

A SWOT Analysis and Preliminary Outcomes Assessment of a Student-Led Learning Center on a Regional Campus

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Students who use academic learning centers earn higher grades and remain persistent in their degree pursuit, especially remedial students at two-year college campuses. Peer tutoring and the use of undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs) have also been shown to have positive impact on both students serving as UTAs and students in the courses. Yet there is little information on student-led learning centers, that is, a learning center where trained undergraduates serve as tutors, advisors, and instructional developers. This paper offers a description of the development, SWOT analysis, and preliminary outcomes assessment of a student-led learning Center in Psychology on a two-year regional campus in Ohio. Our model is a place on campus where all students can go to receive tutoring, advising, a place to connect with other students, and workshops on topics such as “How to Be a Successful College Student” and “How to Get Into Graduate School.” The student-faculty interaction, peer tutoring, and leadership roles given to Student Associates in a learning Center, and the co-curricular events offered to all students, are in line with activities that engage students to promote academic and professional success. For institutions that are trying to increase experiential learning, the Center offers a low-cost and self-sustaining means to offer an experiential learning opportunity that goes beyond serving as a research assistant or classroom TA. The model described in this paper could be used to develop an effective student-led learning Center in any discipline on any Regional or two-year college campus.

Introduction

Most colleges and universities maintain student learning centers to promote student retention and success (Arendale, 2004). Researchers suggested (Kane & Henderson, 2006; Manalo & Leader, 2007; Perin, 2004; Wurtz, 2015) that students who use learning assistance centers have increased grades and persistence in college. Effects may be more pronounced in students at regional and two-year

campuses, as there was a report that developmental students who used their campus learning center were three times more likely to complete their course and twice as likely to continue to a subsequent academic term than developmental students who did not use the learning center (Wurtz, 2015). Coordinating efforts between the department and the learning center has also been found to increase completion rates in a low-success statistics course (Manalo & Leader, 2007), suggesting the value of increased communication between faculty and the learning center for serving student needs. Yet it seems unlikely that many faculty seek out opportunities to work with their learning center to develop specific programs. Further, many students who need learning centers do not use them, with as few as 25% of two-year campus students reporting use (Manalo & Leader, 2007; Wurtz, 2015).

Peer tutoring and the use of undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs) has also been found to significantly impact success of both tutors and tutees (Crowe, Ceresola, & Silva, 2014; De Backer, Van Keer, & Valcke, 2014; Dioso-Henson, 2012; Filz & Gurung, 2013; Fremouw, Millard, & Donahoe, 1979; Hogan, Norcross, Cannon, & Karpiak, 2007; Leung, 2015). Although research on the use of UTAs at regional campuses is limited, research with students at four-year colleges and universities report a number of benefits to students serving as UTAs, including offering UTAs first-hand experience with teaching (Hogan et al., 2007), personal growth, and an in-depth understanding of the material (Filz & Gurung, 2013; Weidert, Wendorf, Gurung, & Filz, 2012). Benefits of UTAs to other students include increased comfort with seeking help from a peer rather than a professor, and an enhanced overall learning experience. These effects have been noted in a variety of disciplines including science, physics, and psychology (Chapin, Wiggins, & Martin-Morris, 2014; Harper, May, & Oliver, 2002; Hogan et al., 2007). As suggested by Hogan and colleagues (2007), UTAs can furthermore be a “boon” to faculty, especially in departments with no graduate students, and suggest that UTAs offer a strong benefit to the institution as they “foster an atmosphere that learning is everybody’s business” (Hogan et al., 2007, p. 189).

