

The Power of Peers: Attracting and Retaining Undergraduate Tutors

NCAT/NGLC Workshop in Columbia, MO

28 September 2011

Margaret W. Cohen

University of Missouri - St. Louis

Peggy_Cohen@umsl.edu

Objectives

- Identify characteristics of effective learning assistants.
- Consider strategies to attract tutors.
- Develop an orientation to introduce tutors to their work.
- Support tutors' success during the term.

What are the characteristics of an effective tutor (graduate? undergraduate?)

- Academics
- Attitudes
- Personality
- What makes an effective model?

Recruiting strategies

- Professor's recommendations
- Department administrative assistants
- Announcements to majors
- Career Services postings
- Office of Student Life
- Campus newspaper ads
- Flyers on campus

Selection processes

- HR application for student employment
 - previous experiences
 - reliability
 - tenacity, perseverance
- CTL application for student employment
 - academic maturity skills
 - metacognitive skills
 - discovering passions
- Interview

CTL@UMSL Application & Interview

1. Describe top three favorite courses
2. Describe all-time favorite instructor
- 3–4. Identify your strengths and weaknesses: personal/academic/professional
5. What appeals to you most about helping your peers succeed?

In Search Of

- Mature, reflective thinkers
 - Analyze how prof communicates
 - Engage in self-reflection
 - Empathize with those seeking tutoring
- Know how to learn
 - Note taking skills
 - Time management skills
 - Understand how studying is my work (job)
- Know what to learn

Learner-Centered Teaching (Weimer, 2002)

“Being learner-centered focuses attention squarely on the learning:

- what the student is learning,
- how the student is learning,
- the conditions under which the student is learning,
- whether the student is retaining and applying the learning, and
- how current learning positions the student for future learning....

When instruction is learner-centered, the action focuses on what students (not teachers) are doing” (p. xvi).

Orienting

- Peer Academic Leaders Seminars (PALS)
 - Offered multiple times as term begins
 - Invite all UGs working with peers across the campus
 - 2.5 hours w/ snacks
 - Experiential, engaging strategies
 - Certificate of completion

-
- Intro to campus policies, resources
 - Intro to running a tutoring session

Orienting to campus policies & resources

- Confidentiality – FERPA, HIPAA
- Respect - positive work & learning environment, nondiscrimination
- Boundary issues - sexual harassment
- Codes of conduct
 - Student behavior
 - Academic honesty
 - Professional codes
- Academic supports on campus

Orienting to campus resources

- Undergrad tutors
 - Working solo, in pairs
 - Leading collaborative study sessions
- Online tutors: NetTutor, Second Life
- Writing Center & Math Center
- FYE mentors
- Center for Student Success
- Library Tutorials
- Technology labs, Res Halls, Libraries

Orienting to the Tutoring Cycle

- Building relationships
- Planning sessions together
 - Alternative formats (solo, small groups)
- Striving toward a product
 - Developing learning skills
 - Meeting an upcoming need for the course
 - Letting the student do the work

-
- Videos of effective, ineffective sessions
 - PALS models a variety of strategies

Continuing supports for peer tutors

- Bi-weekly meetings
 - Linked to payroll cycle
 - 2 hours
 - Topics
 - Snacks
 - Submit hours, planning & assessment records
- Creating a community, home base
- Library for academic skills focal to discipline
- Working with instructors

NOTES: