

Tutoring and Academic Success Centers

Report of Activities

March 2005

**Three Rivers Community College
Norwich, CT**



Table of Contents

Background

Background	2
TASC Mission Statement	2
TASC Goals	2

Tutoring

In-Center Tutoring

Activity	3
Results	5

In-Class Tutoring

Activity	7
----------------	---

Online Tutoring

Activity	7
----------------	---

Testing

In-house Testing

Activity	8
----------------	---

Non-TRCC Testing

Activity	9
----------------	---

Computers

Computer Labs	10
---------------------	----

Adaptive Technologies	10
-----------------------------	----

Math Computer Lab	10
-------------------------	----

Workshops

Academic Workshops	11
--------------------------	----

Learning Skills Workshops	11
---------------------------------	----

<u>Website</u>	11
-----------------------------	----

<u>Books and Videotapes</u>	11
--	----

<u>Other Activities</u>	12
--------------------------------------	----

Background

The Tutoring and Academic Success Centers (TASC) offer academic support to all students at Three Rivers Community College. TASC primarily provides this support through one-on-one peer tutoring, although we also offer assistance to our students in many other ways.

TASC has undergone many changes since issuing its last formal activity report during the Summer Semester, 2001. The former TASC Coordinator, John Whitman, left Three Rivers at the beginning of the Fall Semester, 2002. The college chose not to refill his position at that time, but instead, assigned two full-time staff members to share his duties: Marie Peloquin on the Mohegan Campus and Matt Burbine on the Thames Campus. In a previously existing staff position, a part-time Educational Assistant/Lead Tutor, Patricia Tellekamp, now assists with administrative duties in addition to her tutoring responsibilities. At that same time, Three Rivers established a Writing Center on the Mohegan Campus, apart from the Tutoring Centers on each main campus. A full-time staff member, Jon Brammer, serves part-time as Writing Center Coordinator as well as part-time as English faculty.

Although much has changed since the last report, TASC's Mission Statement and Goals remain the same:

TASC Mission Statement

- To promote student success by providing a responsive and supportive environment of academic assistance that improves student performance and persistence.
- To promote student success by sharing our knowledge of the learning process with students, faculty, administration, and staff in a collaborative partnership for the enhancement of learning.
- To promote student success by providing academic support services to faculty.

TASC Goals

- To promote in each learner the skills and attitudes necessary for the attainment of academic, career, and life goals.
- To enhance the retention of students.
- To help students develop positive attitudes and confidence in their ability to learn.

Although the end of the academic year would be the logical time to issue a report of activities, because of the long hiatus since the last report, we decided to issue the report now, to be followed with a supplemental report later. The following sections describe the activities of TASC since the last report and the changes that have occurred.

Tutoring

In-Center Tutoring

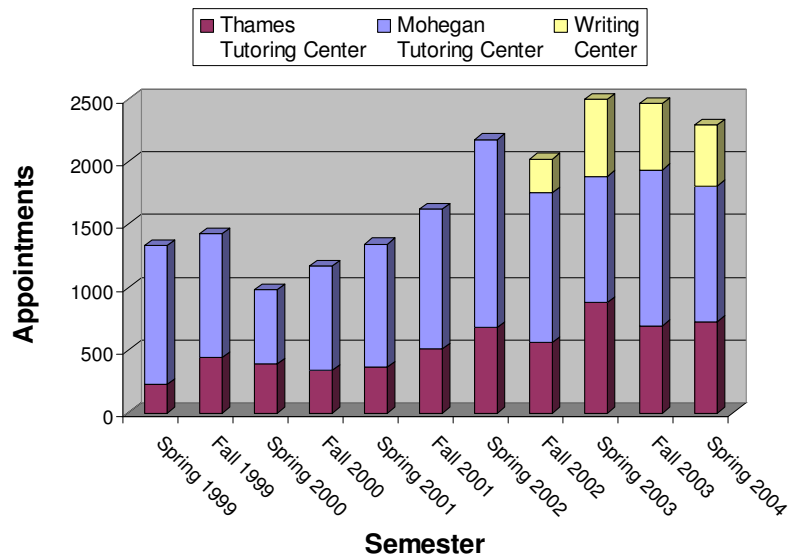
TASC provides free one-on-one and group tutoring to Three Rivers students in the Tutoring Centers located in the Learning Resource Center (LRC) on each main campus. Peer tutors, recommended by their instructors and often qualified to tutor in more than one discipline, provide the bulk of this service, assisted by the administrative staff and faculty volunteers. TASC compensates its peer tutors generally through financial aid awards and student worker funds. The centers offer tutoring in many subject areas each semester, depending on the availability of tutors. Additionally, if a student expresses a need for help in a specific discipline not offered, TASC staff attempt to obtain help for the student.

