

# **Tutoring and Academic Success Centers**

## **Report of Activities**

**August 2007**

**Three Rivers Community College  
Norwich, CT**



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## **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.

Since the beginning of the fall semester, 2002, the TASC staff has consisted of two full-time staff members: Marie Peloquin on the Mohegan Campus and Matt Burbine on the Thames Campus. A part-time Educational Assistant/Lead Tutor position was reassigned elsewhere in the division at the end of the 2004-2005 fiscal year. In conjunction with TASC, full-time faculty member, Brian Kennedy, runs the Math Resource Center (MRC). Full-time faculty member, Jon Brammer, runs the Writing Center, a separate entity from TASC.

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.

## **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. Other sources, such as Perkins Grants and CONNCAS Grants also provide funding for some tutors. 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.

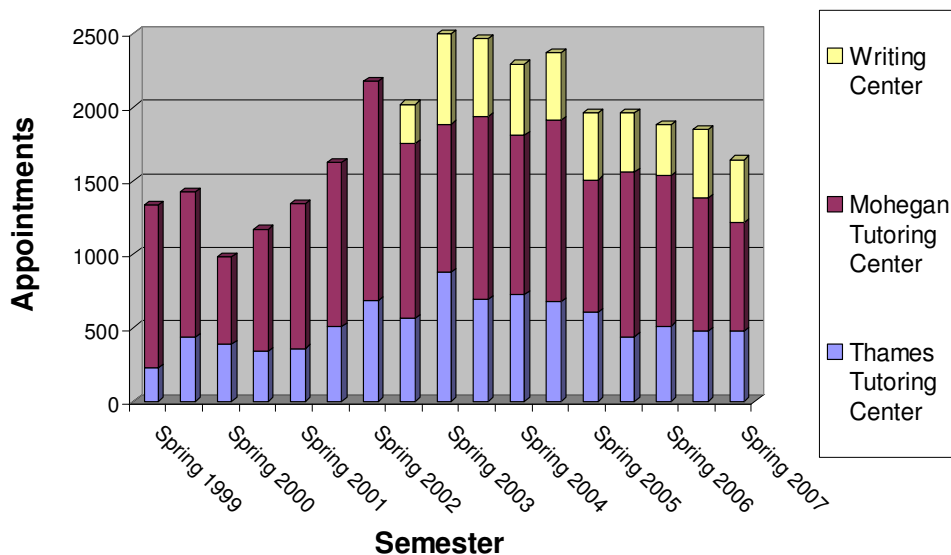
### **Activity**

In the 2007 spring semester, TASC employed 24 peer tutors, with 17 of them working primarily on the Mohegan Campus, the rest at Thames Valley. Similar staffing levels existed for the several previous years. Also, over the past several years, TASC has received tutoring assistance from faculty members June Decker, Brian Kennedy, and John Wengertsman in mathematics and from Philip Mayer in economics.

Since the last TASC Report of Activities (issued in March 2005), total numbers of individual tutoring sessions have dropped (See Figure 1, below). Not counting the summer semesters, during this past 2006-2007 academic year, TASC conducted 2598

hour-long individual tutoring sessions with 665 “student/subjects” (some students were tutored in more than one subject) at the two centers. The 2005-2006 year served 689 student/subjects for 3093 appointments and the 2004-2005 year served 704 student/subjects for 3415 appointments. These figures were down from an all-time high of 3742 sessions serving 481 student/subjects in the 2003-2004 academic year.

