

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

Academic Skills Center helps students find scholarly footing

For Oakland University students grappling with calculus problems, Spanish verb tenses or the mystifying musings of Jean-Paul Sartre, there's hope to be found in the welcoming environment of Oakland University's Academic Skills Center.

Staffed by students, alumni and faculty, the Center is a place of refuge for undergraduates who may need a hand in getting through difficult courses. The Center offers peer tutoring and supplemental instruction to more than 2,000 students each year, covering more than 20 topics in areas such as mathematics, modern languages and philosophy.

This past April, the Center held its annual Student Employee Appreciation Luncheon to honor the commitment and effort of the more than 40 tutors and instructors who often work more than 100 hours a semester to make the program a success.

"Our tutors and instructors are helping students who might not otherwise graduate," Rose Wedemeyer, the Center's assistant director for student success and outreach, said. "At the Center, students can ask questions they might not feel comfortable asking their professors. (By asking these questions of their peers), they begin to learn to interact with their professors."

Since 2001, students in need have benefitted from the generosity of donor Judy Froemke, whose late husband Jon launched the supplemental instruction side of the Center, which cultivates a corps of specialized student instructors who attend traditionally difficult courses and lead weekly study sessions to help students through the material.

Judy Froemke created the Jon Froemke Endowed Graduate Assistantship position within the Skills Center to honor her husband, a long-time Oakland University mathematics professor, and provide financial support for a graduate student who helps coordinate and administer the program each year.

"The ASC students who tutor other students do a wonderful job," says Froemke. "They are 'the cream of the crop' at OU, and all alumni can be proud of them. Trained and assisted by the capable ASC staff, they help their fellow students with specific subjects and in so doing help the professors by supplementing and explaining lecture content and class assignments. I appreciate the work the Academic Skills Center's staff, peer tutors and faculty do to help make OU a great learning institution."

As for the Skills Center, staff and students are grateful for the support. "Judy Froemke is a remarkable donor who is passionate about education and giving back to OU," says Krista Malley, director of the Academic Skills Center. "Her husband's legacy of teaching students lives on in the Froemke Graduate Assistant position, given that one of the duties includes serving as a supplemental instructor for a math course. Donors like Judy are invaluable in helping the Academic Skills Center provide more assistance for classes that students traditionally have a difficult time in."

The tutors and instructors who devote their time and energy to the Center all share a passion for teaching. They want to help their peers succeed. "Most of our tutors are here because of the warm, fuzzy feeling they get from teaching others," Beth DeVerna, assistant director of the Center's academic support program, said. "They enjoy the reward of seeing the light bulb go on for the person they're helping."

Student tutors agree. "There's all this knowledge I'm building up, but it was just sitting there," Matt Cross, a junior in computer engineering, said. "I can share that knowledge here. It's so great to have people say, 'Thank you, I finally get it.'"

Sometimes that help goes beyond textbooks. "A lot of people come to the Skills Center during their first or second semester," tutor Diana Richards, CAS'10, said. The Center "helps kids just getting out of high school understand what it takes to adjust and do well."

The fact that students can help one another through difficult courses and challenging transitions is reflective of one of the University's overall strengths, Richards said, adding, "The best thing about OU is that people are so willing to help each other."

To learn more about lending your support to the Academic Skills Center and the Jon Froemke Endowed Graduate Assistantship, please contact Alysa Hunton at 248 364-6106, e-mail at hunton@oakland.edu or write to Oakland University, University Relations, John Dodge House, Rochester, Michigan 48309-4497.

SUMMARY

Created by Bris Roberts (berobert@oakland.edu) on Tuesday, June 8, 2010
Modified by Bris Roberts (berobert@oakland.edu) on Tuesday, June 8, 2010
Article Start Date: Tuesday, June 8, 2010