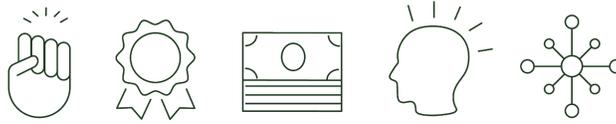


From Chaos to Structure: Organizing Peer Tutoring at PSU

A centralized peer tutoring model to increase efficiency, effectiveness, and student satisfaction

Final Report



Unit, Names of Applicants, Lead Point of Contact

Learning Center

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Purpose

The purpose of this proposal is to address the need for centralized peer tutoring at PSU. [The Learning Center](#) is currently home to the only College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) -certified tutoring center on campus. This certification requires that every peer tutor be thoroughly trained, regularly assessed and given professional development opportunities based explicitly upon the principles and current best practices of adult learning theories and its associated educational methodology. The 10 hours of mandatory annual (AY) training incorporates crucial elements from adult learning, student development, conflict mediation, cultural competency, and customer service. Learning Center tutors are, therefore, knowledgeable in their discipline and poised to convey their knowledge effectively, identify learning barriers and propose solutions, and refer students to appropriate campus resources while upholding the highest standards as student employees.

When PSU students think about where to go for tutoring support, their initial thought is the Learning Center. However, since pockets of college-, school-, and department-run peer tutoring exist outside of the Learning Center, students find it highly confusing to identify where they need to go to get assistance. This proposal will outline why the training of campus tutors and the administration of all peer tutoring at PSU should be the responsibility of the Learning Center and outline the process for adopting a campus-wide peer tutoring satellite structure.

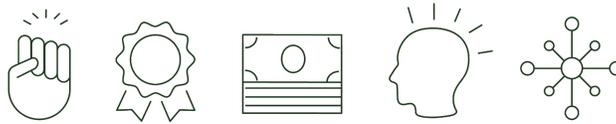
Background

According to information compiled by the National Tutoring Association ([NTA], n.d.), peer tutoring provides many benefits to the student seeking assistance and the peer tutor providing support. Tutees will likely experience improved confidence/self-esteem, increased academic achievement, and more remarkable overall persistence. Peer tutors often deepen their subject knowledge, increase confidence, and develop or hone both communicative and empathic abilities.

Institutions benefit from peer tutoring programs as well (NTA, n.d.). Successful peer tutoring programs increase engagement and reduce course DWF rates among students who participate in these programs. Data collected at PSU's Learning Center consistently match what's reported in the literature on peer tutoring. In fact, term after term, students who visit the Learning Center for peer tutoring have an average 91% term-to-term persistence rate.

Peer tutoring programs also support institutional equity goals. Venezia and Jaeger (2013) found that students transition from high school to college with varying degrees of college readiness. While advocating for a centralized tutoring system at Merrimack College, Johnson (2018) made the connection between their advocacy efforts and the findings of Venezia and Jaeger by identifying peer tutoring as an "effective intervention in improving the academic preparation of students transitioning from high school to college" (p. 6).

Further research by Richards (2020) posited that higher education institutions are providers of cultural capital for incoming students who may not receive this type of cultural foundation



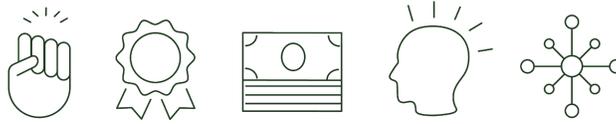
elsewhere (e.g., first-generation students, low socio-economic status students, students of color, etc.). Students possessing cultural capital exhibit more help-seeking behavior and better understand how to access resources. According to Johnson (2018), the utilization of tutoring fosters further help-seeking behavior, making peer tutoring programs a critical component of any institutional strategy to increase cultural capital among students.

One of the Learning Center's main goals is to increase student equity. We do this by providing various ways to engage with our available resources. Our programming is designed to empower students to select the type of peer-led support they need. [The Learning Center's Peer Tutoring program](#) offers drop-in tutoring hours in an open-lab format, group tutoring, and scheduled appointments via the Penji application. Additionally, we strive to find innovative approaches to academic support, such as having our peer tutors host weekly, hour-long, interactive Live Streams where content is reviewed for courses with high rates of DWFs.

Our diverse programming is born of an understanding that access isn't just about finding the needed service but also about ensuring that students feel comfortable with the help they receive. We want to level the playing field and be a resource for all students—not just students with the cultural capital to know where to find resources and how to utilize them. We seek to destigmatize asking for help by providing the desired service directly and immediately or, by providing the necessary referral. Streamlining and centralizing access to support, like peer tutoring, and giving students options for how they'd like to engage fosters help-seeking behavior but it's efficient, effective, and, most importantly, equitable.