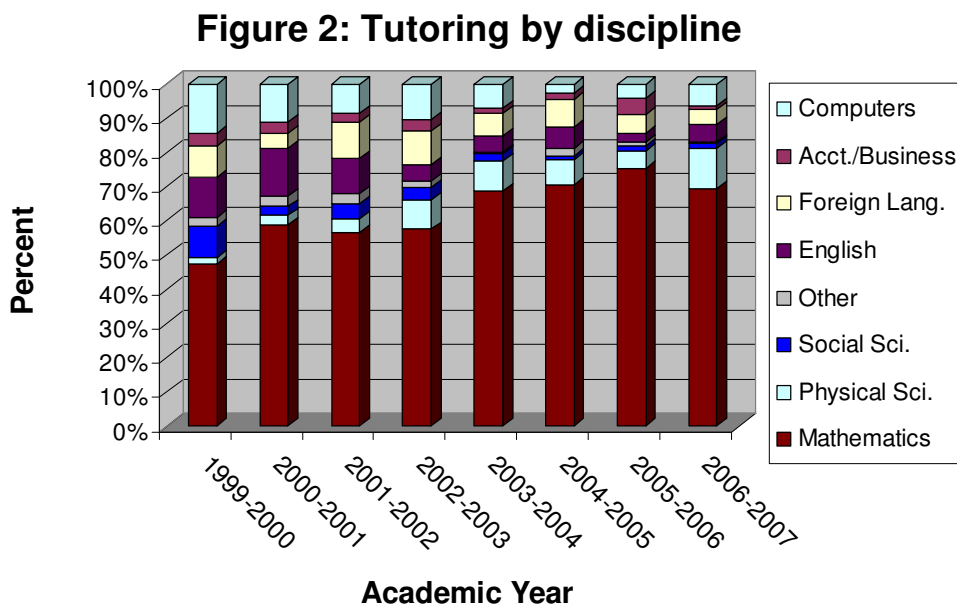
**Figure 1: Tutoring Appointments**



(Note: The Writing Center's data are incorporated into the chart to illustrate total usage of tutoring services at Three Rivers. Use the chart for illustrative purposes only, due to differences in Tutoring Center and Writing Center data reporting methods. 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 continues to account for the largest percentage of the tutoring sessions performed by TASC (see Figure 2, below). The share 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 2003-2004 academic year. In 2004-2005, the mathematics share increased to 71% of the sessions and the 2005-2006 academic year saw a continuation of this growth pattern to 75%. However, this past year saw a decrease to 69% of the total sessions, the same share as that of three years ago.



Of the mathematics courses, the developmental mathematics courses (MAT 075 and MAT 095) have accounted for an average of 49% of all mathematics tutoring over the past eight academic years (up from 47% since the last report). The 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 academic years saw a spike to 58% and 53% respectively, but this past year saw a return to the prior average of 47%.

In other subject areas, the chart shows a sudden decrease in the percentages of TASC tutoring sessions in English and the social sciences (two writing-intensive fields) beginning around the 2002-2003 academic year, coinciding with the opening of the Writing Center. Other than that, the chart projects no definitive, constant trends other than a possible overall decrease in the percentage of computer tutoring sessions (possibly due to an increase in the number of in-class tutors used by computer instructors) and an increase in the percentage of physical science sessions (no explanation).

## Results

Although we continue to collect data on tutee grade results, we do not include those results here. As noted in the recently released Writing Center Report of Activities, we lack baseline grade information for the entire student population with which we could compare our sample results, and such a comparison may very well be meaningless,

since those students motivated to seek tutoring are very well likely to be self-motivated in their classes as well. Also, as noted in our last report, even though there seemed to be some correlation between tutoring activities (numbers of tutoring sessions completed) and student grades, we cannot deduce that causation exists (again, that factor of self-motivation).

### ***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. Typically, TASC supplies and/or funds 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, student worker funds, and government grants. Optionally, the instructor and tutor may instead elect to develop an independent study contract that awards 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 and A&P, Computer Applications I & II, Computer Assisted Drafting, desk-top Publishing, Mathematics, and Psychology. The tutors typically work between 6 and 15 hours per week, often helping the students not only during class and laboratory time, but assisting them outside of class time as well. In recent years, this has benefited TASC in that the tutors often continue tutoring in TASC after receiving training from the involved instructor.

### ***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 participates in an online tutoring program. The Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC) hosts the program, with the participation of approximately 15 Community Colleges and Universities in Connecticut, the Vermont Community College system, and various other colleges in Massachusetts, New York, and Washington State. 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 tutors are not peer tutors, but instead hold at least an Associate Degree.

## Activity

Despite the distribution of flyers and brochures, a web page where students can register online, and presentations to new students, a low proportion of Three Rivers students have used the CTDL 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 TRCC Writing Center also accepts email submission of essay drafts in addition to its in-person sessions. Even with its low usage, the program continues, as it does provide a service to the distance-learning segment of the student population that may not be served by our on-ground tutoring services.

## 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 staff anticipated a need to administer exams for these Three Rivers courses as well. TASC staff implemented a formal testing procedure specifying the responsibilities of the student, the instructor, and TASC in 2002. The procedure may be viewed in full at [http://www.trcc.commnet.edu/ed\\_resources/tasc/testing\\_inhouse.htm](http://www.trcc.commnet.edu/ed_resources/tasc/testing_inhouse.htm).

