the professor to be aware of any student who appears to be left out of these groups and look for ways to facilitate interaction.
- Wolf et al. (2009) suggest that returned classwork be edited with listed or numbered changes to provide a guideline for students.
- For large classes, the professor can utilize a clicker system to periodically assess student understanding of course lecture.
- University personnel should avoid the use of idioms, sarcasm, and innuendos, as these abstractions may be difficult to understand. These simple accommodations are of benefit to all of the learners at the university level.

Autonomy

As echoed in much of the literature, Jillian rarely disclosed her disability at community college. During her matriculation, she

gave conflicting answers to questions concerning the need for modifications. At the time of her first interview, she had been attending summer classes. She claimed she did not need to disclose her disability because it was unnecessary: "I told them I didn't need it for the summer but I am getting some for the fall because I am taking a couple of hard classes." By the end of her first full year of studies, she recognized that the classes were becoming more difficult and that she did need help. In the second interview, when she was asked if she identified her disability to college officials, she said, "Um…I think I did. I'm not positive, but I think I did." This inchoate comprehension of her needs for modifications was echoed through all three interviews. During early interviews, she claimed to not need any modifications, but later she averred, "So it was kinda my fault that I failed… because I really didn't use the services that I could have." When asked if her mother assisted her in finding the correct office, she replied, "I was going to talk with my mom, and it totally slipped my mind." Perhaps she was afraid of showing her parents that she was not mature enough to handle the nuances of college. This is consistent with research that indicates students with disabilities in higher education may face segregation "and experience both overt and more subtle forms of discrimination" (Higbee et al. 2010, p. 8) due to the inability to navigate the maze of paperwork, identify appropriate personnel, and self-disclose their disabilities and needs. The majority of university syllabi contain information on how to contact ODS, but this may not be enough for some individuals with disabilities. Practical and contextual preparation during high school was critically needed for her to navigate the tides of college life. Staff in higher education can also help by using scripts and teaching strategies with all of their students as a way to promote independence.

Jillian also talked about having feelings of guilt during the rare times she reached out for help in college. When questioned whether she ever attended the office hours of her math professor for assistance, she stated, "I always felt guilty going to him because I was taking up all of his office hours and he had other students. I did go a couple of times. I would see people sitting outside and I would feel guilty." One concrete strategy that would have helped Jillian would be the use of checklists and questionnaires that evaluate the students'

level of stress and suggest possible accommodations to ameliorate the situation (Wolf et al. 2009). Kochhar-Bryant, Bassett, and Webb (2009) also discuss specific steps that parents and high school educators can take to assist students in the transition from high school to the adult world. These activities are delineated for each high school grade level to promote autonomy and independence.

Increasing autonomy

- It is all too easy to assume that everyone knows how to take good lecture notes, how to organize classwork, and how to study, but this may not be true. Wolf et al. (2009) recommend a three column note strategy: one column for vocabulary, one for information, and one for questions (p. 49). It may be helpful for the professor to make a copy of the three column note-taking page and hand it out to all students, or to explicitly walk through how to take relevant notes in class.
- Scenarios and explicit instruction of strategies should be incorporated as part of class support for all students.
- Higher education tutoring programs can also implement specific programs that teach students effective note-taking skills.
- If the individual has disclosed their disability, it is imperative for all faculty and support staff to work closely with the ODS to assure that all needed accommodations and modifications are being employed.

Conclusion

Stakeholders in higher education, including policy makers, faculty, and staff, may need to implement a design of learning that is welcoming and supportive of students of all abilities. Parents and students will also benefit from the findings of this study in their preparation for higher education. By creating more contextual accommodations for students with ASD, society ultimately benefits as they are better able to reach their full potential.

References

Algozzine, B., Browder, D., Karvonen, M., Test, D.W., & Wood, W.M. (2001). Effects of interventions to promote self-determination

for individuals with disabilities. *Review of Educational Research, 71*(2), 219–277.