Activity

In the Spring Semester, 2004, TASC employed 24 peer tutors, with 19 of them working primarily on the Mohegan Campus, the rest at Thames Valley. Similar staffing levels existed in the several previous semesters. Also, over the past several years, TASC has received tutoring assistance in mathematics from Professor Brian Kennedy and Professor Emeritus Gerald Gazso, and, more recently, in economics from Instructor Philip Mayer.

Although staffing levels have remained fairly steady, the number of tutoring sessions performed by TASC has increased in recent years (See Figure 1, below, right). Not counting the summer semesters, during the 1999-2000 Academic Year, TASC conducted 2404 hour-long tutoring sessions. During the past academic year, though, we provided 3742 hour-long sessions to 481 “student/subjects” (some students were tutored in more than one subject) at the two centers.

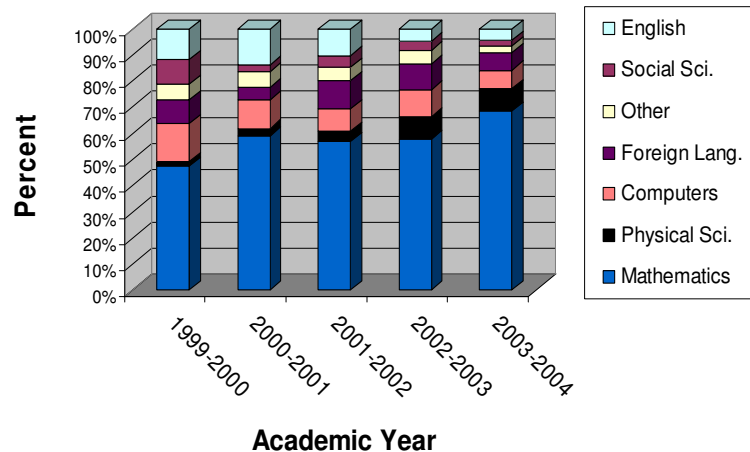
Figure 1: Tutoring Appointments



Although these figures represent a dramatic 56% increase in tutoring sessions over the past three years, they do not fully represent the overall increase in student usage of tutoring services here at Three Rivers. Since its inception in fall 2002, the Writing Center has assumed a large part of the duties formerly held by the Tutoring Centers. As seen in Figure 1, when taking appointments at the Writing Center into account, student use of tutoring services has practically doubled. (Note: Use the chart for illustrative purposes only due to differences in Tutoring Center and Writing Center data reporting. Since Writing Center appointments usually lasted less than the typical hour-long Tutoring Center appointment, we only counted Writing Center face-to-face appointments, not email submissions. Refer to the Writing Center Annual Report for actual data.)

Tutoring for mathematics courses accounts for the largest percentage of the tutoring sessions performed by TASC (see Figure 2, below). The share has increased from 1151 appointments, or 47% of the total sessions, in the 1999-2000 academic year to 2575 appointments for 69% of the sessions in the past year. Tutoring for the physical sciences also increased during this period, although on a smaller scale.

Figure 2: Tutoring By Discipline



Of the mathematics courses, the developmental mathematics courses (MAT 078 and MAT 090, now MAT 075 and MAT 095) have accounted for an average of 47% of all mathematics tutoring over the past five academic years. Despite an increase in the number of developmental mathematics tutoring appointments (from 410 in the 1999-2000 academic year to 1170 in 2003-2004), the actual percentage has remained nearly constant over this period.

At the same time, student use of the Tutoring Centers for help in English and social science courses has dropped both in numbers and in percent of total appointments. Since the social sciences (not to mention English) are often writing intensive courses, obviously the Writing Center now fulfills the needs of many of these students. Student use of the Writing Center has had little impact, though, on the number of students coming to the Thames Valley TASC for help in English; the Thames Valley center remains a convenient alternative to traveling to the Writing Center's sole location on the Mohegan Campus.