Indeed, in a comparison of academic programs that had high student retention versus low, three primary activities emerged that were unique to the high-retention programs: 1) induction, or helping students to meet others in their program and to gain comfort with campus life, 2) peer or personal tutoring, and 3) active or hands-on teaching and learning

activities (Trotter & Roberts, 2006). These findings are in line with activities that promote other markers of success including degree completion, graduate school admission, department chair ratings of overall student satisfaction, and post-degree employment (Stoloff, Curtis, Rodgers, Brewster, & McCarthy, 2012; Stoloff, Rodgers-Good, Smith, & Brewster, 2015). Other factors that greatly impact student retention and success included participation in student organizations and out-of-classroom student-faculty interaction (Cornell & Mosley, 2006; Hunter, 2006; Stoloff et al., 2015). Stoloff et al. (2015) found that out-of-classroom student-faculty interaction uniquely predicted graduate school admission rates even after controlling for SAT scores and conference presentations, suggesting that institutions should be encouraged to increase incentive to faculty for promoting student engagement outside of the classroom.

To summarize, a number of “best practices” have been identified that increase student retention and success at two- and four-year schools, as measured by course completion, degree completion, student satisfaction, successful admission to graduate school, and successful employment in a position related to the degree, and include:

- Getting involved on campus, including involvement in student organizations and using the academic learning center.
- Serving as and interacting with undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs).
- Informal, out-of-classroom faculty-student interaction.

In an effort to engage regional campus students across each of these domains at a level of magnitude that extended beyond a single class, a regional campus student-led learning center was developed in Psychology. Based on the literature noting the lack of use of learning centers by undergraduates and especially first-generation students (e.g., Wurtz, 2015) and the increased comfort with seeking help from qualified UTAs over professors (e.g., Hogan et al., 2007), it was suspected that regional campus students would be more inclined to visit a peer-led learning center than one filled with professional staff. Further, in an effort to offer students learning opportunities in line with the goals Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative (<http://www.aacu.org/leap>), including providing common intellectual

experiences, promoting learning communities, offering collaborative assignments and projects, and providing internships, it made sense to develop a student-led learning center that offered experiential learning opportunities to a broad range of students, that is, those who serve as Student Associates, and those who utilize services provided by the center. The motivation to develop a student-led learning center on a regional campus was enhanced by data demonstrating that non-traditional and historically underserved students, a population to which many regional campus students belong, benefit particularly from these practices (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2015; Kuh, 2008). The process for developing a student-led learning center and recommendations offered in this paper could readily apply to any discipline on any two-year or regional campus.

Developing the Regional Campus Center: The main campus of our institution developed a student-run learning center in Psychology, the Center for Psychological Inquiry (the CPI), in Fall, 2010. Regional students could benefit from such a center, but informal conversations suggested that few ever visited. To verify that the minimal involvement of regional students in the main campus CPI was not due to lack of interest, a needs assessment was conducted (Appendix 1) via anonymous Qualtrics survey emailed to all regional campus Psychology majors (n=185), and received 36 responses (19.5% response rate). The survey asked about familiarity with the CPI, interest in using a CPI if it were available on the regional campuses, resources and programs students would like available, and times they would like the Center to be open.

Using this data, a plan was devised for a regional campus CPI that could best serve the needs of students. Weekly staff meetings with the main campus CPI were attended so that the regional CPI could mimic their model. Next, the regional campus Director of Learning Assistance was consulted to inquire about space and resources. Although space on campus (like most) is at a premium, shared use of space in a central location on a regional campus was offered.

Once space was secured, the regional campus Advising Office staff was consulted regarding incorporating advising for the major. The Advising Office staff was excited about the opportunity, and shared promotional materials, undergraduate bulletins, and other advising information that we could keep in the Center. Faculty were then asked to send copies of

unwanted books and a number of donations were received to begin a library. The campus Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) had funding available, and the Center was awarded \$500 to purchase reference books, study aids, and supplies and prizes to host CPI-sponsored events.

Next, undergraduate Student Associates (Student Associates) had to be recruited to serve in the CPI. Student Associates were to serve the role of a UTA more broadly defined, as they would be expected to tutor in a variety of courses, advise for the major, and develop educational programming including workshops and panel discussions on topics of broad interest to the college community. The goal was to have 8-10 outstanding upper-level students serve as Student Associates. Students were recruited by sending outstanding faculty-recommended Psychology students (n=9) a personalized email explaining the purpose of the Center and inviting them to apply to serve as an SA (see Appendix 2 for a copy of the application form). Major was not a factor when considering these students, only outstanding achievement in at least Introduction to Psychology. A total of 5 students (4 psychology majors) applied and were accepted to serve as Student Associates in Fall 2014. Student Associates had an average overall GPA of 3.28, and all but one were freshmen and only capable of tutoring Introduction to Psychology.

