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The Rinella Learning Center Newsletter

INNOVATION »

Enhanced Tutoring

Rinella Learning Center tutors provide interactive experiences for Miami students seeking academic help. The Rinella Learning Center employs roughly 50 peer tutors annually to help students feel more confident in understanding challenging course content. Approximately 1,500 students per year engage in either individual or group tutoring. To enhance the learning experience, tutors are equipped with large screen Ipad Pro tablets loaded with robust technology like WhiteBoard apps, graphing calculators, foreign language tutorials and dictionaries, and online academic libraries.

Spring 2019, the Rinella Learning Center is launching three new “Interactive Tutoring Stations” to further enhance the tutoring experience. Each new station comes equipped with an oversized touch screen monitor (with computer) that ideally will be used in group tutoring appointments. While one station will be wall mounted and be utilized as an interactive Smart Board, the other two are mobile to promote flexibility and versatility within the center.



• learning •

Supporting Digital Natives

Born between 1996 and 2001, current students come to college having lived their entire lives with access to the internet and digital learning resources.

Generational research suggests that Digital Natives view their world and knowledge differently than previous generations. Their worldview has been shaped by the events and aftermath of 9/11, global recession, a proliferation of school violence, and a heightened feeling of uncertainty and anxiety. Generational scholars also suggest that the newest generation of college students are intrapersonally driven, rely on a “google reflex” to find answers to questions, and are technologically savvy, though likely experience social media fatigue (Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Rickes, 2016). Their internal drive combined with a desire to observe before taking action (i.e. relying on YouTube to learn ‘how to’) means Digital Natives prefer to gather information, observe others, and think through ideas before participating in a group or communicating ideas. Having unlimited access to continuous sources of information, exacerbated by a growing binge mentality and culture, can

cause this generation of student to feel overwhelmed (Mohr & Mohr, 2017). Some scholars further argue that Digital Natives understand through networking paradigms as opposed to linear models of knowledge (Hart, 2017). Consequently, higher education and

GOOGLE REFLEX,
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academic support professionals must respond to these realities. While technology and learning platforms make learning highly accessible, Digital Natives likely need guidance and instruction on how to create search parameters when engaging with large amounts of information. Students should be encouraged to define goals for learning, limit their curation of information, and evaluate the validity of evidence. Academic support professionals should take advantage of digital technologies to provide individual students with foundational materials, but also create opportunities for students to engage with each other to test out ideas and make meaning of their experiences.

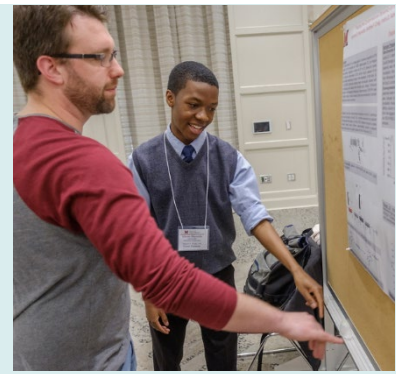
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High-Impact Undergraduate Research

The Rinella Learning Center is proud to recognize the accomplishments achieved by students through the Undergraduate Research Option (URO).

URO serves as a high-impact opportunity for first-year students in the Scholastic Enhancement Program and Miami Access Fellows Program. Both enrichment programs serve diverse student populations, including first-generation college students, students of color, low-income students, and student veterans. Students are matched with a faculty mentor and join Miami's vibrant scholarly community. This year-long research experience culminates in the delivery of a poster or oral presentation at Miami's annual Undergraduate Research Forum.

Research experiences encompass a variety of academic disciplines including Interactive Media Studies, Social Justice Studies, Biology, Botany, Kinesiology and Health, Chemistry, Education, and Family Studies. Many students continue participation in research beyond their first year, allowing them to further build mentoring relationships with faculty and staff; publish research findings alongside faculty; study abroad; and gain relevant experience for graduate study.



Warren Reynolds, Class of 2018, engaged in research throughout his undergraduate career at Miami. Warren is now a lab technician at Stanford University.



Kevin Lema, RLC Graduate Assistant



CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD»

Presentation to Faculty:

Learning strategies to help students master content

Dr. Christina Carrubba-Whetstine, Director of Rinella Learning Center, in collaboration with Miami University's Center for Teaching Excellence engaged with faculty on how to facilitate student learning in and out of the classroom environment.

The 90-minute workshop focused on effective learning strategies that faculty can employ to help students better connect, synthesize, and master course content. While flashcards and memorization have been a mainstay of college students for decades, Carrubba-Whetstine presented alternative learning strategies, like the use of matrices, sequences, and innovative note-taking techniques. Knowledge organization and self-testing lay at the heart of Carrubba-Whetstine's vision of effective learning. She encourages students to organize new ideas and concepts with existing knowledge and to develop a habit of information retrieval through practice problems, short response writing, and labeling of diagrams and illustrations.



Teaching Essential to Learning

Many students from EDT 110 (a study strategies course) ask me, "What is the most effective way to study for an exam?" My answer is usually simple: "Teaching." Throughout my experience, I have noticed that teaching is the most effective way to truly self-assess, and I would argue the quickest way to test your understanding of the material. I would recommend teaching others on a regular basis (weekly). Teaching is a highly active process of repetition and it is a great way to receive instant feedback on the quality of your knowledge. The questions asked in your teaching session can help you adapt and improve, and thus prepare for the exam. Make sure to teach (for at least 45 minutes) someone who is a peer or classmate that has a similar level of knowledge to you. Also, teach someone who knows nothing about the material because they can help you refine all the basic concepts and thus retain the material in your memory. If you can teach it, you are set. Study hard!

