



Support for Non-Traditional Students

A case study of Black Hawk College and Tutor.com, with contributions from Kari Koster, Student Success Center Director, Christian J. Roldan Santos, Mathematics Instructor, and Dick Vallandingham, Ph.D. Vice President for Student Services and Dean of Students at Black Hawk College | 2012

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Black Hawk College serves all or part of nine counties in northwestern Illinois with a population of more than 225,000 residents. Operated as one college with two campuses and several outreach sites, Black Hawk offers more than 40 liberal arts and science curricula in the transfer area and more than 100 career track programs leading to degrees and certificates.

The college also offers a wide range of special purpose and community service programs. The college serves nearly 20,000 credit and non-credit students in 56 degree and 48 occupational certificate programs. Black Hawk serves more people than any other institution of higher education in the Quad-Cities area.

Institution Snapshot

- **Enrollment:** About 20,000 students*
- **Institution Type:** 2-Year College
- **Tutor.com Partner Since:** 2008
- **24/7 Subjects:** Math, Science, English, Writing, and Business
- Students access Tutor.com from the on-campus tutoring center and remotely from anywhere with an Internet connection

* Includes students enrolled in both credit and non-credit courses

THE CHALLENGE: SERVING DIVERSE STUDENTS ON AND OFF CAMPUS

Black Hawk serves a diverse student body that includes first generation college students, non-traditional students and international students. The average age of a Black Hawk student is 27 years old. Students enter their first semester of coursework with varying levels of preparation and yet they all need to learn the same content.

Kari Koster, Student Success Center Director, faced three additional challenges related to operating on-site tutoring: funding, space and continuity. State funding



has decreased, she says, so they don't have money to try and sustain new programs. Their open area can get noisy if math and writing tutoring are going on simultaneously. And, peer tutors leave after two years, so it's difficult to maintain consistency in the tutoring program.

THE SOLUTION: 24/7 ON-DEMAND MOBILE TUTORING FROM TUTOR.COM

Koster says Black Hawk College is moving toward offering entire Associate's degrees online. Initially they looked at online tutoring as a way to support their growing base of online courses, but they've found that Tutor.com meets the needs of students on and off campus. "Tutor.com expands what we do here at the Success Center," she says. "The tutors are available during hours when we are not and they cover all the upper level classes that are difficult for us to staff. We are also able to individually track the students using Tutor.com and about 80% of students getting tutoring passed their classes. We are very pleased with that." (continued>>)

“Thanks for offering Tutor.com.
It isn't possible for me to be at the tutoring center every time I need it, and as long as math is part of my schedule I will need it often!”

— Black Hawk Student

99%

OF STUDENTS SAY THEY ARE GLAD BLACK HAWK OFFERS TUTOR.COM*

99%

OF BLACK HAWK STUDENTS WOULD RECOMMEND TUTOR.COM TO A FRIEND.*

94%

OF BLACK HAWK STUDENTS SAY TUTOR.COM HELPS THEM IMPROVE THEIR GRADES.*

97%

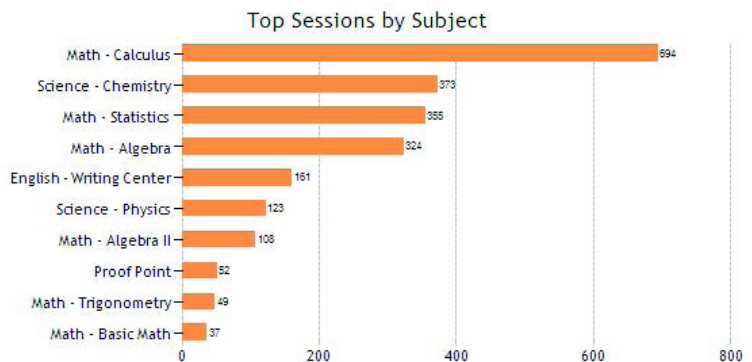
OF BLACK HAWK STUDENTS SAY TUTOR.COM HELPS THEM BE MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT THEIR SCHOOL WORK.*

*Compiled from Black Hawk student post-session surveys during the 2011-2012 academic year.

“We originally selected Tutor.com to support our students taking online and hybrid classes, but **we quickly realized that Tutor.com was beneficial to all our students.**”

— Dick Vallandingham, Ph.D., Vice President for Student Services and Dean of Students

Christian J. Roldan Santos, a Mathematics Instructor at Black Hawk College, reinforces Koster’s perspective. “With Tutor.com, students can log in and get help at any point, any time, and that instant connection is very important,” he says. “Students like to work late at night. If they send me an email at midnight, I won’t reply to it until the next day and by then they have moved on. Tutor.com gives the students’ the assurance that there is always someone there to help.”



Koster says the value of Tutor.com is demonstrated in the responses they get from students about the service. “We didn’t fully realize the degree to which student needs weren’t being met. Being able to offer a 24-hour service is priceless for students. Tutor.com fills the gaps for students who don’t fit into traditional schedules and meets the needs of students across a diverse population.” ■

For more information, visit tutor.com/higher-education.