Making the Connection: Tips for Faculty to Help Connect Students with the AEC

New data on our Weekly Tutoring Groups program affirms that students who make regular, consistent use of tutoring in connection with their STEM-discipline courses perform significantly better in those courses than their peers who don’t. We are happy to see that over the past three years, this and our other tutoring programs have served a steadily increasing number of students -- the word is getting out that tutoring works!

Still, many students who might benefit from tutoring choose not to participate when it is available to them. For some, non-participation may be a strategic choice - they are comfortable with their own study methods, and those methods work for them. Others, however, may simply need better information or more timely encouragement to make the connection. They may not have a clear sense of what tutoring is, who uses it, or how it might help them. Many see tutoring as something students get only when they are struggling, rather than as a part of their study routine. Seeking support may feel stressful.

Over the years, no one has played a bigger role than faculty in encouraging our students to make the best use of tutoring. Our attendance data over the years tells us that when faculty tout the benefits of tutoring, draw connections between tutoring and the coursework, or simply make regular reference to tutoring in the classroom, participation increases. Faculty play a vital role in connecting their students to the support they need. We welcome your involvement and hope to support you in the process of supporting our students.

For faculty who want to know more about our programs or about how to effectively encourage participation, here are a few ideas:

- **Visit the AEC and talk with professional staff and peer tutors about what they do.**
  We can’t expect professors to confidently refer students to our services without embracing the services themselves! Faculty are always welcome to reach out to us, learn more about what we do, and to help make sure that the learning support we provide is aligned with their courses’ learning objectives and expectations. Feel free to contact our professional staff with questions at any time.

- **Encourage students from week one to use Weekly Tutoring Groups as a means of keeping pace with the course -- and show them how to do it.**
  Students are now able to select their own Weekly Tutoring Group hours online, and can even register for a group right from their seats in your classroom. Taking a few minutes to walk students through the process tells them that you think this is important enough to talk about together. If you can’t make time to do this together, consider spending just a few minutes walking through the information on our website.

- **Encourage students to use our Drop-In Centers as much or as little as they like.**
  While Weekly Tutoring Groups are a great way to keep pace with a course, not all students feel it necessary to make a regular weekly meeting. It’s important to promote our Drop-In Centers in math, chemistry, physics and biology - when students can drop in as often as they would like during open hours. Many students find drop in centers to be convenient places to work on weekly assignments or study with friends, knowing someone is nearby who can help when questions arise.

- **Encourage students to make Tutoring Appointments if you feel they may need more focused attention.**
  While we don’t have the resources to provide individualized tutoring to every student, we do make available limited opportunities for students to book an appointment with a tutor. These meetings are
different than Weekly Tutoring Groups in that they do not automatically reoccur, however, they allow the tutor and student to focus on a concept together. The tutor and student can also decide if following up with another appointment, time in the Drop-In Center, or joining a Weekly Tutoring Group make sense as a next step.

- Refer students to the Writing Center for help with any writing project, in a class, at any stage of development.

Students often consider the Writing Center to be a place to go for revision after most of the writing is done. Naturally, our writing tutors are well-trained to help students learn how to assess and strengthen their late-stage drafts – but they are able to do much more. Writing Center tutors will assist students in thinking about where to begin, how to break down complex assignments over time, how to approach writing for different, specific purposes – anything that will strengthen the students’ ability to communicate effectively for the purposes their assignments indicate. Students can plan their appointments in advance by visiting uri.mywconline.com.

- Refer students to an Academic Skills Consultation when they are struggling in any course.

Our Academic Skills Consultations offer one-to-one meetings with students to assess what the sources of their academic struggles may be, and offers strategies aimed at improving their academic performance. This service is available to students in any undergraduate course.

- Keep tutoring in the spotlight as the weeks go by - and especially after exams.

Students often make the decision to get support from tutoring when they discover that a course is proving to be more challenging than they expected. It’s important to keep the idea of tutoring in front of them week to week. Our Weekly Tutoring Groups continue to accept new students throughout the semester, and our Drop-In Centers and Tutoring Appointments are always available.

- Refer students individually when you see that they may need help.

Whether it be through Starfish, emails, or office visits, our experience tells us that when students are referred to our services by other people who are working to support them, they are much likelier to come. Any time you are in touch with a student about their work in your classes, it’s an opportunity to suggest tutoring as an ongoing support.

- Feel free to follow up.

When students visit any of our services, a record of their visit is posted in Starfish and is viewable to anyone in that students’ support network. You’ll be able to know if they have taken your advice and ask them how things went for them if they’ve visited.

- Visit our website often.

Our website contains all the information you and your students may need to connect with our programs and resources. Walking students through the website is a way to help them see what we do and how we do it, which in turn can make it less stressful to approach the center for help. Of course, our program and contact information changes periodically, so visiting us from time to time can also help keep you current.