



LACM SIG NEWS

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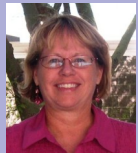
MARCH 2009

LACM SIG:

To provide a forum for the discussion of learning center goals, practices, supervision, and evaluation among learning assistance center managers and staff.



Penny Turrentine
LACM SIG Co-Leader



Dorothy Briggs
LACM SIG Co-Leader



Richmond 2009

Unsung Heroes

From the editor:

As I was thinking about our newsletter for this go-round, I happened to notice that a lively discussion was taking place on LRNASST about tutor retention. Within the hour, during a meeting about the newsletter with my co-leader, Dorothy, we realized a theme had evolved naturally. That theme revolved around our unsung heroes, our tutors. Getting and keeping tutors present so many challenges. First, we have to find those who are qualified for the position. Then the fun really starts. We have to convince them that they really do want to work for us in spite of the fact that they can usually make more money at the fast-food place down the street and they have to be willing to work very hard for those meager wages. They must always deal with students while remaining patient and in good humor. Oh, and, we would also like them to participate in tutor training. Tutoring, I would argue is one of the most challenging and, often, draining, jobs around. So, how do we hang on to this special group of people who give so much of themselves to further student academic success. Well, let's investigate, shall we?

The discussion to which I referred earlier addressed tutor retention. I was impressed with what impressed with what Martin Golson from Austin Peay University had to say. In a phone conversation with Dorothy he shared the following as factors that affect tutor retention::

- Sense of accomplishment: The tutors need to see that they are making a difference. This can be done by reminding them of individual success stories and by sharing data on the impact tutoring is having on student success.
- Sense of appreciation: The tutors need to feel that their service is valued. Some of this is through tangible evidence such as raises, but just as important are the occasional comment from you and their client expressing gratitude. Whenever one of our clients tells me about what a great tutor they have, I always pass the comment along and encourage the client to tell the tutor as well. I also encourage senior clients to send an invitation to

their graduation to their tutor.

- Opportunities to progress: Tutors need to feel that the service they are providing is helping prepare them to meet their own goals. I look for opportunities to help them pad their resume'. For example, I allowed a writing tutor to edit a manual I wrote. I routinely allow tutors to conduct workshops on various topics.
- Sense of belonging: Tutor need to feel like they are an integral part of the organization.
- Avoidance of burnout: It is easy to allow a tutor to become overloaded and burn themselves out. I routinely talk to tutors to see how their classes are going. Sometimes I encourage tutors to voluntarily reduce their tutoring hours in order to not overload themselves for the semester. I also schedule breaks between sessions and tell tutors to get up from the table and take the break.

Occasionally I lose a good tutor, but I have been fortunate



Richmond, Virginia



*Lewis Ginter
Conservatory,
Richmond, Virginia*

nate; most of my tutors stay until graduation and I enjoy writing reference letters for them as they move on to other challenges.

Dorothy shared some anecdotes from their conversation:

He had a student in his office yesterday that had struggled significantly and was 2 classes away from graduation. He was receiving tutoring for a course that he had previously failed. After 3 weeks of a tutoring assignment he asks the student to check back in with him so he can make sure the assignment to the tutor is working; is it the right time? Is it the right person? The student was extremely complimentary about the tutor. He asked the student to do two things: Tell her thank-you and invite her to his graduation. Today the tutor came in to his office to share that the student had thanked her and how excited she was about it. She told him that she knew he had met with the student and she wanted to know if there was anything that the student had shared that would help her improve what she was doing. Although the purpose of his meeting with the student wasn't to get feedback on the tutoring session at all, it did speak to the tutor's:

- Sense of accomplishment

How do you **let your tutors know they are appreciated**? Do you have specific celebrations? Do you have a "wall of success?" Do you solicit student feedback? Share your ideas with us! Log on to our wiki and post your suggestions. The wiki is located at: <http://lacmsig.pbwiki.com/>

- Sense of appreciation
- Sense of belonging

He spoke about how he used this same tutor to become an SLA leader. In the beginning she was nervous about it. She wasn't sure she could do it. He told her that he saw potential in her and that he promised her that by the end of the semester she would tell him 2 things:

She had really stuck her foot in her mouth, but that she now knew she could recover from such a gaffe,

- That she had grown so much from the experience.