Centralizing services to boost student support is a practice that has been introduced previously. Kot (2014) discovered that the first-year attrition rate was lower for students who participated in centralized advising. Maldonado (2019) reported reduced frustration and increased student and administrator satisfaction after a one-stop student services shop was established on his campus. PSU recently demonstrated its confidence in centralizing services, with many student support units operating out of Fariborz Maseeh Hall. Centralizing the administration of peer tutoring at PSU would make scheduling tutor appointments much faster for students -- they'd only need to access a single website. Additionally, a central access point to peer tutor programming means that students receiving this support will be exposed to all available tutoring options each time they access the Learning Center's tutoring website.

Students often report awareness of program availability as a barrier to utilizing support services (Ciscell, Foley, Luther, Howe, & Gjsedal, 2016; Winograd & Rust, 2014). Increasing awareness of available services and removing barriers to access are vital steps to ensure the success of our students; centralizing the administration of and access to PSU's peer tutor programming would benefit everyone involved with this support service.



Project Summary

This project proposes centralizing and reorganizing all peer tutoring at PSU under the Learning Center. Peer tutoring programs outside the Learning Center will be rebranded as Learning Center Peer Tutoring Satellite sites. A single unit overseeing peer tutoring will make it easier for PSU students to identify and access tutoring support services. Students will be assured that the professionalism and expertise they experience with one peer tutor will be standard for all peer tutors across campus. Centralizing peer tutoring administration will strengthen bonds between the Learning Center and other on-campus units that offer peer tutoring. Those units will have increased access to the Learning Center's tutoring innovations (e.g., the Penji application for tutoring scheduling and content-based Live Streams), CRLA-certified tutor training, robust data collection while simultaneously reducing their administrative workload, and regular assessment. Assessment is key to the Learning Center's peer tutor training and maybe a component that is missing from programs in other units. Successful execution of this project will see the Learning Center achieve all these aims while satellite peer tutoring programs thrive within the units where they've always existed.

Project Proposal

This project intends to align PSU's peer tutor programming with other institutions, including implementing peer tutoring best practices, improving access to services, and ensuring overall student success. This proposal outlines how to centralize peer tutoring at PSU to curb student confusion around accessing this resource and how to standardize the provision of this support service across campus. There is no intention to move existing peer tutoring programs from where they have historically been located; students will still have the opportunity to feel connected to their departments while receiving tutor support. Instead, a centralization effort will allow PSU units that offer peer tutoring to function as Learning Center Peer Tutoring Satellite sites.

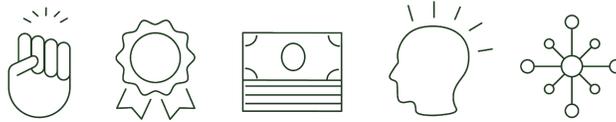
This project will take place in three phases. Each of these phases is described as follows:

Phase 1 - Identify Areas of Peer Tutoring on Campus, Processes, and Resources Spent:

To fully understand the scope of this project, we must first start by identifying where another peer tutoring exists on campus and what operational processes these programs have in place. While we know most peer tutoring locations on PSU's campus -- School of Business, College of Engineering and Computer Science, Mathematics and Statistics Department, Chemistry Department -- we want to be sure that we aren't overlooking any critical places where peer tutoring occurs. It is also important to note that while we aim to centralize all PSU peer tutoring within the Learning Center, the purpose of this project is not to move the peer tutoring programs away from the colleges, schools, and departments where they currently exist; we understand the importance of having an identity tied to your major and receiving tutoring in your building. Our goals are for students to see all available peer tutoring options on one website, schedule their tutoring through one platform, receive consistent, high-level tutoring support, and be empowered to continue asking for help because the process is effective and efficient.

In addition to identifying which units offer their peer tutoring, it is essential to identify the resources devoted to these programs. We seek to find out the following information:

- Total expenditures per year on peer tutoring
- Time spent hiring, training, and supervising the peer tutors



- Assessment practices currently in place
- Any benefits and/or barriers to running a peer tutoring program

We recognize that peer tutoring on campus can take many forms. As such, we'll use the following criteria to define the peer tutoring centers of interest to this project:

- Employs 3 or more students in the capacity of a peer tutor. Any staff member not specifically a student (UG, PB, or GR) does not apply to this count.
- Offers 10 hours minimum of tutoring in the discipline (not course specific) each week
- Advertises the tutoring service on their website or in classes and does not charge an additional fee for use (either a student fee attached to the course or a fee for use)

Phase 2 - Administrative Cost Reduction and Alignment to Learning Center Procedures:

The second phase of this project would be to align the payment structure of the various peer tutoring programs with the Learning Center's payment structure. In areas where Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) are utilized as tutors without additional compensation (tutoring being one of the GTA's responsibilities), we would not align compensation. This second phase would also include helping departments rename their support services that do not fall under the definition of peer tutoring.