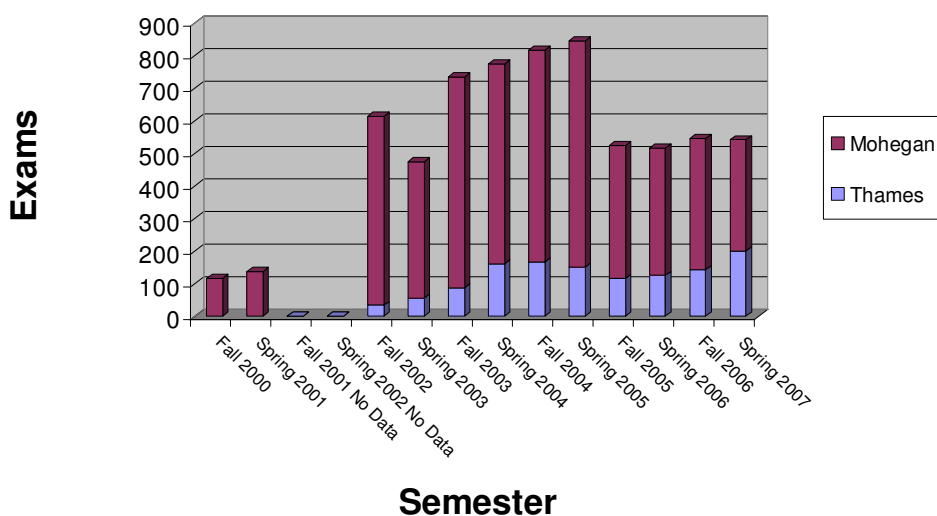
## Activity

The total number of exams proctored by TASC continued to grow until it reached a high of 846 exams in the spring of 2005 (see Figure 3, below). At that point, efforts by Dean Branchini to rein in this ever-increasing number had some success. For the past two years, the number of exams proctored by TASC has hovered around 500 exams per semester.

### *Non-TRCC Testing*

The Mohegan TASC also serves as a testing center for local students taking courses from distant institutions needing a local site to take their tests. Additionally, other area residents needing to take non-academic tests (i.e. licensing exams) in an accredited exam-proctoring facility may use this facility as well. TASC staff established the formal procedure for this service in 2002

**Figure 3: Makeup Exams**



also; it can be viewed in full at [http://www.trcc.commnet.edu/ed\\_resources/tasc/testing\\_outside.htm](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 for the student. Since TASC provides this service primarily to non-TRCC students, we charge a fee for administering each exam (the only TASC service charged for). Students paid fees ranging up to \$100 per exam for most of these exams. The only such exams for which no fee is charged are exams administered to students taking classes at other schools within the Connecticut Community College system.

### **Activity**

The number of these exams is much lower than the number of make-up exams administered by TASC, however, 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, only one TASC professional staff member, Marie Peloquin, administers these exams.

### ***All TASC Testing***

#### **Projection**

Once the new facility is built, TASC (and the Writing Center) will have less combined overall space than in the current facilities. Due to this loss of overall space and the lack of a room that can be dedicated to testing without excluding tutoring, TASC will, in all likelihood, not be able to continue providing this service once the move is completed.

However, the service is a valuable one, both to our students and to the larger community that we serve, and, therefore, should be continued. One possible solution would be to restrict makeup testing to certain times, conduct these sessions in a classroom or (LRC?) conference room, and staff them with a part-time EA position or with faculty volunteers (counting toward extra duties?). Non-TRCC testing duties could possibly be transferred to the office of Cathy Lewis, Coordinator of Testing. Whatever the solution, this is an issue that should be addressed in the near future.

## **Computers**

### ***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's remote location presented a problem both in manpower (at least one tutor had to be assigned to the room, whether students were 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). As a less-than-perfect solution, the math lab was relocated to the larger of the two rooms constituting the TASC computer lab in the Mohegan LRC.

The lab has 11 computer work stations, each with text-specific software for most math courses taught at Three Rivers, generalized math software, TI-Connect software (to link

with TI graphing calculators), 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.

### ***Computer Labs***

TASC oversees a small computer lab on the Mohegan Campus consisting of the Math Computer Lab, plus 5 more computers in the room adjacent to the math lab, 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.

### ***Adaptive Technologies***

TASC has served many students with special needs over the years, and, to that end, one of the five computers in the smaller TASC Computer Lab is a fully ADA-compatible work station.

The computer contains software including ZoomText 8 screen reader and MS Magnifier to assist visually impaired students, Jaws screen reader (for total vision loss), Open Book (text-to-speech), Dragon Naturally Speaking (speech-to-text and hands-free workstation access) , and Texthelp Read & Write Gold (for learning differences).

In addition to the software, the computer and its peripheral equipment are 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.

## **Workshops**

### ***Academic Workshops***

Faculty and TASC staff members regularly present free academic workshops. Several graphing utility workshops presented by Brian Kennedy along with supplemental evening workshops by Matt Burbine, 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. In addition to our own tutor trainees, students from other colleges regularly access the tutor-training section and then take and submit the online test. Many other colleges have contacted us seeking permission to use material from this tutor-training section, lauding its thoroughness. Recently, an informal group of Learning Center and Tutoring Center directors, administrators, and other employees from the Connecticut Community College system have begun compiling a statewide tutor training program based largely on our web site.

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.
- Greeting new students before placement testing sessions and at new-student orientation to help them make the transition to college life and to promote the tutoring services. In addition, TASC staff worked with Karen Westerberg, Director of Student Programs, and Kem Barfield, Director of Distance Learning, in the summer of 2006 and played an integral part in developing the new online new-student orientation now on WebCT/Vista.

### **Additional Information**

For additional information, actual numbers or percentages not listed in the report, tuttee grade information, etc, contact:

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