

2020-2021
Unit Annual Report
Division of Academic Affairs
Unit: Academic Coaching and Tutoring Center

There are amended instructions throughout this document to reflect the special circumstances of this academic year (AY20-21). You will find these in red. As an institution and as departments we have learned that we can use our creativity to deliver services and learning even in the most difficult of circumstances. This year's annual report should also serve as a memorialization of the lessons learned.

I Mission and Goal/Outcomes Statement:

Provide overall Mission/Goal Statement for your unit.

The Academic Coaching and Tutoring (ACT) Center offers services to support the excellence of all students, improving academic performance, retention, persistence, progression, and graduations rates. Qualified and trained peer tutors offer individual, small group, and walk-in tutoring, serving students in all majors. Professional Academic Coaches offer individualized, workshop-based, or in-class support for key student success skills, as well as supporting the success of students on academic probation and warning. Peer mentors support First-Year Experience classes, providing academic and social support. We promote a friendly, supportive, non-judgmental approach to success.

Our mission is to help increase retention and academic achievement by enhancing students' ability to learn, apply knowledge, develop study habits, become more self-directed learners, and build critical thinking skills.

II Personnel:

List all staff and note all personnel changes that occurred during 20-21.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
Jen Abbott	Assistant Director (promoted from Staff Assistant)
Lisa Bauer	Staff Assistant (Part-time)
Tracy Foster-Howdle	Staff Assistant (Part-time Placement Coordinator)
Morgan Hakala	Staff Assistant (Academic Coach)
Ellen Hughes	Administrative Assistant
Andy Linscott	Staff Assistant (Academic Coach)
Kat McLellan	Director

III Facilities/Equipment:

List any new facilities/equipment/software etc. acquired during 20-21.

No new facilities/equipment/software were acquired in 2020-2021. Our use of space changed temporarily as a result of the pandemic. ACT Academic Coaches moved from Hammond 332 & 322A to share Hammond 308A (alternating days), which enabled the Assistant Dean for Retention & Student Success and his Administrative Assistant to share the offices in 322. Additionally, two of the Advisors from Career Services and Advising were temporarily relocated to 306E, one of our group tutoring rooms which the ACT Center ordinarily shares with the library. Our part-time employees (two staff assistants) worked predominantly remotely during the past year, as their work stations—in the open space of Hammond 306—were not conducive to social distancing. Former group tutoring rooms 306B, C and D were used primarily for individual placement testing, and sites for individual tutors and mentors with access issues to provide online services, as they do not allow social distancing for multiple people.

In 2021-2022, we anticipate that 306B, C, D, and E will return to being used for group tutoring and peer mentoring (and library study rooms in the evening), as the pandemic eases and CSA employees can return to their own space. The location of both Academic Coaches in 308A will not function effectively when both Coaches are in person, since the space does not allow multiple students to discuss sensitive, confidential information, although having the Coaches accessible via 306 does reinforce ACT’s cohesive identity for students. We look forward in coming years to continuing to resolve these spatial issues, created in part by the continual growth of ACT and CSA.

IV Budget Expenditure Analysis:

Was the budget expended as planned? Were additions/changes made, and if so, explain.

Please note any changes that resulted from the pandemic.

The ACT Center budget was expended largely as planned, with the bulk of the budget (95%) expended on payroll. In addition to our original budget, we had a Strategic Funds One-time Allocation of \$16,475.00 and a Coronavirus Related Expenses increase of \$5,900, which went toward pandemic-related mentoring support and also pandemic-related remote placement testing. The ACT Center additionally redirected other budget allocations toward student-support-related payroll expenses. ACT budget expenditures:

Budget Pool	Percent of Budget:
B00 (Regular Employee-Related Expenses)	0.3% (\$653.00)
C00 Part-time Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff Assistant ● Placement Testing Coordinator ● Math Tutor for summer tutoring support 	29% (\$58,808.09)
C00 Student Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tutors ● Peer Mentors ● Office Assistants 	66% (\$132,446.91)

E00 Administrative Expenses	0.9% (\$1,865.70)
F00 Operational Supplies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuplacer • LASSI • Gift certificates to boost student engagement 	3% (\$5,396.00)
H00 Consulting for DEI Workshops	0.6% (\$1,200.00)

V Programs/Activities:

List major campus activities, events etc. that the office participated in/supported; committees served; community outreach; etc. List events provided to current and prospective students. Also, provide professional development of all staff. *Please note which, if any, of these activities occurred specifically as a result of, or in response to, the pandemic*

Services Provided to Students:

- Academic Coaching to support key student success skills
- Academic Support Seminars run by Peer Mentors on commonly requested topics
- Group tutoring for high-demand classes
- Individual Peer Tutoring for courses in all majors
- Mandatory Academic Coaching & Academic Support Seminars for students on Academic Warning and Probation
- Peer Mentors & weekly office hours & outreach for all incoming students
- Placement testing in math, writing, and foreign languages
- Writing tutoring at all stages of the writing process

Other Student Support Activities:

