Academic Center for Excellence at Transylvania University (ACE TU)

To succeed in academia and the world, students must graduate from Transylvania being able to research and evaluate information, speak coherently, present their ideas to groups, lead discussions, listen actively, write persuasively, and reason quantitatively. By supporting the acquisition of these academic skills, we both help our students succeed at TU and improve our chances that they will complete their four years here.

To accomplish this, we have created a space in which students may seek the support they need for their academic coursework. Having academic support in one area allows students to easily know where to go. It also allows the experts providing the disparate support services to easily hand-off students to other experts to continue and deepen academic help they receive. This strengthens the help that the students receive.

In a focus group conducted in the Spring of 2011, students told us that this type of space and service would rank higher in importance to them than other major initiatives occurring on campus. They also expressed that they would use it if it were not perceived as remedial. For this reason how we promote this and the language that is used will be important.

The Library houses the [TU Learning Skills Services](#), a satellite of the [Writing Center](#), and the [Technology Learning Center](#). The core service partners, including the Academic Dean’s Office, Learning Skills Services, Writing Center, Library, and the Technology Learning Center are forming a board to work together to determine the programs, directions and growth areas for the Center.
Space and equipment

The ACE has two small conference rooms that each seat 10 in which workshops and seminars can be held. These seminar rooms have video conferencing capabilities so that students, faculty or staff can do group video conference calls with people from anywhere in the world. Imagine a political science class here meeting via skype with an expert in Israel or China.

Another room provides space and equipment for students to video themselves doing presentations, allowing them to observe and critique themselves and obtain critiques from others.

The ACE provides space for students to meet and to have intellectual discussions with their tutors and with each other. To facilitate collaborative learning and creative group work, and to support tutors working with students, the ACE Space has furniture that moves easily based on their needs. There are plenty of white boards on walls and on wheels. There are booths and tables with monitors so that students can work together, plugging a laptop or other device into the monitor and easily sharing their work and ideas.

There are also five smaller collaboration/study rooms that can be used in a multitude of ways.

Building and Coordinating Tutoring

We are developing and coordinating centralized tutoring services at TU. We are offering tutoring, or peer mentoring, both in specific subject areas such as History, Spanish, and Chinese; and in skills such as writing and speaking. It is our desire to offer tutoring in two forms.

We began offering open drop-in sessions in the Fall of 2013 and determined what to offer based on high enrollment and high need. Prior to Fall 2013, Transylvania had been offering drop-in sessions at the library for Math & Science Tutoring and Econ Tutoring. We have now expanded the drop-in sessions to include sessions for other high need and high
enrollment classes such as Western Civilization, Psychology, Accounting, Spanish, French, Chinese, and more. These drop-in sessions occur at set times so that students in these classes can walk in to get help without an appointment.

If we can find funding, we will build an appointment based program to support other subjects and classes. Students needing help would be able to schedule one-on-one appointments for those subjects with less demand. This would happen through a referral program managed by an ACE staff member. A roster of peer mentors, or tutors, would be maintained so that appointments could be made by ACE staff between an expert student and a student needing to further their learning.

ACE-TU works with divisions and programs to identify and hire peer consultants in different areas. We have begun a training program for our tutors which we will develop further over the next several years. In our ideal scenario, students hired to be peer consultants will go through extensive and ongoing training. We want to be sure that they are not only knowledgeable about their subject area but receive training in educational theory and pedagogical techniques. If we have the staffing and budget we hope to build a training program that will eventually be part of a nationally recognized certification program. Peer tutors would be able to add the certification to their resumes.

**Staffing Needs**

ACE services are currently being coordinated by the Library Director aided by the Public Services Librarian, the Reference and Instruction Librarian and the Learning Skills Coordinator.

The tutoring efforts are being managed by student managers under the supervision of the Public Services librarian and the Learning Skills Coordinator. In order to run an appointment-based program, we need to hire a full time ACE staff member who will make appointments for students with tutors and others, follow-up to be sure that the
appointments we held, manage the scheduling of drop-in sessions, hire and manage the tutors, manage the space, reserve rooms, and answer questions about the technology available in the rooms. This person would also keep statistics and conduct surveys, which will help with the assessment of the success of the programs and the use of the space. Since this is a position that supports students we would like this person to work 1pm-9pm, or 2pm-10pm so that they will be there when students need the help most.

AND MORE...

The space can also support workshops staffed by TU and if there is budget, could book outside speakers and experts to help all students.

The Academic Center works with the first year courses such as Intro to Psych, Western Civilization, and beginning level language courses, but it also helps upper classes with their needs. The Center pays attention to the programming, language and marketing so that students don’t assume that it is only available for first years. A possible target area for the services of the Center could be the junior/senior seminars and capstone courses.

Another goal of ACE is to support communication and bridge building among the different offices and professionals who offer academic support to students. By supporting communication among The Academic Dean’s Office, Learning Skills Services, Writing Center, Library, and the Technology Learning Center we enhance and enrich the support that we provide to students.

Areas and services that we can consider growing into in the future might include Quantitative Reasoning, a quickstart program that would complement the activities of August Term, ESL support, Faculty development workshops, Academic Advising support, and working with the Career Development Office.

We would like to expand the renovation and services into the rest of the library. ACE is after all an extension and natural growth of the academic support that has occurred in libraries for decades. We should also consider that in building ACE we removed our quiet study area. We would like to combine the two service desks on the main floor and build a glass partition at the old 1950s wall. The area to the west nearer the stacks would become a traditional old-fashioned quiet reading room. The area to the east would expand the idea of the ACE and support group-work and discussion.
We have built a website to provide the schedule for drop-in tutoring and workshops.  http://libguides.transy.edu/ACE

Are you interested in supporting student success by supporting the work of ACE?  Contact Susan Brown, Library Director and ACE Director at subrown@transy.edu or 859-246-5008. Or contact our Development office at 859-281-3565.

Estimated budget needs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACE Assistant who can manage the space, reserve rooms, make appointments for students with tutors and others, answer questions about the technology, collect statistics. Assume $13/hr for 40 hr wk x 46 wks + benefits($0.2 + $8000 health).</td>
<td>$36,704</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two good student managers for total of 30 hours/week (15 hrs each) for 28 weeks at $10/hr. Anticipate hrs covered would be 3-5pm and 7pm -11am</td>
<td>$8,400</td>
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<td>Hire tutors for individual appointments: 40 hrs/wk for 24 weeks, which is 2 semesters minus two first weeks of the semester &amp; Aug and May, at minimum wage</td>
<td>$6,960</td>
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<td>Hire tutors for drop-in offerings: 12 tutors x 2 hrs/day x 3 days/wk x 24 wks x minimum wage</td>
<td>$12,528</td>
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<td>Tracking software to track who is using the space, how and assess outcomes.</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Center tutors to be available on drop in basis. Assuming 1 student x 2 hrs/day x 5 days/wk x 26 wks x minimum wage, the Writing Center budget will be increased by:</td>
<td>$1,885</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$71,477</strong></td>
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