

Class of 1963 Center for Academic Excellence Update on AY2013-2014

Greetings!

As the Director of the Class of 1963 Center for Academic Excellence (CAE), I, Dr. Bruce Bukowski, would like to share some exciting updates on the ways in which we continue to serve the Brigade. Over the past three years, the number of midshipmen who utilize our services has steadily increased. In fact, **in AY2011-2012, only 44% of the Brigade utilized CAE; in AY2013-2014, that number increased to 62%**. Significantly, an increase is evident among all classes: First Class, from 11% to 27%; Second Class, from 32% to 57%; Third Class, from 52% to 72%; and Fourth Class, from 80% to 88%. This data indicates a yard-wide change in perception of the Center for Academic Excellence. Not only is our center a valuable resource for athletes, plebes, and struggling students, it has now become an integral component for the academic success of upperclassmen and high performing students alike. As we offer academic help to an increasing number of midshipmen, we successfully fulfill our mission to provide the highest quality academic support programs for *all* midshipmen seeking to improve their academic performance. Though increased participation is consistent across CAE, it is valuable to consider the individual successes of each distinct unit: the Tutorial Program, the Writing & Reading Center, the Learning Skills Program, and the Plebe Intervention Program.

The Tutorial Program continues to be a crucial element of CAE's academic support services, as it encompasses our Supplemental Instruction Courses, Evening Tutoring, and Midshipmen Group Study Program (MGSP). **Supplemental Instruction (SI) Courses** are non-credit courses that provide learning support in chemistry, mathematics, physics, and engineering. In order to improve midshipmen's learning within technical disciplines, SI courses provide a review of the major topics covered during the week and offer an opportunity for students to ask questions in a structured environment. A large source of CAE's recent growth, in AY2010-2011 only 63 SI classes were offered; by AY2013-2014, we expanded our class sections by 148% in order to offer 152 SI classes. As a result, we increased our total seats from 400 to 1278, thereby resulting in 15,757 student visits in AY2013-2014. In addition to the SI courses, our professional staff held 5599 tutoring sessions in AY2013-2014 during **Evening Tutoring**. Evening professional tutoring is available to all students on a first-come, first-served basis in the subjects of chemistry, mathematics, physics, engineering, and Arabic; the goal of the tutoring encounter is to address specific content and problem-solving skills with which the individual student is struggling. In addition to these offerings, our student-driven **Midshipmen Group Study Program (MGSP)** provides regularly scheduled, out-of-class, peer-facilitated sessions. Students work together to compare notes, discuss important class concepts, and develop more effective study strategies. Each session is facilitated by a MGSP leader: in traditional MGSP, a competent student who has previously taken the course, been recommended by the course instructor, and chosen by CAE; in Writing Center MGSP, a strong writer who has been recommended by a faculty member, chosen by CAE, and trained by the Writing Center staff. In AY2013-2014, MGSP leaders were responsible for 11,953 tutoring sessions: 495 for 1/C, 2682 for 2/C, 3222 for 3/C, and 5554 for 4/C. Our robust Tutorial Program continues to thrive in numbers and in quality instruction.

The Writing & Reading Center partly accounts for CAE's major growth in AY 2013-2014 because in September 2013, CAE assumed operation of the Writing Center to continue the mission of fostering a culture of writing across the USNA community. **The Writing Center** provides writing workshops and one-on-one writing consultations for all writing projects during any

stage of the writing process, with the goal to provide a professional and supportive environment where midshipmen, faculty, and staff can receive guidance from experienced writers. Once CAE acquired the Writing Center, we almost doubled the amount of student visits from previous record highs, increasing the amount of writing consultations from 1227 in AY2012-2013 to 2374 in AY2013-2014 (133 for 1/C, 241 for 2/C, 325 for 3/C, and 1675 for 4/C). After the first semester of AY2014-2015, we are already on track to break 3000 appointments this year, nearly tripling the amount of annual writing consultations in just two years. In addition, the Writing Center staff led a series of well-attended writing workshops that included offerings from Grammar Tutorials to Effective Argumentation and Public Speaking. As part of the initiative to foster effective communication skills across the Brigade, **The Advanced Speed Reading Program**, facilitated by Ace Reader software, has proved to dramatically increase midshipmen's comprehension while greatly improving reading speed. This premier speed-reading course is offered as a six-week series of software and classroom sessions that is typically offered twice per semester. Due to the effectiveness of this program, the number of participants continues to climb. In AY2011-2012, the program began with only 45 students and 270 student visits; in AY2013-2014 this number dramatically increased to 1068 visits, and we are on track to break 2800 student visits in AY2014-2015.

The Advanced Learning Skills Program, facilitated by our professional staff, provides instruction in time management, note taking, test preparation, test taking, and stress management. In addition to the short, non-credit Learning Skills course offered on these topics, workshops and individual sessions are provided upon request throughout the academic year. This is an area of CAE which we hope to develop in the near future; even though it is considered one of our smaller programs, it was still able to generate 1056 student visits in AY2013-2014.

CAE's final unit, and one greatly valued among the Fourth Class, is **The Plebe Intervention Program**. Every summer since 1989, the Academic Center/CAE identifies approximately 90 freshmen to participate in this program based on an analysis of admissions credentials as well as performance on Plebe Summer placement exams. After the initial at-risk group is selected, approximately 30 additional plebes are offered the opportunity to join the program in October, after six-week grades, and in January, in conjunction with Academic Boards. The intervention program continues to offer significant academic benefits to this target group.

I would personally like to thank the Class of 1963 for their support along the way. With the help of their patronage, we have continued to develop and tailor our programs according to the needs of midshipmen. As we grow in size, we are also constantly striving to improve the quality of our support services. Likely evidence of the effectiveness of our programs, Academic Board cases have dropped dramatically in the last three years. Furthermore, the following data serves as evidence that our approach is working:

Total Appointments in the Class of 1963 Center for Academic Excellence

2010-2011	19,200
2011-2012	22,000
2012-2013	33,000
2013-2014	39,359

We look forward to continuing our tireless efforts to provide the best possible support services for our future naval officers. Thank you, and happy holidays!

Sincerely,
 Dr. Bruce Bukowski
 Director of the Class of 1963 Center for Academic Excellence