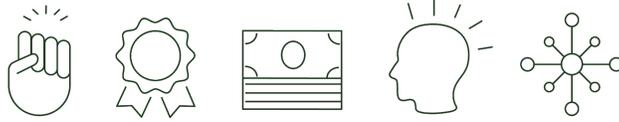
This phase would also include a thorough review of administrative practices, including the following:

- Hiring protocols, including administrative responsibilities and costs
- Training inventory - how are current tutors trained, observed, assessed, etc.?
- Scheduling and hours - how do units select the hours to hold tutoring, where can students find these hours, how do students sign up, is tutoring offered on campus or online, etc.?

Phase 3 - Prepare to Launch for Fall 2021:

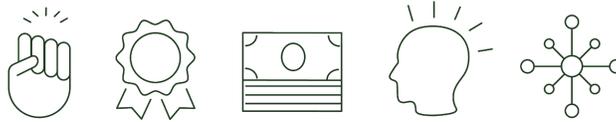
By starting this project in June we would be ready to launch a reorganized peer tutoring model in time for Fall 2021. Phase 3 of this project includes centralizing peer tutoring behind the scenes and on the Learning Center's public-facing website. Additionally, this phase will include the following:

- Create MOUs with each Peer Tutoring Satellite site on campus addressing:
 - Coordination responsibility - who sets tutoring hours, dates, etc.
 - Fiscal responsibility - how the tutors will be paid (index code), budget allowance, etc.
 - Administrative responsibility - who is responsible for hiring paperwork, timesheets, and new tutor recruitment
- Develop and administer Peer Tutor Training to all peer tutors at both the Learning Center and at satellite sites
- Update the Learning Center website to include all satellite sites; request that other tutoring service pages on pdx.edu include LC information.
- Increase Penji's capability to include satellite sites
- Train satellite site front office employees on Penji to help with student questions



Project Timeline

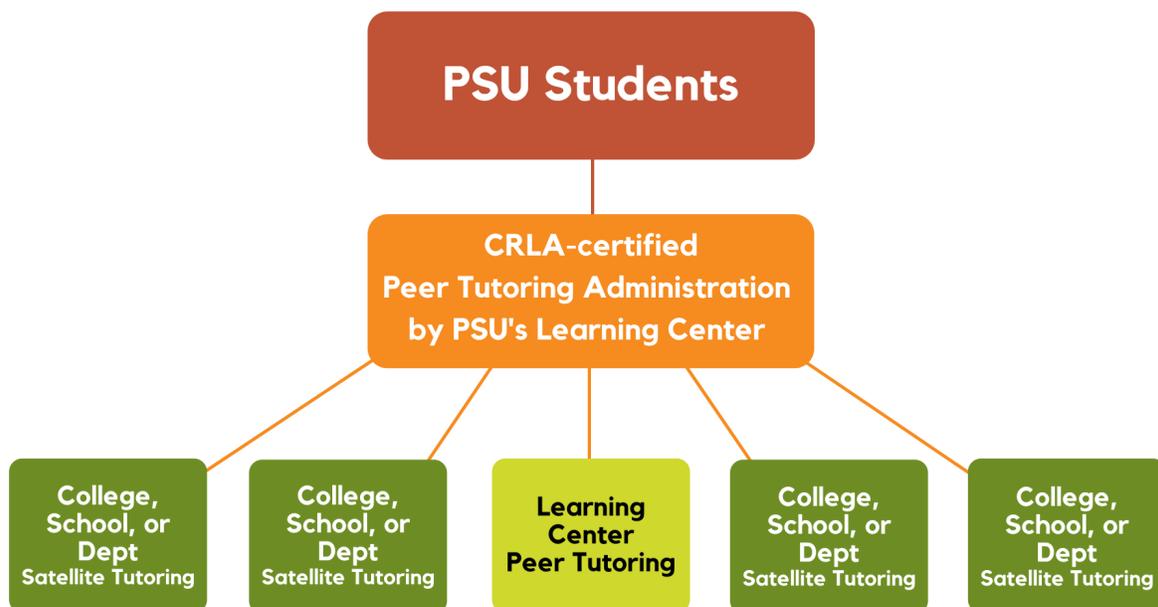
Action	June	July	August	September
Identify areas of peer tutoring on campus	X			
Determine the resources units spend on peer tutoring	X	X		
Align the payment structure between all tutoring programs and the Learning Center		X	X	
Work with departments to rename support services that do fit under the tutoring criteria/definition			X	
Determine if there is a cost savings for departments		X		
Create MOUs between units and the Learning Center			X	
Train all existing peer tutors in order to comply with CRLA			X	X
Update the Learning Center website to reflect changes				X



