

THE MICHAEL P. WEBER  
LEARNING SKILLS CENTER  
REPORTING PERIOD  
2018 - 2019



*The mission of the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center  
Is “helping students to succeed”.*

*Dr. Judith R. Griggs, Director*

**THE MICHAEL P. WEBER  
LEARNING SKILLS CENTER (LSC)**

**DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY**

**GROUND FLOOR, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

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Director**

***ABOUT THE COVER:** During the 2018-2019 academic year, more than 1000 Duquesne University students relied on the Michael P. Weber Learning center for tutoring to help them master their subjects. From calculus to chemistry, from languages to literature, from philosophy to physics, this highly popular service is just one of many services that the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center makes available free of charge to Duquesne students. Tutoring is one of several Learning Skills Center services which promote high student retention rates at Duquesne University. The Learning Skills Center also provides important services to the schools and departments within the University, as well as to the Pittsburgh community in general.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **History**

The Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center (The Center) is an outgrowth of the Duquesne University Counseling and Learning Department for Black Students (CLD) established in 1969. CLD's greatest successes were the following:

- 1) Reducing the attrition rate of African-American students from over 50 percent to less than 1 percent, and
- 2) Developing retention strategies and approaches which serve as the model presently utilized by the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center in its current retention efforts.

Due to the success of Counseling and Learning Department in meeting its major goal of retaining Black students, in 1975 CLD was charged to expand its scope of support to include all Duquesne students and with that expansion came the change in name to "Learning Skills Center." Retention continued to be the focus of the Learning Skills Center.

In 1990 the Learning Skills Center began a community outreach program to children and adolescents from several city public schools in the Hill District, which initially began as an in-school partnership with Duquesne student tutors working within classrooms helping students. Students were also brought to campus on Saturdays during the semester for tutoring and help with homework. These outreach services continue. With the assistance of the University's work study program, PACT (Project for Academic Coaching Through Tutoring) reaches many more students. The Duquesne University Learning Skills Center at Greenway Middle School, which was a University presence within the school, was discontinued in 2006 due to funding considerations.

The Learning Skills Center was renamed in honor of the retiring Provost and Academic Vice President, Dr. Michael P. Weber. The Dedication Ceremony was on April 20, 2001.

### **Philosophy**

The philosophy of the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center is that, through appropriate intervention, students can learn to become independent, life-long learners. This intervention is individualized and personalized and may be either affective, academic, or a combination of both. Therefore, the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center offers a wide range of comprehensive services to the Duquesne University community and the community at large.

### **Mission**

The mission of the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center is to maximize each student's learning potential to produce life-long learners with a sense of self-worth and social responsibility by providing a supportive learning environment that recognizes the uniqueness of each individual. Our mission is "helping students to succeed."

## **Goals**

The Center serves students and faculty by providing a broad range of programs and learning skills services including those in the areas of skills assessment, learning strategies and techniques, tutoring, academic advisement, counseling and training of learning services personnel. The Center also serves the community at large via initiatives to link the University community with its Pittsburgh neighbors, providing them learning opportunities, exposure to campus facilities, and interaction with scholars and professionals from various fields.

## **Objectives**

The Center has ten goals, the viability of which is dependent upon adequate staffing and operational resources.

1. To facilitate learning by providing easily accessible environments.
2. To proactively outreach to students who need academic assistance.
3. To enhance academic performance by monitoring student progress and providing appropriate programs and services.
4. To provide opportunities to educationally and financially disadvantaged students to pursue higher education.
5. To promote The Center's programs and services to all university students, faculty, staff, and administrators.
6. To adapt the Center's programs and services in accordance with the University's strategic plan and mission.
7. To provide training for student tutors to increase their skill proficiency, build professionalism and establish a productive work ethic.
8. To provide students with service learning experiences that will help them become better citizens, problem solvers, critical thinkers, and active in the community.
9. To provide training in diagnostic and treatment procedures for Psychology and Counseling graduate students.
10. To collect, maintain and disseminate data on Center activities and performance.

**I. ACHIEVEMENT SUMMARY / ANALYSIS**

**College Success Courses**

*Goal # 1: At least 50% of the freshmen students attending the College Success courses will earn sufficient credits to become sophomores.*

Outcome: Of the 238 students who started as freshmen; 132 (55%) eventually became sophomores at the end of the spring term

*Goal # 2: The Pathways to Success course (required of all first term freshmen earning less than 2.0 at the end of their first term) will increase the overall spring term quality point averages as a group by at least 0.50 above the previous fall term.*

Outcome: Students who were required to take the Pathways to Success course averaged 1.75, in spring Term.

*Goal # 3: At least 80% of the students who take a College Success course in the fall term will remain through the end of the spring term.*

Outcome: 90.5% of students enrolled in College Program Success courses remained to the end of the spring term.

**OOPS (Outreach Opportunity Program for marginally performing Students)**

*Goal # 4: At least 50% of new OOPS program participants with one or more midterm “D” and “F” grade deficiencies will have improved their at-risk course grades by at least one letter grade at final grade report.*

Outcome: Of the 37 “D” and “F” midterm grades received by OOPS students who requested Learning Skills tutoring assistance, 21 improved by at least one grade (57%).

*Goal # 5: Course retention shall be at least 75% for the term which a midterm deficiency occurs (i.e., course withdrawal shall be no greater than 25% when a “D” or “F” grade exists for persons accepting an invitation to receive OOPS services.).*

Outcome: Of the 37 students with “D” and “F” midterm grades received by OOPS, 10 students withdrew from the term with a “W” grade (27%).

## **II. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME**

### **A. COLLEGE SUCCESS COURSES REVIEW**

The Learning Skills Center sponsors five College Success courses which provide practical techniques that students can apply throughout their college life to become more productive and do well in their academic careers and beyond.

#### *CLPR 008 Strategies for Academic Success: 1 cr.*

This course is designed to help students understand the academic rigors of college so they can develop personal approaches to achieve classroom success. Course content includes learning styles, time management, goal setting, critical and creative thinking, reading comprehension, effective note taking, and test taking strategies. Lecture.

#### *CLPR 009 Academic Strategies for International Students: 0 to 1 cr.*

This course is designed to help international students understand how a U.S. university works. Course content includes goal setting, instructors' expectations, time management, library research, academic planning, creative thinking, note taking, and test taking strategies. Lecture.

#### *CLPR 011 Seminar for New International Students: 0 to 1 cr.*

This course is designed to help new undergraduate and graduate international students adjust to the social and academic aspects of Duquesne University Seminar.

#### *CLPR 015 Introduction to University Success: 1 cr.*

This course is designed to help students adjust to their new surroundings as University students. Discussions will concentrate on becoming familiar with Duquesne University---students, faculty, staff, services, and facilities---to maximize your college experience. Lecture.

#### *CLPR 016 Pathways to Success: 1 cr.*

This course is designed to help students in academic difficulty improve their academic status. It is a requirement for second semester freshmen whose low first semester performance puts them in academic jeopardy, i.e., academic dismissal. The course addresses the major concerns of struggling students: time management, choosing a major, not succeeding in the first choice of major, missing family and friends, study skills, and adjustments to the requirements of college. In addition to required enrollment in the course, students are restricted to no more than 13 credits, including this one-credit course, during their second semester. Lecture.

### **B. COLLEGE SUCCESS COURSES ENROLLMENT**

282 individual students enrolled in one or more college retention courses during 2018-19. Sessions for *Strategies for Academic Success*, *Academic Strategies for International Students*, and *Introduction to University Success* courses were held during fall term. The *Pathways to Success* was only offered in the spring.

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NUMBER OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN COLLEGE SUCCESS COURSES BY TERM			
COURSE TITLE	Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Total Students by Course
Strategies for Academic Success	207	0	207
Academic Strategies for International Students	12	0	12
Seminar New International Students	0	0	0
Introduction to University Success	12	0	12
Pathways to Success		51	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>282</b>

Additionally, special summer sessions in *Strategies for Academic Success* and *Introduction to University Success* were provided to 68 first-time freshmen enrolled in the Robert & Patricia Gussin Spiritan Division.

The courses having the greatest enrollment were *Strategies for Academic Success* and *Introduction to University Success*. The students enrolled in the *Pathways to Success* course were first-time freshmen who were specifically required to take the course based on poor academic performance in their first term. Bear in mind that because there were only a few international students enrolled in the two international courses, statistical figures for these two courses will be affected to a greater degree by the performance of their individual course participants than the other courses.

Students taking these five courses were overwhelmingly freshmen. This, of course, is to be expected because the purpose of these courses is to prepare students to become successful college students. Students in higher class levels are already familiar with college life and are normally applying various academic principles and habits which work best for them.