He shared that when she came to his office today they talked about this too. She told him that she loved doing the SLA groups. She shared that she has already accomplished both those two things. She is a business major and she shared that she has grown so much from the experience, so far (and the semester is only 1/3 over!) that she decided that she wanted to go into Marketing because she loves working with groups. This illustrates his point:

- Opportunities to progress

And finally, he talked about:

- Avoidance of burnout
- He schedules tutoring appointments with 10 minute

them to take a break by going to the restroom, getting a soda or going outside and walking around. He said it's not for the tutor's benefit, but for his own – it keeps the tutors from burning out and he is able to maintain his workforce. The majority of his staff continue on tutoring until the graduate.

He helps tutors focus on why they are in it – it's more than a job. It is to help others. He makes sure the tutors know they are appreciated and helps them focus on what he called the "lightbulb moments." That's why we are all in this business. If he can help the tutors feel appreciated, they will stay.

The International Tutor Program Certification Committee is actively seeking qualified Program Evaluators

Are you a current CRLA member?
Is your tutoring program certified?

Please consider using your expertise to help other programs.

**For more information or to volunteer, please contact:
Olga Thurman, Coordinator of ITPC Publicity and Recruitment,**

Building Community

By
Dorothy Briggs



Have you ever had the feeling that everyone is working against you rather than with you? With a student staff as large as ours, it frequently feels like we are herding cats. My staff recently met with Penny Turentine to discuss how she manages her Learning Center. Over the course of the hour we spent together she mentioned building a community of tutors several times. Penny gave an example of how she fosters the sense of community among her tutoring staff. Her staff meets once a month for tutor training at a luncheon potluck. The potluck is themed to add a sense of adventure to the meetings.

Upon leaving Penny's site we began to wonder, "is building community something we have neglected?" And if the answer is yes, what can we do about it? We started to analyze our tutoring activities. We found that we don't neglect building community among our tutoring staff. Our new tutors are assigned a Master Tutor or an Advanced Tutor for mentoring purposes. Mid-semester we have a Tutor Panel where conversation and cookies encourage sharing and support. We have Master Tutors scheduled to cover time slots where any tutor may drop in to "Ask A Master." Questions and discussion are encouraged in lots of ways. We have a tutor listserv with weekly updates to make sure all tutors are informed of development activities and supplemental training opportunities. Subject area meetings encourage discourse among tutors in common subject areas. We have end of the semester celebrations.

So if we do all of that, why did we feel so envious of Penny's potlucks? With our staff of 75+ tutors, a potluck isn't realistic. We had to remind ourselves that we do what we can when

we can, with the budget and resources we have available, keeping in mind that our tutors are important to us. We encourage communication and support. We have amazing discussions.

We realized we have our own community. It looks different that Penny's but it's our community and our team. It reminds me of a something I once heard about teamwork: *Teamwork is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.* – Unknown Isn't that what we are in the business to do? We spend all day everyday working to attain those uncommon results. We can't do it alone. It takes our community.

What do you do to build community among your tutors? Will you please share how you build a sense of community and foster teamwork on our wiki so that we can learn from you too? Access our wiki at: <http://lacmsig.pbwiki.com/>

My Perspective on Tutoring

Bruce Thoms

(a volunteer tutor at the West Campus Learning Center, Pima Community College)



I have been a volunteer tutor for a little more than one year now. I wanted to take a minute to recognize what it is I like about it. Tutoring plays a unique role in the machinery we call education. That role is something I really believe in, and I appreciate the opportunity to be connected with it.

At The Pima Community College Learning Center, where I tutor, we do a lot of training on the subject of tutoring. The lessons we cover provide new tools to make us more effective tutors. But what I see, what makes tutoring so positive for me, is a larger truth that all those tools point toward in a more holistic and organic way:

All students are teachable and are worthy of an education.

To that end, the tutor's role is much different from the instructor's. As a tutor, I am free of the responsibility to render any judgment of the student and the material. I am unconcerned about who passes and who fails, what constitutes a rigorous treatment of the subject and how the grade I assign will affect the student's career.

I offer what I can to each student, and they are free to absorb all they care to or are capable of. I leave it to each student to define what it is they are looking for. They must decide what they need to understand and then take responsibility for that decision. That is great practice for the students. It is that same responsibility they will need to take throughout their education, career and life.

