Online Academic Support for Developmental Education: Experiences from Three Colleges

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Smarthinking at NOVA's Extended Learning Institute

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NOVA Overview

- DC metro area

- 6-campus community college

- 78,000 students

- Majority of students need remediation in math and/or English to become college-ready

Extended Learning Institute (ELI)

- Offering distance learning since 1975

- 300 courses with 300+ faculty serving 11,000 students per semester

- Robust student support services including student life program, online library services including embedded librarians, virtual academic advising, success coaches, and online tutoring

Developmental Education at ELI

Spring 2011: over 550 students in online developmental education courses (31% English, 59% math)

Implementation of Smarthinking at ELI

- Implemented summer 2007
- First full year = 1304 hours used, now using 2500+ per year
- Most-used subjects by far = basic math and writing center

Implementation, cont'd: Policies and Logistics

- ELI students enrolled each term into Smarthinking so only DL students have access; unlimited hours allowed

- Information provided on ELI website, in Blackboard course sites, through student blog and newsletter, by mass email, and direct from faculty

- Funded through IT budget (which funds entire DL program)

Challenges and Observations

- Clear benefits—convenience, anonymity, retained records of tutoring sessions, "TA function" for faculty

- Challenges of assessing impact on student success

- Particular needs of developmental-level writers

- Student development challenges—developmental students less comfortable asking for help

- Use of online tutoring requires better literacy skills

Delaware County Community College

Lametha Northern, M.Ed , Kutztown University
Director of Act 101 Program and Tutoring Services
Earned Post-Graduate Credits at the University of the Arts and Penn State University

- Involved with developmental education for more than 30 years working with college-level students earning a two-year degree or transferring to a four-year institution of higher education.

- Professional goals have always revolved around working with at-risk students to assist them i in actualizing their academic hidden potential.

- Educational philosophy is to encourage students to reach beyond the present and prepare for tomorrow with a vision of excellence.

Delaware County Community College

Since our founding in 1967, Delaware County Community College has been serving the educational needs of Delaware and Chester counties.

Today, the College is the center of educational opportunity in Delaware and Chester counties, with more than 28,000 students enrolled each year. Whether you're looking to work toward a bachelor's degree, advance your career by earning an associate degree or professional certificate, or just take a course for personal fulfillment, you can find yourself here.

LOCATIONS

DELAWARE COUNTY
MARPLE CAMPUS – MEDIA, PA   SOUTHEAST CENTER – SHARON HILL, PA

CHESTER COUNTY
EXTON CENTER   PENNOCK BRIDGE CAMPUS   DOWNINGTOWN, PA

SPRING 2011 DEMOGRAPHICS

STUDENT POPULATION

Total Students Enrolled	12,073	
Full Time	4,942	
Part Time	7,131	

Gender

Female	6,782
Male	5,291

Race/Ethnic Group: Spring

	Enrollments	Percentages
Black/African American	2,752	23 %
Native American	12	0.1%
Asian	506	4.2%
Hispanic	241	2.0%
White	7,639	63.9%
Native Hawaiian/Other Islander	13	0.1%
Other	560	4.7%
Two or more races	225	1.9%

Why we decided to implemented online tutoring?

- Directors of the Learning Centers and the Act 101/Tutoring Lab identified shortcomings in our total college tutor availability
- Provide tutoring support to students at off-campus sites
- Provide tutoring for distance learning courses (student would not need to travel to campus for tutoring)
- SMARTHINKING would supplement tutor availability for students in need of help but would not replace peer or professional tutors who provide face to face tutoring
- SMARTHINKING would give all students access to tutoring after hours and during weekends when our services are not available

Expected Outcomes

- Provide tutorial support seven days per week.
- Provide tutorial support for distance learning students.
- Increase the retention rate of students completing on-line courses.
- Improve the retention rate and/or course grade of student's first time attempt of a course.
- Accommodate tutorial needs of students unable to schedule appointments for hands-on tutoring sessions because of other responsibilities.
- Increased tutoring support at off-site campuses in writing, math, science and business.

IMPLEMENTATION OF SMARTHINKING

First SMARTHINKING Online Tutoring Services Agreement
- Fall semester 2006, DCCC purchased 600 hours
- Each year the number of hours purchased increased to 1,000 hours per semester
- Fall semester 2010 - added the SMARTHINKING Nursing tutoring option

Marketing Strategies: To advertise SMARTHINKING and provide on line tutoring 24/7 to all DCCC students
Strategies Implemented:
- Staff Training
- Student Workshops (How to access on-line tutoring)
- Faculty Professional Development with SMARTHINKING representative
- Adjunct Faculty In-service
- Freshman orientation presentations
- Advertised service with flyers, brochure, bookmarkers
- 10-15 minute classroom presentations
- Increase faculty involvement
  - Encourage students to use SMARTHINKING as a tutorial support
  - One assignment using SMARTHINKING services

Faculty Support
- In-class SMARTHINKING announcement.
- Place SMARTHINKING website on syllabus each semester.
- Encourage struggling students to use on-lining tutoring.
- Assign an activity/exercise related to course content.

