

The Gateway to Excellence

THE ACADEMIC RESOURCE CENTER:

Excellence

As the smell of popcorn hovers in the air, there is excitement around the circular tables filled with students studying. Some are exploring the relationship between psychological disorders and treatment outcomes, others are quietly poring over chemical calculations and equations, and others are engaged in a lively discussion about quantum physics. This is the Academic Resource Center, more commonly known as the ARC, where undergraduate students from all disciplines come to interact, learn, and achieve academic excellence.

The Academic Resource Center, formed in 2002 by the merging of the University Challenge for Excellence Program and the Learning Skills Center, is a student's one-stop shop for the most comprehensive set of academic services available at the University of Pittsburgh. With the help of 18 professional staff members and more than 40 peer master tutors, ARC supplements classroom instruction by offering free drop-in tutoring services for more than 50 School of Arts and Sciences courses as well as study and life skills workshops.

Whether students are looking to improve a course grade, check their understanding of a topic, or review assignments, ARC's small group or individualized learning environment can assist them. Working hand in hand with the tutoring program, ARC study skills workshops teach students lifelong strategies on how to improve memory, manage time, prepare for exams, read texts, and take notes effectively.

"With our student services and paraprofessional training programs, the Academic Resource Center provides the support and development students need to excel academically," explains Gail Austin, director of the ARC. "Pitt students are already high achievers. The ARC gives them the competitive edge so that they can be successful, productive citizens when they graduate and move beyond the walls of the University."

In addition to tutoring sessions and study skills workshops, ARC's newly renovated space offers students a quiet study area, Wi-Fi capability, and the use of computers. Between

classes, students can stop by to read, do research on the Internet, or tackle homework with the expertise of a master tutor just an arm's length away. Master tutors are high-achieving Pitt students who go through an extensive training program prior to tutoring and clock a significant number of tutoring hours.

To ensure that ARC's programming continuously aligns with the high academic standards of the University, ARC works in collaboration with faculty, staff, and administrators. "Faculty input is vital to ARC's success," says Austin. "Faculty members assist us in identifying high-achieving students for our master tutor program and support our tutor training program by clarifying course content and objectives."

To be more responsive to student needs, ARC now offers free walk-in satellite tutoring in the residence halls. For specific tutoring courses and hours, visit www.calendarwiz.com/arcservices.

In addition, the ARC has initiated a pilot online tutoring program in an effort to fit tutoring around students' schedules better. This program enables students to be online for specified evening hours working in a group setting with a master tutor. Faculty members work closely with the ARC tutor coordinator to design the online tutorials. Currently, only sections in biological sciences and neuroscience are offered online. If student and faculty response to this pilot program is positive, the ARC will look to expand online tutoring.

Other programs under the ARC umbrella include Student Support Services, for first-generation college students who meet government-specified criteria; FOCUS, for underrepresented students at Pitt; and Upward Bound, a college readiness program for high school students.

For more information on the Academic Resource Center and the programs and services it offers, visit www.as.pitt.edu/arc or call 412-648-7920.



MORE RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS:

Advising Center: Students work with their academic advisors, who help them choose the best academic programs and resources to reach their professional and personal goals. Go to www.as.pitt.edu/undergraduate/advising for more information.

Computing Labs: The University has seven computing labs located throughout the Pittsburgh campus. Visit www.technology.pitt.edu/students.aspx.

Counseling Center: Students can access free, confidential counseling at the University Counseling Center. Visit www.counseling.pitt.edu.

Disability Services: Pitt provides equal opportunities in higher education to academically qualified students with disabilities. Visit Disability Resources and Services at www.drs.pitt.edu.

Oral Communications Lab: Students may bring any type of speaking project to the lab for personal consultation and instruction. Check out www.comm.pitt.edu/undergraduate/commlab.html.

Robert Henderson Language Media Center: Serving the Pitt community, the center uses technology to enhance language learning with more than 50 listening stations and webcams. Visit www.polyglot.pitt.edu.

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Celebrating Our Resources

The University of Pittsburgh, among our nation's most distinguished academic institutions, is an internationally recognized center of higher learning and research, offering a top-quality liberal arts education. Pitt's strength is rooted in the depth and superiority of its resources: world-renowned faculty and robust programs and services that provide students with a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

Students in the School of Arts and Sciences have the advantage of tapping into the many resources of a large research institution but within the parameters of a small school setting. With a student-to-faculty ratio of 17:1 and more than 60 percent of classes having fewer than 30 students, undergraduates at Pitt have the opportunity to work alongside distinguished faculty members and participate in cutting-edge research in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities.