COLLEGE SUCCESS COURSES: CLASS LEVELS AT START OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR

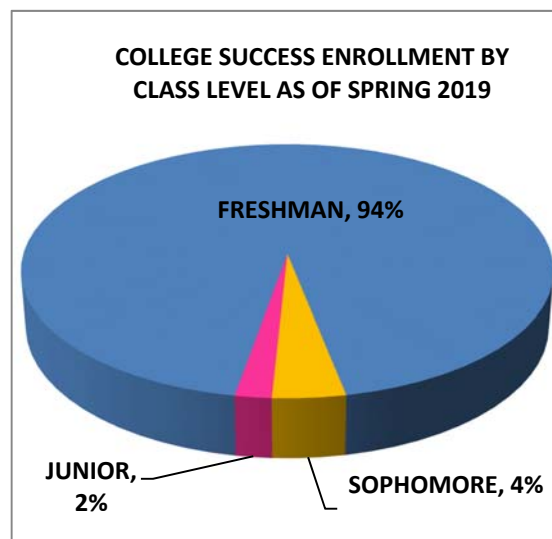
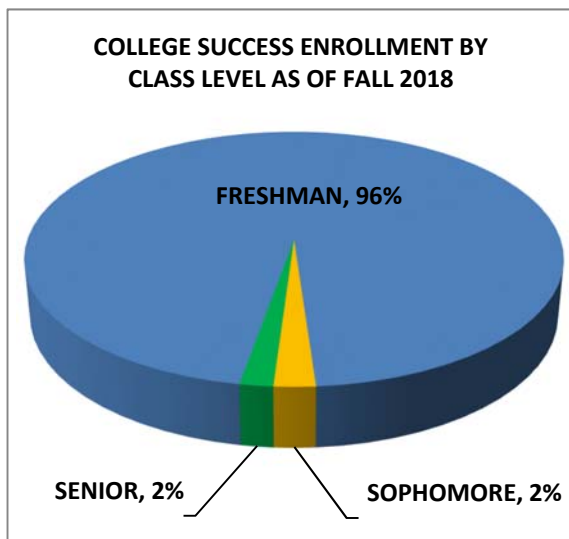
COLLEGE SUCCESS ENROLLMENT BY CLASS LEVEL AS OF FALL 2018					
COURSES	FRESHMAN	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR	TOTAL
Strategies-Academic Success	201	3	0	3	207
Academic Strategies for International Students	9	2	0	1	12
Introduction to University Success	12	0	0	0	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>231</b>

By the time students complete the spring term, a good portion of them have earned enough credits to become classified in the next higher class level. At the end of the spring term, freshmen are still the predominant group, comprised of 94% of the students.

COLLEGE SUCCESS ENROLLMENT BY CLASS LEVEL AS OF SPRING 2019					
COURSES	FRESHMAN	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR	TOTAL
Strategies-Academic Success	0	0	0	0	0
Academic Strategies for International Students	0	0	0	0	0
Introduction to University Success	0	0	0	0	0
Pathways to Success	48	2	1	0	51
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>51</b>



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**C. COLLEGE SUCCESS COURSES GRADES**

1. Credits Earned

COLLEGE SUCCESS COURSES: CUMULATIVE CREDITS EARNED AT END OF 2018-19 ACADEMIC YEAR	
Credits Earned	Students
0-14 (FR)	29
15-29 (FR)	74
30-44 (SO)	143
45-59 (SO)	25
60-74 (JR)	4
75-89 (JR)	1
90-104 (SR)	2
105-119 (SR)	2
120-135 (Graduated)	2
<b>Total Students</b>	<b>282</b>

2. Average Term GPAs

COLLEGE SUCCESS COURSES - TERM QUALITY POINT AVERAGES AT END OF COURSE			
Course	Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Average Term GPA
Academic Strategies for International Students	3.19		3.19
Term Average	3.19		3.19
Strategies for Academic Success	3.17		3.17
Introduction to University Success	3.45		3.45
Term Average	3.31		3.31
Pathways to Success		1.75	1.75

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- Students who completed any College Success Course averaged a fall term QPA of 3.31
- Freshmen students who achieved a fall term QPA of less than 2.0 are required to take “Pathways to Success” in the spring term. The result above shows that after successful completion of this course, the average spring term QPA for freshmen students increased to 1.75.

The progress of 231 students who attended fall term college success courses is:

FALL TO SPRING PROGRESS		
Registered for Course in Fall 2018	Fall 2018	Spring 2019
Academic Strategies for International Students	3.19	3.23
Term Average	3.19	3.23
Strategies for Academic Success	3.17	2.95
Introduction to University Success	3.45	2.95
Term Average	3.31	2.95

*Note:* A fall term QPA is not indicated for *Pathways to Success* as this course is only offered in the spring term.

COLLEGE SUCCESS COURSES - CUMULATIVE QPA	
Course	Cumulative QPA
Strategies for Academic Success	3.110
Academic Strategies for International Students	3.400
Introduction to University Success	3.180
Pathways to Success	1.750
<b>Cum Average</b>	<b>2.860</b>

At the end of the spring 2019 term:

- The overall average cumulative QPA for all students enrolled in any College Success Course during the 2018 - 2019 academic year stood at a very respectable 2.860.
- Students who took *Introduction to University Success* ended with a 3.18 cumulative average.
- Students enrolled in *Strategies for Academic Success*, achieved an average of 3.11
- Students enrolled in *Academic Strategies for International Students* achieved an average QPA of 3.40
- Students enrolled in *Pathways to Success* achieved an average QPA of 1.75

### 3. Dean's List

In the 2018-19 Academic year, 83 of the 282 (29%) College Success students, attained Dean's List status.

DEAN'S LIST - COLLEGE SUCCESS STUDENTS 2018 - 19		
Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Grand Total
81	2	83

### D. COLLEGE SUCCESS COURSES RETENTION

Of the 231 students who took a College Success course in the fall of 2018, 209 students remained into the spring term, or **90.5%**. Because most of these students are first-time freshmen, it is only possible to consider the fall-to-spring term retention.

Fall to spring retention by specific College Success courses is listed in the table below.

COLLEGE SUCCESS COURSES - RETENTION BY COURSE, FALL 2018 TO SPRING 19			
Course Title	Took Course Fall 2018	Enrolled in Spring 2019	College Success Course Fall-Spring Retention Rate
Strategies-Academic Success	207	189	91.3%
Academic Strategies for International Students	12	8	66.7%
Introduction to University Success	12	12	100.0%
<b>Total Retention, Fall to Spring Term</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>90.5%</b>

- The *Pathways to Success* course cannot be included in this study because it was only available during the spring term.
- Three of the courses had more than 60% fall-to-spring retention.

## **E. SERVICES AND PROGRAMS**

### **1. Services for Students**

#### **a. Academic and Affective Diagnostic Test Battery and Prescription**

These services determine deficiencies and are used to recommend appropriate methods of correction. A variety of tests are used including tests for reading and mathematics ability, study skills, aptitude etc.

#### **b. College Success Studies**

The Center sponsors a series of credit-bearing college success courses and class review sessions open to all University students, staff and faculty. College reading and study skills, test preparation and test taking, and researching and writing term papers are three of the subject areas addressed by this service.

A further developmental service is tutoring students in preparation of a required course or in an area which they would like to develop their skills or knowledge such as a foreign language, writing skills, or mathematics.

#### **c. Academic Advisement**

This service assists students in developing an awareness of their abilities, strengths and weaknesses, potential, and life styles in order to make informed and timely course selections.

#### **d. Counseling**

Counseling offers students assistance in adjusting to the higher education environment. Students are also given assistance with personal problems that tend to impact their academic performance. The services provided include financial aid and personal adjustment counseling.

#### **e. Learning Disabilities**

The Learning Skills Center provides learning disability assessments for students when requested by students, staff and faculty, as well as a range of services to accommodate students' disabilities. This service also provides information to the Duquesne community regarding learning disabilities.

#### **f. Academic Strategies and Study Skills**

The Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center offers useful advice and practice for students who want to improve their study skills and their success on tests. Individual and/or small group tutoring sessions are scheduled based on students' request.

**g. Tutoring Services**

The Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center provides tutoring services to University students at no cost in almost every subject. Tutors are pre-qualified and trained, and then become available to students through both regular appointment hours (“in-center”) and on an on-call (“as-needed”) basis. In addition to providing personal instruction for the subjects in whom the students are currently enrolled, tutoring is also available for remedial learning, personal enrichment, and preparation for an anticipated course.

**h. Professional and Certification Test Preparation**

The Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center offers one-on-one tutoring in preparation for various tests, such as PRAXIS, GRE, GMAT, and LSAT.

**2. Services for Duquesne Schools and Departments**

**The School of Nursing: Essential Mathematics Exam Review Sessions and Tutoring Workshops**

The Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center presents a series of math reviews and tutor training sessions. These sessions are mandatory for first year nursing students who failed to score 90% or higher on the school’s required math competency exam. The objective of these sessions is to help students improve their overall scores and pass the exam. In addition to the reviews, one-on-one tutoring is readily available to those students who need individualized instruction.

**3. Retention Programs**

The objective of these Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center programs is to improve student retention and overall persistence toward obtaining a University degree.

▪ **OOPS: Outreach Opportunity Program for Marginally Performing Students**

The OOPS program, serving students since 1989, is designed to offer assistance to marginally performing University students. Early in the fall and spring terms, the Center outreaches to students who’s overall or semester QPA has fallen below 2.00, offering hope and many support services. A second outreach occurs following the reporting of midterm deficiency grades. All undergraduates with “D” or “F” grades at midterm are contacted and invited to come to the Learning Skills Center and receive support.

▪ **AIP: Academic Intervention Program**

Whereas the OOPS program identifies marginally performing students based on midterm and final grades, the Academic Intervention Program, active since the 2004-05 academic year, enables Duquesne instructors to identify and refer marginally performing students in their classes directly to the Center at any time throughout the term. Using an online form, the instructors notify both the student and the Learning Skills Center of the referral. Our office then follows up with a personal contact with these students and offers personally appropriate support services to them.

▪ **College Success Courses: *Academic Strategies, University 101, and University 102***

The Learning Skills Center provides three courses, one credit each, that teach the essential skills necessary for students to become successful in college.

- *Strategies for Academic Success* imparts information and teaches various approaches designed to improve students' productivity and understanding. It does this through a focus on the development of learning skills. The course was formerly named "Academic Strategies" in 2009-10 and "Study Skills" prior to that.
- *Introduction to University Success* is intended to provide students with information and experiences to help them adjust to college, as well as to nurture within them the necessary motivation and provide encouragement to succeed at their studies. (The course was previously known as "University 101" prior to 2010-11.)
- *Pathways to Success* is a required course for second semester freshmen with a first semester QPA less than 2.00. There are many reasons why a student earns poor grades. These include not making connections on campus; being unsure about a major or starting an inappropriate course of study; missing home and family; poor time management and study skills; and other issues with adjusting to college. These issues and more are addressed in the course. (This course was formerly known as "University 102" prior to 2010-11).