American Psychiatric Association. (2011). Autism spectrum disorder. *DSM-5 Development.* Retrieved from: http://www.dsm5.org/ProposedRevision/Pages/proposedrevision.aspx?rid=94

Autism Research Institute. (2012). DSM V: What changes may mean. Retrieved from: http://www.autism.com/index.php/news_dsmV

Barnard-Brak, L., Lechtenberger, D., & Lan, W.Y. (2010). Accommodation strategies of college students with disabilities. *The Qualitative Report, 15*(2), 411–429.

Brockelman, K.F., Chadsey, J.G., & Loeb, J.W. (2006). Faculty perceptions of university students with psychiatric disabilities. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, 30*(1), 23–30.

Camarena, P.M., & Sarigiani, P.A. (2009). Postsecondary educational aspirations of high-functioning adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their parents. *Focus on Autism and other Developmental Disabilities, 24*(2), 115–128. doi: 10.1177/1088357609332675.

Carter, E.W., Lane, K.L., Pierson, M.R., & Stang, K.K. (2008). Promoting self-determination for transition-age youth: Views of high school general and special edutors. *Exceptional Children, 75*(1). 55–70.

Chambers, C.R., Wehmeyer, M.L., Saito, Y., Lida, K.M., Lee, Y., & Singh, V. (2007). Self-determination: What do we know? Where do we go? *Exceptionality, 15*(1), 3–15.

Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*(4), 227–268.

Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (2002). *Handbook of self-determination research.* Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.

Deshler, D.D., & Schumaker, J.B. (2006). *Teaching adolescents with disabilities: Accessing the general education curriculum.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Disabled World. (2011). Latest U.S. disability statistics and facts. Retrieved from: http://www.disabled-world.com/disability/statistics/census-figures.php

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R.I., & Shaw, L.L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic field notes.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Freedman, S. (2010). *Developing college skills for students with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome.* London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Hesmondhalgh, M. (2010). Autism at work. *Occupational Health, 62*(2), 32-36.

Higbee, J., Katz, R.E., & Schultz, J.L. (2010). Disability in higher education: Redefining mainstreaming. *Journal of Diversity Management, 5*(2), 7-16.

Kochhar-Bryant, C.A., & Greene, G. (2008). *Pathways to successful transition for youth with disabilities: A developmental process* (2nd ed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Kochhar-Bryant, C.A., Bassett, D.S., & Webb, K.W. (2009). *Transition to postsecondary education for students with disabilities.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

MacLeod, A., & Green, S. (2009). Beyond the books: Case study of a collaborative and holistic support model for university students with Asperger Syndrome. *Studies in Higher Education, 34*(6), 631-646.

Mustian, A., Mazzotti, V.L., & Test, D.W. (2013). Disseminating evidence-based practices in secondary transition. Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 15, 197–204. doi: 10.1177/1098300712459355.

Raymond, E.B. (2011). *Learners with mild disabilities: A characteristics approach,* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Press.

Rubin, H.J., & Rubin, I.S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data.* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Scharoun, S. M., Reinders, N. J., Bryden, P. J., & Fletcher, P. C. (2014). Dance/Movement therapy as an intervention for children with autism spectrum disorders. *American Journal of Dance Therapy, 36*, 209-228. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10465-014-9179-0

Schwartz, I. S., Sandall, S. R., Garfinkle, A. N., & Bauer, J. (1998). Outcomes for children with Autism: Three case studies. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 18*(3), 132-143.

Taylor, J.L., & Seltzer, M.M. (2011). Employment and post-secondary educational activities for young adults with autism spectrum disorders during the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 41*, 566-574. doi: 10.1007/s10803-010-3.

U.S. Department of Labor. (2011). The employment situation. Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t06.htm

VanBergeijk, E., Klin, A., & Volkmar, F. (2008). Supporting more able students on the autism spectrum: College and beyond. *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders, 38*(7), 1359-1370.