Project Budget

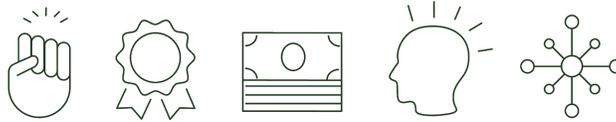
Item	Estimated Cost
Administrative Support	\$3,000
Penji Contract (\$20/month/tutor) Up to -50 Additional Tutors	\$10,000 (AY 2021-2022 - paid in July)
Training Supplies	\$2,000
Total	15,000

Proposed Organizational Chart



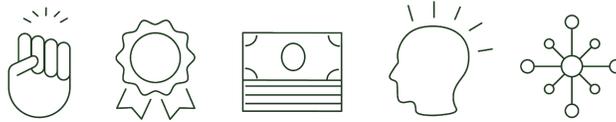
Findings

Overall, the ReImagined grant fulfilled its purpose in that the Learning Center was able to onboard many of the satellite tutoring that was already occurring to the Penji application. However, at this time the tutors that are hired within the schools and departments are mostly trained by those who hire them. The Learning Center has not been able to provide administrative support or training support for these satellite tutoring centers as there hasn't been interest. At this time, the Learning Center continues to pay for a site license for Penji and will continue to work on ensuring that as many tutors on campus are utilizing the app.



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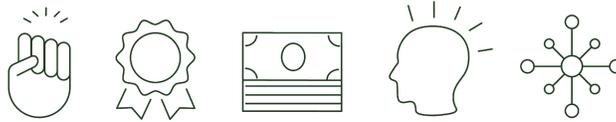
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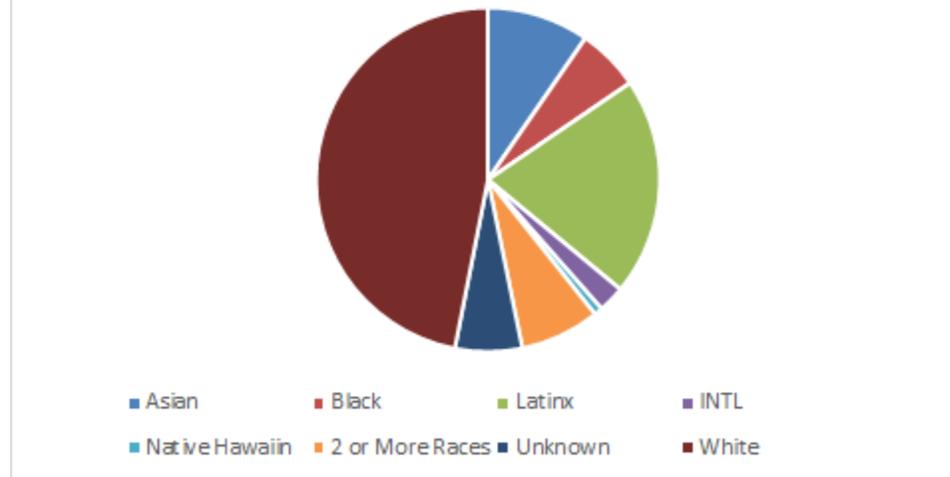
Appendix 1 - Responses to proposal-guiding questions from PSU's *ReImagine* website

