Peer Tutor Program: 2015-2016 Report

Program Description

Transformative Learning’s (TL) signature service, the Peer Tutoring Program (PTP), is commonly referred to as The Study and provides high quality co-curricular support for more than 40 courses. Offering proactive assistance, the goal of the Peer Tutoring Program is to enhance students’ academic experience as early and often as possible. UK’s unique Peer Tutoring model - free, drop-in (no appointment necessary), group tutoring - allows students to actively construct their own experience of academic support through tutoring. Students assess when, where, and with whom (TL employs more than 120 undergraduate tutors) to utilize peer tutoring so that they gain the maximum benefit for their academic needs. In this way, TL encourages students to be active participants in their pursuit of academic success at UK. The Peer Tutoring Program is facilitated by undergraduate students who have experience and succeeded in the subjects for which they tutor. Undergraduate peer tutors are trained to ensure that each student walks away with an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the course material and how to navigate the curriculum successfully.

Access

The Peer Tutoring Program (PTP) provided approximately 25,476 tutoring session during AY2016, a 7.1% decrease from the previous year. Accompanying this decrease in total sessions, the PTP also saw a decrease of 13.6% in unique students from the previous year. As predicted, the decline in both areas is most likely correlated to campus changes including the relocation of the main campus dining to The 90 and the closing of the tower residential halls, Kirwan & Blanding. The Study’s current location on south campus in Commons Complex has become less relevant to residential students and despite focused marketing efforts the service is reaching fewer students. Due to these reasons, TL leadership team is working proactively with campus leadership to relocate PTP to a central location, close to residential halls and complimentary student services. The following chart details total sessions provided by the PTP over the past seven years:
The trend over the past six academic years shows a consistent increase in students accessing peer tutoring more frequently. The chart below shows the percent of students accessing the Peer Tutoring Program for multiple sessions this year:

How often do students access Peer Tutoring?
- 31% come one time
- 65% come three or more times

Broken down further we see that:
- 15% come 3-4 times
- 40% come more than five times

Aligned with the programmatic goal of enhancing all students’ academic experience as early and often as possible, as well as the University wide retention goals, PTP is intentionally designed to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for all UK students. To assess these goals and design it is valuable to examine who is utilizing the PTP. The following chart details the percent of total sessions by selected demographic attributes for the past seven academic years:
**Subject and Location Breakdown**

This academic year’s traffic patterns indicate the largest decline in total sessions was seen at the South campus location (3rd floor of Complex Commons), which experienced a decline of approximately 24% in total sessions. In contrast, this year The Study North (TSN) saw a dramatic increase of approximately 68% in total sessions. This is a clear indicator that while the current South Campus location, at Complex Commons, is no longer a relevant or convenient space for students, the service itself is still highly desired. The chart below shows the monthly total tutoring session broken down by location:

Looking at the traffic patterns in more depth, PTP saw a marked increase of tutoring sessions in multiple subjects. Some of the largest increases were seen in:

- MA 162 (increased by 122%)
- PHY 211/213 (increased by 94%)
- ACC 201 (increased by 87%)
- MA 213 (increased by 28%)
- Organic Chemistry (increased by 28%).

The following chart shows the change in subject access from the previous year:
Impact of PTP

Data suggest a very strong, positive correlation between accessing the PTP and student retention at the university from first to second fall. The chart below shows the impact PTP access has on retention for the last seven first-year cohorts:

First to Second Fall Retention by PTP Access

The impact of the PTP on retention is broken down by high school GPA range in the chart below, demonstrating that accessing tutoring has significant impacts for students at all levels of academic preparedness:

First to Second Fall Retention for HS GPA Ranges by PTP Access, Aggregated across 2009-2015 Cohorts
In students with average and above average GPAs, the expectation is that students are adequately prepared and motivated to succeed and thus will be retained at high rates. However, even in this group, TL demonstrates a positive correlation between PTP access and fall-to-fall retention. The relationship between PTP access and retention is even starker across lower high school GPA ranges. Across a range of ability and motivation, the graph above demonstrates the far-reaching impact of PTP access on retention.

**Survey Assessment**

Each student who logs in and out for PTP is asked to rate the services he or she received during the visit. The graph below reports the results of this one-question survey for the 2016 academic year. The results of the survey are overwhelmingly positive, with 98% of students rating the services they received as average, good, or excellent and 81% rating them as excellent. Follow-up surveys sent automatically via email to students who rate the services they received as below average or poor are consistently read and addressed by the Assistant Director for Peer Tutoring, Christie Maier. Primary reasons for unsatisfactory visits include space and staffing limitations on very busy tutoring nights, followed by a lack of knowledge or helpfulness of tutors. Issues regarding the latter are addressed immediately with the help of TL’s Student Program Coordinators. The chart below shows the distribution of responses to the one-question survey students complete when they sign out:

As part of the cyclical assessment plan, an extended annual survey was administered to students who had accessed the PTP in AY2016. Employing an instrument initially developed by UK’s Office of Assessment that has been shown to be both valid and reliable, the survey responses illustrate that even as the numbers of students served and sessions provided declined, the program’s impact is being maintained. Trends in responses to key survey questions are presented below. Numbers are percent of respondents who agree or strongly agree with the statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>AY 14</th>
<th>AY 15</th>
<th>AY 16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The peer tutoring session(s) helped increase my understanding of the subject.</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The peer tutoring session(s) improved my understanding of how to do the assignment.</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The peer tutoring session(s) improved my confidence in my ability to successfully complete my assignments</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend peer tutoring in The Study to others.</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After seeking assistance from a Peer Tutor, I felt increased motivation to succeed academically.</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The peer tutoring session was beneficial to me

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Strategies</th>
<th>87%</th>
<th>84%</th>
<th>90%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Peer tutoring session(s) helped me improve my study strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Strategies</th>
<th>53%</th>
<th>54%</th>
<th>67%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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Working with a Peer Tutor reduced my feelings of stress about college academics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Strategies</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>57%</th>
<th>73%</th>
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In addition to the quantitative data collected through various surveys, Transformative Learning collects qualitative student feedback contributed through open response questions. Below is a representative sample of the data collected therein.

When students were asked what the most valuable thing they gained from The Study and/or The Study North, responses included:
- The way the tutors explain the problem just makes a lot of sense because they were a student as well so they have the student view of the problems
- How to properly study and what questions to ask
- I actually made a really good friend who is a tutor
- I became less stressed out about the subject
- How to make better use of my time and how to seek help when I need it
- Confidence
- Advice
- Understanding of concepts
- Honest help from honest people willing to sit down and help you in whatever way you need it

When students were given the opportunity to comment on anything about PTP, responses included:
- I enjoy having The Study as a resource, keep it up
- I absolutely love The Study and plan on becoming part of the staff one day
- I love that it's free. Thank you.
- Thanks for all you do!
- Everyone that I received help from was very knowledgeable and patient with me, which was very much appreciated!
- The single most helpful resource on campus
- I would like it if The Study can have more locations
- The Study/Study North is a great place to go get help and I really appreciate the University offering this service to students
- My peer tutor was excellent
- I recommend The Study to all of my friends and find it very helpful.

Students were also given the opportunity to offer constructive criticism of the Peer Tutoring Program. When asked that they would like to change about their experiences, the following suggestions were offered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Criticism of PTP</th>
<th>Number of open responses in category</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need more Peer Tutors available</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need additional subjects to be offered</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor tutoring</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional or different hours</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Study/TSN was loud/crowded/etc.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing/Other</td>
<td>30</td>
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Faculty and Campus Engagement

Transformative Learning and the PTP continuously strive to develop and improve communication and collaborations amongst departments and colleges, especially with those that house the academic course that the PTP offers tutoring in. Through out AY 2016 the PTP has worked with over 30 faculty and staff members in departments targeted by courses covered by PTP, and collaborated on such projects as content review sessions (entitled Lunch ‘n’ Learn), access to online homework and class resources, and respond to questions or issues that arise on the tutoring floor.

In order to foster collaboration and build partnerships, TL coordinated 4 meetings (2 each semester) of the campus-wide Tutor Advisory Board throughout AY 2016. The board is made up of representatives from Academic Departments and tutoring centers across campus including: CARES, LEAP, CATS, Chem Lab, Physics, Mathematics, and more. In addition to serving on this board, the Assistant Director for Peer Tutoring, Christie Maier, assisted in the creation and facilitation of the student counterpart to the Tutor Advisory Board. This newly established student board, entitled Board of Instructional and Peer Tutors (BOP IT), also met 4 times this year (twice each semester) and is intended to be an open forum for student tutors to share ideas and best practices, an opportunity to build positive relationships with tutors across campus, and for students to provide feedback and guidance on topics brought forward from the Tutor Advisory Board.

Focused Improvements

1. TL moved Office Hours @ The Study, formally entitled Academic Consulting, out of a pilot program phase and into an established tutoring model. Informed by, but different than, the peer tutoring model, Office Hours @ The Study is a partnership between TL and participating departments, through which department TAs serve as content experts and work with undergraduate students to help them master course material. A full report on this new service can be found in a later section, but TL would like to see the continued growth of this service through additional partnership and expanded offerings.

2. This year, PTP staff was successful in building partnerships with Academic Departments across campus to provide Lunch ‘n’ Learn seminars for tutors, collaborating with Chemistry and Physics to host 5 sessions. Facilitated by department faculty/staff, these sessions are an opportunity for tutors to review upcoming, new or challenging material in the subject(s) they tutor. Building off this success, PTP would like to expand this content review model through partnerships with additional Academic Departments, specifically Mathematics and Business, in order to better support all tutors and the courses offered through PTP.

3. The campus landscape continues to change and these affects continue to be felt by the PTP. Most evident is the decline in traffic at the south campus location, in Commons Complex. To further complicate this issue, campus facilities plans to take Commons Complex off-line starting Fall 2016, however an alternative location for The Study services has yet to be designated. In order to effectively plan and market the PTP a new location for The Study needs to be identified immediately. On the opposite side of campus, the opening of new residence halls (Limestone I & II) means approximately 1,400 additional students living on north campus. Knowing students most often come to tutoring from their residence hall, PTP anticipates seeing a significant increase in traffic at TSN. In anticipation of this increase traffic, PTP has proposed to open TSN on Sundays from 4pm-10pm starting Fall 2016.