Training Student Associates: Once accepted, all Student Associates had to meet for at least one hour with the faculty director of the regional campus CPI and the main campus CPI staff which included 3-4 undergraduate Student Associates, the graduate student SA Coordinator, and the main campus faculty director, to develop an understanding of the Center model. Once completed, Student Associates met three times each week for 2 consecutive weeks for a total of 6 hours to train in advising and proper tutoring practice. Sessions were focused on training in the course requirements for the major and how to read and use the Majors Checklist, a helpful sheet describing the sequence of courses in the major. Training in advising for general education requirements was also provided, as well as training in how to use materials provided by the Advising Office. Student Associates were strongly encouraged to refer students to the Center faculty director the Advising Office for additional information. Next training focused on proper tutoring practice, that is, not giving answers to questions, not “gossiping” about professors or assignment requirements, how to help students find appropriate answers on their own, etc. Student Associates were encouraged to send challenging tutoring issues directly to the Center

faculty director or to their professor. Additional time was spent training Student Associates on how to use the tutoring materials available in the center, that is, textbooks, course notes and assignments from previous courses, etc. Student Associates were permitted to make copies of materials to give to students for free, but could not let students copy answers or take copies of assignment or quiz questions out of the Center. Three Student Associates also joined our regional campus tutoring program, which competitively accepts students for training as tutors. Successful graduates of that 6-week program can register in our TutorTrac system and receive compensation for scheduled tutoring hours.

Running the Center: The Center opened the first week of November 2014. The needs assessment identified that students wanted the option to schedule appointments, so the Center opened as both a drop-in Center and accepted appointment requests (by emailing the faculty director). A total of 12 open hours across 5 days were offered, including 2 evening hours (5-7pm Mondays). Weekend times were not scheduled, since the needs assessment indicated that fewer than 10% of respondents wanted weekend hours. The opening was announced via email to all declared psychology majors on the regional campuses, by asking Psychology faculty to make announcements in class, and by posting flyers advertising the Center around campus.

Three students visited the CPI between November and December, one for help studying for an Introduction to Psychology test, and two for questions about the major. An official Open House was hosted in December to partner with "Cram Jam," our student-services sponsored pre-final exam week study blitz. There were 18 visitors to this event, something considered a significant success by staff and faculty.

In Spring 2015, all five of Student Associates returned and one new senior-level student joined, for a total of six Associates, two of whom were senior majors. The returning students had taken at least one additional psychology course, so all Associates could tutor at least two courses, and two students could tutor most courses in the major. The six Associates scheduled a total of 21 office hours per week ranging from 8am-7pm M-F. Fourteen visits occurred between February 5 (our semester began January 26) and April 9. One student came for help with Introduction to Psychology, four students came for tutoring in Introduction to Biopsychology, one student came for computer assistance to access SPSS, a computer program for studying statistics, and eight visits were for information about the major.

Student Associates in Spring term were additionally tasked with developing programming the CPI could sponsor. Projects included 5 days of activities to support Brain Awareness Week (March 14-18, 2015) and two workshops: How to be a Successful Major: Advice from a Graduating Senior, and Advising for the Psychology Major. Our Brain Awareness Week activities attracted 87 participants from all 3 campuses. The two workshops were visited by a total of 20 students and were rated very positively by attendees.

Sustaining the Center: One SA graduated in May, and one continuing student will return as an SA in Fall 2015; the others may return in later semesters. Three new students were recruited and trained in Fall 2015. Recruiting for 2015-2016 was organic: students visiting the Center last year requested applications. Student Associates kept a total of 11 open office hours, although the faculty director was on research leave this semester which significantly decreased student involvement in the Center. Nonetheless, the Center received another \$500 in CTL funding and the Student Associates have been working on programs for Spring including five more days of Brain Awareness Week activities and two panel discussions, one on the opiate abuse problem in our region, and another on Regional Employment Opportunities in Psychology where we will have a panel of successful graduates discuss their educational and career paths.