- Connecting students referred through cases to appropriate Academic Coaching or Tutoring Services
- Creating Academic Coaching campaigns in SSC to support students identified in Enrollment Census Progress Reports
- Creating individualized Tutoring Campaigns in SSC to support students identified in Deficient Midterm Grade Progress Reports
- Creating individualized Tutoring Campaigns in SSC to support students with incompletes
- Designing and mailing a Fitchburg State academic planner to incoming students
- Engaging in proactive and repeated email, text, and telephone campaigns to ensure students with academic standing issues meet their requirements
- Hiring and supervision of approximately 70 student employees each year, including regular check-ins and observations, written feedback, and small-group meetings by major or focus
- Incorporation of academic departments into mid-semester tutor training
- Management of Summer Bridge program
- Recruitment of student employees, with outreach to students, faculty, and staff

Activities Developed in Response to Pandemic:

- Creation of asynchronous “Ask-a-Tutor” submission form
- Creation of asynchronous student support materials, including a video series by Academic Coaching on essential success skills
- Creation of subject-specific videos by tutors on how to access tutoring, distributed to faculty to post on their Blackboard sites
- Development of online training modules for Peer Tutors & Mentors, with a new framing on community trauma and resilience, to improve student support
- Development of process to cross-reference multiple indicators of student risk & collaborate with other campus offices to provide at-risk students outreach from campus members with whom they have existing relationships
- Development of targeted communication plan, mail merging each student the week’s tutoring times for their specific classes
- Establishment of consistent social media presence & incorporation of Peer Tutor and Mentor input
- Establishment of Peer Advisory Board, to solicit student input
- Expansion of hybrid Summer Bridge options
- Expansion of undergraduate office assistant coverage, to provide an approachable in-person contact to students seeking help making appointments
- Extension of Peer Mentors to all incoming students, including transfer students
- Improvement of online Peer Tutoring, Mentoring, and Academic Coaching
- Weekly gift-certificate giveaway to tutees in the fall, to boost attendance
- Written outreach (postcards) from Peer Tutors and Mentors to FY students when we went remote in the fall, with messages of encouragement

Committees and Collaborations:

- Advised Housing’s Academic Success Residential Learning Committee (Jen Abbott & Kat McLellan)
- Career Services & Advising search committee (Morgan Hakala)
- CDI Director search committee (Kat McLellan)
- Falcon Graduation Walk Volunteering
- FYE Community of Practice (Jen Abbott & Kat McLellan)
- FYE Subcommittee (Jen Abbott)
- NECHE Standard 5 Subcommittee (Kat McLellan)
- Orientation presentations on Academic Transitions (Andy Linscott) , Academic Success & Remote Learning (Kat McLellan) & at Falcon Family Coffee Talks
- Provided Online Orientation & Falcon Connections materials
- SSC Presentation at Advising the Whole Student Summer Institute (Jen Abbott & Kat McLellan)
- STEM Inclusive Excellence Group (Morgan Hakala running focus groups)
- Student Success Taskforce, Ex-officio COVID-related Student Support (CSI data) Subcommittee (Kat McLellan)

- Student Support Services group (established by Kat McLellan, with Melisa Alves)
- Trained Housing's new Academic Enrichment Assistants
- TRIO Advisor search committee (Kat McLellan)
- Virtual & In-Person Open Houses

Professional Development:

- Attended (as a staff) *EAB Connected* conference and UNH's *Empower Students for Academic Success* conference, plus individual attendance at many others
- Developed weekly professional development series for Peer Tutors and Mentors, with presentations from offices such as Disability Services, the Library, CSA, and Counseling Services, and also on topics such as Allyship and Safe Zone Training
- Discussed *Becoming A Student-Ready College* as a staff, with each staff member facilitating a weekly discussion of the book
- Hired consultant Faustina Cuevas to facilitate all-staff discussion of *So You Want to Talk about Race*

Community outreach:

- Hosted the annual New England Peer Tutor Association conference
- Jen Abbott served as CRLA (College Reading and Learning Association) Northeast Communications Coordinator

VI Action Plan for 2020-21:

(Insert Action Plan for 20-21)

The ACT Center action plan for 2020-2021 included plans to:

- Provide high quality online academic support services, supplemented by safely delivered in-person services when possible
- Maintain student engagement in ACT Center services despite the substantial student disengagement during the pandemic
- Collaborate more effectively with other campus units around alerts and referrals
- Develop a consistent system for supporting Fitchburg State's most at-risk students in collaboration with other units

VII Assessment Report for 2020-21

Were the Action Plan objectives met? Provide in list or table format that parallels item VI above.

Please note any changes to the plan that occurred as a result of the pandemic.