The Center also provides two College Success courses designed specifically to benefit international students. Students from foreign nations often face unique adjustments and challenges that students from the United States do not. These courses are offered to students on either a zero or one-credit basis.

- *Academic Strategies for International Students* is designed to help international students understand how a U.S. university works. Course content includes goal setting, instructors' expectations, time management, library research, academic planning, creative thinking, note taking, and test taking strategies.
- *Seminar for New International Students* is designed to help new undergraduate and graduate international students adjust to the social and academic aspects of Duquesne University.

#### **4. Student Support Programs**

▪ **Tutoring**

The tutoring program, the most popular service provided by the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center, focuses its efforts on two important aspects -- tutoring the students and training the tutors, in order to provide high quality educational support to Duquesne University students.

**Tutoring** provides planned instructional intervention in an effort to assist any student of the University in intellectual development through addressing specific academic needs. Tutoring is provided at no charge on a one-on-one basis or in small groups to Duquesne students. The location may be either "in-center" within the premises of the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center or at any other suitable location, as mutually agreed upon by the student and tutor.

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**Tutor Training** provides support and assistance to tutors via a training model. Working from the concept that good instruction makes good learning possible, and good instruction results from good supervision, the program seeks to provide a sound-training program for tutors. Tutors receive training in diagnostic teaching, evaluating and applying various instructional modes, as well as clinical supervision.

### ▪ **Counseling & Counselor Training**

The Center maintains a staff of certified counselors and advisors to guide and assist University students. The center also provides supervision for selected graduate students who are currently enrolled in a counselor certification degree program. It provides a practicum for them to learn their chosen profession under mentorship and enables them to obtain practical, professional experience in a real-life environment.

#### **The counseling program:**

- Provides training and supervision for graduate students in diagnostic and treatment procedures.
- Provides a format and supervision for a mentoring program for students.
- Provides a format for involving parents in the network of care provided to students.

### **Community Educational Outreach**

#### ▪ **Program for Academic Coaching Through Tutoring (PACT)**

The PACT tutorial assistance program seeks to enhance the academic achievement of elementary, middle, and high school students in the Pittsburgh area. Students are tutored in reading, math, science, computers, social studies, and foreign languages. They also receive help with researching and writing papers via the computer.

The Program for Academic Coaching Through Tutoring (PACT) program began in 1990 as a community outreach service learning project of the Duquesne University Learning Skills Center. Organized to provide after-school and Saturday morning tutoring for children residing in the Hill District community, the project was expanded in 1997 when an infusion of federal funds allowed the inclusion of in-school and after-school tutoring throughout Pittsburgh and surrounding communities. When the project was initially formulated, it was staffed by community volunteers of retired teachers, church members, parents, and students serving for course credit.

Duquesne students continue to serve for course credit, as college work study recipients, and as volunteers. The tutors are very committed to helping the children who come to them for academic support and skill building. They also provide mentoring and career exploration demonstrations to tutees regarding career interest.

Each academic year, PACT links the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center with schools and other organizations to offer tutoring services to the community at large. PACT sessions provide students with learning experiences which link school to life. PACT helps to develop thoughtful, caring citizens and provides a curriculum that challenges students to think and to problem solve. The K-12 tutees received help in many subjects, including language arts, history, science, mathematics, and SAT preparation.

Duquesne students serve as PACT tutors and are noted for their commitment to helping the children who have come to them for learning support. They serve for course credit, as volunteers, and as college work-study recipients. At these sessions, tutors assist students in grades K-12 with their homework and provide

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skill development exercises. Some Division students choose to provide off-campus tutoring in schools under the supervision of classroom teachers, or at several community agencies and organizations. Saturday activities included career exploration by tutors and staff, weekly current events and discussions, parent-student orientations for the fall and spring, and learning activities around special events such as Black History Month, Women's History Month, and St. Patrick's Day. Students were introduced to critical thinking and the importance of time management and effective study skills and organizational skills. During 2018-19, 30 tutors provided services for our on-campus PACT Program as well as for our community partners. This year's partnerships included two community agencies: the Wesley Center: The Center that Cares in the Hill District, and the Ammon Center. During 2018-19, 30 tutors provided services to 35 tutees. Services are offered on campus as well, 4 days a week : Monday – Wednesday evening from 6 to 8 PM, and Saturday from 10-12 PM.

### ▪ **Sr. Thea Bowman Catholic Academy**

The Gussin Spiritan Division, in conjunction with Duquesne's Law School and the Kwame Ture Leadership Institute, sponsored the **10th Annual Career Day** at the Sr. Thea Bowman Catholic Academy on May 1, 2017. For the past 21 years, the Division has provided Sr. Thea Bowman Catholic Academy with student development workshops through the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center's PACT. Fr. David Taylor, Gussin Spiritan Division faculty member, currently serves as director of the school. Our associate director, Dr. Uhuru Hotep, served as the coordinator and Master of Ceremonies for the one-day event which featured speakers from a wide variety of occupational fields such as Business, law, athletics, and entertainment. The activity also included small workgroup sessions. Luncheon was served.

### ▪ **Field Observation course**

The Field Observation course provides students with a credit-bearing service learning experience with elementary, middle and high school students. The primary service activity is tutoring. Field Observation as a service learning course originated as a result of a federal program originally known as the "Literacy Corps," which was intended to promote volunteerism within the undergraduate college population. A proposal for Duquesne University's Learning Skills Center was first drafted and submitted in 1990, whereby college students would be granted college credit for providing tutoring services through PACT (Program for Academic Coaching through Tutoring) and a Field Observation course. The plan became one of only 90 proposals across the United States which was ultimately accepted and granted federal funding. Over the years, the PACT has received funding by federal, state and local governments. Field Observation continues to be a standard part of the required curriculum for students enrolled in the Robert & Patricia Gussin Spiritan Division, and it is available to all Duquesne University students as well.

### ▪ **Summer Institute**

The Summer Institute, which began its first year of operation in 2000, is a summer enrichment program designed to expose high school juniors and seniors to Duquesne University and to the world of American higher education. Students stay on campus for one week, earn college credit and participate in a variety of informative and extracurricular activities. The Learning Skills Center recruited 27 high school students for the one-week, residential Summer Institute Program, which began on Sunday, July 22, 2018, and ended on Friday, July 37, 2018. The week-long institute provided high school sophomores, juniors and



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seniors an opportunity to visit the University and experience college life. Students came from the following high schools: Elyria High School, The Ellis School, Beaver Local High School, Montour High School, Steubenville Catholic Central HS, North Royalton High School, Veterans Memorial Early College HS, Veterans Memorial Early College HS, Our Lady of the Elms, Mt. Lebanon High School, North Royalton High School, Conrad School of Science, Propel Andrew Street High School, Thomas Jefferson High School, Reservoir High School, Upper St Clair High School, Westinghouse, Hempfield Area High School, Southern Boone High School, Beaver Local High School, Burrell School District, Lincoln Parks PACS, Nazareth Academy, Propel Braddock Hills, Pittsburgh Science and Tech, David W. Butler High. Participants attended a three-hour Introduction to the College Experience course Monday through Friday. As a part of the learning process, students attended a seminar to learn about memorization techniques, time management, active listening strategies and analyzing movies and other forms of media. Students were also required to research various institutions of higher learning and become familiar with their admissions application process. For their final activity, they prepared and presented their research results to their fellow students in a special group session. Throughout their one-week college experience, students were obliged to demonstrate important responsibilities such as arriving on time for class, following a schedule, and devoting appropriate amounts of time necessary to complete multiple tasks. In the process, they also acquired a few basic research skills. In addition to class work, participants attended a number of off-campus activities, including a Ice cream social, visit to Kennywood Park, Movie in Schenley Park, Pizza. The students also attended mass at the Chapel on campus. Guest lecturer Akmed Khalifa, came in and taught a seminar course on writing. Khalifa is the author of a short story, which was published into a booklet that the students all received. The week ended with a Luncheon on Friday at the TGIF. For their participation in the total experience described, students earned one college credit.

### ▪ **Jerome Bettis Computer Literacy Camp**

*The Bus Stops Here Foundation* was established by the famed Pittsburgh Steelers running back Jerome Bettis. The Foundation sponsors several programs dedicated to improving the quality of life for inner-city youth. In conjunction with Pittsburgh Public Schools and Duquesne University, The Foundation has been sponsoring the *Cyber Bus Computer Literacy Program* since fall 2007. Computer camps are held for eight consecutive weekends on the Duquesne University campus during the fall and spring terms. Participants learn valuable computing skills, including hardware assembly and computer software usage. The Bus Stops Here Foundation covers the costs of computers, printers, the lead instructor, and tutors. The Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center designs the program structure inclusive of the curriculum, and provides for the students' bus transportation, lunch, and peripheral equipment such as flash drives, cordless headsets, microphones, digital recorders, totes, and digital cameras. Several Learning Skills Center tutors and staff members offer their time and talents to help in this most worthwhile endeavor. At the final session, students who complete the camp present their accomplishments to the public and receive certificates at a presentation and awards ceremony hosted and attended by Jerome Bettis. They also get to take home their very own computer which they learned to assemble.