The goal is to continue to grow the Center and the number of Student Associates. Ideally the Center will have had 8-10 Student Associates each semester, and the application process will grow more competitive. In an effort to get the Center established, every applicant to date has been accepted regardless of major or GPA. Average cumulative GPA of the six associates who served last year was 3.39, which is in the range of competitive students. Average GPA for the three new associates this fall is 3.25, which reflects the average of two Student Associates with GPAs over 3.7, and one senior student with a mediocre GPA due to poor performance during earlier attempts at college.

In addition, as our university has moved to incorporate experiential learning as a graduation requirement of all incoming students, faculty have committed to encourage students to both serve as Student Associates and to use the Center. This should facilitate applications for Student Associates as well as attendance and participation by all students taking psychology courses.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Defined: The SWOT analysis offers a simple model for organizations to self-evaluate on four factors: **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats (Armstrong, 1982; Moriarty, 2012). Strengths and weaknesses are generally internally-driven past and present factors such as resources and capabilities, and in the present model, included benefits offered to students and the institution. Opportunities and threats are generally externally-driven future and present factors including mechanisms to allow or prevent growth; the present model considered internal factors such as institutional space and resources as potential threats rather than weaknesses to the general model of student-driven learning Centers.

Strengths: Three primary strengths were identified to the model of a student-driven learning Center: the benefits offered to all students, the benefits offered to Student Associates, and the benefits offered to the institution.

All Students: Learning Centers can be established on any campus as a place to house resources: textbooks and reference materials relevant to the major, course notes, sample exams and papers, etc. Many students on regional campuses struggle to pay for class materials or may not have contacts with other students who have taken the course before. Offering centralized and equitable access to these resources can increase student success. Further, student-driven learning Centers offer a place for all students to study, get tutoring, and to network. This allows students to feel connected to the campus community, a factor known to impact student satisfaction and retention (Buch & Spaulding, 2011; Stoloff, Curtis, Rodgers, Brewster, & McCarthy, 2012; Stoloff, Rodgers-Good, Smith, & Brewster, 2015).

Student Associates: Serving as a Student Associates in this type of learning Center constitutes several high-impact educational opportunities identified by the Association of American Colleges & Universities Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2015; Kuh, 2008), including offering common intellectual experiences, developing learning communities, working on collaborative assignments and projects, and completing internships. Ample data exist on increased learning and student engagement afforded of this type of experiential, scaffolded learning and student-faculty interaction (Buch & Spaulding, 2011; Crowe et al., 2014; Hogan et al., 2007; Noble, Flynn, & Lee, 2007; Stoloff et al., 2015).

Institution: As noted earlier, ample data also exist on the increased retention, graduation, and success rates for students who become involved on campus (Buch & Spaulding, 2011; Hunter, 2006; Lorenzetti, 2013; Noble et al., 2007; Stoloff et al., 2015). The student-faculty interaction, responsibility, and leadership roles given to Student Associates in a learning Center, and the co-curricular events and workshops offered to all students are in line with activities that engage students to promote academic and professional success (Hogan et al., 2007; Stoloff et al., 2015). For institutions trying to increase students' experiential learning, the creation of a center offers a low-cost and self-sustaining means to offer an experiential learning opportunity that goes beyond serving as a research assistant or classroom TA.

Weaknesses: There are 2 potential weaknesses to the model of student-driven learning Centers: 1) Student Associates must be qualified and well-trained, and 2) Student Associates must serve under the careful mentorship of a Supervisor or Director, ideally a faculty member. If Student Associates are not prepared or available to assist other students, or if users of the Center do not perceive the Center to be run with expertise and authority, the model fails. Indeed, data on the use of UTAs indicates that students only benefit from UTAs if they are perceived as helpful, accessible, knowledgeable, and friendly (Filz & Gurung, 2013). Faculty mentors must be willing and able to help Student Associates develop these skills, or students likely will not use the Center.

