Improving the New Model for Learning Resources

Introduction

Current out-of-classroom support for learning is predominantly achieved through St. Petersburg College's (SPC) libraries, including all electronic materials, the various tutoring centers located on six campuses, and Smarthinking, an online tutoring service offered to all students as a link in ANGEL. Five full-service libraries provide more than 60 hours of Reference desk assistance to all students. SPC libraries also provide 10 hours weekly of online reference assistance to state-wide users through our partnership with the Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC). On-campus services include library workshops on citation methods, evaluating resources, and information literacy, as well as classroom visits upon request covering the same or modified topics depending upon the needs of the faculty member requesting the visit.

Nearly all of the tutoring is provided at seven Learning Support Commons (LSCs) approximately 2,300 hours weekly. Consisting primarily of tutoring in math, writing, and sciences, many of the LSCs also offer open computing to students with some assistance from LSC staff. Each site offers drop-in and by-appointment tutoring as well as individual and group sessions. Workshops are offered not only in critical areas such as developmental math but also in calculus and statistics. Study skills and an orientation to ANGEL, the college's Learning Management System (LMS), are offered to students at most sites either as part of classroom visits by a librarian or by staff in one of the LSCs.

Statement of the Problem

Who's Next data for the college's tutoring areas indicate a 10% increase in use in college-wide Learning Support Commons over FY 2010-11. However, the greatest increase for FY 2011-12 occurred at the DT location (260% over 2010-11) and it accounts for nearly all of the college-wide increase in use of the LSCs. SPC libraries checked out nearly as much audiovisual materials, reserves, and laptop computers (15,512) as print material (20,182) in FY 2012-13. This is not surprising, as movements away from print to electronic materials reflects national trends as well as does student use of the libraries as gathering places to meet, study, or collaborate on projects.

However, Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCSSE) data for 2011 indicates student engagement levels in out-of-class support for SPC are low. For example, of the 1,168 SPC respondents, 23.7% indicated they used academic support services such as tutoring or academic assistance. In addition, although 52% responded peer or other tutoring was very important to them, 44% indicated they rarely or never used it. Likewise, 49% of respondents indicated skills labs (writing, math, etc.) were very important, yet 36% rarely or never made use of them.

In addition, student success rates (attaining a "C" or better) for Spring 2012 indicate an urgent need to be more deliberate and creative in the delivery of academic support particularly for those disciplines that have historically been partners with academic support services. Consider the following chart:

Course	Success Rate
ENC 1101	60.80%
ENC 1102	71.90%
MAT 0018	48.10%
MAT 0028	47.40%
MAT 1033	52.70%
MAC 1105	61.90%

Ironically, learning support for math consists of 715 hours weekly in college-wide LSCs and math faculty at the SPG campus in particular have been early adopters of our efforts to enlist faculty to spend a portion of their office hours in the Learning Support Commons; in contrast, writing assistance for students in Learning Support Commons totals 492 hours weekly across the college, and few if any faculty members spend part of their office hours in the LSCs or Writing Studios.

Finally, faculty engagement in out-of-class learning support is low. Faculty members' participation in college-wide Learning Support Commons totals 62.5 hours weekly of the more than 2,300 hours of learning support performed by instructional assistants, OPS employees, student assistants, disabilities resources specialists, and community volunteers.

General Solution and Supporting Research

A review of literature regarding the best practices for improving student success, creating a culture of learning and of promoting learning support, and engaging faculty members suggests SPC challenge existing assumptions and align learning support to local, state, and national trends. Consider the following sources in support of improving the current out-of-class learning support model:

- Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count, *Engaging Faculty in the Achieving the Dream Initiative* recommended a series of procedures and practices for engaging faculty in helping students succeed. Practices such as using data to redesign courses, information sharing and discussing strategies, and holding campus dialogues to problem-solve for student success are recommended.

- Cerna, Plantia and Fong's (2012) *Leading by Example: A Case Study of Peer Leader Programs at Two Achieving the Dream Colleges* is an excellent case study of two peer-leader programs, Supplemental Instruction (SI) and Supplemental Peer Mentors (SPM), at two community colleges in Massachusetts – Northern Essex Community College and Bunker Hill Community College. Both programs have led to improvements in student success and have been successfully scaled up from pilot programs.

- *History of Supplemental Instruction (SI): Mainstreaming of Developmental Education* (2007) by David Arendale of the University of Missouri-Kansas City charted the history of the ground-breaking student success program that began in 1973. This is a formative article as it explained the origins of SI, its history from a grant-funded program to a university-wide success program and its eventual adoption by community colleges for developmental and "gateway" courses.

- *Measuring Referrals: The Use of Paraprofessionals at the Reference Desk* (2010) concluded only 7.4% of the Reference desk transactions required referral to a librarian based a year-long study at Stetson University's DeLand campus library. Implications include the increased use of paraprofessionals, the need for greater technical assistance for students regarding computers and technology, and the possible reassignment of librarians to develop other forms of communication with students and faculty.

- *A Report by the RR2 Taskforce* (2012) focused on a study conducted at the USF Tampa Library. Tracking reference desk questions over the course of a semester, the task force noted the decrease in traffic as well as the nature of the questions received at the reference desk. Recommendations of the task force included a merged service desk into a single desk, the creation of three committees that will focus on training, peer-to-peer learning, and implementation.

- Thomas H.P. Gould's (2011) *Creating the Academic Commons* focused on the increasing changes in libraries and learning centers. Specifically, the creation of the "millennial library" as a mecca for student learning and the role of the "millennial librarian" that will be far different that it has ever been. Gould noted the positive effects of libraries as relates to the future of student learning and the need for information

Recommendations

1. **Service** - Implement a consistent service model that appropriately projects SPC's high regard for student learning. This will involve introduction to an institutional service model that can be applied to all academic support areas and which can be evaluated by students, faculty, staff, and Learning Resources supervisors.

2. **Technology** - Provide technology for students and faculty members in libraries and Learning Support Commons. This includes web-based printing; computing instruction for students for Microsoft basics and ANGEL orientation; tablets to be pre-loaded with instructional materials; flat-screen TVs that advertise college programs, promote courses, and provide "live" remote lectures.

3. **Training** - Cross-train willing library and LSC personnel in order to offer expanded hours of operation during peak times of the year, assist with projects, and provide coverage; tutor training for instructional assistants, student assistants, and OPS employees should be implemented to bring tutoring practices in line with national standards that will lead to tutor and program certification; to assist in the role as "learning specialist" as part of the Student Life Plan Project, Learning Resources personnel should receive appropriate training for assisting students who are struggling to maintain good academic standing.

4. **Innovation** - Engage faculty members to use emergent technologies such as podcasts and lecture capture to enhance class instruction; provide cyber tutoring to students as a way of reaching online students as well as those traditional students whose time is constrained by personal responsibilities; pilot programs in peer mentoring, supplemental instruction, and tiered library reference.

Closing Remarks

Despite changes to the learning environments at SPC in the last year, a re-concentrated effort is necessary to bring further improvements to out-of-class support. The recommendations identified in this paper are broad based and comprehensive. Furthermore, they express the values of the institution's mission of being learner-centered and holistic in its approach to student success and they more strategically align the college with the needs of the communities and stakeholders we serve.