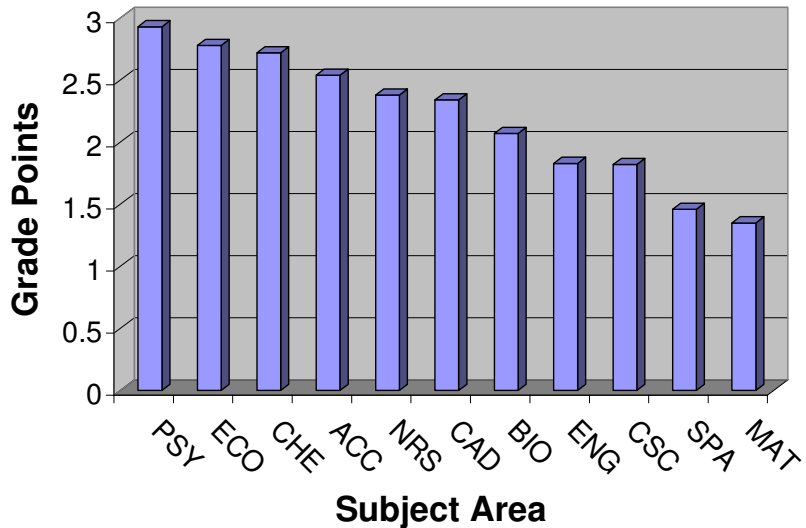
Results

Prior to this spring semester of 2004, we collected no data regarding the success of students using TASC services; reports of success remained purely anecdotal. For the Spring Semester 2004, though, we began collecting data including tutees' final grades in the courses in which they were tutored. However, the data-gathering process remained slow, as TASC staff continued learning how to use BANNER "on-the-job." Recent talks, though, with Three Rivers' Director of Institutional Research, George Rezendes, revealed more efficient means of gathering information, which we hope to employ in the future. However, for the time being, we present some of the results of this past spring's data collection here, with the following caveats:

1. Due to the time-consuming methods used to collect the data, we have currently made no efforts to gather past tutee-success data to compare with.
2. We also lack comparison data for the general student population.
3. Developmental courses assign an "NC" or "M" grade (both worth 0 grade points) to any grade below "C," thereby eliminating the entire "D" range for those courses. This may skew the resulting means to the low side.

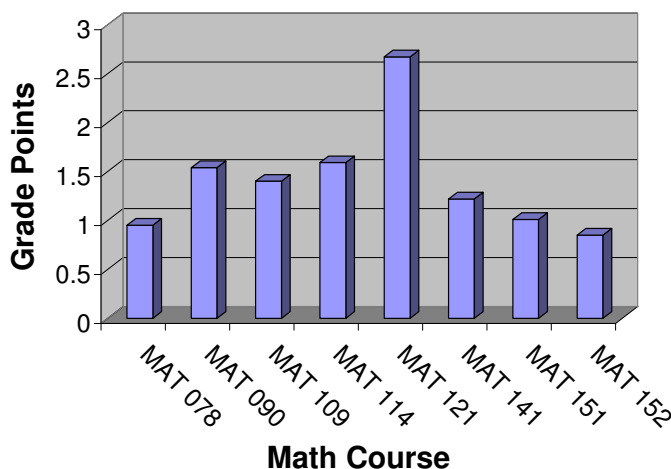
Overall, tutees earned a mean of 1.63 grade points (D+) in the subjects for which they received tutoring. Since mathematics comprises over 50% of our tutoring sessions, we may logically compare the outcome of mathematics tutees to the rest of the tutee population. Students in non-mathematics courses earned a mean of 2.08 grade points (C), while mathematics tutees earned a mean of 1.35 grade points (D+). This seems to reflect the anecdotal general trend of the entire student population. Figure 3, right, depicts a complete breakdown of grade points earned by tutees in selected subject areas.

Figure 3: Grade Points by Subject



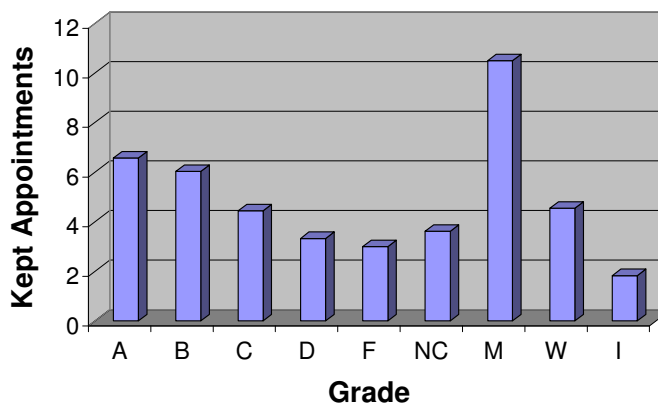
The division between developmental and non-developmental math courses presented another logical comparison. However, tutees in non-developmental math courses earned a mean of only 0.09 grade points higher than those in developmental courses. In fact, mean grade points earned by tutees in all mathematics courses remained fairly consistent, with the exception of Statistics (MAT 121, now MAT 163) (see Figure 4, right).

