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ABSTRACT

An experimental student-to-student tutoring program established at California State University is discussed in this article. The tutors receive academic credit rather than money for their services. The tutor's responsibilities require: (1) contact hours with the tutees; (2) tutorial preparations; (3) consultation with course instructors; (4) reporting, analysis, and evaluation of the tutorial experiences; and (5) participation in an all-university orientation and evaluation program for tutors. The author explains how this program differs from student, teacher and minority-group tutoring programs. (BL)

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How to Pay Tutors in Personalized Instruction
if your Institution does not Provide
the Funds

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ABSTRACT

As stated in the Conference announcement, P.S.I. requires tutors, who are usually good students who have previously taken the course. Funds are not always available for tutors. The solution may be found in "paying" the tutors in earned academic credit towards their degree. The pedagogic and administrative rationale of this system as established at my university is outlined in a brief paper.

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My brief contribution to this conference on sharing information and experiences about personalized instruction deals with an apparently minor, yet crucial, aspect: how can we offer personalized, that is, individual, face-to-face verbal encounters with students if we do not have the money to pay the persons who will meet with them?

There are many definitions of personalized instruction, but one common ingredient on which all seem to agree is the need for tutors, whether they are called tutors, para-professionals, facilitators, teacher aides, proctors, resource persons from the community, or what have you.

The flyer for this conference emphasizes the importance of tutors by stating that in P.S.I. "the students are provided with tutors, (who are usually good students who have previously taken the course). The tutors use the class time usually spent in lecturing to answer questions from students and to correct proficiency examinations."

At other institutions, such as The University of California, the problem is resolved easily enough: teaching assistants become the tutors and their schedule for individual consultation is arranged so as to have at least one tutor available every hour of the working day for the student who wants to discuss his problems, take an exam, or just plain be encouraged.

In high schools, two-year colleges¹, and at my own State

University the situation is radically different. In anticipation of the need to individualize learning with the help of tutors, I initiated two years ago a program of "Student-to-Student Tutorials" whereby we "pay" our tutors in academic credits instead of money. The program received the enthusiastic support of our Dean for Academic Planning, was accepted by the campus-wide Curriculum Committee, and approved by the Faculty Council. It now bears an all-campus number (just like Independent Study) but the Department prefaces the number by its own designation in order to receive the financial benefit derived from enrollment.

As the course description below, in our catalog, shows, the "Student-to-Student Tutorials 196 and 496" should not be confused with university students who go as tutors to neighboring high schools and earn field-practice credit towards their teaching credential; nor should they be confused with university students who tutor (voluntarily or for pay) culturally deprived minority groups on campus. Each system has its own raison d'être and its unique features:

STUDENT-TO-STUDENT TUTORIALS 196 and 496

The university has begun a program of experimentation with and development of "student-to-student tutorials."

One of the fastest and profoundest ways to learn is to teach. The "student-to-student tutorial" will provide a formal way to encourage students to learn through

teaching. It will expand significantly the opportunities for students to have meaningful experiences as teachers. At the same time, it greatly will increase the amount of tutoring available and will extend tutoring to all of the kinds of students who need and want tutorial assistance.

Students electing to be tutors not only will increase their mastery of particular subject matters but also will have practice in developing their communication, cooperation and interpersonal relationship skills. Most important adult roles and jobs also involve a teaching dimension and the tutorial experience will provide opportunities to develop awareness of teaching problems and competence in teaching techniques.

Each department will decide whether or not it wishes to offer this course. Departments choosing to offer the student-to-student tutorial course will follow the rules listed in the following course description.

The course number will be 196 or 496, and one to three units of credit can be given for each course.

Prerequisites: A 3.0 or more grade-point average and-or consent of instructor and simultaneous enrollment in the course or previous enrollment in a similar course or its equivalent. The tutor and his tutee or tutees will work in mutually advantageous ways by allowing all involved to

delve more carefully and thoroughly into the materials presented in this specific course. One to three students may be tutored by the tutor unless the instructor decides that special circumstances warrant increasing the usual maximum of three tutees. Three hours of work are expected for each unit of credit, and this work may include, apart from contact hours with tutees, such other activities as: tutorial preparations; consulting with instructors; reporting, analysis and evaluation of the tutorial experiences; and participation in an all-university orientation and evaluation program for tutors. A maximum of three units can be taken each semester and nine units of any combination of 196 and 496 for an undergraduate program. This course must be taken as an elective and not counted toward general education, major or minor requirements. The course can be taken on a credit-no credit basis by the tutor. Requests for tutors must be initiated by tutees and can be initiated up until the official university date for dropping a class with a W. Tutors electing to respond to such requests will receive credits at the end of the semester and can register in the course until the official university date for dropping a class with a W. Both tutors and tutees must submit written reports, analyses and evaluations of their shared tutorial experience, and both must participate in an

all-university orientation program as well as, in any conferences or critiques that the instructor of the course may require. Further information can be obtained from the department in which the student is interested in "student-to-student tutorials."

Lest you might be led to believe that economics is the only reason why we pay our tutors in academic credit rather than in cash, may I say that the tutors fully earn their academic rewards. The pedagogic rationale for the Student-to-Student Tutorials is that the tutor stands to profit academically as much as the tutee. It is truly a symbiotic relationship, mutually advantageous to both tutee and tutor. Although there is no hard research yet available to prove this point, I believe that as teachers we know it to be an almost self-evident truth that there is perhaps no more efficient way to learn than to teach.

Footnote:

1. At the conference I learned about a similar system in the English Department of the (two-year) American River College, Sacramento, California. Designed by Helen Mills, the "teacher aides" earn from 2 to 4 units tutoring in courses like Sentence Writing and Developmental Reading. Students register as tutors under English 46.