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DOC 1997-12 Learning Assistance Center and Tutorial Services

University of Dayton. Student Academic Policies Committee

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PROPOSAL TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE

TITLE: Learning Assistance Center and Tutorial Services

SUBMITTED BY: Student Academic Policies Committee of the Academic Senate

DATE: December 5, 1997 APPROVED BY: Executive Committee of the Academic Senate

ACTION IS: Legislative

REFERENCE IS: Faculty Handbook, Pg. 47-48

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

The document presents rationales for recommending the following actions:

1. In terms of budget and control, place all Learning Assistance Center Activities under the Provost, with the exception of the Office for Students with Disabilities and help offered to students who have serious problems with study skills or time management and who require counseling services.
2. Establish an oversight committee with representatives from all academic units and from student development to set policy concerning services offered by the LAC. The SAPC recommends the oversight committee consider the following suggestions:

November 25, 1997

To: Academic Senate

From: Student Academic Policies Committee of the Academic Senate

Subject: Learning Assistance Center and Tutorial Services

Rationale

The Student Academic Policies Committee was asked to consider the tutoring program which is run by the Learning Assistance Center (LAC). This request came about as a result of a change in the funding for and offering of tutorial services which occurred immediately before the beginning of the fall 1997 semester and which caused campus-wide concern. In its investigation the SAPC consulted with Jim Melko (Director of the LAC), Deb Bickford (Assistant Provost for Learning Pedagogy), Fred Pestello and Mary Jo Vesper (Associate Deans from the College of Arts and Sciences), Don Ross (Assistant Athletic Director for Academic Services and Compliance), and Bill Schuerman (Vice President for Student Development). Jim Melko provided the documents on the LAC and Tutorial Services which are attached to give background information.

Retention rates for Special Admit students indicate the effectiveness of the work being done with at-risk students at U.D. The low attrition rate of student athletes is another positive indicator. The increased retention of students in the School of Engineering testifies to the success of tutoring programs. In short, there are numerous effective efforts currently being made at U.D. to assist students with their academic work.

The tutorial services offered by the LAC and staffed by student tutors account for a very small portion of the total budget of the LAC (\$28,235 out of \$326,142 for the current year). The remainder of the budget pays for the services of the permanent staff which provides management and training of the tutorial services as well as the Write Place, the Office for Students with Disabilities, developmental courses (DEV 050, 055, 060, 070), Learning Support Services such as peer advisors and the Supplemental Instruction programs, and support programming for Mathematics. In discussion with Jim Melko, Mary Jo Vesper and Don Ross the committee was told that the LAC staff spends large amounts of time on intensive work with a fairly small number of students who have serious problems with study skills, time management or basic skills. Their efforts in this area appear to be quite successful. However, it is not clear that there is enough involvement of faculty in setting priorities for the LAC activities.

While the LAC offers centralized tutoring, there is also a lot of tutoring happening elsewhere on campus. For example, the School of Engineering operates a math and science tutoring/workshop program for engineering students which has a budget of approximately \$40,000 per year. Many departments offer tutoring by students who are assisting faculty or who are hired specifically to

tutor departmental courses. This raises the question of which budgeting unit should be paying for tutoring, and why the LAC offers tutors for some courses and not for others.

The placement of the LAC, and tutorial services in particular, under Student Development instead of under the Provost is an issue that was discussed at length by the committee and those consulted. Without citing numbers, Jim Melko said that it may be more common to offer this type of service under the academic division of a university rather than under student development. Discussion with Dr. Vesper and Dr. Pestello and input from individual faculty suggest a need for more academic oversight in setting policies for tutoring to ensure that academic needs are met. There is concern that the LAC may not be as much of a priority in budgeting for the student development area as it would be under the academic side. Stable funding and programming in this area are essential to the academic program and are expected to increase in importance as the student body increases in diversity.

Recommendations

Because the primary mission of the LAC is academic, the SAPC suggests the following actions:

1. In terms of budget and control, place all Learning Assistance Center activities under the Provost, with the exception of the Office for Students with Disabilities and help offered to students who have serious problems with study skills or time management and who require counseling services.
2. Establish an oversight committee with representatives from all academic units and from student development to set policy concerning services offered by the LAC. The SAPC recommends that the oversight committee consider the following suggestions:
 - a. Review current campus-wide tutoring services and consider offering tutoring centrally through the LAC for lower level, high enrollment courses, such as those associated with basic skills, humanities base and introductory math courses. Make departments responsible for offering tutoring as needed for upper level courses offered mainly for majors.
 - b. Review current methods of placing students in courses and consider the development of improved placement techniques to reduce the amount of tutoring needed due to students having inadequate preparation.
 - c. When establishing a new program, such as the new integrated natural science sequence, incorporate a plan for needed tutorial services.
 - d. Retain drop-in tutoring, which was initially cut in favor of referral tutoring this fall, to avoid discouraging students from using tutoring. There is concern for students who may not want to let their professors know that they are having trouble, as well as for the inconvenience of the referral process.

Learning Assistance Center

Overview of Tutorial Services and Resources for Special Admits Committee

October 15, 1997

History

Original Services

The Learning Assistance Center (LAC) was opened in fall of 1984. Some support services had been previously provided to a select group of students who met the criteria for a federally funded program called Project SURGE (Selection/Support of Undergraduates for Retention, Graduation, and Employment); however, the criteria used for selecting those students was determined to be too limiting. Thus, University funding was substituted so that services could be extended to the larger population in need of academic support.