Opportunities: There are a number of opportunities to developing student-driven learning Centers for any discipline on a regional campus. One, Student Associates who serve in the Center derive all of the benefits mentioned above of experiential learning, participating in learning communities, serving leadership roles, and engaging in high-stakes involvement in the campus community. Secondly, the Centers provide opportunities for all students to receive free tutoring and to participate in co-curricular events through workshops and events. Third, student-run learning Centers allow all students to network and to gain information about opportunities and strategies for success in the major, and campus life in general, a major factor shown to motivate student retention (Trotter & Roberts, 2006). Regardless of discipline, student-driven learning Centers offer great opportunity for student-faculty interaction, building community, scaffolded learning, and leadership.

Threats: The four largest threats to establishing a Center in any discipline are space, money, time, and use.

Space: The institution needs to commit to space to house the Center. With space at a premium, it can be difficult to find a spot, but in my experience, opportunities that support students will be well-received by your institution. One recommendation is to ask. Try asking your department, campus offices of Student Services, Learning Assistance, Advising, or Center for Teaching and Learning (if available). If all else fails, try the Dean's Office. There may be opportunities to share space.

Money: Money for materials to supply and support the Center will be needed. Centers can be developed with little to no money, as long as space and volunteers exist. The Center was stocked with textbooks that were unsolicited publisher desk copies or older editions donated by students and faculty. Depending on how rapidly the discipline changes, older editions may be acceptable. The Advising office was extremely generous and willing to donate advising and promotional materials. For funding, one suggestion is to check with the department, a Center for Teaching and Learning (if available), and the Dean's office. Often there are pools of money available to support student learning for which a Center may qualify. The subject discipline or department may also have regional, national, or international organizations that support undergraduate education; some may have grants available to support projects that enhance teaching and learning.

Time: There are two potential threats to time: student time and faculty time. For student time, finding Associates who can volunteer the time necessary to man the Center is important. For regional campus students, time is at a premium, especially when it is volunteer time. Incentivizing work through independent study course credit can assist with recruiting and retaining Student Associates to man the Center. Another recommendation is to investigate the possibility having paid work-study students in the Center. Student Associates may also be able to register as paid tutors, so it is helpful to check with the college's tutoring office on their policies.

The other threat to time is faculty time. Student-driven Centers need Faculty Directors who will devote time to train and mentor Student Associates. As learned from this semester's experience, even with two highly motivated and involved Student Associates, the lack of the Faculty Director's presence on campus greatly decreased use of the Center,

demonstrating the importance of faculty involvement, at least during the initial development of the Center. Faculty also need time to assist with developing and implementing programs sponsored by the Center. This author's time as Faculty Director for the regional campuses has amounted to an average of 1-3 hours a week over the course of a semester, with more time needed at the beginning of the semester for training, and up to 10 hours per week during events. Time for events includes planning and attending, but also gathering data from attendees (including contact information), and disseminating and analyzing follow-up surveys after the events. This year follow-up surveys will be sent to all students who visit the Center, which will require additional time to create, disseminate, and analyze. To receive institutional credit, the time spent can be listed as service to students on an annual review. To document this service the following were included in an annual review: records of number of visits to the Center, number and types of workshops offered and number of attendees, feedback offered from events, and hours spent training Associates. When developing a Center on a campus, it is of critical importance to keep records of all activities run through the Center, as careful record-keeping will also be important for requesting resources. To minimize the time burden on a single faculty member, one recommendation is to work with other faculty in your discipline (if available) to develop co-directorships. As the Center develops and Student Associates gain experience, it may be possible to minimize faculty time by having an advanced SA serve as Coordinator, who can train new associates and/or run workshops and events.