### **III. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT**

#### **A. OOPS (Outreach Opportunity Program for Marginally Performing Students)**

##### **1. Goal: Retention**

The OOPS and Academic Intervention Programs are specifically designed to outreach to students experiencing academic difficulty and offer assistance similar to that provided to the Spiritan Division students. At a time that may be potentially embarrassing and frightening for some, it can be comforting to have an offer of help during this difficult period. Some do not know where to go; some need a hand extended to them first in order to move on to restorative action. One-stop care is also important to many students, for it limits the number of offices, and thus individuals, with whom they must interact. Direct and immediate attention is the most productive. The Center assumes the roles of advocate, liaison, troubleshooter, and problem solver in providing its support system to students.

OOPS has made a significant contribution to the retention of students University-wide. During each spring and fall semester, the Center contacts all students whose overall or semester QPA fell below 2.00, and those students whose midterm grades were below a "C." Contact is normally made by a mail invitation. Students who respond are interviewed by the Assistant to the Director for Retention and Evaluation in a confidential setting, the issues are analyzed and an appropriate remedial course of action is put into effect. The strategies normally fall under three general categories: tutoring, academic coaching sessions (study skills, time management, test taking, organizing, etc.), and counseling & advising.

##### **2. Invites and Responses**

###### **2018-19 Invites:**

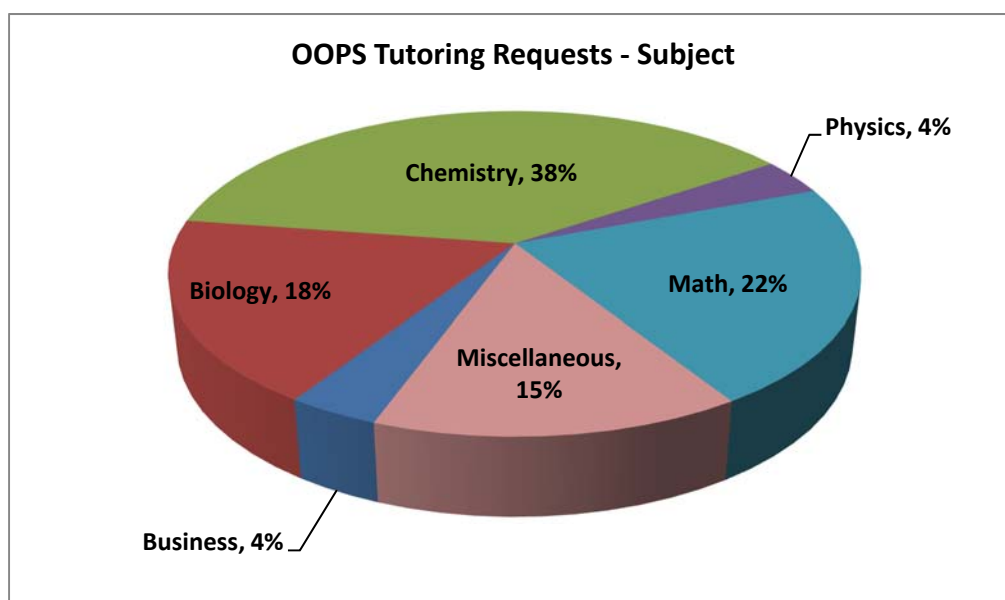
The Learning Skills Center sent out a total of 1,604 OOPS invitations in the fall and spring to undergraduate students in an effort to improve academic performance. There was a noticeable reduction this year in students who had midterm deficiencies. In previous years, after midterm grades were reviewed, the OOPS program typically sent out about 1100 letters encouraging low performing students to seek assistance through the OOPS program. From a University perspective, that's encouraging because it shows that students are learning well and progressing toward their degree. We believe that this pattern could be partly due to the University's trend in recent years to admit students with stronger admissions qualifications. The Center will continue to offer proactive assistance to all students who show signs of being at risk of failing, inviting them to bolster their performance and benefit by the services that are readily available to them. 36 students sought assistance. The reasons for not responding vary. Sometimes students feel that they are able to improve on their own or they believe that the specific situation responsible for their poor academic performance was temporary and the problem no longer exists. Sometimes students will seek assistance from sources other than the Learning Skills Center. We believe that the most successful students are those who take advantage of the resources available to them.

THE MICHAEL P. WEBER LEARNING SKILLS CENTER REPORT PERIOD 2018 - 2019

OOPS MAILINGS AND RESPONSES				
Basis for Invitation	Term that the Invitations were Mailed	OOPS Invites Sent	OOPS Responses	Percent Response
Spring 2018 End of Term: QPA Less than 2.0	End of Spring 2018	120	8	7%
Fall 2018 Mid Term: D,F Grades	Middle of Fall 2018	668	12	2%
Fall 2018 End of Term: QPA Less than 2.0	End of Fall 2018	163	6	4%
Spring 2019 Mid Term: D,F Grades	Middle of Spring 2019	653	10	2%
<b>Total</b>		<b>1604</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>2%</b>

### 3. Services Requested

55 requests are made in different courses. The most frequently requested tutoring subject for the OOPS program this year was Chemistry (38%), Math (22%), followed by Biology (18%).



### 4. Course Grades, QPA and Credits

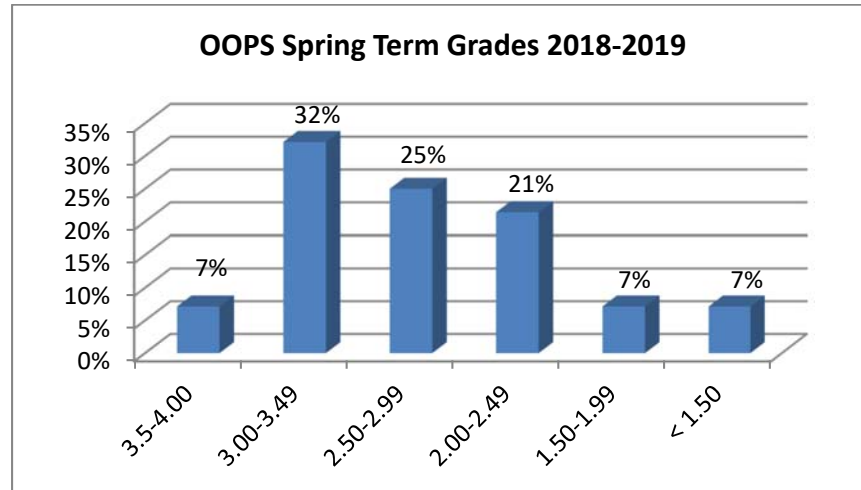
Midterm OOPS invitations are only sent to undergraduate students who received at least one “D,” or “F,” grade at midterm. There are always some students in this group who have multiple low grades.

FINAL OUTCOMES OF OOPS STUDENTS WITH "D" or "F" GRADES F AT MIDTERM								
Midterm Grade	FINAL GRADE							Total
	A	B	C	D	F	W	I	
<b>D</b>	1	3	12	1	1	4	0	<b>22</b>
<b>F</b>		1	3	1	3	6	1	<b>15</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Percent</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

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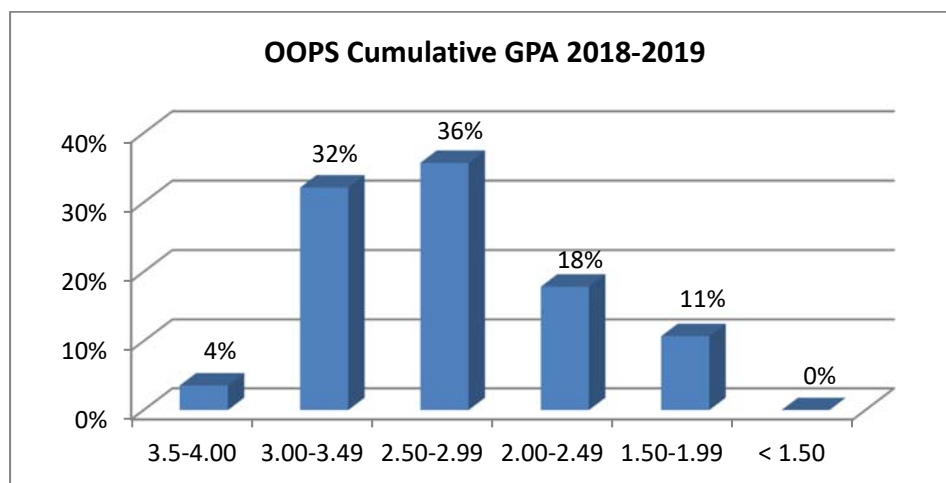
- 57% of the 37 students with multiple Ds or Fs improved their grades at the end of the term.
- 11% remain unchanged
- One student received I grade and 27% withdrew from the course.

### Spring Term Grades



- 32% of this year's OOPS students ended with term averages between 3.0 and 4.0
- 46% had term averages between 2.0 and 2.99.
- Almost 14% of students ever fell below a 2.0 for the term;
  - 7% of the total group earned between 1.50 and 2.0.
  - 7% earned below 1.50
- The average term GPA for the group was 2.66.

### Cumulative Grades



- This year's OOPS students ended the spring term with an average cumulative QPA of 2.72.
- 36% had a QPA of 3.00 or higher.
- 54% of students had averages between 2.00 and 2.99.
- Only 11% fell below 2.0.
- All students had cumulative QPAs at least 1.50 or higher.

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### 5. Retention

The past year had a retention rate of 84%. This year's entire OOPS population will have an opportunity to be reviewed with respect to retention in next year's report.