Figure 4: Math Grades



Another comparison that can be made is the relation between the numbers of appointments kept by the tutees with their final grade in the course. Those students having greater than 10 appointments earned a mean of 2.00 grade points (C-), students keeping between 5 and 10 appointments earned 1.57 grade points (D+), and students keeping less than 5 appointments earned 1.50 grade points (D+). Figure 5, below, gives a different portrayal of this relationship, relating the letter grade earned to the number of kept appointments.

Figure 5: Number of Appt.s by Grade



Although there appears to be some correlation between the number of completed tutoring sessions and the grade earned by the tutee, we do not want to imply causation; other factors may well be responsible for the outcome as well. Student motivation likely played a major role in the students' successes. A

student motivated enough to attend multiple tutoring sessions is most likely committed to succeeding and will apply himself in other areas of learning, too. In support of this point, note the mean number of appointments kept by students earning a grade of "M" in Figure 5. Only four tutees received an "M" ("Maintaining Progress" in a developmental class), while 37 tutees received an "NC" ("No Credit" in a developmental class). The two grades hold the same grade point value and have the same result, and the instructor apparently chooses between the two at his discretion. Most likely, the effort exerted by the student in class matched the effort put into receiving tutoring, and the instructor recognized this effort by awarding the "M" grade.

In-Class Tutoring

In addition to in-center tutoring, TASC has supplied in-class tutors to various faculty members since 1990. We have continued this practice for the last several years. TASC supplies the tutor, but the instructor and the tutor develop the nature of the tutor's role. TASC compensates the tutor in the same way we compensate our in-center tutors: through financial aid awards and student worker funds. Optionally, the instructor and tutor may instead elect to develop an independent study contract that grants course credit to the tutor. This contract may include duties such as independent research or developing hand-outs or study guides in addition to actual tutoring of the students in the class.

Activity

Since the last activity report, TASC has supplied in-class tutors to classes such as Biology, Computer Applications I & II, Desktop Publishing, and Computer Assisted Drafting. In the 2003-2004 Academic Year, 7 in-class tutors worked with 6 separate classes, working between 6 and 15 hours per week. The tutors often work with the students not only during class and laboratory time, but assist them outside of class time as well.

Online Tutoring

TASC maintains a web page, "Ask TASC," where students can submit questions online. The questions may involve class-related material or general school-related information. TASC staff attempt to answer these questions by email within 24 hours (during the week).

Also, although not overseen by TASC per se, Three Rivers has participated in an online tutoring program for the past several years. The Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC) hosts the program, with the participation of approximately 15 Community Colleges and Universities in Connecticut. Each school provides from 1 to 5 tutors to the program, with the services open to all students at the participating schools. Matt Burbine has served as TRCC's Coordinator of Online Tutoring since 2002, and TRCC has supplied between 1 and 4 tutors per semester during this period. The Davis grant previously funded these tutors at an EA pay rate.

Activity

Despite the distribution of flyers and brochures, a web page where students can register online, and presentations to new students, few Three Rivers students have used the CTDLC online tutoring program. Several reasons for this may exist, but the most probable is that the program duplicates many of the services already offered at TRCC. Both Tutoring Centers and the Writing Center all offer abundant in-person tutoring. Submission of essay drafts emerged as the online program's most-used service, but the Writing Center here also accepts email submission of essay drafts in addition to its in-person sessions.

The Davis Grant expired at the end of the 2003-2004 academic year, but Dean Goetchius secured funding for Three Rivers to participate for the current year. Due to its low usage, the program's future is currently under debate.

Testing

In-house Testing

TASC administers makeup exams to Three Rivers' students for those professors wishing to use the service. With the advent of distance learning courses, TASC now also administers exams for many of these Three Rivers courses as well.

