

Adopted from the ASC year and term-end reports and previous history compilations.
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A Brief History of the ASC

The Beginnings: 1960-1974

In the 1960's, Professor Andrew Baer, of the Dartmouth Psychology Department, became interested in providing resources for academic and learning-related counseling.

In the early 1970s, Dartmouth College hired Dr. Bruce Baker to work in the Counseling Center. Soon after Baker began, he met with President Kemeny and informed him of the inconvenience of the location of the counseling center in North Fairbanks Hall. In 1972, the College moved the Center to the third floor of College Hall, which is now Collis Center.

From February to mid-May, 1973, 42 students used Academic Support Services, and 23 students attended class sessions taught by Lillian Bailey to learn reading and study skills. The College soon considered the Counseling Center insufficient in regards to the terms of academic support. In response, some faculty proposed forming an autonomous academic support organization, entitled the Reading and Study Skills Center (RSSC).

The Reading and Study Skills Center: 1974-1983

Karen Pelz started working as the director of the RSSC in November, 1974. The RSSC initially offered workshops, individual academic counseling, and administration of the Tutor Clearinghouse, which the RSSC "inherited" from the Freshman Office. Between twenty and thirty students participated in the Tutor Clearinghouse each term. The majority of students requested tutors for math, biology, and chemistry. Pelz taught three workshops each term: Study Skills, Vocabulary Skills, and Reading for Speed and Comprehension.

In 1976, the RSSC underwent substantial change and expansion. As the reputation of the Tutor Clearinghouse spread, the number of participants began to increase. In the winter term, the RSSC moved from the third floor to the second floor of College Hall.

From 1977-1978, the Tutor Clearinghouse served between sixty and eighty tutees each term. The College changed its policy concerning tutor costs and made the decision to cover the full cost of tutoring for students on financial aid. Math, chemistry, physics and French were the subject areas that received the highest request for tutors.

The Academic Skills Center: 1983-1993

During the summer of 1983, the College hired Carl Thum PhD as the first full-time Director of the Reading and Study Skills Center. Desiring to extend the ASC's support to more students, Thum began to meet individually with students in personal academic skills advising sessions.

In 1985, the RSSC's name was changed to the Academic Skills Center (ASC), in line with Thum's recommendation from the previous year. Due to the expansion of Career and Employment Services (CES), the Center moved from the second floor of College Hall within the same office as CES, to the basement, 6 College Hall.

The ASC also added a new program to its Tutor Clearinghouse; study groups which were coordinated by Nancy Pompian. They were initially formed in response to the demand for individual tutors in large introductory courses such as Economics 1. In addition to making tutoring available to more students, study groups for economics provided exposure to different methods of problem solving and ways of understanding the material in a student-led group atmosphere.

The highlight of the 1986-1987 academic year was the "Dyslexic/Learning Disabled Students at Selective Colleges: An Invitational Symposium," hosted by the ASC on April 16 and 17, 1987. More than 130 participants (administrators, deans, faculty, and students) represented forty of America's selective institutions of higher education. The symposium provided a forum for current information about learning disabilities and ways in which colleges should accommodate learning disabled students. The ASC expanded its role as an office for disabled students and implemented a system for the timely diagnosis of students with learning disabilities by working with a consultant through Dick's House, Anne Silberfarb.

In the 1988-1989 academic years, the ASC initiated an intermediate level ESL course during the winter term, geared toward graduate students and their spouses. ESL services were later moved to the Language Outreach Office.

By the following year, the ASC's services, programs, and activities were well-established in the Dartmouth community, and all areas of the Center experienced growth. An expanded array of workshops were offered to the Dartmouth community, and approximately 700 students used the services of the Tutor Clearinghouse throughout the course of the year. 354 students received individual tutoring in over 100 different courses, and 313 students signed up for study groups. The study group program was expanded to provide specific study group opportunities to Native Americans (in the NAD house) and athletes (in Davis Varsity House), and the ASC also planned to provide study group opportunities to African American students in Cutter Hall (now Shabazz).

From 1992-1993 the ASC was located on the second floor of the Norris Cotton Center on Maynard Street due to the renovation of Collis Center. The new location being on the periphery led to difficult access to students, however, resulted in a decline in use this year, most notably in the Tutor Clearinghouse program (which also suffered because of under budgeting). Total contact fell to 2302.

The Academic Skills Center-Expanded:1993-2005

In the fall of 1993, the Academic Skills Center returned to Collis Center, now a more accessible location for students. Holly Tracy-Potter joined the Academic Skills Center staff in

May of 2002 as its new full-time administrative assistant to coordinate the Tutor Clearinghouse and Study Group programs, manage the ASC budget.

During the 1995-1996 school year, greater numbers of students of color—particularly African-Americans and Latino/Hispanic students— used the ASC. Within a few years, students of color made up 56% of the contacts (an optional ethnicity question was inaugurated).

The student us of the ASC expanded through the Learning at Dartmouth course designed for first-year, first-term students. Also, a new mini-course called Power Learning was offered. Furthermore, the ASC created its own website and initiated an Academic Enrichment Library. The ASC also offered a voice recognition program for students with dyslexia and physical disabilities, called “Dragon Naturally Speaking.”

Several efforts were made to enhance relations with undergraduate deans and coaches. The following things were also initiated: ASC-hosted roadshows, individual student meetings (half of whom were athletes), a learning style assessment for first-year recruited athletes, a NCAA laptop program for traveling athletes, and the CHAMPS life skills program, a NCAA program designed to promote intellectual and personal growth among student-athletes. Carl Thum worked in collaboration with Bruce Baker (Counseling Services) and Lisa Thum (Senior Class Dean) to develop an Academic Discussion Group for those students who were experiencing academic difficulties, and the ASC worked with the upper-class Dean's Office and the First Year Office to initiate the Dean’s Office Student Consultants (DOSC) program.