Student Access
- DCCC Portal – deleGate – one click access to SMARTHINKING ON-LINE tutoring
- Each semester students are assigned five hours of SMARTHINKING ON-LINE tutoring
- SMARTHINKING e-mail address

Faculty Feedback

12/14/2010

Thank you for making Smart Thinking available to our students at Delaware County Community College. In the fall of 2009 I attended a workshop on Smart Thinking. Since then I have required the use of Smart Thinking for several of my REA050 assignments. Students enrolled in this course can have a variety of writing experience therefore this service helps all levels of writers to be successful. Since requiring this support I have seen a noted improvement in my student writing. Several of my students have commented on the easy of use and how they intend to use the service in their future courses. This semester both Lametha Northern and Dawn Moscariello have been an invaluable support. They have helped to support my students and have also advocated for student access to this tutoring resource.

Professor of Reading

11/18/2010

The tutors at SmarThinking (many of whom are graduates from Harvard, Boston University, and Boston College) have helped our students, esp. those who don't have the time to meet with a tutor at our Writing Center, to get important feedback on their essays. I'm grateful to those who initiated that program here at DCCC, esp. Lametha Northern and her team, and the college for support this online tutorial financially.

Professor of English and Communications

SMARTHINKING TOTALS

	New Registration	Distinct Users	Online Writing		Live Session		Submitted Questions		Total	
			Sessions	Hours	Sessions	Hours	Sessions	Hours		
Fall 2006	146	57	51	29:45	61	32:36	23	7:40	70:01	
Spring 2007	174	133	150	87:30	210	108:56	24	8:00	204:26	
Summer 2007	46	36	55	32:05	35	14:31	8	2:40	49:16	13.488194
Fall 2007	178	116	155	90:15	166	90:54	18	6:00	187:09	
Spring 2008	167	124	175	102:05	205	114:29	20	6:40	223:14	
Summer 2008	47	30	63	36:45	115	71:00	10	3:20	111:05	21.727778
Fall 2008	194	134	127	74:05	180	89:02	18	6:00	169:07	
Spring 2009	182	147	213	124:15	319	163:08	16	5:20	292:43	
Summer 2009	68	48	73	42:35	58	30:30	13	4:20	77:25	22.46875
Fall 2009	473	355	654	381:30	326	166:28	39	13:00	560:58	
Spring 2010		0	762	501:30	377	201:03	32	13:20	715:53	
Summer 2010		114	160	143:50	66	33:48	22	9:10	186:48	60.985417
Fall 2010		622	1361	896:05	327	155:18	25	10:25	1061:48	
Spring 2011		150	152	100:50	50	22:25	8	3:20		
Summer 2011										
Total	1675	2066	4151	2643:05	2495	1294:08	276	99:15		

Total Session	Total Hours:Min	Total Hours Purchased	Hours Remaining
6922	4036:28	4700:00	663:32

SMARTHINKING ON-LINE TUTORING

STUDENT EVALUATION RESULTS

Eighty-six percent (86%) of the students surveyed last semester said that they would use SMARTHINKING in the future. When asked if they would recommend SMARTHINKING to other students, 77% said they would.

Of the students that utilized the service last semester

- 37 % indicated excellent as their overall satisfaction level, 32% above average and 16% as average.
- When asked if the tutor was helpful the satisfaction level is as follow: 47% indicated excellent, 32% above average, and 16% as average.
- 47% of the respondents said that SMARTHINKING helped them get a better grade in the course.

Introduction

- Jenny Koster
- Assistant Professor of English / Writing Center Coordinator
- Course taught: Preparation for College Writing 1 & 2 [as part of a Learning Community with Student Development courses), College Comp 1 &2, Creative Writing

Piedmont Virginia Community College

- Located in Charlottesville, Virginia
- 5,551 students, or 2,793 full-time-equivalent students
- In 2009-2010:
- 29% off campus
- 98% in-state
- 25% first-time college students
- 51% in transfer programs

Developmental Ed@PVCC

- In 2006, 555 students enrolled in developmental courses—reading, writing and math.
- Pass rates in developmental English courses were 77 to 78%.
- 71% of students from developmental English passed College Comp with 4 years, compared to 81% of the general population.
- 18% of students taking developmental English graduate or transfer within 4 years, compared to 42% of the general population

Why online tutoring?

- To serve a growing number of off-campus [dual enrollment and distance ed] students
- To supplement on campus resources— campus closed on Sundays
- To serve our population of commuter students

Why Smarthinking?

- Maximize availability to students
  - 24/7 tutoring in Math
  - Late night hours
  - Essay submission
- Provide pedagogically sound tutoring
  - Tutors tutor not edit
  - Tutors understand writing process
- Administrative efficiency
  - Providing written feedback requires a higher level of training and supervision

Implementation

- Best to introduce at the beginning of a semester
- Used predominantly by English faculty
- Students access it through our website
- Market via fliers, presentations, emails to students

Usage & Impact

- Approximately 300 Smarthinking Essay Center submissions per semester; 2/3 use it more than once.
- Evidence suggests that students who use tutoring services at PVCC two or more times are 10 to 20% more likely to successfully pass their course [C or above]
- English faculty love Smarthinking
- Students like the ease and anonymity of submitting their papers online

Open Discussion