The need to centralize services arose from anticipation of the Basic Skills Document and from the growth in demand for tutorial services then provided by the Center for Psychological Services (now the Counseling Center). Thus, beginning in the fall of 1984, the LAC began offering courses in Developmental Reading, Mathematics, and Writing, as well as one-on-one tutorial support for students experiencing difficulty in regular University courses.

The original mission statement for the LAC stated that the Center addressed the needs of students who came to the University "less prepared both academically and personally than other students." Likewise, students were originally eligible for tutorial services only if they were (a) earning a C or below in the course and approved for tutoring by their professor, or (b) if their SAT or ACT scores fell below specified levels, or (c) if they could demonstrate a history of difficulty in similar high school courses or in earlier attempts to complete the current course at the college level. Faculty and students reported that students were reluctant to use our support services for fear of being stigmatized.

Drop-In Services

In the fall of 1986, the mission statement as well as tutorial services were expanded to include "students of all ability and achievement levels." At that point, demand for services began to increase until we were regularly exceeding our allocations. In the fall of 1988 in an effort to control costs, the LAC implemented drop-in tutorial services, reserving one-on-one arrangements only for those students who needed assistance beyond what the drop-in services could provide.

In 1995-96, the LAC spent \$44,869 for tutorial services, well in excess of our \$28,235 allocation. Expenses were cut back in 1996-97 to \$37,976, and we began to prepare for trimming services even more to stay within our allocation for the current academic year. However, in March we learned that we would be absorbing the cost of Special Admits programming, thus reducing our funds available for tutorial services from \$28,235 to \$16,235.

Current Services

To stay within our limited resources, we developed a new tutorial system that would focus only on those students with significant need for support as determined by their professors. This system would provide private tutoring and would financially guarantee that every established tutorial relationship would be able to continue for the remainder of the semester even if we were financially unable to fulfill new requests for service later on in the term.

However, the necessity of stretching our resources as far as possible meant that we could only afford minimum wage (which was raised from \$4.25 to \$5.15 without any corresponding University increases) for our tutors, and that we would no longer be able to guarantee them the

LAC: Overview of Tutorial Services and Resources, cont.

B. Write Place

1. Fall

- a) 246 students
- b) 486 contacts
- c) 10 tutors

2. Winter

- a) 137 students
- b) 263 contacts
- c) 8 tutors

III. Learning Assistance Center Staff and General Responsibilities

A. Jim Melko, Director (12 months)

- 1. Learning Assistance Center
- 2. Office for Students with Disabilities

B. Trudy Krisher, Assistant Director (9 months)

- 1. Writing support services
 - a) DEV 070 (Developmental Writing) instruction
 - b) Write Place (writing skills tutoring and other support)
- 2. Developmental course management
- 3. Coordination of DEV 055 (Developmental Study Skills), required of all first-year students on academic probation, and instruction
- 4. Staff development
- 5. Publications and outreach

C. Bev Butter, Assistant Director (12 months)

- 1. Programs for special populations
 - a) Academic support for STEP (Summer Trial Enrollment Program)
 - b) Coordination of BSEP (Business Special Enrollment Program)
 - c) Coordination of SI Program for other Special Admit students
 - d) Special programming for athletes
 - e) Special programming for students on academic probation
- 2. DEV 050 (Critical Reading and Study Skills) instruction
- 3. DEV 055 instruction

D. Karen Mickel, Developmental Mathematics Coordinator (9 months)

- 1. DEV 060 (Developmental Mathematics) instruction
- 2. Support programming for Mathematics

Tutorial Services

Description

Learning Support Services provides a network of tutorial support throughout the University community that provides opportunities beyond the traditional classroom setting for students to mature and succeed as learners. Through the use of undergraduates as peer tutors, Learning Support Services encourages a sense of community in which members recognize each other as potential resources for achieving success. Services are designed to promote student mastery of academic course content, basic skills, study skills and time management.

Goals for Students

Students will:

- ◇ Overcome learning obstacles to course success and content mastery.
- ◇ Develop self-confidence and competence as learners within the course discipline.
- ◇ Explore their attitudes and motivation for learning course content.
- ◇ Understand their learning processes, styles, strengths and weaknesses in relation to the demands of the course.
- ◇ Develop learning goals, plans, and strategies appropriate to the learning tasks at hand.
- ◇ Accept responsibility for their academic success.

Assessment Strategies

- ◇ Supervision and ongoing consultation - All Learning Support Services staff will be observed by and will meet with supervisors on a regular basis.
- ◇ Student surveys - Students will be surveyed at least twice per semester to evaluate the quality of and student satisfaction with tutorial sessions.
- ◇ Student progress reports - Progress reports will be completed by both the student and the facilitator at the end of each one-on-one tutorial sessions and will be reviewed regularly by program supervisors.
- ◇ Consultation - Professional staff and tutors will consult as needed with faculty to evaluate student progress.
- ◇ Grade comparisons - Grades both before and after the utilization of one-on-one tutorial services will be compared to determine improvement.
- ◇ Student satisfaction surveys and evaluations - A summative survey at the completion of one-on-one services as well as community-wide surveys on a periodic basis will be administered and evaluated.
- ◇ Tracking and assessing student demand for services - Course attrition rates and population statistics will be evaluated in relation to resources and services to determine if University priorities for academic support are being met appropriately.