Use: Getting Students to Use the Center. Even on main campus, it is challenging to get students to use the Center. Depending on your population of students (i.e., the constant commuter who spends virtually no time on campus, or the minimal-day attender, who schedules classes just a few days a week with large chunks of time between classes), this problem may be lesser or exacerbated. For example, constant commuters likely will not stay on campus to use the Center without strong incentive. Faculty may consider offering extra credit for visiting the Center, or making a Center visit part of a class assignment, for example, asking students to have a Center Associate sign-off on a paper review or assignment check. The minimal-day attenders may have blocks of time available on campus when they can visit the Center, but need to feel welcome and understand the resources available in the Center. Announcements in class, emails to majors, signs

around campus, class “field trips” and assignments that require visits to the Center can help. Word-of-mouth has been the best advertisement, so Student Associates, other faculty, and visitors to the Center should be especially encouraged to spread the word.

Outcomes: Preliminary data suggested success for this student-driven learning Center in Psychology. Table 1 summarizes use and outcomes for students who visited the Center (n=34, including the Open House) and students who participated in programs sponsored by our Center (n=107). Of the 16 students who used the Center outside of the Open house in 2014-2015, six came for tutoring in courses they were taking, one visited for computer assistance with SPSS, and 9 came for general advice about the major. Of the 4 students who came for tutoring in Introduction to Biopsychology, 3 earned A’s and one earned a B+. One student who came for tutoring in Introduction to Psychology earned a C and one earned a C-, but each earned their highest scores on work completed after visits to the Center, and their visits to the Center were instrumental to their passing grade in the course. Of the 107 students who attended events and workshops (not including the Open House), 43 (39%) attended for extra credit offered by the Faculty Director (n=38) and one instructor on main campus (n=5).

For students who served as Student Associates in our Center (n=6), 100% (1/1) of our graduating Student Associates gained admission to a number of competitive graduate programs in Clinical/Counseling Psychology. Of note is that this student developed programming to support the Center, suggesting that taking a leadership role is important and potentially critical. Overall GPA of the non-graduating Associates who served last year is currently 3.41, suggesting some slight improvement in GPA for students who served as Associates, although at present it is unknown whether GPA improvements were due to serving as Associates or other factors.

Table 1. Summary of Use and Outcomes of the Regional Campus Student-Led Learning Center in Psychology for 2014-2015.

Reason for Visit	Number of Visitors	Outcome
Tutoring in Introduction to Psychology	2	Higher grades on work completed after visit, earned course grade of C (n=1) and C- (n=1)
Tutoring in Introduction to Biopsychology	4	Earned course grade of A (n=3), B+ (n=1)
Computer Assistance with SPSS	1	Unknown
Advising/Learn About Opportunities	9	3 of these visitors are Student Associates for the coming year
Workshop: How to be a Successful Major	10	Post-event evaluation positive
Workshop: Advising for the Major	10	Post-event evaluation very positive
Events: Brain Awareness Week	87	Extra course credit (n=43), free snacks and brain erasers (n=87), prizes that included t-shirts, squishy brains, floating brain pens, brain note pads (n=20)

Recommendations for Establishing a Center on Your Campus: Based on the experiences with developing a student-led learning center on a regional campus, these 5 recommendations are offered:

- 1) Conduct a needs assessment. Determine what discipline-specific assistance students on your campus need and want. Our needs assessment (Appendix 1) asked students to respond yes or no to questions about services they would use in the Center and courses for which they wanted tutors. The assessment had open response questions that asked what type of programming and workshops students would like, and what days/hours they would use the Center and attend events.
- 2) Recruit Student Associates who can fulfill the needs revealed by your assessment. If students say they would never come for help

with introductory courses, do not accept Student Associates who can only tutor the Introductory class. If students say they would not use the Center on weekends, do not accept Student Associates who can only keep weekend hours.