In addition, the University of Pittsburgh offers students a strong infrastructure of programs and services to assist them in their pursuit of academic excellence. One key component is the Academic Resource Center, which provides the building blocks for a student's success by offering valuable lifelong skills such as time management, study strategies, and mentoring.

In this issue of *Pitt Pride*, you will read about the multitude of resources that are designed to help students navigate the transition to college life; better acclimate themselves to the academic rigors of the University; and continue to strive for academic, personal, and professional growth throughout their college experience.

I extend to you my best wishes for a joyful holiday season and a happy new year!

Juan J. Manfredi

Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies



FUTURE LEADERS

Learn Today

CBS INTERNSHIP FULFILLS A LIFELONG DREAM

The credentials of senior communication major Pat Mitsch are impressive: Fox Sports intern, former sports editor for *The Pitt News*, public address announcer for Pitt's men's soccer team, and high school football stringer for the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. However, for a guy who has his eye set on a career in national sports media, one position was ostensibly missing from the list—until now. His hard work and dedication paid off when Mitsch was named the 2008 recipient of the Anthony and Concetta Ambrosio Internship Award and spent the summer of 2008 at CBS Corporation headquarters in New York City as a CBS College Sports intern.

The interview process for the summer academic internship was intense. Mitsch worked diligently with the Career Development Office to put together a strong résumé as well as prepare for two rounds of interviews—a panel interview through the Office of Experiential Learning and a phone interview with CBS. When he went for the first interview, he was literally sweating, not from nerves, but from a 24-hour flu bug. Nevertheless, Mitsch forged ahead, determined to let nothing stand in the way of his goal, not even the flu.

Working daily at CBS in the College Sports digital media division, Mitsch had the opportunity to analyze sports videos, do voice-over and production work, and write copy for cbscollegesports.com. "It was an incredible feeling to see something that I had written published on the CBS Web site," says Mitsch. One of the most valuable things that Mitsch has taken away from his internship is a powerful portfolio of writing and video spots to show prospective employers.

Throughout the summer, while taking the train to CBS from his living quarters at Columbia University, Mitsch marveled at his good fortune. "All of the CBS employees were so helpful and friendly," explains Mitsch. "No one ever was too busy to talk with me; they made me feel like I was a valued member of the CBS team."

The Anthony and Concetta Ambrosio Internship Award was established with a gift to the University of Pittsburgh from Tony Ambrosio (BA '82), executive vice president of human resources and administration at CBS. Ambrosio wanted to make a difference with a gift to Pitt, so he chose to create this internship award. Through this fund, students like Mitsch are able to live in New York City while working as an unpaid CBS intern. Each year, the award recipient receives \$5,000 for living expenses.

"I am so indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Ambrosio for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," says a grateful Mitsch. "To be working alongside professionals at CBS College Sports was invaluable to me. It was the highlight of my college career."

Because of this experience, Mitsch firmly believes that someday he will be involved in philanthropic endeavors at his alma mater. "I want to return the kindness that was given to me by Mr. Ambrosio and everyone involved with this internship," explains Mitsch. "I would be honored to give back to the University by helping a fellow Pitt student."

For more information on the Anthony and Concetta Ambrosio Internship Award, visit www.as.pitt.edu/undergraduate/experience/internships/ambrosio.html.

THE ART OF THE WRITTEN WORD

"R U OK?," "Y?," "C U 2morrow." These are some of the many text messages students send over cell phones, on Facebook pages, and through instant messaging. Although this type of communication may be acceptable for informal dialogue, it has now infiltrated college classrooms and affected students' ability to write creatively and analytically.

That's where the Writing Center steps in as a resource for all University of Pittsburgh students, faculty, and staff. Offered through the Department of English, the Writing Center has more than 25 tutors, most of whom are faculty members who assist approximately 3,000 students yearly. "It is a tremendous asset for students to have the expertise of Pitt faculty," explains Geeta Kothari, Writing Center director and Department of English faculty member. "Our Writing Center is one of the few writing centers in the country that have a large contingent of faculty tutors. This certainly exemplifies the importance of creative

and analytical writing at the college level and the University's commitment to writing at Pitt."

The Writing Center offers individual tutoring to assist students throughout the writing process, whether it's at the beginning of an assignment or during the final phase of the project when they need help editing and proofreading. "For students, this is a wonderful opportunity to communicate and interact with faculty and peer tutors in an informal, nonthreatening environment," explains Kothari.

Although Kothari feels the text messaging phenomenon has affected students' ability to write effectively, she believes that the bigger issue is that students are hindered by a limited vocabulary and are not prepared for the challenges of college writing. "I encourage parents to have their son or daughter read as much as possible. Reading is the best way to broaden and expand vocabulary and to be exposed to written English," Kothari says.

