

Current Functions of the Communications Lab

Our lab functions as a writing center as well as a computer lab. Below is a list of what we do as a lab.

- Tutoring in reading, writing, and study skills.
- Testing center for Nelson-Denny reading test and Gates-MacGinitie.
- Reference area for all study skills, reading, and writing textbooks.
- Provide area for instructors to store test material, as well as administering these tests to students.
- Conduct writers' workshops for reinforcement of our composition program which include critical analysis, argument, and documentation styles.
- Create and provide handouts on all documentation styles used by the college and handouts on basic elements for reading and writing.
- Accelerated Reader programs that include computer testing programs and books.
- Reservation area for instructors to use for their companion websites included in the curriculum.
- Computer lab for students to type papers and access Angel.
- Provide online tutoring services.
- Study group areas for ESL conversations, ESL tutoring in Government and Political Science.
- Rosetta Stone access for overflow of World Languages Lab.
- Writing Fellow programs that assist instructors in composition programs, especially for ESL composition I. Lab assistants assist in the instruction and group projects, as well as tutoring these students in reading and writing inside the classroom.

Future Expansion of the Lab

For our lab to be more of a resource and service to the college, I believe the following should be considered when expanding the lab.

- We need more areas for study groups and tutoring groups. Right now, the lab can only accommodate a limited number of tutoring sessions. We have 7 tables for tutoring and one group tutoring room. The lab needs areas for ESL conversation groups that are closed off, so other students are not bothered with noise during tutoring sessions and while working on papers. We need areas that foster collaboration and peer discussions. Additional seating and tables would be beneficial and foster all the above.

- Since we do testing for the Nelson-Denny, we need an area specifically for this function. The lab, because of the traffic and tutoring, is not a quiet place for this.
- We need extended reference areas for our many textbooks and Accelerated Reader materials. We are running out of room for these resources.
- Instructors reserve our lab on a routine basis for their classes. This creates a problem because we close the lab to other students. Our lab needs separate computer rooms for our instructors to use for their textbook companion websites. For example, instructors in the College Success courses use our computers to complete their required access to Angel and learning strategy exercises. The Accelerated Reader program for Developmental Reading includes web material, and these instructors use our lab on a weekly basis to complete these assignments.
- We conduct writers' workshops with power-point presentations. An additional classroom would provide an area for this instruction. Currently, it is very difficult to secure rooms for these workshops. On average, we have 20-30 students who attend these workshops. Most instructors give extra credit to students when they attend these workshops, and some Student Success instructors require it. Because of the lack of classroom space, these workshops are only offered 4 times during the semester or less depending on the availability of rooms.
- We need more computers in the lab. Right now, we only have 26 computers, and we are turning students away to other labs.
- Tutoring is our major function, and we are tutoring on average 21-40 students daily. During mid-term and finals, these numbers triple. We do this with a staff of 3-4 tutors available throughout the day. Many times students wait for 15-30 minutes for tutoring. In addition, these tutors participate in the overall operations of the lab which includes: keeping track of log-ins, computer assistance, and clerical duties. Lab assistants also leave the lab to conduct workshops and in-class presentations on documentation styles. This service is valuable, but pulls staff away from the lab. We need additional staff to accommodate our student population.
- We need more specific computer programs for our Developmental Reading and Writing courses. Students seem to benefit from and learn more readily with programs that are interactive with graphics and immediate graded response. Currently, our programs are traditional "find what is wrong in this sentence" instruction. Our lab needs to be brought up to more modern approaches of reinforcement consistent with our classrooms.