



## Chipola College Academic Center for Excellence



Chipola College opened the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) in March 2007. The center was established as part of a federal Title III grant that also provides support for implementing Supplemental Instruction and a First Year Learning Experience. Funding for the initial five years is through Title III and extended support will be available through the college budget. Bonnie Smith, the Academic Center for Excellence Coordinator, oversees the center and reports to the Associate Dean of Institutional Planning and Development. The ACE staff includes the coordinator, a college reading instructor and 14 paid tutors. There are numerous volunteer tutors that are members of the college's Honors Program and members of Chipola's Phi Theta Kappa organization. The center has a six member faculty advisory committee that meets regularly to discuss issues related to tutors and the center.

The ACE provides free peer tutoring, scheduled reviews, access to computers for class assignments, and academic advising. The ACE has created an academically rigorous environment where students can work on a wide range of courses that vary from Elementary Algebra to Differential Equations. Small, informal study groups form to assist each other with class assignments and laboratory projects. Larger review sessions are scheduled regularly to review for important examinations or to provide additional instruction on complicated course material. These sessions are scheduled at the request of students and college faculty. Periodic seminars, such as those on critical thinking skills, leadership, good decision making and basic skills, are offered in the center to contribute to student success.

Applications for tutors are available on the college web site and job announcements are advertised in college's weekly news letter, Chipola This Week. The applicants are required to include a recommendation from a faculty member with their application. To be considered for a tutor position, the student must have a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or better, have received (or currently holding) an A or B in the course(s) they wish to tutor or in a more advanced course in the same discipline. They must also receive an excellent recommendation by a member of the college faculty and have no campus disciplinary record. They must also have a successful interview with the ACE coordinator. Tutor must re-apply each semester and only those with satisfactory or better evaluations are considered for future employment.

Tutors receive training in numerous ways throughout the semester. They complete a half day orientation and training session prior to beginning work in the center. This training includes completing a confidentiality agreement and the required FERPA student agreement. Additional training is provided throughout the semester through appointments with the coordinator, required readings, and video presentations.

There are additional group sessions offered at the beginning of every fall and spring semester. ACE tutor training includes all requirements outlined by the CRLA for level I certification and are listed on the CRLA checklist that is completed by the tutor and the ACE coordinator and documented through agenda and examples of presentation materials.

All ACE tutors are expected to keep their tutorial documentation up-to-date. This includes the CRLA checklist and the tutor log. The CRLA checklist documents the training the tutor has completed and the date the tutor completed the required 25 hours of tutoring experience. Dates of each evaluation are also included on the checklist. A log of actual tutoring hours is completed by the tutor. They are required to update this each time they work. The tutors record the subject they tutored, along with the time and date the service was provided. This log is reviewed by the coordinator periodically, and the performance of the tutor and the amount of work completed is considered in the tutor's evaluation. The tutors receive feedback on their performance every semester through formal evaluations completed by the ACE coordinator and through informal meetings. There are four formal evaluations documented on the CRLA checklist. The tutor must have a peer complete an evaluation and someone he or she has tutored must also evaluate his/her skill as a tutor. The tutor also completes a self evaluation prior to receiving the final semester evaluation.

The effectiveness of ACE and its tutors is measured through student surveys each semester, the graduating student survey and the tutor evaluations. ACE also benefits from recommendations from an external evaluator hired through the title III grant. Chipola college faculty and staff are updated about ACE activities through e-mails, flyers, and presentations at faculty meetings, administrative council meetings, and governance council meetings. The ACE has also benefited from assistance from the SARC lab at the University of Central Florida and the director, Jennifer Wright. She has been very helpful in designing documents for evaluation, designing training for the tutors, and basic lab scheduling.