For more information, visit www.english.pitt.edu/writingcenter.

Students Play Important Role in Classroom Learning

Making the transition from high school to college can be an exciting yet hectic time for students, filled with trepidation and uncertainty. That's why the Office of Freshman Programs offers two courses that acclimate students to college life at Pitt. Introduction to the Arts and Sciences and Freshman Seminar teach students about the educational and cultural opportunities at Pitt through course work, extracurricular activities, and class discussions.

Each course is led by a faculty member and a trained undergraduate teaching assistant (UTA). "The added benefit of having UTAs in the classroom is that they act as peer mentors to freshman students," explains Laura Dice, director of the Office of Freshman Programs. "We look for students who seem genuinely committed to helping new students adjust to life at Pitt."



Junior theater arts and film studies major Rachel DeSoto sees the UTA program as a definite commitment by the University to support student success at Pitt. "Freshman students are not always aware of the abundant resources available to them, so I am there to bridge the gap," explains DeSoto.

"Being a UTA is an incredible opportunity for me to network with the professors, plan activities, and interact with students."

The idea of giving back was what drew senior communication rhetoric and English writing major Samantha Barrett to be a UTA. "I love working with



freshman students, reaching out to them, and helping them navigate through the University," says Barrett. "I field questions all the time about how to deal with roommates, making friends, and how to get to classes."

New UTA Beth Hackney, a senior sociology major, enjoys planning activities that involve students leaving the confines of the classroom.

"Because about 95 percent of the students in my class live outside Pittsburgh, the neighborhood tour project lets them discover the wonderful treasures and ethnic diversity of Pittsburgh neighborhoods," says Hackney.



Before each class, new UTA Jordan Opperman meets with his professor to discuss the day's activities and course content. "My professor is wonderful to work with and so open to my suggestions," says the sophomore math major. "He also encourages me to draw on my own experiences at Pitt to engage students in discussions that are relevant to them. Being a UTA—it's my favorite day of the week."



For more information, visit www.as.pitt.edu/fp.



ANXIETY IN COLLEGE

by Mary Koch Ruiz, University Counseling Center

Worry and anxiety have become increasingly common among college students. Anxiety is now one of the most frequently reported issues at the University Counseling Center. Students report feeling anxious about their studies, friendships, and relationships; peer pressure; family conflicts; making decisions; time management; and money. Most students who struggle with anxiety have social anxiety, performance anxiety, or generalized anxiety.

As students' anxiety increases, it can become more difficult for them to cope. Daily living can become filled with feelings of worry, dread, and fear. Eventually, the anxiety can interfere with day-to-day functioning because the worrying dominates the ability to think clearly and objectively and then negatively impacts school, social activities, work, and relationships. When they feel overwhelmed, students sometimes turn to unhealthy coping methods, including substance abuse, abuse of medications, and self-injury.

What are some symptoms of anxiety?

- Excessive, continuous worrying
- Difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness
- Sleep disturbance, insomnia, fatigue
- Agitation, irritability, tearfulness, anger
- Physical symptoms, such as headaches, nausea, muscle tension, sweating, and trembling
- An unrealistic perspective of problems

As parents, you can be a valuable resource for your son or daughter, who may be experiencing anxiety. A feeling of shame often is associated with anxiety. Talking candidly about your concerns will help to bring the problem out into the open.

What can you do to help your son or daughter?

- Recognize the symptoms of anxiety
- Help to identify what feels overwhelming; discuss possible ways to reduce or eliminate involvement in activities and/or organizations
- Talk about thoughts related to stress and reframe thoughts that are negative; challenge expressions of hopelessness
- Encourage a prioritization of responsibilities and tasks
- Discuss the importance of maintaining a realistic perspective of what needs to be done
- Help your son or daughter refocus on positive aspects of life
- Encourage adequate sleep, a well-balanced diet, and daily physical activity

Resources:

University of Pittsburgh
University Counseling Center
334 William Pitt Union
3959 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
412-648-7930
www.counseling.pitt.edu

National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov/anxiety/anxietymenu.cfm

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dean's Stars

Undergraduates who complete the fall term with a minimum of 12 credits of letter grade and a term GPA of 4.0 receive a \$50 Dean's Stars gift award posted to their accounts. If your student qualifies for this award but does not see it in his or her PeopleSoft account, please contact us at pittpride@as.pitt.edu.