As an outreach effort to the community, Thum developed the College Learning Strategies Course for regional high school students. Thum also created two "Strategic Learning" videos: Learning and Time Management. The success of the videos offered on campus and distributed by a NYC company helped the production of four more videos which were later digitized and captioned.

The ASC gave many workshops and presentations during this period. Due to the actual increase in number of psychiatric issues at Dartmouth and in colleges across the nation, the ASC hosted a psychiatric disabilities symposium for March of 2000. Thirty-six institutions were represented (mostly COFHE schools). 400 students, faculty, and community members attended. The event placed Dartmouth at the forefront of selective schools that were addressing this increasingly important issue in higher education.

In July 2001, Nancy Pompian gave a national presentation, "Overcoming Barriers to Collaboration" with Mark Reed, a counselor at AHEAD.

Also in 2001, Dartmouth received a Department of Education Universal Instructional Design grant along with Brown, Harvard, Stanford and Columbia. Using those funds, Pompian coordinated a workshop for twenty-seven faculty members, covering teaching techniques geared to reach all students, including those with disabilities, and ways in which to minimize the need for individual accommodations.

In September of 2003, two human-impaired students and one hearing-impaired student who received remote-real-time captioning services (CART) in high school enrolled at

Dartmouth. In response, a number of workshops to help faculty to understand the concept and process of interpreting and several campus-wide education programs were conducted. The ASC also hired two interpreters and offered workshops for faculty in whose courses these students were enrolled.

By the 2003-2004 academic school year, Pompian retired. At her retirement, the college decided to separate the offices of the Student Disability Services and Academic Skills Center as both services saw great increases in student usage. Her position was changed from Student Disability Coordinator to Director of Student Disability Services.

2005-Present

From 2005, the Academic Skills Center expanded its student outreach. The ASC's student contact continued to increase, from 5,392 contacts in 2005 to 13,780 contacts in 2018. The ASC hosted a significant increase in the number of workshops, roadshows, and presentations, with student contact through these programs reaching 6,207 in the 2017-18 year. The TC matched 2,192 tutors and tutees, a 400% increase from 2005.

After several years of sharing office spaces, the ASC moved to 224 Baker, where it still resides. With its budget greatly increased thanks to Dean Charlotte Johnson's efforts to reduce deficit spending for the ASC peer tutorial support programs, the center created several new positions including: an Associate Director, a Peer Tutoring Coordinator, an Administrative Assistant position. The Associate Director was first filled by Leslie Schnyder and is currently filled by Karen Afre '15. Another great change was the joint decision of Carl Thum and Holly Tracy-Potter to remove all financial barriers to peer academic support. As of the 2016-2017 school year, all individual and group peer academic tutoring offered through the Tutor Clearinghouse is free.

In the 2007-2008 academic year, the ASC created and co-hosted with Harvard the first annual Ivy League Plus learning center directors' conference in November. Seventeen highly selective institutions attended the conference in Cambridge. Its success led to the continuation of the conference in Duke the following year, with twenty colleges/universities represented.

The Geisel School of Medicine asked the ASC to provide academic support for medical students and Dean Sylvia Spears asked Thum to direct the Integrated Academic Support Program (IAS), which would allow for more specific tutoring and assistance for Math 1-2, Chemistry 2, and Writing 2-3. College Learning Strategies continued to attract from 20-40 high school students every summer, and in the 2016-2017, Thum was also asked to be the first faculty mentor for the first group of ten Posse Veterans coming to Dartmouth as first-year students. In 2017-2018, the ASC revamped the RESET program, which provides support for students with a GPA lower than 2.7.

Cathy Trueba was hired as the Director of Student Disability Services, then renamed as the Student Accessibility Services (SAS). SAS purchased new technology, developed a

disabilities database using the Banner system, and implemented focal learning assessments for students struggling with foreign language tailored to the context of foreign language as taught at Dartmouth. Collaboration between SAS and the ASC was productive as many students used both services. Thum began to offer ADD/ADHD academic coaching.

In 2007, Meg Hancock replaced Michelle Smith as the NCAA Academic Advisor. She revitalized the NCAA laptop program, where laptops were lent out to travelling student athletes so that they could continue school work away from the campus and introduced the T.E.A.M concept, a leadership academy for student-athletes during the summer term implemented. During the 2008-2009 school year, the Student-Athlete Academic Advising Program was moved to DCAD.

The Tutor Clearinghouse and Study Group program continued to expand with more students applying to be tutors, and more students being matched to be tutored. Tracy-Potter worked to improve retention and training for tutor and study group leaders, incorporating best practices from research and workshops. A survey asking tutees to evaluate their tutors was developed and sent out in the winter of 2009 for continued improvement of the program.

Several new programs were created. The Resident Expert Program was created in the Fall of 2008 to meet the needs of student-athletes who cannot use the Tutor Clearinghouse as a resource due to conflicts with their athletic obligations. The program would later expand to residential communities and affinity communities. In 2010-2011, the Conversation Partner program was developed by a student intern to help students maintain their foreign language skills. The Tutor Clearinghouse also increased marketing efforts through meetings with individual professors, events, and social media.

In the 2017-18 year, Preetha Sebastian, Peer Tutoring Coordinator of the TC, introduced a “code” that automated tutor matching that had once been done on-by-one by hand which considerably reduced time and effort spent on the matching process and helped students begin to be tutored earlier in the term.

In 2018, Preetha left the ASC, with Caroline Renko replacing her as the Peer Tutoring Coordinator.