Wagner, M., Newman, L., Cameto, R., Garza, N., & Levine, P. (2005). *After high school: A first look at the postschool experiences of youth with disabilities.* A Report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2. Retrieved from: http://www.nlts2.org/re-

ports/2005_04/nlts2_report_2005_04_complete.pdf

Wehmeyer, M.L., Agran, M., Hughes, C., Martin, J.E., Mithaug, D.E., & Palmer, S.B. (2007). *Promoting self-determination in students with developmental disabilities.* New York, NY: Guildford Press.

Wessel, R.D., Jones, J.A., Markle, L., & Westfall, C. (2009). Retention and graduation of students with disabilities: Facilitating student success. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 21*(3), 116-125.

Wolf, L.E., Brown, J.T., & Bork, G.R. (2009). *Students with Asperger Syndrome: A guide for college personnel.* Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing.

Book Review: *The Writing Center Director's Resource Book*

Murphy & Stay, eds.2006. *The writing center director's resource book.* Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group: New York, NY.

Reviewed by Kirsten Komara

Editors Christina Murphy and Byron L. Stay compiled a series of essays that move from writing center history to theory to practice, creating a narrative of cross talk and discussion in showing that writing center work functions at the core of an education. Murphy and Stay divide the book into two parts: Part 1 "Writing Centers and Institutional Change" and Part 2 "Writing Centers and Praxis." Each part is subdivided into sections that take on various administrative, scholarly, and practical aspects of writing center administrative work. First published in 2006 and then in electronic form in 2010, some of the book's essays offer enduring wisdom, but others are a bit dated. For example, Hawthorne's essay "Approaching Assessment as if It Matters" strongly argues for meaningful assessment from multiple perspectives; the scholarly work produced after this call for richer assessment has been heard and answered, such as in podcasts from Harry Denny and Lori Salem (2009), and Neal Lerner and Jason Mayland (2008), and in the thorough and excellent *Building Writing Center Assessments that Matter* by Ellen Schendel and William J. Macauley, Jr (2012). Murphy and Stay's book offers new writing center directors a starting point for practical professional advice because each essay balances history and/or theory with practice and contains a wealth of bibliographic material, but I suspect that the essays' authors would cheerfully recognize that their earlier discussions need supplement from a growing body of scholarly work.

Part 1 has four subparts: 1. "What Writing Center History Can

Kirsten Komara | Our Lady of the Lake University | kkomara@ollusa.edu

Tell Us about Writing Center Practice"; 2. "Managing the Writing Center"; 3. "Responding to Institutional Settings/ Demands"; 4. "Writing Centers and the Administration." Part 1 maps writing center history in order to analyze the place of writing centers, writing center directors' professional roles, and writing center missions within the larger institutional context. Exploring writing center history from various perspectives builds a professional framework for the future. For example, Neal Lerner firmly establishes the writing center director's professional role in the academy, despite the ongoing debates about finances and release-time. The history of writing center professionals is balanced by some specific writing center narratives that raise our consciousness to the energy and moments of time when insight and meaning open up (Glover) and that contextualize pedagogical and theoretical concerns by considering the writing center's university culture and audiences (not just students but administration and faculty) in order to effectively respond to the challenges of budgets, assessment, literacy, and building space (Ferruci and DeRosa). Writing center missions must develop responsive pedagogies without compromising their own philosophies in order to remain vibrant and friendly to their communities.

In 1.2 on "Managing the Writing Center," writing center stories act as our resource guide because they open up dialogue, engage us in analysis, and allow us to recognize our place in the larger writing center community. Writing center directors must gauge budgets, staffing, space, assessment, technology, shifting student demographics, among many other administrative details. Pamela Childers articulates good basic questions, offers excellent examples for strategic planning in her appendices, and emphasizes prioritizing goals to the needs of staff, student, and faculty. Fitzgerald and Stephenson narrate the stories from their centers in order to extrapolate important larger points about collaboration, hierarchical relationships, and proactive rather than reactive approaches to changes in relationships. Writing center directors must be keenly aware of the political landscape of higher education locally and nationally because of governmental funding, economic downturns, shifts in student numbers and preparedness, as well as perceived market value vis-à-vis costs in the age of technology. Cultural and social changes, since 2006, also shift the research

dynamic in writing centers, but sound advice about community collaboration remains constant.

