

Service provides students with necessary help

Each year, more students are seeking tutorial help

By Carrie Dennett
Emerald Contributor

Each term, more than 1,000 students seek some form of tutorial assistance from the Center for Academic Learning Services, located in the Knight Library.

Surprisingly, most of the assistance is not requested from students who are in danger of failing their classes.

"Increasingly, we are seeing students who are borderline or doing reasonably well, but have aspirations to do better," said David Hubin, ALS director. "As the University has become increasingly competitive to get in, students are coming here who are not used to ever having seen a 'C'."

Jon Clauss, a math GTF and ALS tutor for three years, agrees with Hubin.

"The majority are getting 'B's' and want higher grades. But you do get a number of students who are in bad shape," he said.

Hubin said as better students come to the University, there are more requests for academic assistance.

"I think it's a reflection of the competitive environment," he said.

The University of California-Berkeley and Stanford University are also receiving an increased demand for learning support as they become more selective, he said.

The primary student interests are in math, the quantitative sciences, and foreign languages, Hubin said.

"The disciplines where they build on previous knowledge

or concepts are where we see our requests for tutoring," he said.

Jerry Wolfe, an associate professor in the math department, said tutoring is sometimes the most effective solution for people with academic questions that is available.

"The people I have recommended for tutoring are struggling with things that aren't directly related to the class. They may be in calculus but are having problems with algebraic concepts," he said.

"We just don't have the time to really give them the help they need with those kinds of problems."

Assistance by the faculty recommended tutors can be found in three areas. The first is the tutorial group, which involves a tutor meeting twice a week with up to three students from the same class.

"We run those groups in the areas where there is a high demand," Hubin said.

The other areas are individual tutoring, in which a student and a tutor are matched through the ALS data base, and the free drop-in lab, which is used mostly by students who need immediate help, Hubin said.

Each term, around 450 students use individual or group tutors, and the math lab receives over 2,000 visits from an additional 600 students.

ALS keeps records of how well students were helped.

"We do an evaluation of each tutor, and we do an evaluation of the program," Hubin said.

Hubin added the tutor/student relationship should



Photo by Mark Ylen

Michel Kovcholovsky, left, of the ALS program, gives math student Bryan Jones some help with his homework. The ALS program provides assistance to over 1,000 students a term.

not be dependent. The true measure of success is how well the student can do without assistance after leaving ALS, he said.

Clauss currently works with a tutorial group and puts in several hours a week in the math lab.

"I've seen a lot of success here in this math lab and with students that I've tutored," he said.

"Tutors are able to give a much more detailed description of the concepts, as well as intuitive notions and tricks of the trade, because we're all students.

"We're able to spend a lot more time on any individual concept, we have all the luxuries that a teacher lacks," he said.

Increased class sizes have made it difficult for instructors to give individual attention, Wolfe said it is very difficult for one instructor and one GTF to accommodate 120 students.

"If any significant portion of the students showed up at one time, we would be swamped," he said.

ALS also offers a three-credit course, "Introduction to University Study," which has an enrollment of 250 students per

year. "We turn away more than two people for every one person we can admit because we don't have enough sections," Hubin said.

He is hoping to expand the course sections to make the class more available to students who want to enroll in it.

"Universities that have been developing these courses have found that students get far better oriented if they are given an introduction course that talks about the structure of the university, the expectations, and

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