PROPOSALS SHOULD ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. How does your proposed project support creating a future-ready institution?
 - Allows tutoring services to scale across the university while reducing the number of places students need to look for tutoring information
 - Provides the opportunity for currently uncertified tutoring support to become CRLA-certified, meaning increased training and professional development opportunities for PSU's student employees
 - Increases student employees' level of professionalism via trainings designed from contemporary educational research and practice (complementary to the content-specific knowledge of all disciplines)
 - Efficient and effective: simplifies and standardizes peer tutoring processes
 - Provides access to more reliable data on how this support service is utilized by students
 - Preserves administration time for units with Learning Center Peer Tutoring Satellite sites
 - We hope that this will provide savings to the institution.
2. What is/are the key challenge(s) your proposed project is intended to address?
 - Decentralized and potentially redundant peer tutoring services across campus
 - Student confusion over where to go to access the tutoring they need
3. What is/are the intended outcome(s) of your project?
 - Make it easier for students to locate and schedule peer tutoring
 - Establish a PSU-wide learning community for peer tutors and tutees
 - Certify and standardize all of PSU's peer tutoring
 - Free up time and/or money within departments, but are unsure until after Phase 1.
4. How does your proposal support our efforts to build a sustainable budget?
 - Minimal cost scalability
 - Free up time and/or money within departments, but will know more after Phase 1.
5. How does your proposal increase or enhance services to students?
 - Centralized service offers a better student experience when engaging in help-seeking behavior around tutoring
 - Sets standards for PSU's peer tutoring support service
6. How does your proposal increase our ability to achieve our racial equity goals?
 - Currently, the LC serves a very diverse group of students. In fact, 53% of all tutoring students served during the Winter 2021 term identified as a race other than white.



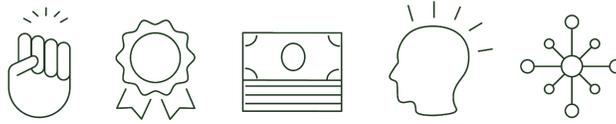
LC Tutoring Student Demographics Winter 2021



- Promotes access, removes barriers, decreases help-seeking behavior stigma. Through centralized peer tutoring under the Learning Center, students are provided with multiple ways to engage with peer tutors (i.e., the Penji web-based or phone app, in-person in the Library or satellite sites, via Live Streams, etc.).
- The LC strives to hire student employees who also are as diverse as the students we serve. It is imperative that our hiring and recruitment practices seek to employ our minoritized students. We also recognize the importance of having students seeing tutors that “look like them” and have had similar experiences.

A SUCCESSFUL REIMAGINE PSU PROPOSAL COULD CONSIDER SUCH QUESTIONS AS:

- How can we organize most effectively to support students in ways that are equitable and timely?
 - This project can be executed by Fall 2021 - refer to the project timeline.
- How can we revise our curriculum to be more inclusive of anti-racist and decolonizing approaches across the university?
 - Over the last year, the Learning Center has utilized all mandatory all-staff meetings to provide anti-racist trainings and bring together our staff to conversations around these topics. Time during our staff meetings was intentionally dedicated to having these conversations.
 - Our accreditation body is fully committed to ending systemic racism and offers guidance on how to do so within CRLA certified tutoring centers. For more information, see the CRLA article [*Dismantling Systemic Racism in Learning Support: The Time is Now!*](#)
- How can we prepare and inspire students for careers of impact?
 - We hire student leaders who are interested in helping other students succeed. We work with them to strengthen their own tutoring/leadership/teaching skills. We provide them with professional development opportunities.



- We train student employees to be aware of not only themselves and their position on campus with its associated responsibilities but also the Learning Center's position on campus and its relationship to other entities both on and off campus.
- How can we update our curricula/programs to meet the competencies needed for the changing world of work?
 - The Learning Center's tutoring and academic coaching programs are CRLA-certified, a certification that is constantly adapting and changing to meet the changing world of work. Topics included:
 - Cultural awareness, intercultural communications, diversity, and special needs students
 - Gender Issue Awareness
 - Critical thinking skills
 - Conflict resolution
 - Referral skills
 - Assertiveness and boundaries
 - Advocacy for students: when, what, how much
 - Leadership styles
- How might we unbundle our curriculum to make it accessible to broader populations of students?
 - This project will support university-wide efforts to achieve this goal.
- How can we revise our curriculum and staffing to meet the needs of a smaller and changing population of students?
 - This project will support university-wide efforts to achieve this goal.
- How can we reorganize our units to reflect the future-facing shape of disciplines and fields and simultaneously enable us to operate more effectively?
 - This project will support university-wide efforts to achieve this goal.
- How can we build more effective pathways for students from high schools and community colleges to complete degrees at PSU?
 - The Learning Center supports incoming high school students in various ways, including the destigmatization of help-seeking behavior and the further development of cultural capital. Students coming from community colleges are used to having very robust tutoring programs and finding it all in one place. This project would strengthen our service to both of these populations of students.
- How can we operate more effectively by sharing administrative resources and services across units?
 - We want to utilize the expertise that exists within the Learning Center by sharing it across campus in regard to the administrative and training components of running peer tutoring programs.