1.3, "Responding to Institutional Settings/Demands," examines specific types of writing centers: multi-campus, community college, small college, remedial/developmental, graduate school. Authors define the perimeters of their centers according to their institutional demographic. For instance, we all understand the difficulties of funding, space, outreach, and training, but Gardiner and Rousculp address the greater challenges that community college writing centers face in these areas than four-year universities and colleges because of open enrollment and community outreach. I suspect that President Obama's 2015 State of the Union call for free community college and tax reform increases the community college writing centers' challenges. We know that shifts in the US political and economic climate change but rarely remove complex ethical and philosophical issues, such as processing students through remedial programs (Paoli), regular summer hours or job descriptions of directors (Byron), or disciplinary identities of graduate programs or fee structures (Snively, Freeman, Prentice). I agree with Dennis Paoli's reflection that writing centers remember the fundamental ideas of education and intellectual/whole person development in their work and with Albert C. DeCiccio's statement that "writing centers are not simply the best thing in writing instruction, but the next best thing in education" (187).

1.4, "Writing Center and the Administration," examines the complicated relationship between writing centers and upper administration. Jeanne Simpson's review of administrative language, goals, and needs provides a compendium of terms that may help someone new to academics, but administrative parlance, institutional needs, and management concerns have moved from upper administration into the language of faculty and staff because of ongoing discussions about educational core, assessment, and quality enhancement programs. Yet, the relationship between writing center directors and upper administration remains fraught. In 1.1, authors Ray Wallace and Susan Lewis Wallace noted that writing center directors' moves to upper administrative roles could garner writing centers greater sympathies (and larger budget lines). Of course, writing center directors' segue into higher ranks of the academy makes sense, given the

multi-layered management, administrative, and teaching and learning concerns that they organize and supervise (Speck). In "Administrative (Chaos) Theory," Mullins, Carino, Nelson, and Evertz may shed some light on the reason for the troubled relationship: writing center directors experience different reporting lines (from English Departments to Student Success to Athletics) and must negotiate accordingly for everything from budgets to personnel to location. Too many silos in universities frustrate writing center work and its efforts to reach out to students across disciplinary lines. The issues covered in 1.4 are timeless, though details change.

The second part of the book focuses on "Writing Center and Praxis" and divides itself into four subparts: 1. "Ethics in the Writing Center"; 2. "Tutor Training in the Writing Center"; 3. "Writing Centers and Electronic Instruction"; and 4. "Writing Center Case Studies." The titles of each subpart focus the essays gathered in it. In 2.1, the central ethical issues that the authors address are plagiarism, writing center marginalization, and hegemony of academic culture. Howard and Carrick advocate writing center leadership in addressing plagiarism, and in recent years, many writing center directors work with information literacy course modules that libraries and first year seminars use. Bringhurst links concerns about student plagiarism with writing center marginalization. The link is not so tenuous if writing centers reside on the margins of the community because professors do not understand the tutor's role in students' writing. Bringhurst astutely points out that those writing centers that do not feel marginalized within their academic communities usually feel confident enough to create ethical standards that their constituency (students, tutors, faculty, administrators) fully embrace and understand. Bringhurst, Pemberton, and Murphy correctly make writing center marginalization an ethical issue: if a writing center has a budget and an administrator, then it is part of the larger university community. Writing centers cannot be marginalized from the larger intellectual community or defined hegemonically as establishing or reifying one academic voice. Christina Murphy carefully critiques Nancy Grimm's *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times*, a book that views writing center work as too often erasing students' identities and voices in an effort to create sanitized academese. This is a timeless

battle that writing centers face, and Bringhurst, Pemberton, and Murphy nicely address the ethical issues at the heart of marginalization, defining writing center culture and its highly textured voices within the academy without blaming.