- 3) Advertise, advertise, advertise. Talk about the Center in your classes, take students on field trips to the Center, post signs around campus, and offer extra credit for visiting the Center. Ask your colleagues to do the same. Our activities during Brain Awareness Week were attended by students from main campus (n=5, 5.7% of the 87 attendees) because an instructor was asked to offer extra credit and he agreed.
- 4) Keep careful records. Record everything: number of visits and reason for visits to the center, number of attendees and reason for attendance at workshops, type and amount of materials used in the Center, and number and type of snacks, gifts and prizes shared at events or in the Center. Be sure to have log sheets on hand, and make sure Student Associates are logging everything on those sheets: visitor name and email, reason for visit, length of time for visit, notes about the visit. Also recommended is that faculty conduct post-visit and post-event surveys and ask visitors to indicate on the log sheet whether they are willing to be contacted by email after the visit/event. Qualtrics survey software was utilized to create event-specific questions and collect anonymous data.
- 5) Be resourceful. Request space and do not hesitate to accept shared space. Request donations for materials to keep in your Center. Ask colleagues to share books, course notes, old assignments, tests, models, and other materials students find useful in the Center. To purchase supplies or other materials, look for pools of money that support teaching and learning on your campus and from outside organizations. Some institutions offer money to students or faculty for experiential learning opportunities, of which this may qualify. For example, on this regional campus, students can apply for money to conduct research, and faculty sponsors of these projects can receive small pools of professional development money that could be used to purchase supplies. One creative way to tap into this pool of money may be to have interested Student Associates apply for funding to develop a teaching project such as “How to teach undergraduates about the brain in Introductory Psychology.” The

student or small groups of students could conduct research to create an evidence-based lesson plan, and submit a request for funding to buy materials to support the lesson. National organizations such as the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) may be another place to look for funding for this type of experiential learning opportunity.

To summarize, five recommendations are offered for establishing a student-led learning center on a regional campus:

- Conduct a needs assessment by requesting information from students who would use the center.
- Recruit student associates who can fulfill the needs identified by the needs assessment.
- Advertise the center widely among faculty, students, and administrators.
- Keep detailed records of all activities conducted within the center and by the center associates. These records will be instrumental for documenting faculty service to the center and for requesting resources to support the center.
- Request resources such as space, books, study material, and advising material from a variety of sources, including students, faculty, administrators, staff, and external organizations that support student teaching and learning.

Student-led learning centers offer the opportunity for students all over campus to engage in a productive college experience. Student-led learning centers have the potential to promote experiential learning, team work, and academic and professional success. The opportunities offered by this type of learning center are exciting, and should offer high potential for success if implemented and managed carefully.

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations of this study include a lack of substantial data from students using the Center for tutoring. While research indicated that use of traditional learning centers is generally low, especially at two-year campuses (Manalo & Leader, 2007; Wurtz, 2015), future research will need

to compare usage and outcomes for students using our student-led learning center with our university sponsored learning center.

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Personal Biography

Barbara Oswald is an Assistant Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Miami University Hamilton Campus. I teach courses in Introduction to Psychology and Biopsychology. In addition to numerous committees and service projects, I serve as faculty director of the regional campus Center for Psychological Inquiry, a student-run center for all things psychology. I am particularly interested in identifying ways to increase student engagement, retention, and success through curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular involvement.

Appendix 1. Questions on Needs Assessment Emailed to All Regional Campus Psychology Majors

- 1. Are you familiar with the Center for Psychological Inquiry?** (if yes, skip to question 2. If no, skip to question 4).
 - Yes
 - No

- 2. How many times have you used the Center for Psychological Inquiry?**
 - 0-1 times
 - 1-2 times
 - 3-4 times
 - 5-6 times
 - More than 6 times

- 3. In what capacity have you used the Center for Psychological Inquiry? Please be as specific as possible.** (free response question, then continue to question 4)

- 4. The Center of Psychological Inquiry (CPI) is a space that houses all things psychology. Students can go here to find tutoring, advice about the major, information about internships and research opportunities, and more. What could the CPI do that would be helpful to you? Please be as specific as possible.** (free response question)

- 5. What would be the best way for you to learn about events at the CPI? Please check all that apply.**
 - School email
 - School website
 - Flyer posted on campus
 - Announcements in psychology classes
 - Digital board on campus
 - Social media (facebook, twitter, etc.)
 - Other

