

MyMathLab: complicated

Dustin Ragsdale
The Clackamas Print

MyMathLab is one of the CourseCompass online homework programs now being used in some departments at Clackamas. Students are encountering more headache than anticipated when signing up for math classes with MyMathLab, but the challenge is not the math itself.

Mathematics and computers have a longstanding rivalry for the king of nerdy pursuits, dating back more than 50 years, when the concept of computation first began its division into two very different sciences.

Since the fateful time of silicon valleys and solar-powered dreams, math and Computer Science have cemented their differences, while stimulating each other's growth.

A perfect example of the loving (sometimes grudgingly) relationship and (usually) peaceful coexistence between this parent and child of the sciences can be found in Streeter Hall.

Just take a look at a floor plan of Streeter Hall and the Streeter Hall Annex buildings. From above, it appears that the CS Department is trying to escape the Math Department's clutches by making a b-line down the hall, around the corner, through the Annex and off to open fields of corrective lens liberty and pocket protector prosperity.

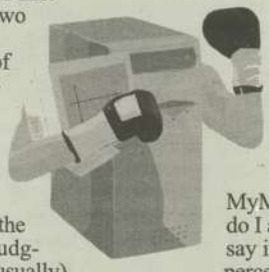
However, the CS Department's roots are firmly planted in Streeter Hall, surrounded by mathematics.

Zoom-in closer on the image of Streeter, and one sees the fulcrum of this balance. Streeter Academic

Computing Labs hosts the newest incarnation of the calculating-computer love/hate relationship.

On the screens of computers in Streeter, students are encountering their latest struggle with the re-acquaintance of mathematics and PCs.

"Figuring out how [CourseCompass] wants the answer is 99 percent of the game with MyMathLab. You can know the material and not put your answer 'right.' Then, you have to do a second problem, and it takes at least twice as long," said Chris Hill, an Education Major now enrolled in Algebra I.



"I find myself spending more time with students explaining the program than the math. The most common question with MyMathLab is 'How do I answer this?' I'd say it's more than 50 percent of the com-

mon questions," said CCC Math Tutor Theodore Bieber, who is enrolled in Statistics II.

According to Math Department Chair Kurt Lewendowski, this is an old battle for math educators. The science of mathematics is being challenged to present itself as stand-alone information without the aid of a math guru to explain the material; thus the idea behind MyMathLab. This has never been an easy undertaking, though; teaching the highly technical science of math in a way that can be easily understood without an expert around can seem near-impossible, like trying to teach someone to sing without opening your mouth.

Despite the great challenge involved, more "MyMathLab success stories" are being related back to instructors every term. Many younger students and others already comfortable with PC-use have learned the MyMathLab program quickly.

"With regular homework, if you don't understand the problem, you have the opportunity to skip it and move on. But with MyMathLab, if you don't understand a problem, it gives you plenty of examples and takes you through step-by-step," said Jessica Maurier, who is an Early Childhood Education major enrolled in Algebra I.

"I will say the premise is good, but the execution is tough," said Christine Campanella, an Education Major and CCC Math Tutor now enrolled in Differential Equations.

In light of the fact that students seem to be having more difficulty with the computer side of their

math homework, shouldn't there be computers in the Math Lab? All students pay lab fees to have the aid of the Math Lab and math tutors available to them when they register for math classes. One would think that since the new system of homework involves computers, that the Math Lab should have computers inside of it, not next to it.

Currently, students can either do their homework with tutors and without computers, or with computers and without the math tutors. As well, math tutors have to keep an eye out for students with questions, which is flat-out

impossible when they are scattered throughout the computer lab next door.

If a student does manage to get a tutor after having to get up, securing their belongings, leaving the area, finding the right type of tutor (good luck finding one who isn't already helping people in the Math Lab) and bringing them back into the computer lab, then they have just removed a tutor from the Math Lab - usually for several minutes.

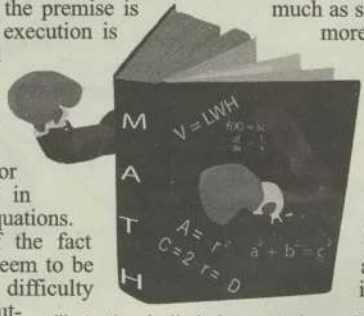
Now, instead of being able to coordinate a few students' questions into some sort of rotation, that tutor is lucky if they can so much as see, let alone help more than one math student at once.

After hearing the suggestion of computers in the Math Lab, Lewendowski gave an optimistic response. It appears that the idea will soon be discussed as another

possible way to help students make the transition from the dead-tree-edition-addition of last century to the computer-calculation-curriculum of contemporary times.

CourseCompass is also constantly updating their services in order to stay competitive. There is good news for math students in Spring Term: by the time classes begin, MyMathLab will be updated to a newer, more user-friendly version with the exact same content as that found in textbooks.

"Students are catching on to the idea. They are figuring [MyMathLab] out; it just takes time," said Bieber.



Illustrations by Kayla Berge Clackamas Print

Campus Poll: What are you doing over Spring Break?



Josh Seater



Branwin Jones



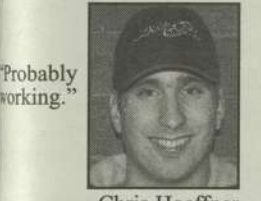
Justin Munsui



Jeannie Scantling



John Schmidt



Chris Hoeffner



Keiko Yokoyama

Campus Poll compiled by Jenessa Palmer and Megan Koler

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How to survive taxes

on APRIL 17

Andrea Simpson
The Clackamas Print

Forty-eight days until what is perhaps the most dreaded day of the year: April 17. Tax day. Tax day falls on the 17th this year because April 15 is a Sunday and the 16th is a national holiday in Washington D.C.

Everyone with an income fears this day more than they fear contracting the plague and bird flu combined. Fear not taxpayers; no need to fret, because this tax season, you too can breeze through with no problems.

There are several different ways to file taxes.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) offers those who qualify the option of filing taxes electronically for free.

To find out if you qualify, go to <http://www.irs.gov/>. The forms can also be found online, to be printed, filled out and mailed in.

I highly recommend that if any problems arise and you want to contact the IRS, do not wait until April 16 to call. You will most likely not

get through, and if you do, you will encounter a grumpy, harassed, overworked IRS agent and very little will be accomplished.

Another option is to buy a tax service in a box. These claim that they help you save more by seeking out tax deductions that you may not have known you qualify for.

There are many different brands, including Turbo Tax and H&R Block. User reviews vary on these services. H&R Block Taxcut Basic received rave reviews for its easy-to-use question-and-answer format and the fact that it's a free download. It received a user rating of five out of five stars.

Turbo Tax is a program you have to pay for, but one that users claim will give you a larger tax return than H&R Block. However, users claim that it puts limitations on e-filing



Illustration by Kayla Berge Clackamas Print

your taxes. The last option is to just hire a professional to do your taxes for you. Save all your receipts, and keep track of all your expenses and potential deductions. This is the easiest, most painless and number one way to survive doing taxes. The cost is

different for every tax company, but all are fairly reasonable.

Taxes don't have to cause you a headache if you start early and get professional help. So sit back, relax and watch others scramble to not be caught in the crossfire of the IRS.

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