Study Smarter with Study Lab

University of Pittsburgh students are all smart, motivated, and hardworking. But they’re not all the same. People learn in vastly different ways, and there is no one path to success. That’s why the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences created Study Lab.

In Study Lab, Dietrich School students experiment with a variety of study techniques, discover which work best for them, and design their own unique study strategy. Study Lab is home to a large staff of experienced students who serve as guides and mentors to other students. They provide tools, resources, and firsthand knowledge to help other students discover the most efficient and effective ways for them to study.

“Study Lab is about studying smarter, not harder,” says Mary Napoli, director of Study Lab. “Pitt students spend a lot of time studying. We’re here to help them get the most out of that investment.”

Napoli explains that Study Lab empowers students to apply Pitt’s commitment to research to their own learning. “We want students to get curious about how they learn, connect them to tried-and-true techniques, and let them customize their own personalized plan for academic success.”

To ensure that students can interact with Study Lab in the ways that work best for them, services are available in a variety of formats, from one-on-one appointments to group study opportunities to online resources.

Study Anytime, Anywhere

Study Lab on Demand is the online hub of Study Lab. Here, students can access online modules providing training in study skills such as time management and reducing test anxiety whenever and wherever they choose.

Study Lab on Demand also is home to an expansive library of short, easy-to-digest video tutorials on the subjects that students are studying. Each video is created by one of Study Lab’s peer tutors, students who have mastered specific classes within some of the Dietrich School’s most challenging subject areas, such as chemistry, Biology, and statistics. Rather than taking their chances with a generic online search for concepts in their areas of study, students can hear relevant basic concepts explained by fellow students who have taken the same classes here at Pitt.

Study with a Group

Mobile Study Lab brings Study Lab to students where they are. With no appointment needed, students can drop in at Hillman Library on most weeknights and find small groups of students studying the same subjects. And there is always a peer tutor on hand, so if a question arises, students can get instruction from a knowledgeable fellow student on the spot. It’s like googling a question, but with a real Pitt student on hand to provide insider insight.

Study with a Guide

Students can get even more insight—as well as dedicated, personalized attention—by scheduling a one-on-one appointment with a peer tutor. Students can come prepared with specific questions or just to talk more in depth about a subject. Whether they need additional information for an upcoming exam or just want to bump a B up to an A, students can achieve their best in every class by working one on one with a fellow student.

Study Your Own Way

Students also can meet one on one with an academic coach to complete a Study Skills Inventory. This assessment shows students where their strengths and weaknesses lie when it comes to study skills. Academic coaches can then connect students to the skills and tactics that work best for them and help them to develop a personalized study strategy to plan for success.

Whether they’re looking for a quick on-demand answer, a one-on-one session about an upcoming test, a video tutorial about a tricky concept, or to connect to a group of other students headed to med school, there is something at Study Lab for all students.

Learn more at asundergrad.pitt.edu/study-lab.

The Knowledge Drop

Students can now get study support from peer tutors anytime, anywhere by visiting the Knowledge Drop. This online library features short, easy-to-understand video tutorials created by Study Lab’s own peer tutors. Currently, students can access videos explaining basic concepts in biological sciences, chemistry, economics, and physics. Throughout the 2019–20 school year, more videos in more subject areas will be added. Check out the videos at asundergrad.pitt.edu/knowledge-drop.

Peer tutor Nathanael Kegel covers basic calculus in his economics video tutorial.

Sinidhya Madireddy provides personalized one-on-one peer tutoring in biological sciences, chemistry, and neuroscience.
MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATE DEAN

A Personalized Approach to Enhancing Your Education

One of the core values of the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences is providing a personalized educational experience for each and every student. This personal approach shines through in all that we do. At Study Lab (featured on page 1), our expert staff and student team helps students to design their own personal study strategies. Students visiting Study Lab have access to tools and research-backed tactics that are proven to help students study more efficiently and succeed in even the toughest courses. And students can connect to more experienced peers who can serve as guides and mentors on their path, whether that be toward professional school, graduate school, or directly into the workforce.

Both inside and outside the classroom, our advisors and faculty members are guides and partners to our students, there to help them customize the most meaningful college experience for them. Research mentors like Bryan Hanks connect students like Sarah Montag to experiences that take them from Pitt’s campus to locations around the globe (see story on page 2). Dietrich School students don’t have to travel to Mongolia, however, to connect to real-world experiences. As evidenced by the inaugural broadcasting course featured on page 3, Pitt’s faculty members collaborate across departments and bring in experienced professionals to teach our students in hands-on environments. These interactive courses allow students to explore the areas that are most meaningful to them and allow instructors to work individually with each student to meet their needs and interests.

And dedicated faculty members like Geoffrey Glover (see story on page 3) invite students to grow as both learners and people by connecting ideas to the real world and our unique perspectives to one another.

This personal attention starts from day one and remains through graduation day and beyond. Through experiences like Academic Foundations (see page 4), we uniquely support each student’s transition to the University of Pittsburgh. What surprises each first-year student about the transition from high school to college may vary, but our experience means that we know what to expect and can provide support to each and every student.

At the Dietrich School, we encourage our students to explore more and customize their educational experience. The personalized services we offer—from start to finish and around the globe—make a truly unique experience possible for each of our students.

John A. Twyning
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies

RESEARCH FROM ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES

Building Connections to Faculty Mentors and the World Through Research

"I never imagined that I would be doing geophysics surveys on Bronze Age campsites in Mongolia when I first reached out to Dr. Hanks about geoarchaeology research," says Sarah Montag, a senior majoring in anthropology and geology. Montag initially contacted Bryan Hanks, associate professor in and chair of the Department of Anthropology, when she took his European History class during her sophomore year. Montag's interest in prehistoric archaeology—and her desire to get involved in undergraduate research—prompted her to ask Hanks if there were any opportunities to get involved in geoarchaeology research in the department.