April 2009 Graduation

The 2009 University of Pittsburgh Commencement Convocation will be held at the John M. and Gertrude E. Petersen Events Center on Sunday, April 26, 2009. Academic departments often host special receptions to recognize graduating seniors. If you have a senior graduating this spring, please contact your student's academic department for more information about planned festivities. You can find a complete list of academic departments at www.pitt.edu/academics.html.

Summer Sessions

The School of Arts and Sciences once again will offer summer session classes. Students can choose from hundreds of 4-, 6-, 12-, or 14-week courses to meet their academic needs in most disciplines. Students can complete general education requirements and upper-level courses to ensure that they are on track to graduate in four years. Registration for summer sessions begins in February. For details, go to www.summer.pitt.edu.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS:

- Advising Center412-624-6444
 Academic Resource Center412-648-7920
 Office of the Associate Dean
 for Undergraduate Studies.....412-624-6480
 Office of Freshman Programs412-624-6828
 Office of Experiential Learning.....412-624-6828
 Office of Student Records412-624-6776

www.as.pitt.edu/undergraduate

Questions or concerns? E-mail us at pittpride@as.pitt.edu.



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PROBLEMS SOLVED AT THE MAC

The Math Assistance Center (MAC) is a bustling place, with tables filled with students and tutors engrossed in textbooks reviewing linear, quadratic, polynomial, exponential, and logarithmic functions or standing at whiteboards graphing algorithms. The MAC provides free walk-in math tutoring services for undergraduate students. On any given day, 65–100 students come through the doors of the MAC. And when midterms and finals approach, the numbers increase significantly.

Students seek out the resources of the MAC for many reasons, including clarification about math concepts or ideas, help with a particular problem, or for review sessions prior to midterms and final exams. With more than 100 tutors who are graduate and undergraduate teaching assistants,

the MAC provides students with answers to questions about math topics from college algebra to scientific calculus.

“Math assistance centers are a relatively new concept,” says Neale Hahn, MAC director and special instructor in the Department of Mathematics. “We are one of only a handful of universities that offer this type of service to students.” Hahn attributes the success of the Math Assistance Center to the involvement of Department of Mathematics faculty members, who take a very proactive approach in reaching out to students who are having difficulty grasping particular concepts. “The earlier we can get students to the MAC, the better equipped they will be to move forward successfully in their math studies.”

While students visit the MAC throughout their college careers, Hahn sees more freshmen than upperclassmen coming to the center for assistance. “The expectations are much more rigorous at the college level than at the high school level,” explains Hahn. “The subject matter is taught differently, the course load is more intense, and there are more demands put on the student. All of these factors contribute to students needing some assistance once they arrive at Pitt.” Hahn encourages all students taking math classes to visit the MAC and to strive to improve their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts.

To learn more, visit www.mathematics.pitt.edu/resources/mac-center.php.

The University of Pittsburgh, as an educational institution and as an employer, values equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic and cultural diversity. Accordingly, the University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or a veteran of the Vietnam era. Further, the University will continue to take affirmative steps to support and advance these values consistent with the University's mission. This policy applies to admissions, employment, and access to and treatment in University programs and activities. This is a commitment made by the University and is in accordance with federal, state, and/or local laws and regulations.

For information on University equal opportunity and affirmative action programs and complaint/grievance procedures, please contact the University of Pittsburgh: Office of Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Inclusion; 412 Bellefield Hall; 315 South Bellefield Avenue; Pittsburgh, PA 15260; 412-648-7860.

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8-15	Spring recess for students (no classes)
13	University's observance of Spring Holiday; University closed
19	Fall term registration and add/drop begins; first two days reserved for seniors
April	
10	Last day to withdraw from all classes in the dean's office
17	Spring term last day for undergraduate day classes
18-25	College of General Studies classes, all graduate classes, Saturday classes, and evening classes will continue to meet during this period; final examinations should be held during the last scheduled class meeting
20-25	Final examination period for undergraduate day classes
25	Spring term ends; official date for degrees awarded in spring term
26	Residence halls close (except for graduating seniors); annual Commencement Convocation
29	Spring term grades must be approved by instructors
30	Spring term grades available online

January	
2	All University offices and buildings, including residence halls, reopen
5	Spring term registration ends and classes begin
15	Last day to declare a major to register with a departmental advisor for next term
16	Spring term add/drop period ends
19	Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday observed; University closed
29	Deadline to submit Grade Option (S/NC) forms to the dean's office
February	
16	Summer term registration and add/drop begins
27	Honors Convocation
March	
5	Last day to resign from all classes with the Student Appeals Office
6	Spring term deadline for students to submit Monitored Withdrawal forms to the dean's office

CALENDAR OF EVENTS