In 2.2, the authors approach the topic of tutor training theoretically, practically, and demographically. Steven Strang advocates for professional tutors at any university that serves more than undergrads, whereas Paula Gillespie and Harvey Kail offer practical advice for developing a peer tutoring program, and Muriel Harris suggests practical ways for training tutors. Haviland and Trianoksy discuss their research findings on ways that writing center directors can contribute to the growth and security of tutors. Devet reviews the CLRA certifying process and compares it to others, claiming that overall certification helps to validate the role of the writing center on campus. Reading these essays allows writing center directors to consider their own context.

In 2.3 on electronic instruction, Sheridan offers ideas and approaches for incrementally creating writing center consultants and tutors that address multi-modal writing. He includes an excellent but slightly dated course reading list that could easily be made current. Bell uses the theoretical foundations of writing center work in order to explore OWL practices, and Click and Magruder discuss the development of electronic portfolios in the writing center. These discussions on electronic instruction do not lose sight of the importance of the writing process and teaching and learning strategies in the writing center. OWL and electronic portfolios have become powerful teaching and learning tools in higher education. 2.4 offers a sampling of writing center case studies with different foci: secondary school, research institute, faculty consultants, funding. Writing center directors narrate and analyze their writing center experiences—successes and failures—in service to other directors. We learn from each other, finding common theoretical concerns despite differing experiences.

The Writing Center Director's Resource Book remains a solid resource for new directors. I have used it, taught from it, followed its footnotes, and also followed footnotes back to it. It marks a point in our continuing body of scholarly work.

Pertinent Publishing Parameters

The Learning Assistance Review (TLAR), the national peer reviewed official publication of the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA), publishes scholarly articles and reviews that address issues of interest to learning center professionals (including administrators, teaching staff, faculty, and tutors) who are interested in improving the learning skills of postsecondary students. Primary consideration will be given to articles about program design and evaluation, classroom-based research, the application of theory and research to practice, innovative teaching and tutoring strategies, student assessment, and other topics that bridge gaps within our diverse profession.

Categories for Submission

Articles

- Topics: TLAR will accept manuscripts that address our purpose: to publish scholarly articles and reviews that address issues on program design and evaluation, classroom based research, the application of theory and research to practice, innovative teaching and tutoring strategies, student assessment, etc.
- Types: TLAR will accept manuscripts following all four of the article types outlined in the American Psychological Association Manual: empirical study and articles on review, theory, and methodology. Follow APA manual (chapter 1.4) for specific requirements and structure for each type; regardless, all manuscripts need a clear focus that draws a correlation between the study, review, theory, or methodology and learning assistance practices.

Joining the Conversation

- Idea Exchange: Discussion directly relates to articles published in TLAR. Submissions are limited to fewer than four paragraphs and are to be constructive idea exchanges. In addition to the name, title, college, and contact information from the submitter, Idea Exchange submissions are to include the details of the referenced article (Title, author, and volume/number, and academic semester/year). A submission form may be found online on the TLAR website.

- Further Research: These article submissions that have a stated direct link to prior published TLAR articles. These articles will be considered following the manuscript submission guidelines.

Book Review

Book review requests should be accompanied with two copies of the book to facilitate the reviewing process. Potential book reviewers are urged to contact the editorial team for details.

Manuscript Guidelines

Manuscripts and reference style must be in accordance with the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.) through January 2010. Submissions that do not comply with APA style will be returned to the author(s). Manuscripts must be original work and not duplicate previously published works or articles under consideration for publication elsewhere. The body of the manuscript may range in length from 10 to 15 pages, including all references, tables, and figures. Longer articles will be considered if the content warrants it. The authors are responsible for the accuracy of all citations and references and obtaining copyright permissions as needed. The only acknowledgments that will be published will be those required by external funding sources.