Successfully Managing Time

Final exams are approaching, group projects are wrapping up, and students may be thinking about jobs, internships, and summer vacations! How can you help them manage all their responsibilities while also staying grounded?



Block It Out.

We recommend using a technique called “block scheduling.” This involves starting out with a blank schedule, filling in times when one has non-negotiable time commitments, and identifying open blocks of time. Students may find that they have a full hour between two classes, or that their Thursday mornings are relatively free. Instead of using that time to return to their residence hall or take a nap, students should assign themselves a learning task to complete during that time.

Reading a textbook chapter, completing 1-3 sample problems, or writing a summary of a class lecture is a small, achievable task to complete during such open blocks of time – and it will save on the study time needed for evenings and weekends.

With Studying, Less is More.

Generally, we do not recommend studying any subject longer than 45-60 minutes in one sitting. While this may seem like an insubstantial amount of time, neuroscience tells us that the brain stops retaining new information past this point. Not only will students likely feel tired or frustrated after studying longer than an hour – they may not retain much information from those study sessions. This is where block scheduling can help: strategically using half-hour or hour-long blocks throughout the day ensures that students get in a thorough amount of study time, while also breaking up that study time into manageable blocks that allow them to better recall information.

Test Before the Test.

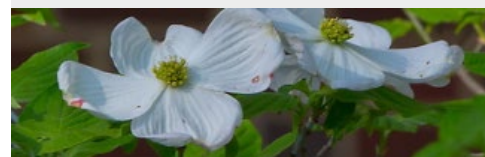
Students frequently note that when they study, they “review” or “re-read” class notes or textbooks. This may not be an effective use of study time, because it allows students to ignore the most important questions related to studying: *What do I know, and what do I NOT know?* To answer these questions, students should begin their studying by engaging in self-testing. This might mean writing an outline of class lectures from memory; working through practice problems without an answer key; trying to write out vocabulary definitions in their own words; or even taking practice tests.

Be Realistic.

With time management, students may not always have realistic goals for themselves. If a student does not like to get up early, for example, how likely are they to wake up and begin studying for Calculus at 8:30 am? Encourage students to thoughtfully examine their own habits and practices, and build a schedule that acknowledges those habits. Time management is not about radically changing all of one’s habits at one time; instead, time management should be about knowing oneself and one’s goals and thinking strategically about how to achieve them.

Reward Success.

Students will feel more motivated to continue their strong time management practices if they build rewards into the process. While some rewards may be external (such as getting a good grade on a test!), many students will be even more encouraged by internal rewards: reminders of things they care about, things they enjoy, and things they are hopeful for in the future. *Intrinsic motivation* – the desire to do something because they want to, rather than because they are told or forced to do it – is the best tool for helping students adopt strong time management practices.



Strategies to Stress Less

It is common and normal for college students to experience stress. Stress is supposed to be a temporary state (intermittent) that motivates us to action. Stress hormones and adrenaline help us get things done, like study for an exam. After the resolution of a stressful situation, the stress response should reduce. If, however, we experience ongoing and persistent stress (i.e. we over commit and neglect self-care), stress can become chronic and lead to anxiety.

Stress Less Strategies

1. Practice intentional self-care. Identify activities that lead to a sense of calm and well-being. Intentionally and mindfully engage in those activities during expected stress periods of the semester.
2. Identify and engage with activities/behaviors that energize you. This could include connecting with friends, writing in a journal, or running. The key is to be aware of what activities work best for you.
3. Physical activity combats stress. It can be as simple as stretching, going for short walks, or maintaining your regular workout schedule.
4. Practice breathing and relaxation techniques. Becoming aware of and slowing down your breathing can reduce stress throughout your body.



Leaders in the Field



Leadership Certification

The Learning Center Leadership Certification (LCLC) program sponsored by the National College Learning Center Association provides individual learning assistance professionals a nationally-recognized credential and set of standards by which to foster growth and development. This certification provides endorsement of individuals' expertise in the field of learning assistance through external and objective review. During the 2018-19 academic year, three Rinella staff members received LCLC certification. Gary Ritz, Associate Director, received the highest level of certification (Level 4) and both Tory Lowe and Heather Morrow received level 2 certification.

Master Advisor Certification

Miami University promotes excellence in academic advising through an advisor certification program. Because of the Rinella Learning Center's commitment to promoting academic excellence through academic support, we fully supported and engaged with the certification program. During the 2017-18 academic year, Dr. Ana Baratta, Dr. Christina Carrubba-Whetstine, and Dr. Golden Fanning received Master Advisor Certification. During the 2018-19 academic year, Chasity Dittmann, Tory Lowe, Heather Morrow, and Gary Ritz received Master Advisor Certification. All current professional staff members have received Miami's highest certification level.

Advisory Board 2019

The Rinella Learning Center's inaugural advisory board met in January 2019 to approve the charter, elect a chair, and hear updates on the Center's application for the Learning Center of Excellence award through the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA). Dr. Lauren Toben and Dr. Christina Carrubba-Whetstine will serve as co-chairs for 2019.



Current Board Members:

Kevin Lema (*Graduate Student*)

Dr. Lauren Toben (*Student Counseling Service*)

Dr. Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis (*English/ Global & Intercultural Studies*)

Craig Bennett (*Enrollment Management and Student Success*)

Dr. Brian Kirkmeyer (*College Of Engineering & Computing*)

Evelyn Covington (*Orientation and Transition*)

Dr. Christina Carrubba-Whetstine (*Rinella Learning Center*)

Dan Darkow (*Miller Center for Student Disability Services*)



MIAMI UNIVERSITY

BERNARD B. RINELLA, JR. LEARNING CENTER

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