From the Coordinator

By Ken Seino

Over the Holiday Break, while my wife and I were out shopping, I met a store clerk who happened to ask what I did for a living. “I’m the Coordinator of the Learning Lab at Cape Fear Community College,” I replied. “Really!? Well you’re my new best friend,” she said. She went on to tell us that she was 62 years young, had returned to school, and had struggled in a class. When she realized she needed help, she wandered in to the Learning Lab and met a tutor that helped her understand all of her course materials. “I wanted to take him home with me so that I could have him help me whenever I had a question but he told me that he thought I would be fine. He was right about that, too.” When she asked what other help we provided, I told her about the Math, Writing, and Science Labs and I explained that Peer Tutoring covered all other subjects. I also told her about our computer labs and the help our Computer Facilitators provide.

It was wonderful to hear that this person had such a positive experience with tutoring, and success stories like this makes all the effort that goes into tutoring worthwhile for our Peer Tutors and Instructional Facilitators. Helping is the goal of what we do, and over the years we’ve helped countless students reach their goals. Whether it’s subject area tutoring, study skills coaching, or help with using a computer, the Learning Lab is prepared to serve students’ needs. So, the next time you’re working with students, don’t forget to mention the Learning Lab as one of the many wonderful resources that CFCC has to offer!

Lab Tours, Orientations, and Computer Reservations

We welcome instructors to bring classes to the Lab for a tour or orientation. These take place in our main lab location (L-218) and can be a brief walk-through or sit-down orientation with a staff member giving a five to ten minute summary of our offerings. Instructors may also reserve computers as part of an orientation if they plan to have the class stay and work on specific projects. On a limited basis, faculty can reserve computers in advance for their class if they need computer access for a particular assignment or group project. To schedule, please call the Lab (x7476 days or x7496 evenings).
Department Profile: The Learning Lab

Though we share a common supportive role to students, the Learning Lab has its own staff and functions separate from the LRC (Library). During Fall 2011, the Learning Lab had a staff of 76 people, 4 of whom are full-time staffers (3 downtown and 1 at the North Campus). Part time employees comprise the remaining 72 positions. Our full-time employees include the Coordinator, Secretary, and Evening and North Campus Computer Facilitators. Our part time employees consist of a Data Entry Clerk, Computer Facilitators, Tutors / Peer Tutors, Front Desk Clerks, Work Study staff, and Service Learning student workers.

We provide one-on-one expertise and assistance to students with an emphasis on developing their ability to clarify instructions, question and summarize materials, correlate various fields of study when appropriate, and improve study skills with the goal of developing their skills as independent learners.

Our challenge is to coordinate our services among the many part-time employees and locations. The Downtown campus currently has four lab locations: the main Lab – L-218, which offers both computer use and tutoring in subjects such as CIS, Accounting, Spanish, Economics, and others on an as-needed basis; the Writing Center/English Lab and Math Lab across the hall in L-219; the Science Lab in the Natural Sciences building, in room N-407; and the Math Lab in S-606. The North Campus Lab is located in room NA-113I where both computer use and tutoring is provided.

“Our goal is to provide tutoring across the curriculum”

Our goal is to provide tutoring across the curriculum. We have a core staff of tutors in the most sought after subjects, (CIS, CTS, Math, English, Sciences) and we also hire tutors based on student needs and requests (as our budget allows) for subjects such as Nutrition, Accounting, and Spanish. We also proctor make-up tests for both CFCC instructors as well as instructors from other colleges, conduct orientations to the Lab and offer subject-specific workshops, most often in conjunction with Instructors and/or Tutors. The Lab has two computers devoted to special needs students with assistive software such as Kurzweil and JAWS.

The Lab provides computer access to students who need to type term papers, work on assignments, get on Blackboard, do research, or use email to communicate with instructors.

Sign-in procedure: No More Cards!

Utilizing our services has never been easier! No more barcodes! The Lab staff is singing praises for a new feature from our student tracking system upgrade last summer. It enables student log-in by ID number. This has eliminated the need for students to riffle through hundreds of cards with barcodes in order to sign into and out of the Lab, which annoyed and delayed many students.

It has also saved staff time from printing out the barcodes, adhering each to cards, and typing the number into each student’s profile in order to register students for our services. Another way we are speeding things up is by having more front desk work-study staff coverage in all our tutoring labs to assist students with registering and logging in. Please spread the word!
Feature: The Writing Lab

The Writing Lab, located in room L-219, is a tutoring lab under the Learning Lab. The Writing Lab is open to all currently enrolled students as well as prospective students seeking guidance on the Accuplacer test. Through the use of professional, well-qualified tutors (many of whom are English instructors at CFCC) a student can get help with everything from grammar to essay structure to the correct MLA form of references and citations. This help is given free of charge on a walk in basis during the ample hours the lab is open. Many make the mistake of thinking that the Writing Lab only provides help with English papers. The tutors are more than willing to provide help with work in any subject taught at CFCC that requires writing and document presentation. They also provide help with the written content of resumes, letters of application, PowerPoint presentations and more. The Writing Lab is beneficial to all, helping instructors assist their students in succeeding, as well as helping students with some of the difficulties that could make their college years a struggle.

Why we do that IRF “Form” thingy!

I am an Instructor Recommendation Form (IRF). The purpose of my existence is two-fold: To grant students access to tutoring and to capture FTE. My creator, the NCCCS State Auditor, requires that all students fill in the information asked for on me and also requires their Instructors to sign off on me. The instructor’s signature makes me legal. If you receive an email about me or if a student delivers me to you, please reply or sign me right there on the spot. I do not want to be illegal and students want to receive the help they need as soon as possible!

Printing Policy

Our policy for student printing remains limited to 5 free pages per day for L-218. This is a generous practice compared to most colleges. At many other institutions, students have to pay for any printed materials so we feel this is a reasonable practice. The Writing Lab also has the same policy (though papers exceeding this limit are allowed). Please keep this in mind as you require PDFs, PowerPoints, etc., and remind your students the LRC is a separate entity and provides unlimited printing for a cost of 5-cents per page.

Financial Aid Assistance

Just an FYI...staff in the Learning Lab will only provide technical assistance (computer help) to students who are using lab computers to complete their FAFSA’s online. Questions regarding personal financial information or what type of loan they may be eligible for cannot be addressed without our staff violating pertinent FERPA regulations and should be referred to the staff in the Financial Aid Office. However, we are committed to serving our students in any other way.
Supplemental Instruction

CFCC’s Supplemental Instruction (SI) program is based in the Learning Lab. The goal of SI is to assist students with historically difficult courses in a tutor-led group setting. Learning Lab staff train SI leaders to conduct study sessions in order to help students learn how to learn the course content, earn higher grades, and become independent learners.

Spring 2012 SI Schedule

Downtown

BIO 168  T, 1pm—2pm, N404; Th, 1pm—2pm, N202
BIO 175  M & W, 2pm—4pm, L228; F, 12:30—2pm, L228
CHM 151  M & F, 11am—12pm, N307; W, 9am—10am, N307;
CTC 112  W, 12pm—2pm, N307
CTC 120  M & F, 1pm—2pm, N307
ECO 251  M W F, 9am—10am, L218
ECO 252  M W F, 11am—12pm, L218; M W F, 1pm—2pm, L218
MSC 276  W, 11am—12pm, S212; W, 12pm—2pm, S209

North Campus

BIO 168  M W F, 8am—9am, NA334
BIO 169  M W F, 10am—11am, NA334; M W F, 12pm—12:50, NA334

Schedule subject to change. Call the Learning Lab at x7657 if you are interested in having an SI for your course!