Tutoring really rewards boldness in the students. I especially like working with those adventurous students who recognize that their biggest challenge is becoming comfortable in the deep end of the pool. I often get to model one of my favorite approaches to life; I'm not sure where this problem will lead, but I am sure that we can find out. It is those students who get the most from the experience and give me the most satisfaction. This is where I see tutoring most often crossing from homework help to forming a successful approach to learning.

I like the student's optimism. Even a student who is struggling has the flame of optimism burning at their core. They are taking time out to get an education. It is a huge investment in time and money and is probably one of the most challenging things they will ever do. Making that kind of investment in oneself is by nature very optimistic, and that optimism is where I can reach them to connect what I do to their mission.

I believe that education is the most accessible path to empowerment. It is what makes us an ever-stronger people. It is the most logical way for each of us to tilt the playing field in our favor. What better way would I be able to serve our students than supporting them in their own empowerment?

For me, tutoring is the answer to the


the question we all wrestle with; what would I be doing right now if I enjoyed it so much I wouldn't have to be paid for it? It is a help-ever, hurt-never role in a huge and often impersonal machine we call education. It affects students positively, individually and directly. What could be better?

REMINDERS:

Don't forget to visit the LACM SIG wiki at <http://lacmsig.pbwiki.com/>.

As SIG members, this is a valuable communication tool as well as a resource for those new to the field. I encourage all of you to share your expertise for the benefit of all of us and our students.


Ralph W. Gerard. *"There is first the problem of acquiring content, which is learning. There is another problem of acquiring learning skills, which is not merely learning, but learning to learn, not velocity, but acceleration. Learning to learn is one of the great inventions of living things. It is tremendously important. It makes evolution, biological as well as social, go faster. And it involves the development of the individual."* ("The New Computerized Shape of Education" in W.Z. Hirsch (Ed) *Inventing Education for the Future*. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967).



Foundations for Success in Times of Change
College Reading and Learning Association
42nd Annual Conference
October 28-31, 2009
Richmond, Virginia

Call For Proposals!!
Deadline: March 31, 2009
www.crla.net

Karon Mathews
CRLA 2009 Conference Chair
Student Learning Center
Texas A&M University
118 Hotard, 4230 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-4230
ksmathews@tamu.edu
(979) 845-2724 office
(979) 845-6419 fax



SIG Presentation for 2009 Conference

For those of you who got our last newsletter, you probably noticed the large number of people from our SIG who presented at the CRLA Conference in Cleveland. Well, it's time to submit proposals for the 2009 Conference in beautiful Richmond, Virginia. The deadline for submission of proposals is **March 31st**.

CRLA has suggested the following tips for those of you who have not previously submitted a proposal or those who just need a few reminders:

Tip one. Make your session sound interesting, informative, and helpful to your peers. The relevance of your title and description to the proposed strand(s) and to the presentation as a whole must be explicit.

Tip two. Make it clear that your presentation will make a significant contribution to the field. This may be as simple as citing the theoretical construct on which your presentation depends.

Tip three. Clearly define learning objectives for participants that are explicit, appropriate, and reasonable. What do you want your attendees to take away (either literally or figuratively) from your session?

Tip four. Explain what handouts/media you will use, and make sure they are appropriate and of high quality. Make the appropriate citations if needed. Develop delivery methods in terms of time, audience, and session type that are appropriate and effective.

Tip five. Clearly describe the content and method of your presentation. Organize and write your description with your audience in mind. Ask a colleague to read it and provide feedback.

Tip six. **Submit your proposal electronically by March 31, online [proposal form](#).**

Goethe "Knowing is not enough. We must apply. Willing is not enough. We must do."

For those of you who attended the 2008 CRLA Conference, you may have had the opportunity to participate in the day-long institute sponsored by our SIG. In addition to the many presentations by our SIG members, the institute, so ably created and produced by Lois McGinley and her co-presenters, was very well received. Attendees reported that it was full of helpful information. My question to you all is whether you would like to produce another such institute this year. If you believe that our SIG should do so, please contact me:

pturrentine@pima.edu.

There are a number of ways you can contribute: volunteer to develop the institute itself, volunteer to be a presenter for the institute, or suggest possible institute themes and/or topics. The deadline for submitting the proposal for such an institute is March 31st. Our presence at last year's conference was a strong one: the institute, many presentations, an exhibit table, and a well-attended breakfast meeting. Even if you are unable to attend this year, and there are many of us in that situation, please don't think you that you can't contribute. Send me your ideas and get on board with the wiki.