Academic Coaching:

- In Fall 2020, individual Academic Coaching appointments fell to 465, 76% of Spring 2020's and Fall 2019's numbers
- However, in Spring 2021, individual appointments rose to 643, which was higher than any prior semester

Peer Mentoring:

- In Fall 2020, 61 students attended Academic Success Seminars, which was 50% of Spring 2020 attendance
- However, in Spring 2021, attendance rose to 79, which was 67% of Spring 2020
- Throughout 2020-2021, attendance at peer mentor office hours remained very low, as did response to peer mentors' weekly email outreach
- However, in polls surveying FY students on their experience with Peer Mentors, students consistently expressed satisfaction with their Peer Mentors

Tutoring:

- In 2020-2021, we had 1,778 total tutoring appointments, attended by 443 unique students
- This was down substantially from 2020-2019: Fall 2020 appointments were 33% of Fall 2019's, and Spring 2021 appointments were 54% of Fall 2020's
- Unique attendees were far less diminished: unique attendees in Fall 2020 were 69% of Fall 2019, and Spring 2020's were 90% of Spring 2021
- At a recent CRLA debrief, a colleague suggested tutoring, nationally, is down about 70% - although our tutoring numbers look disappointing, our attendance is comparatively high
- Additionally, our biggest drops in tutoring appointments were in regular attendance of group tutoring. For example, in 2019-2020, more nursing students attended 7 or more group tutoring meetings that year than attended 6 or fewer, whereas in 2020-2021, the majority of students attended 1-3 group tutoring meetings. We postulate that the huge decline in group tutoring stemmed from a lack of in-class camaraderie, which we hope will return next year.

Referrals & Alerts:

- In Fall 2020, 935 students received Midterm Deficiency Alerts (1,439 alerts, average 1.5 alerts per student, 36% of these students received 2 or more alerts)
- Prior to Midterm Deficiency Alerts, 15% of those students had accessed ACT services (average 1.85 appointments 9/1-10/15), but afterward, 20% accessed services (average 2.05 appointments 10/15-12/15)
- F20 students who received MDAs and then attended tutoring increased grades on average 1.34 points (as opposed to 0.93 points for students who didn't attend tutoring) (per class, not unique student)
- Of students with MDAs (excluding graduates), 77% who met with the ACT enrolled in Spring 2021, versus 72% of students who did not. Of students who met with ACT after their MDA, 79% enrolled in Spring 2021.
- In Spring 2021:
 - 50% tutor referrals met with us (average of 2.25 times);
 - 41% coaching referrals met with us (average of 3.7 times)

Tracking multiple risk indicators:

- Tracked and cross-referenced Attendance Alerts, Midterm Deficiency Alerts, academic coaching referrals, tutoring referrals, and academic probation/warning, seeking to identify students struggling with multiple risk factors and to prevent them from falling through the cracks.
 - In Fall 2020, this was 552 students
 - In Spring 2021, this was 440 students

VIII Other Accomplishments:

List accomplishments not already captured above.

Please note which, if any, of these accomplishments are related specifically to your department's response to the pandemic.

IX Action Plan 2021-2022:

Planned Initiatives for 2021-22 <small>Add more rows as needed</small>	Associated Strategic Plan Goal & Strategy <small>Goal # followed by Strategy # ex: 3.2</small>	Indicate if a DEI initiative
Multi-Lingual Scholars Program	2.1	✓
Hybrid Summer Bridge model to increase accessibility	2.1	
Identifying and supporting students with multiple risk factors	2.2	
Upscaling Peer Mentoring to support expanded FYE program	2.2	
In-person placement testing at various locations across the state	2.4	
Resuming (pre-pandemic) training of Fitchburg High School tutors	3.4	
Possibly develop mentoring pipeline with regional high schools	3.4	
Peer observation & feedback program for mentoring and tutoring	4.3	
CRLA certification for mentoring, CRLA 2/3 certification for tutoring	4.4	

Updates to the Action Plan may be submitted via a revised Annual Report.

X Reflection:

Take this section to reflect on--

- 1) *Initiatives that you may be considering for 22-23 academic year that you did not already capture above.*

N/A

- 2) *Reflect on how the department adapted to the pandemic. Reflect on actions that surprised you and on lessons learned that will help in the future.*

To adapt to the pandemic, the ACT Center moved all of its services online, and to adjust to the substantial decrease in student engagement, we attempted many outreach strategies. These included weekly individualized emails informing students of the tutoring schedules for their specific classes, targeting tutoring and coaching campaigns through SSC, calling students with academic standing issues or multiple risk factors to enroll them in appointments, offering gift certificates for attendance, doing presentations in classes, and many other outreach efforts. Although these strategies worked to keep Academic Coaching numbers high, they were less successful with tutoring. Although our tutoring attendance was on par (or, somewhat better) with national trends, the effect of the pandemic, and the switch to remote services, was substantial. Nonetheless, we will continue to provide some online services in the future, as accessibility was greatly increased for some students.

The ACT Center additionally developed new strategies for identifying at-risk students and connecting them with support and resources. This collaboration was not only effective for students, but also helped conserve staff resources during this time, as we created one centralized spreadsheet where many student support offices could check to see if a student was already receiving support services from another office. We look forward to further refining this system, as it promises to significantly improve the support we give to our most at-risk students.

We also retooled our trainings, so that they can be delivered in shorter online modules. As a result, we can now training our Peer Tutors and Mentors throughout the summer, giving them time to consider and absorb the concepts we cover. Overall, we have learned a great deal about providing accessible services, and doing so efficiently, during this pandemic. We have also learned more about how best to support the university's most vulnerable students. It will be good to implement these lessons learned in a different way, once the pandemic passes.