Activity

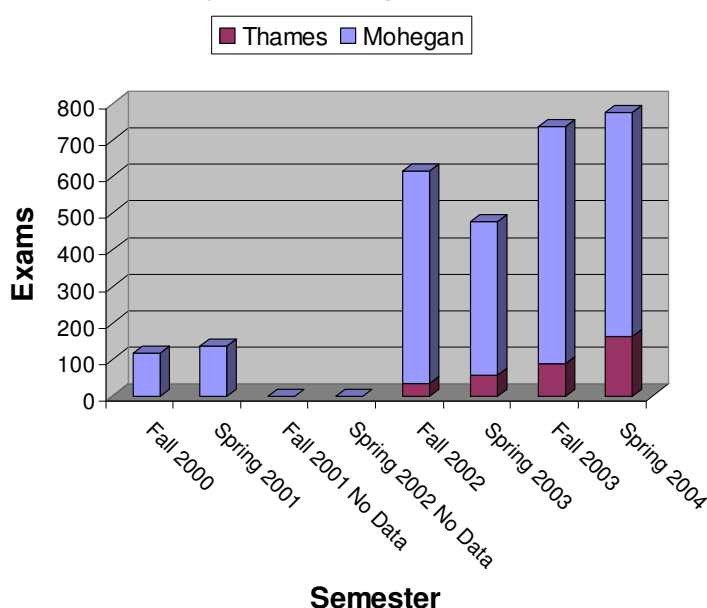
The total number of exams proctored by TASC has increased astronomically over the past few years. While we could not locate data for many previous years, sources show that TASC administered 118 exams during fall 2000, and 138 in spring 2001 (TASC 2000-2001 Report of Activities). Since then, the numbers have soared to 736 exams in fall 2003 and 776 in spring 2004 (see Fig. 6, below). These large numbers of exams require a significant amount of staff time not only in the actual administration of the exams, but in record-keeping and disposition of the tests as well.

Prior to the Fall 2002 Semester, only the Mohegan Campus TASC provided this test-proctoring service. On the Thames Valley Campus, instructors would leave makeup exams in a slot in the LRC mail box. However, due to several reasons, including a need for increased test accountability along with an increase in use of the service, the Thames Valley TASC assumed the testing duties as of that semester.

At that time, TASC staff established a formal procedure for the control, administration, and documentation of makeup (and other) exams coming to the TASC on both campuses. The procedure specifies the responsibilities of all parties involved: the student, the instructor, and TASC. Implementation of the procedure has resulted in a more secure and accountable system. The in-house testing procedure is posted online at http://www.trcc.commnet.edu/ed_resources/tasc/testing_inhouse.htm.

However, one deficiency in the testing system remains. The Mohegan TASC testing room has room for only 3 students at one time and the Thames Valley TASC does not have a dedicated room for testing. If more than three students need to take a test at one time (or any students on the Thames Campus), they must take their exams among the library patrons. If the student needs absolute quiet, TASC staff must request use of the LRC Conference Room and TASC must commit a staff member to proctor the exam (if required by the professor) because of the remoteness of the room.

Fig. 6: Makeup Exams



Non-TRCC Testing

Along with an increase in students taking distance learning courses here at Three Rivers, another population emerged: local students taking courses from distant institutions needing a local site to take their tests. Additionally, other area residents often need to take non-academic tests (i.e. licensing exams) and must do so in an accredited exam-proctoring facility. TASC staff had occasionally performed this service in the past, but prior to fall 2002, no formal procedure guided the process.

With the implementation of the testing procedures, though, the Mohegan TASC now serves as a testing facility for both of these groups as well (only the Mohegan TASC performs this function due to, among other things, the lack of a dedicated testing room on the Thames Valley campus). The non-TRCC testing procedure is posted online at http://www.trcc.commnet.edu/ed_resources/tasc/testing_outside.htm.

If the student could not locate a local testing facility, the originating institution could require the examinee to travel to its own facilities to take the exam, incurring a large expense. Since TASC provides this service primarily to non-TRCC students, we charge a fee for administering each exam (the only TASC service charged for).

Activity

Since spring 2003, the Mohegan TASC has administered over 35 exams to students taking distance learning courses from schools as far away as Nevada, California, and Washington State. The number also includes several non-academic exams administered by TASC. Students paid fees ranging up to \$100 per exam for most of these exams. The only such exams for which no fee was charged, were two exams administered to students taking classes at other schools within the Connecticut Community College system.

Although the number of these exams is much lower than the number of make-up exams administered, each of these exams requires a more significant investment of time. Prior to administering the tests, TASC staff must often go through several rounds of contact with the student and the home institution before being certified as an acceptable proctoring facility. Also, to maintain credibility, TASC peer tutors do not administer these exams; therefore a TASC professional staff member must perform the duties.