-
- 6. What resources would you like to see in the Center? Please be as specific as possible.** (free response question)
- 7. Are there any specific events (workshops or panels) that you would like the CPI to host (e.g., Getting into graduate school, how to become a research assistant, etc.) Please be as specific as possible.** (free response question)
- 8. Do you see yourself coming to the CPI with questions related to your (Statistics and Research Methods) coursework?**
Yes
No
- 9. Do you see yourself coming to the CPI for assistance with APA format for writing assignments?**
Yes
No
- 10. Do you see yourself coming to the CPI to learn more about SPSS or to use SPSS on our computers?**
Yes
No
- 11. What year are you?**
Freshman
Sophomore
Junior
Senior
- 12. What days would you use the Center if it was located on _____ Campus? Please check all that apply.**
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday
- 13. What times would you use the Center if it was located on _____ Campus? Please check all that apply.**
8:30-noon

Noon-4pm

4-7pm

Only before 8:30am or after 7pm

Appendix 2. Application to Serve as a Student Associate in the Center for Psychological Inquiry (CPI)

Center description: The Center for Psychological Inquiry (CPI) is a resource for psychology students to facilitate their education and engagement in psychology. The Center will provide students with resources to assist them in their coursework, to learn about opportunities in the department to enhance their education, and to direct students to appropriate resources for exploring career opportunities for psychology majors, including applying to graduate school. In general, the Center is intended to provide students with an opportunity to develop a sense of community within the department.

Personnel: The Center utilizes undergraduate Student Associates as the primary points-of-contact within the CPI. *An experienced Student Coordinator will mentor these associates (include this statement as your Center develops and you can train an advanced student to serve).* The associates and coordinator will work under the guidance of the *director* of the Center.

- Director: Center coordinator: TBD

Associate description and duties: Associates work with students and the faculty directors to fulfill the mission of the Center. In working directly with students, associates will:

- **Tutor** students one-on-one or in small groups on psychology course material.
 - Associates must have a strong foundation in the study of psychology as a science. Typically, this means demonstrated knowledge in Statistics, Research Methods, and/or breadth requirements.
- **Refer** students to the appropriate faculty and campus resources.
 - Associates will direct students to a wide range of department and campus resources.
- **Advise** their peers on requirements of the major as well as the.
 - Associates refer students to advising resources in the department in order to obtain information about the psychology major, the, career opportunities and the process of applying to graduate school. Associates help

undergraduates prepare to talk with their primary academic advisor.

Working with the faculty advisors and Department staff, associates will:

- **Publish** useful informational materials for psychology majors.
 - Associates will develop an ability to create, update, or modify materials for both paper and web-based publishing.
- **Coordinate** Center-sponsored academic and community-building events.
 - Associates will assist with arrangements for Center-sponsored speakers and events, and provide logistical support for department-related activities.

Associate commitment and compensation:

The opportunity to work as a Center Associate is a unique opportunity for a *select few* psychology students. Associates are expected to be present in the Center for 1-6 hours per week. Associates will earn independent study credit as compensation for scheduled work. Associates will also attend meetings with the faculty director and/or student coordinator as appropriate and complete small assignments.

***Note: Associates will *not* engage in psychological counseling or the diagnosis or treatment of any mental condition or illness.** Students with these issues will be encouraged to visit _____. *This statement is added due to the nature of the Psychology major. It is not likely necessary for other disciplines.*

Associate Application:

Name: _____ Email: _____
Year: _____

Please discuss the following items:

1. Why are you interested in becoming a Center Associate?
2. Please identify your personal qualities, qualifications, or skills that would help you perform well as an associate:

3. Will your schedule allow you to work in the Center for 1-2 (1 credit hour of Independent Study), 3-4 (2 credit hrs), or 5-6 hours (3 credit hrs) per week on a regular basis? Please specify how many hours and the days/times you'd like to work each week.

4. Why are you a psychology (*substitute your discipline*) major? What are your career goals?

5. Please rate how comfortable you would feel tutoring in the following courses (*list your discipline-specific courses here*):

Course: (<i>substitute your courses</i>)	Very	Somewhat	Slightly	Not
Introductory Psychology				
Intro to Psych Stats				
Research Methods				
Biopsychology				
Cognitive Psychology				
Developmental				
Abnormal				
Social				

Please provide one campus reference (professor, instructor, or campus employment):

Submit this form in person or by email to:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Position: _____