However, a review of OOPS students over the previous four academic years from 2014-15 to 2017-18, shows that as of the end of this 2018-2019 academic year

MICHAEL P. WEBER LEARNING SKILLS CENTER - OOPS FOUR-YEAR RETENTION RATE					
OOPS Interview Year	Original OOPS Students Interviewed Count	Graduated	Still Attending 2018-19, Not Yet Degreed	Total Retention (Graduated plus Still Attending)	Four Year Retention Percent
2017-2018	25	0	21	21	84%
2016-2017	50	1	26	27	54%
2015-2016	71	4	38	42	59%
2014-2015	113	2	29	31	27%
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>47%</b>

- The OOPS program has maintained a four-year retention rate of about 47%.
- 44% are continuing to make progress toward their degree, and
- 7 students have successfully graduated.

All of these students have, at one or more points in their studies, been at academic risk.

### B. TUTORING SERVICE

#### 1. Goal: Retention through Satisfactory or High Level Course Grade

Tutoring is our most popular service. Tutors provide individualized instruction or group sessions in their areas of expertise. Tutors also meet with instructors, attend supervisory and training sessions, and provide documentation to the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center. The documentation is designed to enhance the quality of the tutoring service provided, and includes a plan for every session (including instructional activities and the outcome of the session), time sheets, information regarding monthly conferences with instructors, and a history of tutoring contacts submitted.

Tutors Available Summer 2018 to Spring 2019			
Term	In-Center	As-Needed	TOTAL
SUMMER 2018	8	0	8
FALL 2018	7	14	21
SPRING 2019	9	3	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>41</b>

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Each tutor is required to attend seminars to hone their tutorial skills. Initially, a pre-screened tutor must attend the Prospective Tutor Seminar as well as the Course Selection Seminar in order to become familiar with Michael P. Weber Learning Skills policies, expectations, and to determine the tutor's area(s) of expertise. Once completed, tutors attend three mandatory training sessions:

- 1) Diagnostic Teaching teaches tutors how to specifically target a tutee's needs and how to identify his or her cognitive behaviors.
- 2) Clinical Supervision focuses on improving the tutor's instructional performance through a colleague relationship with the supervisor.
- 3) Developmental Curriculum teaches tutors how to develop a lesson plan for students who request tutoring that is not in conjunction with a course.

In addition to these required tutor trainings, the Learning Skills tutoring staff has developed and now offers on a rotating basis the following additional advanced training seminars:

- 4) ESL (English as a Second Language) trains tutors how to bridge the cultural and communication gaps when working with a student whose native language is not English. This is the most popular advanced training seminar and the one most offered. It is provided in conjunction with Duquesne University's ESL Department.
- 5) Rapport Building presents the importance of fostering a positive relationship between tutors and tutees in order to create an optimal learning environment. The session focuses on the importance of communicating with one-another on a personal and professional level. Individuals identify specific items that can help another person get to know them better, as well as what they consider to be most challenging in the public sector. Four leadership styles are identified and strategies to help individuals become more assertive are discussed.
- 6) Personality and Learning Styles identifies four personality types and then compared them with different learning preferences. Specific details are highlighted within each personality types and learning style.
- 7) Dealing with Difficult People deals with the differences in conflicts. Constructive and destructive conflicts are highlighted, including specific behaviors and emotions of each one. Four approaches are presented for handling, managing and resolving conflicts. Individuals identify what their "hot buttons" were and what specific behaviors may need modifying.
- 8) Academic Round Table Discussion is an informal meeting designed to share ideas and provide feedback. The individuals discussed what was important to them both in the "professional" role, as well as what they would consider to be a "pet-peeve". Specific strategies are highlighted, as well as ways to compensate for difficulties.

New tutor training topics are added from time to time. Each one is designed to improve tutoring skills, improve the tutor's understanding, and maintain a high standard of tutoring quality at the Learning Skills Center.

### **2. Tutoring Profile**

This year the Learning Skills Center received almost 1633 individual requests for tutoring services between Summer 2018 to Spring 2019. The Center provided 4079 hours of tutoring to 1132 students. There was an average of 3.6 courses requested per tutee.

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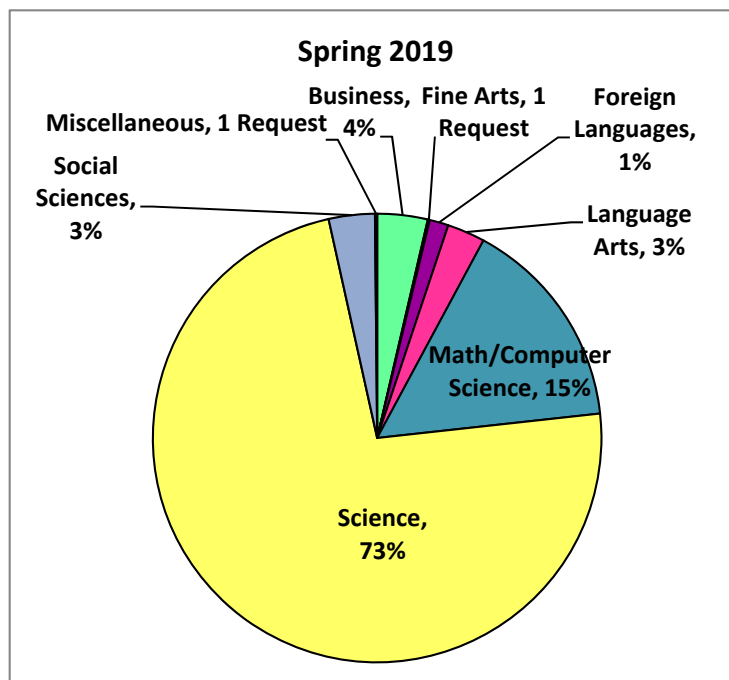
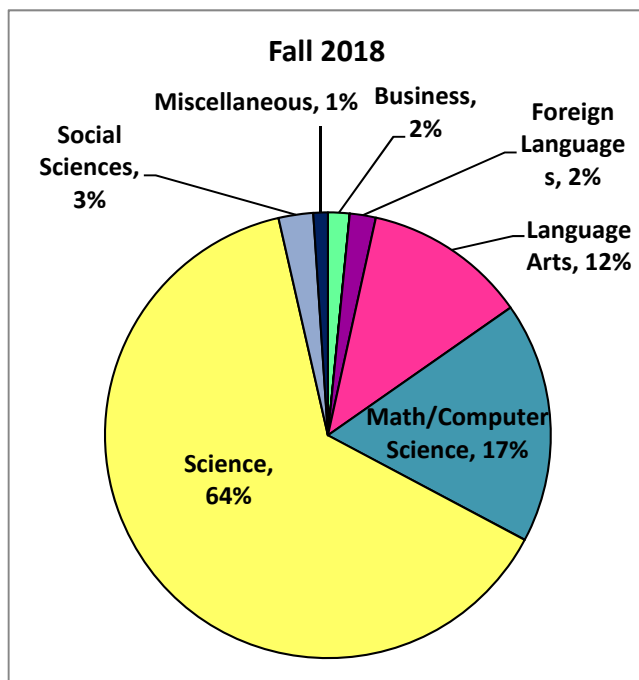
OVERALL TUTORING SUMMARY - SUMMER 2018 TO SPRING 2019				
	SUMMER 2018	FALL 2018	SPRING 2019	TOTALS
STUDENTS	16	689	427	1132
TUTORING REQUESTS	16	955	662	1633
REQUESTS FILLED	9	543	449	1001
REQUESTS NOT FOLLOWED THROUGH	7	412	213	632
HOURS TUTORED	18.5	2103.5	1957	4079.0
Requests Per Student	1.0	1.4	1.6	1.4
Average Tutoring Hours Per Student	1.2	3.1	4.6	3.6
% of Requests Filled	56%	57%	68%	61%

### 3. Tutoring Requests

Requests are classified into two categories: “Filled” and “Not Followed Through.” The Learning Skills Center always tries to provide tutoring to everyone who requests it. However, in every term there are always a number of tutoring requests that go unfilled, usually for two reasons: either (a) the student did not show up for the scheduled tutoring appointment, or (b) the Learning Skills Center was not able to find a tutor for the subject requested. When a tutor is not immediately available, the Center tries its best to locate a qualified tutor but is not always successful.

This fall, as usual, the most popular subjects requested were science courses (608 which is 64% of total requests). The mathematics/computer science and language arts courses came in second and third respectively in both the fall and spring terms. Business and foreign languages were also requested on a regular basis.