Computers

Computer Labs

TASC oversees a small computer lab on the Mohegan Campus consisting of 6 computers, plus 3 more in another room, while I.T. has designated 2 computers in the Thames Campus LRC as belonging to TASC. TASC tutors use these computers for tutoring students taking classes in computers as well as students taking any other classes which may require the use of a computer. When not in use for tutoring, the computers are available for general student use. Also, the Mohegan TASC now tracks all of its tutoring appointments on a shared file on the intranet, simplifying record-keeping. Plans are being made to implement the system on the Thames Campus as well.

Adaptive Technologies

TASC has served many students with special needs over the years, and we have had access to a computer on the Mohegan Campus with several programs installed on it for that purpose. The programs included Open Book (text-to-speech) and MS Magnifier to assist visually impaired students and Dragon Naturally Speaking (speech-to-text and hands-free workstation access).

TASC staff worked with the I.T. department for some time, and, as of this report, Dean Goetchius has acquired a fully ADA-compatible work station based at the Mohegan TASC. The new station has much of the software previously in use, plus a good deal more, including Jaws screen reader (for total vision loss), ZoomText 8 screen reader (for vision impairment), and Texthelp Read & Write Gold (for learning differences). In addition to the software, the computer and its peripheral equipment are now designed specifically for the work station's intended purpose. The station includes a scanner, large-key keyboard, large trackball mouse, and a 21" high resolution monitor. All of this, along with the adjustable-surface workstation, makes the station completely handicapped-accessible.

Math Computer Lab

In fall of 2004, TASC and the Math Resource Center opened a computer lab in room 303 on the Mohegan Campus. The lab has 14 computer work stations, each with text-specific software for most math courses taught at Three Rivers, generalized math software, TI-Connect software, and sound cards for using the audio portion of multimedia applications. The lab is open to students for their individual use or for tutoring sessions. Additionally, faculty may reserve the room for class demonstrations, projects, etc.

The lab is staffed by TASC tutors during TASC's regular hours of operation. Currently, the lab's remote location presents a problem both in manpower (at least one tutor must be assigned to the room, whether students are present or not) and in supervision (with only one full-time staff member on the Mohegan Campus to supervise both the lab and the tutoring center). We are currently exploring ways to remedy this situation.

Workshops

Academic Workshops

Faculty and TASC staff regularly present free academic workshops. Three graphing utility workshops presented by Brian Kennedy, three pre-MAT 137 workshops given by Barbara Maurice, and multiple basic math review and English and reading sessions conducted by Marie Peloquin have been offered each semester.

Learning Skills Workshops

Additionally, TASC has regularly offered workshops in general academic skills, usually during the summer session. TASC has presented workshops on student learning styles, dealing with math anxiety, learning to concentrate, and how to succeed in college, to name a few examples. Additionally, the TASC website contains several online workshops on learning skills.

Website

TASC maintains a vast website as part of TRCC's overall website. In addition to the common website information such as academic support programs offered and contact information, the site offers students the tutors' schedules, computer lab room schedules, online workshops, PowerPoint presentations, online ability to request a tutoring session or just ask a question, and thousands of links to online academic resources, to name a few things.

The website also has a large section for the indoctrination of new tutors and resources for them to use once they start tutoring. Many other colleges have contacted us seeking permission to use material from this tutor-training section, lauding its thoroughness. Additionally, almost 70 students from other colleges have accessed the tutor-training section and then taken and submitted the online test in the past year alone. The website requires a significant amount of time to keep updated, but it remains a valuable asset to students, tutors, and staff.

Books and Videotapes

TASC keeps copies of some of the current texts for use in the tutoring center. In addition to the library's collection, we also keep some of the older texts on hand that students can borrow and use to supplement their current texts. The Thames Campus TASC has a large collection of past mathematics textbooks.

The library holds on-reserve videotapes that accompany some of the current mathematics classes, but students can withdraw them for only three days. TASC has many videotapes that accompanied prior math texts for most courses and students may borrow these for longer periods if necessary.

Other Activities

In addition to all these services and in keeping with our Mission Statement, TASC strives to support the student body, the faculty, and the administration and staff in any way possible. Some activities TASC typically perform include:

- Making presentations to classes (typically FYE classes) explaining TASC's procedures and resources. These presentations range from a quick ten minute description of our services to a class-long presentation on subjects such as study skills or learning styles.
- Performing "one-time" tutorials for a class needing a specific skill (i.e. demonstrating the use of PowerPoint to a Speech class requiring its use).
- Assisting instructors with any in-class support they may need. This help has included such varied activities as taping speeches with a video camera and proctoring a test for a sick instructor.
- Assisting students during open registration periods. TASC professional staff and peer tutors help streamline the registration process by assisting the students before they see the advisor.