Hanks invited Montag to participate in research at the Carmann Site in New York, N.Y., that term. As Montag completed shallow geophysics surveys of Iroquois longhouses, she says she was "immediately hooked on doing this kind of scientific—yet still anthropological—fieldwork."

Back in Pittsburgh, Montag continued to conduct research with Hanks, this time processing soil samples that had been collected from sites in Idaho as part of an ongoing collaborative project between the Departments of Anthropology and Geology and Environmental Science.

Montag's enthusiasm for this work earned her an invitation to travel to Idaho to work on similar sites in July 2018. Montag was part of a collaborative team of researchers from the University of Pittsburgh and the U.S. Forest Service in Idaho that went to two different prehistoric pit house village sites on the Salmon River and the Big Creek tributary to complete geophysics and geochemical surveys.

Hanks and Montag's research collaboration continued when they returned to Pittsburgh in fall 2018, with Montag continuing to work with soil samples. When Hanks was invited by researchers in Mongolia to perform geophysics surveys at their sites, Montag was the natural first choice to join him as a research assistant.

In Mongolia, Montag and Hanks worked as collaborators and supporters of archaeological research projects that have been active for several years, helping to survey several sites with geophysics equipment.

"For me, it was so amazing for the mentor-student relationship I have with Dr. Hanks to culminate in a research experience abroad," says Montag. "His experience with geophysics in archaeology has been an invaluable resource to me as I work through fieldwork projects and attempt to navigate toward my own goals in geoarchaeology research."

"She continues, "I learned so much about archaeology and geophysics from Dr. Hanks on this trip, but maybe more importantly, I learned how to succeed in remote field conditions and be a stronger researcher."

The field conditions were often intense. Montag recalls living out of a backpack in basic camping conditions for three weeks in a location so remote that it took two days of driving to get there.

"Being out in the field for weeks at a time in a remote setting has pushed me to be a stronger researcher and tougher person than I thought I was," says Montag. "Actually, being able to do research in remote locations like Idaho and Mongolia taught me that I love fieldwork and all of the challenges that come with it! My undergraduate research experiences helped me confirm that a career in geoarchaeology is the right path for me."
In the spring of 2019, the University of Pittsburgh launched its first-ever broadcast class in the new Pitt Studios—a state-of-the-art facility housed in the Petersen Events Center, thanks to a partnership between Pitt Athletics and the Film and Media Studies Program. Jason Earle, a rising senior studying communications and nonfiction writing in the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, was especially excited to enroll in the University's first broadcast class.

"It's the class I've always wanted here at Pitt," says Earle.

As an aspiring sports broadcaster, he sought out opportunities throughout college to work with Pitt Athletics as much as he could—from coiling equipment cables on game days to operating the graphics in the control room.

But what was missing was a formal classroom training of the ins and outs of broadcasting. What helped change that was the creation of the ACC Network, which led to the birth of Pitt Studios. A collaboration with ESPN, the network launched in August. Pitt Studios and facilities at other Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) schools will provide live content for the network.

The course was jointly developed by Paul Barto, associate athletic director for broadcast and video production, and Randall Halle, the director of the Film and Media Studies Program, who Barto said was an important advocate for getting students involved in the space.

"The class is drawing students from majors like computer engineering and economics," he said.

The class came with some perks: special guests often joined in on the class—a major highlight, according to the students.

"Especially to bring in industry professionals like [Pittsburgh] broadcast veterans Ken Rice and Sally Wiggin, it's just been an incredible experience. Networking and who you know is everything in this industry," said Earle.

The term culminated in a final exam that required students to put their knowledge to the test. Each student took turns operating key control room positions, including running the graphics that appear on screen and operating the mixer in the audio booth—essentially producing a mock live sporting event.

Read more about Pitt Studios at utimes.pitt.edu/news/pitt-studios-gearing.
Academic Foundations Provides Personalized Support to First-year Students

“Being a new student, I was unfamiliar with a majority of Pitt’s resources and the city of Pittsburgh,” recalls Paul Mlodgenski, a sophomore studying ecology/evolution and psychology.

Fortunately, Mlodgenski enrolled in the one-credit Academic Foundations course, available exclusively to first-year Dietrich School students.

“Academic Foundations provided me with a background of college expectations, resources, and opportunities,” explains Mlodgenski. “Coming to a large university can be intimidating; however, Academic Foundations provided me with a smaller community within the larger realm of college.”

Mlodgenski says that the most valuable part of Academic Foundations for him was an assignment requiring him to interview a faculty member.

“I interviewed my English Composition instructor, Ms. Ingrid Mundari, who shared her experiences at Pitt, outside the classroom, and abroad,” he says. “We discovered that we share the same interests in academia, literature, outdoor activities, films, and travel. Ms. Mundari offered me valuable advice on persevering beyond obstacles, the value of a liberal arts education, and the importance of critical thinking. I found a mentor.”

Mlodgenski also recalls the benefits of group discussions about his experience as a first-year student, and visiting attractions and neighborhoods through Pittsburgh in small group projects.

“I found all that I learned in the Academic Foundations course to be beneficial to me as a new student,” he concludes. “It is unlikely I would become familiar with these areas of the city, develop outside relationships with faculty, and connect with students with different backgrounds from my own without the course.”

To learn more about Academic Foundations, visit asundergrad.pitt.edu/first-year-students/courses-first-year-students.