#### TUTORING REQUESTS BY SCHOOL 2018-19

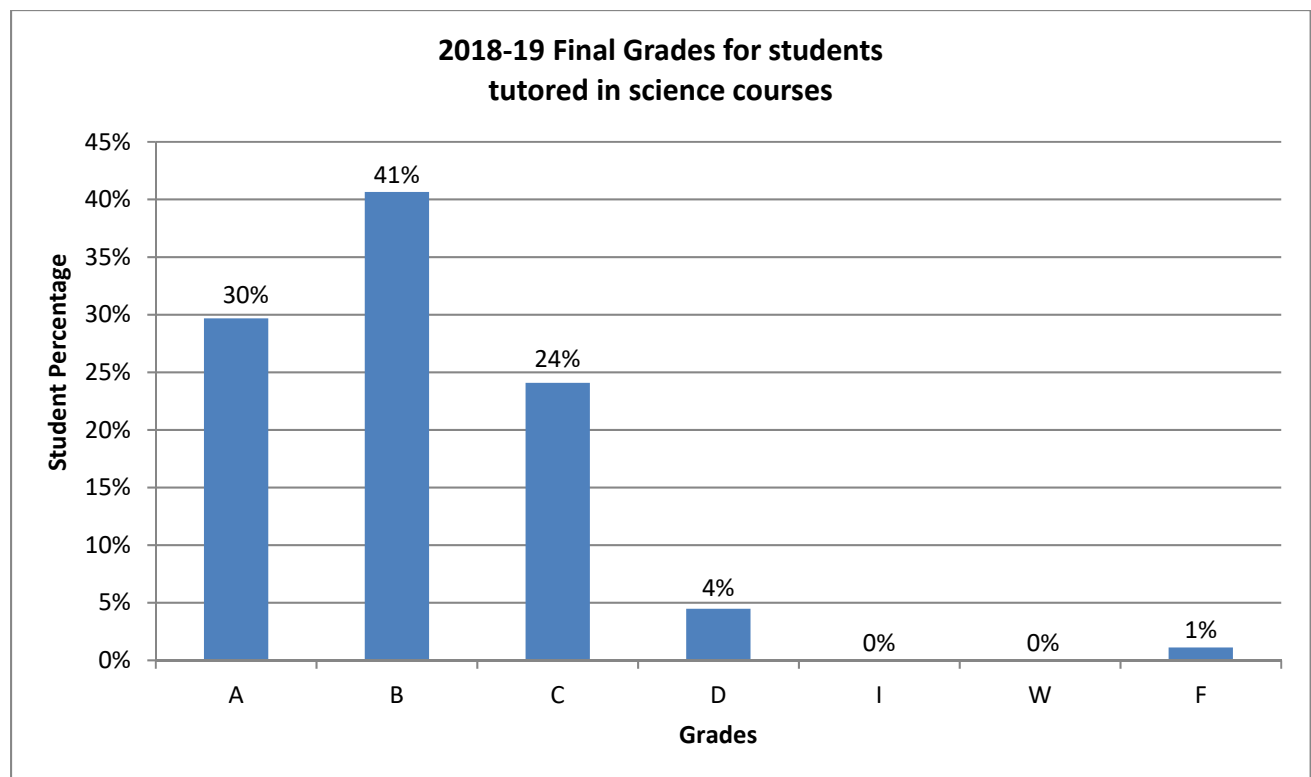


#### 4. Tutoring Course Grades

Tutoring is one of several factors that ultimately affect grades. A review of the final grades received for the courses tutored reflects on the overall success of the tutoring program. Students most commonly apply for tutoring because they find the course material somewhat difficult. The higher their final course grade, the more likely the tutoring program has met its objective of helping students to succeed.

In 2018-19 we served 984 students for various science courses.

End of Year 2018-19 Grades of science courses tutored			
Final Course Grade	Number of students	Percentage	Benchmark
A	292	30%	30%
B	400	41%	70%
C	237	24%	94%
D	44	4%	99%
I	0	0%	99%
W	0	0%	99%
F	11	1%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>984</b>	<b>100%</b>	



Of the 984 students tutored, 94% received a grade of C or higher, 4% received a D and only 1% failed the course.



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### C. ACT 101 (“PENNSYLVANIA ACTS”) ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The mission of the Act 101 Program is to provide opportunities for college enrollment and success for students who are economically, educationally, or socially disadvantaged as defined by guidelines established by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The Act 101 program student group served is derived from two populations at the university: the GSD and the university at large.

Students who are not identified through the Spiritan Division are identified in the population at large using state guidelines & requirements. The state requires that participating institutions offer services to students who meet the economic, academic and social guidelines.

In the 2018-19 academic year, 162 university students were reported as Act 101 participating and 38 (23%) graduated and earned their degrees. Around 90% of 162 participating students are in good standing according to the university’s policy. The Average term GPA for fall 2018 is 2.96 and for spring 2019 is 3.02

<b>ACT 101 DEAN'S LIST FALL 2018 - SPRING 2019</b>			
<b>Academic Level</b>	<b>FALL 2018</b>	<b>SPRING 2019</b>	<b>Total Dean's List Achieved in 2018-19</b>
Freshman	76	3	<b>79</b>
Sophomore	2	9	<b>11</b>
Junior	9	2	<b>11</b>
Senior	21	30	<b>51</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>152</b>

### D. COMMITTEES

#### **Academic Council**

Chairperson: Dr. Uhuru Hotep, Associate Director

Mission: To implement the mission of the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center which is, “helping students to succeed,” and the Gussin Spiritan Division, which is, “Helping Students Achieve.” The Academic Council insures that the academic components work together to guarantee high quality tutorial, academic and other related services for both the Gussin Spiritan Division and non-Gussin Spiritan Division students.

The Committee is composed of key Learning Skills and Gussin Spiritan Division personnel who specialize in academic matters, or who sit on or chair key Learning Skills Center committees.

The committee met monthly to devise strategies and activities to promote academic excellence among students. They worked closely with the Center’s staff and the Gussin Spiritan Division faculty. Topics discussed include Gussin Spiritan Division curriculum, educational outreach programs, student evaluation, tutoring and retention programs.

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### **Communications**

Chairperson: Dr. Uhuru Hotep, Associate Director

Mission: The committee aspires to the highest level of excellence in its work to develop and print electronic media that promote the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center and the Robert and Patricia Gussin Spiritan Division.

The Communications Committee oversees and publishes the following printed materials.

#### Learning Skills Center Publications:

**The PACT Newsletter, The Gussin Spiritan Division Newsletter, The Pennsylvania Acts Newsletter called The Achiever, and the Gussin Spiritan Division Chronicle.**

Frequency: Annually.

Content is related to the students we serve, their parents, school administrators and other stake holders

### **Brochures:**

- The Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center
- The Gussin Spiritan Division
- Helping Students Succeed
- Learning Disabilities
- The Summer Institute
- Tutoring: Academic Assistance for Students
- A Guide for Student Tutoring
- Tutoring – Is it the Job for You?

### **Counseling Component**

Chairperson: Vicki Bush, Assistant Director of Counseling Services

The members of the component provide counseling to Spiritan Division students throughout the year. The Counseling staff and the academic liaison continued their biweekly meetings throughout the academic year. At the point in any meeting when issues surrounding the behavior of specific students, the academic liaison exits the meeting so as to preserve counseling confidentiality.

During the past year, the Counseling Component reviewed the suitability of standardized tests that have been used annually to assess the strengths and needs of the incoming Gussin Spiritan Division freshmen. Newer test versions and other standardized tests were also investigated to determine their appropriateness. A self-assessment questionnaire continued to provide essential information from the students' own perception. It is another tool enabling advisors and counselors to determine what meaningful services can be provided to individual students to increase their likelihood of success in college.

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### **Orientation and Comportment Committee**

Chairperson: Vicki Bush, Assistant Director of Counseling Services

Mission: The Orientation Committee was established to facilitate the acclimation of new Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center staff to the organizational structure of the office as well as policies, procedures and practices. All new persons hired by the department will be given a complete orientation to the Center. It also develops an office manual to be used by the Center

The committee is charged with the responsibility of conducting new staff orientation to include new employees, supervisors, and current employees to update them on any revisions related to office policies, procedures, and practices.

Orientations are conducted as necessary for each new staff member of the Learning Skills Center within the first week of hire.

The Comportment Manual outlines office policies and procedures for all staff members. The manual was designed as a useful booklet intended to serve as a resource. The intent is to develop harmony and utility among the staff.

### **Technology Committee**

Chairperson: Ameya Ranade, Assistant to the Director for Retention and Evaluation

Mission: The mission of the Technology Committee is to apply the various components of technology to enhance and promote the services of the Department. This includes reviewing the technological needs of the Department and making recommendations for the purchase or leasing of new hardware or software, keeping abreast of how technology is changing and how this might affect the Department, serving as webmaster for the department's web site, serving as coordinator of training in the use of technology for department personnel, creating and updating videos and other presentations on various departmental functions as stand-alone as well as for the website, and serving as liaison to other departmental functions and committees utilizing technology.

### **Theme Committee**

Chairperson: Vicki Bush, Assistant Director of Counseling Services

Mission: The mission of the Theme Committee is to create a cultural and artistic environment in the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center that reflects the diversity of the Center. The goal is to capture the ethnicity of the students, faculty and staff of the Center and to display creative ideas that will attract constituents to the Center.

The displays have a monthly theme around students, faculty and staff interest and ethnicity. The fall term décor reflected topics of traditional autumn leaves, Pittsburgh Steeler Football, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. During the month of January, the focus is oriented toward students and academics, to inspire motivation for the spring term. January's theme also represented the great civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King. February brought to the Learning Skills Center the rich heritage of the African-Americans' Black History Month. In addition, the February poster in the Center also included St. Valentine's Day, and President's Day. March was a celebration of the Fighting Irish, the history of St. Patrick's Day and Women's History Month. April celebrated spring and Easter through the Life and Resurrection of our

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Lord. The appreciation of mothers and a taste of Italy were celebrated in May. June's display revealed Flag Day, the coming of summer and a time to relax from all the exhausting work accomplished during the academic year. July's display depicted the sentiment of our patriotism with a focus on our great country's birthday, the Fourth of July.

### **E. EVIDENCE OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS USED TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING**

The Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center maintains a full-time staff member whose job title is *Assistant to the Director for Retention and Evaluation*. This individual's responsibilities include the following:

- Monitoring the academic progress of all undergraduate students, identifying specific students who show signs of academic difficulty as evidenced by their midterm and final grades, and initiating contact with them to offer appropriate support services designed to improve their educational performance.
- Providing statistical assessment and data analysis services to the department for general purposes, such as analyzing feedback from program questionnaires and student surveys. This service enables the department to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses and initiate adjustments as necessary.
- Providing analytical reports detailing the overall performance of the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center and the Robert & Patricia Gussin Spiritan Division. This enables the Learning Skills Center and the Gussin Spiritan Division to regularly evaluate:
  - The overall academic performance of Division students, both for the current year and over the course of multiple years.
  - The progress that the Departments have made toward meeting existing goals;
  - The effectiveness of our academic programs and student support services.
- These reports are distributed internally to appropriate administrative staff within the Department and to Duquesne University's administration. Details and important highlights are presented in summary form to the Robert & Patricia Gussin Spiritan Division/Act 101 Advisory Board at their biannual meetings held toward the end of the fall and spring terms.