Submission Guidelines

Pertinent information:

- The title page must include the title of the manuscript (not

to exceed 12 words); the name(s) and institutional affilia-
tion(s) of all authors.
- The lead author should provide work and home address-
  es, telephone numbers, fax, and e-mail information where
  applicable.
- The second page should be an abstract of the manuscript.
  Abstracts are limited to 100 words.
- To start the reviewing process, the lead author will be
  required to sign a certificate of authorship and transfer
  of copyright agreement. If the manuscript is accepted for
  publication, a second authorization agreement must be
  signed by the author or authors.

Submission packets must include:
- a cover page.
- the original manuscript.
- a masked manuscript for review.
- abstract of the manuscript, maximum 100 words.
- figures and tables must be black and white, camera ready,
  according to APA style.
- an electronic copy of the above materials e-mailed to the
  address listed below.

Please send your submissions and/or questions and comments
to: TLAR@MissouriState.edu

Michael Frizell, MFA
Editor, TLAR
Director of Student Learning Services
Bear CLAW (Center for Learning and Writing)
Missouri State University
901 South National Avenue
Springfield, MO 65897

Phone: (417)/836-5006
Direct E-Mail: MichaelFrizell@MissouriState.edu

Review Process

Author(s) will receive an e-mail notification of the manuscript receipt. The review process may include a peer-review component, in which up to three members of the TLAR editorial board will review the manuscript. Authors may expect the review process to take about three months. Authors may receive one of the following reviewing outcomes:

(a) accept with minor revisions
(b) revise and resubmit with editor's review only
(c) revise and resubmit for second full editorial board review
(d) reject

As part of the reviewing correspondence, authors will be electronically sent the reviewers rankings and general comments on one document and all the reviewers' contextual markings on one manuscript. Manuscript author(s) must agree to be responsible for making required revisions and resubmitting the revised manuscript electronically by set deadlines. Manuscript author(s) must abide by editorial revision decisions.

Accepted manuscripts become the property of the National College Learning Center Association and may not be reprinted without the permission of the NCLCA. Authors relinquish ownership and copyright of the manuscript and may only distribute or transmit the published paper if copyright credit is given to NCLCA, the journal is cited, and all such use is for the personal noncommercial benefit of the author(s).

NCLCA Membership Information

What is NCLCA?

The National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA) is an organization of professionals dedicated to promoting excellence among learning center personnel. The organization began in 1985 as the Midwest College Learning Center Association (MCLCA) and "went national" in 1999, changing the name to the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA), to better represent its nationwide and Canadian membership. NCLCA welcomes any individual interested in assisting college and university students along the road to academic success.

NCLCA defines a learning center as a place where students can be taught to become more efficient and effective learners. Learning Center services may include tutoring, mentoring, Supplemental Instruction, academic and skill-building labs, computer-aided instruction, success seminars and programs, advising, and more.

Join NCLCA

NCLCA seeks to involve as many learning center professionals as possible in achieving its objectives and meeting our mutual needs. Therefore, the NCLCA Executive Board invites you to become a member of the Association.

The membership year extends from October 1 through September 30. The annual dues are $50.00. We look forward to having you as an active member of our growing organization.

Membership Benefits
- A subscription to NCLCA's journal, The Learning Assistance Review
- Discounted registration for the Fall Conference and for the Summer Institute
- Regular issues of the NCLCA Newsletter

- Voting privileges
- Opportunities to serve on the Executive Board
- Special Publications such as the Resource Directory and the Learning Center Bibliography
- Opportunities to apply for professional development grants
- Access to Members Only portion of the website
- Announcements of other workshops, in-services, events, and NCLCA activities

Membership Application

Membership application/renewal available via PayPal: http://www.nclca.org/membership.htm.

Contact the Membership Secretary to request an invoice if needed.

OR

Complete an application and send it with your dues payment to the NCLCA Membership Secretary. Be sure to check whether you are a new member or are renewing your membership. If you are renewing your membership, please provide updated information.

Please direct all questions regarding membership to the contact below:

Eric J Moschella, PhD.
Director, Student Success Center
NCLCA Membership Secretary
University of South Carolina
1322 Greene Street, Columbia, SC 29208
803-777-0684
Moschella@sc.edu