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Math Tutoring Matters: A Call for Improvement at ODU

There are many aspects of a student's academic journey that dictate the level of student success they achieve during their college journey. One core aspect of success in any field is support. From an educational standpoint, our access to tutoring support is vital to our success as students. At ODU, we are given access to a wide range of tutoring services. These services are implemented to help us succeed here at ODU as we embark on our academic pursuits. Although these tutoring services are designed to push students toward academic success, that is not always the case. The math tutoring program in particular is a core example of a service that fails to meet its expectations.

If you weren't already familiar, ODU offers various tutoring services for various subjects like mathematics, writing, science, and world languages. For students struggling with writing, ODU offers students the Writing Center which is located at the Perry Library. There, students can book an appointment to receive support on writing assignments across many different disciplines. Students are then given feedback on their writing, which helps them learn strategies and develop skills that will help them “achieve independence in the composition and revision of their own work” in the future (Writing Center). For students struggling in science courses, ODU offers the STC which is also known as the Science Tutoring Center. This is located at various locations for the various science courses offered at ODU. There, students can walk in or book “appointments, which can be scheduled either online or in-person” to receive support on any science-related courses offered at ODU (Science Tutoring Centers). For students struggling with a world language course, ODU offers the LLC which is also known as the

Language Learning Center which is located at the College of Arts & Letters. There, students can receive support on all the different world languages offered at ODU. Tutors at the LLC work with students to help them improve their “oral, listening, reading, and writing skills” (Language Learning Center). These services continuously meet their students needs day in and day out.

While many of the tutoring services provided at ODU aim propel students towards academic success, this isn't the case for the math tutoring program. The math tutoring program is a service that continuously fails its students. With a quick Google search of “ODU math tutoring” you will land on the MAC or Mathematics Assistance Center page, here students are supposed to be able to find tutoring services and resources for all the different math courses offered at ODU. Emphasis on supposed to because they don't. The math tutoring services are located in the Visual Arts Building. When a student is struggling with a math course the math tutoring program recommends students to first approach their Instructor with questions related to the course. Then students can go to VAB to receive support on any of the various math courses offered at ODU (Mathematics Assistance Center). Although this might sound sweet and simple there are many problems hidden within the math tutoring program which negatively effects the students who attend for support. The most glaring problem with the math tutoring program is their understaffing. I know firsthand what it's like to show up at the VAB just to wait twenty minutes to get some help with one math problem. Can you imagine having to wait that much time every single time you're struggling with a math equation? This problem constantly arises because there are always too many students who need support and with only one to two tutors available to offer their support. Another major problem with the math tutoring program is their the lack of one-on-one or appointment-based tutoring sessions. For a tutoring service to be effective it must be able to accommodate the student. Many students like myself are most effective in one-on-one settings. That is why it is very impractical and unbeneficial for math tutoring services to only offer only walk-ins. The last major problem with the math tutoring services is the fact that tutors are mostly fellow upperclassmen students. This means that they're not going always going to have the answer. In my own experience, I've been told my fair share of “I don't know” or “I'm not sure” when I've showed up at the math tuting center with a question. Although,

understandably, some tutors might not have all the answers it is still highly unprofessional and negative for a student to hear that. When a student takes the initiative to go get help or tutoring the last thing they want to hear is “I don’t know” or “I’m not sure”. These support services are implemented to help us succeed as students here at ODU. That is why an answer like “I don’t know” or “I’m not sure” is unacceptable from a tutor. These problems show why the math tutoring services has continuously failed to meet their expectations.

It’s okay though because there are several ways we can solve the problems at the math tutoring program to better support and serve its students in the future. The first way the math tutoring program could improve their services would be hiring more staff. As I have already stated, the math tutoring program is highly understaffed which negatively effects the students who got there often to get help like myself. This addition would highly benefit the the tutoring centers in supporting students quickly and effectively. The next way to math tutoring program could improve their services would be implementing one-on-one or appointment-based tutoring sessions. This would give many students the the time, space and freedom to learn and receive feedback from a tutor. That last obvious the math tutoring program could improve their services needs to be the addition a a professor in every math turing center in the math tutoring program this will prevent events like mine and potential students from happening in the future.

I understand that the math tutoring program has ran its operations in this manner for ages although it might of worked in the past it is now negatively effecting the students. So there needs to be a change. We must not forget that our access to tutoring support is vital to our success as student. According to “The relationship between tutoring and student success” a thesis written by Adanta Ugo for Capella University. There is a critical relationship between tutoring and student success. According to Adanta Ugo research has shown “tutoring has consistently been found to improve student retention and success” (Ugo, Adanta N 98). According to another article by Steenbergen-Hu, Saiying, and Harris Cooper titled "A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of intelligent tutoring systems on college students’ academic learning”. A journal entry in the educational psychology journal for the Taylor & Francis a company for academic journals. The authors found “that students who made use of the Tutoring Center (TC) regularly

gained more academically than simply help with an individual class. In fact students who visited the TC more than 10 times per quarter had approximately 10% higher rates of persistence and approximately 0.2 points higher average GPA's than students who infrequently visited or who do not visit the TC during their first year of college” (Steenbergen-Hu, Saiying, and Harris Cooper). These academic pieces show how tutoring have consistently helped students succeed. Which further shows why the math tutoring program needs an upgrade to better support and aid students in the future.

Work Cited

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