The *Academic Intervention Program (AIP)* enables professors and instructors to report students who are at academic risk of failing a course. Instructors can, at any time during the semester, report students who are having academic difficulty to the *Assistant Tutorial Supervisor of the MPWLSC and the student's Academic Advisor*. The *Assistant Tutorial Supervisor* initiates contact with the student and arranges a meeting to discuss the appropriate course of action.

### **F. LINKAGE OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS WITH PLANNING AND BUDGETING**

**Student Retention:** Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center programs such as:

- College Success courses;
- "OOPS" and "AIP" outreach programs which are aimed at improving the effectiveness of specifically identified marginally performing students;

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- the state-funded Pennsylvania Acts/Act 101 program, co-sponsored and administered in conjunction with the Robert & Patricia Gussin Spiritan Division, aimed at retaining Pennsylvania residents who are both academically and financially at risk; and
- Tutoring, the highly popular program designed to improve course performance and promote better subject understanding and ultimately, higher grades.

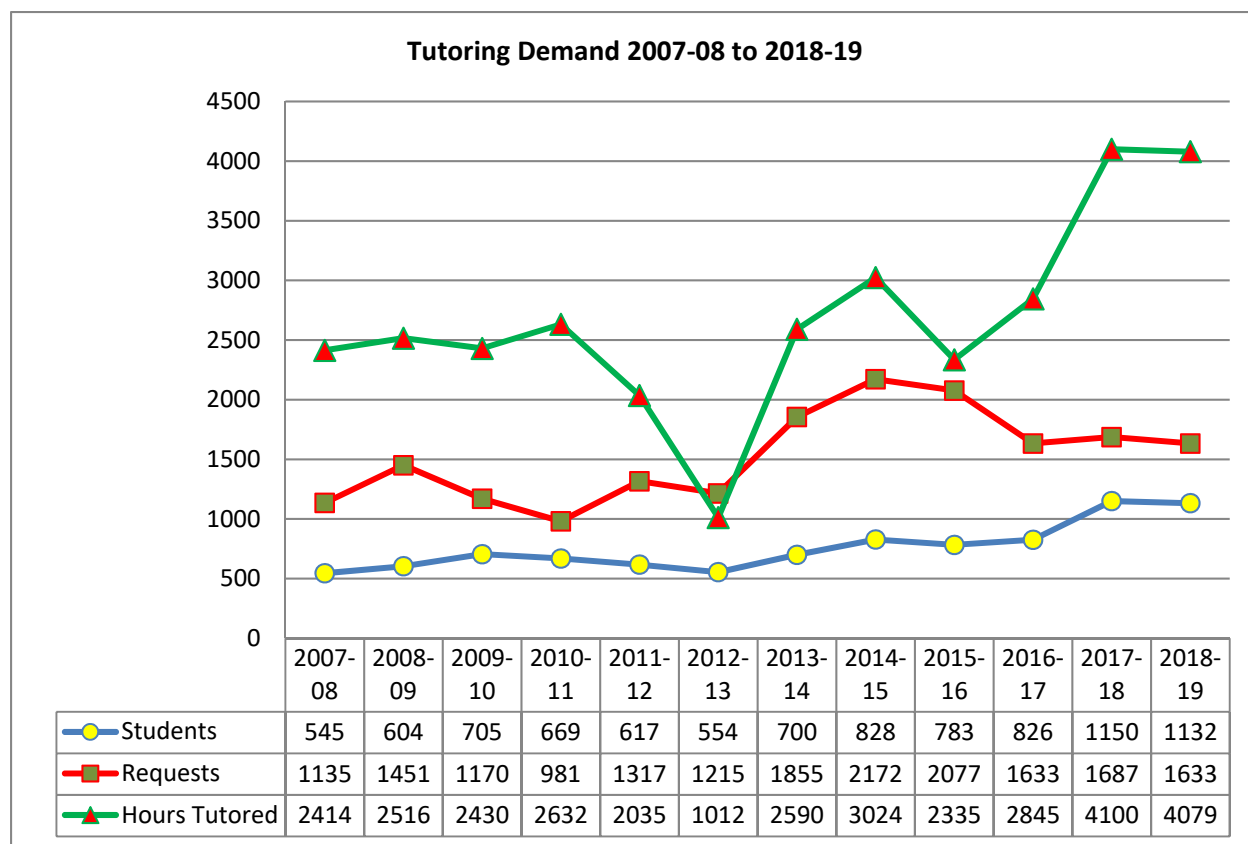
All contribute to higher University retention rates and persistence until graduation. High retention impacts the budget positively in the sense that the student contributes to the University's income while here in the form of tuition and parking and payment of other fees for services. When a student drops out, the University loses not only a potential graduate, but it also loses a year or more of student tuition and other income and also loses a potential Alumni fund donor. The student loses financially because he or she had paid thousands of dollars for a benefit that ultimately never materialized, and also may potentially incur a loss of future income generally associated with a holder of a college degree. Higher graduation figures also positively impact the University's overall image. Positive write-ups in catalogs and reports tend to attract the attention of more successful students and encourage them to apply for University admission.

### **Funding for the Department is used to provide:**

- Payroll for administrative and office support staff and tutors;
- Faculty salaries for the College Success courses;
- Office supplies, stationery, postage, telephone and administrative supplies;
- The Achiever, an annual Pennsylvania Acts/Act 101 student publication written by Pennsylvania Acts students;
- Technology to maintain high efficiency and to enhance the Center's ability to serve students, the University and the community. This includes items such as computers, software, audiovisual equipment, photocopiers, printing machines, and image scanners.
- Sponsorship of community programs and activities such as the Jerome Bettis Foundation Computer Literacy Camp, The Summer Institute, and PACT which provides tutoring to community children.

## **IV. CHALLENGES AND NEEDS**

In the past, due to budgetary constraints, tutoring in our most popular subject, Chemistry was restricted to only one hour per student. When students learned of this, several students felt that this was not enough instruction to meet their needs and they did not request our services; some also stopped coming. Undoubtedly, if it weren't for that constraint, the tutoring figures would have been higher and we could have served even more students. Understanding the need for more adequate instruction time to fit students' needs, the LSC increased instruction time to two hours per week per subject. Students from the following departments must be referred to the center in order to receive services: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Math, English and ESL (English as a Second Language).



### Additional Space

In-Center Tutoring: Most of the tutoring time that is logged is “in-center” (on-site). This is undeniably a very popular service. Tutoring typically occurs in our single conference room and in the other areas of the center, using couches, coffee tables, and portable white boards. However, there are many times that the conference room is not available for tutoring purposes due to faculty and staff meetings, workshops, committee meetings, or private counseling and testing sessions. Therefore, tutors are left without a suitable space at The Center to conduct their tutoring. To meet the rising demand for in-center tutoring, it would increase our efficiency greatly if the Center were assigned a specifically designated area to conduct tutoring, one that is easily accessible to both tutors and students and not subject to interruptions and scheduling conflicts.

### Tutoring Budget

The demand for tutoring services at the Learning Skills Center has increased substantially over the past several years. Over the last eight years, the requests for tutoring have essentially doubled. During 2007-2008, we received 1135 requests; this past year, Learning Skills handled 1633 requests. The number of students tutored since then has increased from 545 to 1132. Also during that time, at the request of the University, our tutor pay scale was increased. Non-student tutor salaries have increased since 2008 by 31.6%. Yet, over these years, funding allocated to the Learning Skills Center for tutoring has remained constant. To compensate, there have been some cutbacks in the maximum number of tutoring hours permitted per week per course for tutees. In past years, tutoring funds formerly allocated to the Learning Skills Center were redirected to various departments so that they can provide tutoring within their own departments. The Learning Skills Center routinely receives tutoring requests from these departments, and we are happy to serve these students. If available, additional funding would be helpful and will enable us to serve to our fullest capacity.

### **Resources Needed to address the needs**

The Learning Skills Center has been using its resources effectively in administering its ongoing operations throughout the years. Overall, the assessment results show very good performance in the many courses, services and programs that the Center provides to Duquesne students, to the University in general, and to the public.

As discussed previously in section II: "Challenges and Needs," the funding obtained by the Learning Skills Center is used to pay for things such as salaries for faculty, staff, and tutoring services; to purchase equipment and supplies necessary to provide classes, student support services and public service programs, as well as to pay for typical business expenses (e.g., telephone, printing, and office supplies.) If additional resources can be granted, the following key areas would be worthy of consideration:

1. Funding for tutoring.
2. Additional facility space.

To briefly highlight the specific issues:

- 1) Because tutoring salaries were increased at the request of the University while demand for tutoring services also increased, limitations needed to be imposed on the amount of tutoring that we were able to provide students in order to stay within the operating budget. The result shows a decline in the number of students tutored. Additional funding for this service would enable us to tutor more students, to provide more tutoring hours to those requesting academic assistance, and to provide a higher level of tutoring service which we had provided in the past.
- 2) Relative to the many services that we provide and the many things occurring daily within the department, our office space is small. If granted, additional office space would enable us to work far more efficiently and enable us to better serve Duquesne students.

## **V. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **A. History**

The Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center (The Center) is an outgrowth of the Duquesne University Counseling and Learning Department for Black Students (CLD) established in 1969. CLD's greatest successes were 1) reducing the attrition rate of African-American students from over 50 percent to less than 1 percent, and 2) developing retention strategies and approaches which serve as the model presently utilized by the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center in its current retention efforts.

Due to the success of the Counseling and Learning Department in meeting its major goal of retaining Black students, in 1975 CLD was charged to expand its scope of support to include all Duquesne students and with that expansion came the change in name to "Learning Skills Center." Retention continued to be the focus of the Learning Skills Center.

Through the acquisition of a federal grant in 1990, the Learning Skills Center began to administer the Program for Academic Coaching Through Tutoring (PACT), a community collaborative program designed to serve children and adolescents from several city public schools in the Hill District. PACT initially began as an in-school partnership with Duquesne student tutors working within classrooms helping students. Students were also brought to

campus on Saturdays during the semester for tutoring and help with homework. These outreach services continue. With the assistance of the University's work study program, PACT reaches many more students.

The Center's community partnership programs have expanded to include the Summer Institute, a summer enrichment program for high school students, and the Jerome Bettis Computer Literacy Camp, a program dedicated to increasing inner-city middle school students' knowledge and ownership of computers.

## **B. Philosophy**

The philosophy of the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center is that, through appropriate intervention, students develop into independent, life-long learners. This intervention is individualized and personalized and may be affective, academic, or a combination of both. Therefore, the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center offers a wide range of comprehensive services to the Duquesne University community and the community at large.

## **C. Mission**

The mission of the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center is to maximize each student's learning potential to produce life-long learners with a sense of self-worth and social responsibility by providing a supportive learning environment that recognizes the uniqueness of each individual. Our mission is "helping students to succeed."



## **D. Goals**

The Center serves students and faculty by providing a broad range of programs and learning skills services including those in the areas of skills assessment, learning strategies and techniques, tutoring, academic advisement, counseling and training of learning services personnel. The Center also serves the community at large via initiatives to link the University community with its Pittsburgh neighbors, providing them learning opportunities, exposure to campus facilities, and interaction with scholars and professionals from various fields.

## **E. LINKAGE TO DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **1. Diversity:**

*Strategic Priority #2.2, "The student body will become more diverse and support for human diversity will become a commitment of all students."*

The Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center encourages economic and academic diversification by co-administering the Pennsylvania Acts program (a.k.a. "Pennsylvania Act 101") with the Robert & Patricia Gussin Spiritan Division of Academic Programs. The Pennsylvania Acts program provides educational support services targeted toward economically and academically disadvantaged students. Through this program, students who might not otherwise consider attending college, as well as those who are at risk of dropping their college studies due to financial or academic stress, are provided an opportunity to pursue studies at Duquesne University and eventually obtain their degree. New Duquesne freshmen who meet specific academic guidelines are admitted into the Gussin Spiritan Division and receive Pennsylvania Acts services through the Division. The remaining Duquesne student population meeting the state requirements for services under this Act receives similar benefits through services of the Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center. Participants in the Pennsylvania Acts program are proactively contacted and encouraged to avail themselves of our services, which include tutoring, counseling, advising, and academic skills coaching. This results in a broader range of academic and socioeconomic student diversity throughout Duquesne University. 38 Pennsylvania Acts students graduated from Duquesne University this year.

Once finalized, the Learning Skills Center will ensure that its services and methods support the new Strategic plan currently being developed.

### **2. Community Service:**

*Strategic Priority #1.2: "Service to others will be a theme throughout the Duquesne experience."*

The Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center provides opportunities for service to others through tutoring programs such as *PACT* (Project for Academic Coaching Through Tutoring) and the *Field Observation* service learning courses which are open to all Duquesne students, and the *Jerome Bettis Cyber Bus Computer Literacy Program* that provides computer instruction and hardware to inner city youth.

One popular program that provides a means of community service for Duquesne University student tutors is the Project for Academic Coaching Through Tutoring (PACT) sponsored by the Michael P. Weber

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Learning Skills Center, in partnership with St. Rosalia School and community agencies such as the Hill House Association, the Wesley Center: The Center that Cares in the Hill District, and Mt. Ararat Baptist Church in the East End of Pittsburgh. Other agencies that have participated in previous years include the Pittsburgh Public Schools, and the Sixth Mt. Zion Baptist Church in East Liberty. PACT provides tutoring labs at the Duquesne University campus on Saturdays and on two weekday evenings. At these sessions, tutors assist students in grades K-12 with their homework and provide skill development exercises. Some Division students choose to provide off-campus tutoring in schools under the supervision of classroom teachers, or at several community agencies and organizations.

### F. Retention Programs and Services

The Center has designed, developed, and administers several retention programs that help to retain students, ultimately leading to their graduation. Specifically, some of the major programs include the University Success Courses, the Outreach Opportunity Program for Marginally Performing Students (OOPS), Act 101, and Tutoring. A discussion of each ensues.

**1. University Success Courses:** The Learning Skills Center provides three courses, one credit each, that teach the essential skills necessary for students to become successful in college.

- *Strategies for Academic Success* imparts information and teaches various approaches designed to improve students' productivity and understanding. It does this through a focus on the development of learning skills. Students enrolled in this course achieved an average of **3.170 and 91.3% retention**.
- *Introduction to University Success* is intended to provide students with information and experiences to help them adjust to college, as well as to nurture within them the necessary motivation and provide encouragement to succeed at their studies. The group of 61 students who took this course ended with a **3.45** cumulative average and **100% retention**.
- *Pathways to Success* is a required course for second semester freshmen with a first semester QPA less than 2.00. There are many reasons why a student earns poor grades. These include not making connections on campus; being unsure about a major or starting an inappropriate course of study; missing home and family; poor time management and study skills; and other issues with adjusting to college. These issues and more are addressed in the course. The overall average of the 51 students who took this course is **1.75**.
- *Seminar for Professional Development* is offered for upper-class students whose quality point averages are below 2.00

The Center also provides two College Success courses designed specifically to benefit international students. Students from foreign nations often face unique adjustments and

challenges that students from the United States do not. These courses are offered to students on either a zero or one-credit basis.

- *Academic Strategies for International Students* is designed to help international students understand how a U.S. university works. Course content includes goal setting, instructors' expectations, time management, library research, academic planning, creative thinking, note taking, and test taking strategies. The overall **QPA was 3.40 and 66.7% retention**.

The 282 students (non-Spiritan Division) who completed any University Success Course averaged a **fall term QPA of 3.25, a spring QPA of 2.95, and an overall QPA of 2.86**. In the 2018-19 Academic year, 83 (29%), of the 282 College Success students, attained Dean's List status. Of the 231 students who took a College Success course in the fall of 2018, 209 students remained into the spring term, or **90.5% retention**. Because most of these students are first-time freshmen, it is only possible to consider the fall-to-spring term retention.

## 2. Act 101 (Pennsylvania Acts) Program

The mission of the Act 101 Program is to provide opportunities for college enrollment and success for students who are economically, educationally, or socially disadvantaged as defined by guidelines established by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Act 101 program student group served is derived from two populations at the university: the GSD and the university at large.

Students who are not identified through the Spiritan Division are identified in the population at large using state guidelines & requirements. The Commonwealth requires that participating institutions offer services to all students who meet the economic, academic and social guidelines.

In the 2018-19 academic year, 162 university students ("non-Spiritan" Division) were reported as Act 101 participating and 38 (23%) graduated and earned their degrees. Almost 90% of the 162 participating students are in good standing according to the university's academic standing policy. The average term GPA for fall 2018 is 2.96 and for spring 2019 is 3.02.

## 3. Outreach Opportunity Program for Marginally Performing Students (OOPS)

The OOPS program, serving students since 1989, is designed to offer assistance to marginally performing University students. Early in the fall and spring terms, the Center outreaches to students who's overall or semester QPA has fallen below 2.00. A second outreach occurs following the reporting of midterm deficiency grades. All undergraduates with "D" or "F" grades at midterm are contacted and invited to come to the Learning Skills Center to determine the type of support if any that is required.

The Center sent out a total of 1,604 OOPS invitations in the fall and spring to undergraduate students in an effort to help them improve their academic performance. A total of 36 students responded to the Center's overtures and sought assistance. Students received tutoring in 55 different courses: 38% in Chemistry and 18% in Biology. An analysis of the performance of the 55 follows:

- This year's OOPS students ended the spring term with an average cumulative QPA of 2.72.

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- 36% had a QPA of 3.00 or higher.
- 54% of students had averages between 2.00 and 2.99.
- 11% fell below 2.0.
- All students had cumulative QPAs at least 1.50 or higher.

A review of OOPS students over the previous four academic years from 2014-15 to 2017-18, shows that as of the end of this 2018-2019 academic year

- The OOPS program has maintained a four-year retention rate of about 47%
- 44% are continuing to make progress toward their degree; and
- 7 students have successfully graduated.

### **4. Tutoring Program**

The goal of the tutoring service is to help retain students through satisfactory or high level course grades. The tutoring service provides a high volume of service. Tutors offer individualized instruction or group sessions in their areas of expertise. Tutors also meet with instructors, attend supervisory and training sessions, and provide documentation to the Weber Learning Skills Center. The documentation is designed to enhance the quality of the tutoring service provided and includes a plan for every session (including instructional activities and the outcome of the session), time sheets, information regarding monthly conferences with instructors, and a history of tutoring contacts submitted.

This year the Learning Skills Center received almost 1,633 individual requests for tutoring services between Summer 2018 to Spring 2019. The Center provided over 4,079 hours of tutoring to 1132 students. There was an average of 3.6 courses requested per tutee.

This year, as usual, the subjects most often requested were science courses (608 which is almost 64% of total requests). The mathematics/computer science and language arts courses came in second and third respectively in both the fall and spring terms. Business and foreign languages were also requested on a regular basis. Of the 984 students tutored in science courses, the area most requested, 94% received a grade of C or higher, 4% received a D and only 1% failed the course.