

News From the UAC

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The Math Learning Center

Directed by Charles Whiffen, the Math Learning Center is a drop-in service staffed by "knowledgeable and dedicated" upperclassmen. Mr. Whiffen is a native of "wild, wonderful West Virginia." He received his BS in Mathematics from West Virginia Wesleyan College and his MS in Mathematics from Virginia Tech. He has two sons, a daughter, and two grandsons. Before coming to Coastal Carolina University, he worked "as the regulatory manager for an insurance company and taught evening and weekend classes at Elon University and Alamance Community College."

Mr. Whiffen's experience over the past thirty years as a manager in government and private industries has helped revitalize the Math Learning Center. He views the students as customers of the Math Learning Center and he wants "the Math Learning Center to be a welcoming place where they will feel comfortable coming to receive help."

One of the goals of the Math Learning Center for the semester is to improve the services for specialized courses taken by students pursuing liberal arts, elementary education, and early childhood education, in addition to covering the traditional math and statistics courses. In the fall, the Math Learning Center "will be implementing a tutor training program along with the other Learning Assistance Centers that aligns with national tutor training

models." Mr. Whiffen also says that there has been "a dramatic increase in the number of students attending [The Math Learning Center], and of course we want to work to maintain those numbers."

The Math Learning Center is not only for students who are struggling with math. The Math Learning Center is open to all students who are enrolled in any math course. Mr. Whiffen suggests for students to "come to the Math Learning Center right after the first class. You don't need an appointment. You can do your homework there and get help if you need it. Often students delay getting help because they think there is a stigma about getting tutoring. That impression is completely wrong." In fact, the students who use the Learning Assistance Centers tend to have higher grade point averages.

Skills learned in math courses will be used in everyday life. Studying math helps develop critical thinking skills that enhance problem solving skills required in daily life. It is also necessary to have basic competency in math for everything from balancing a checkbook to balancing finances to pay bills. Mr. Whiffen reiterates the

importance of math because it is "involved to one extent or another with just about every other discipline, so being proficient with the mathematical aspects of the discipline will improve your competency." He further explains that "basic computational skills are required in everyday life. The more time you spend studying higher mathematics, the more your basic skills improve (the trickle-down theory)."

Whether math is your strong point or not, do not hesitate to come to the Math Learning Center in Prince 208.

By: Charli McBee and
Agatha O'Brien-Gayes



Photo Courtesy of Charli McBee

"The essence of mathematics is not to make simple things complicated, but to make complicated things simple."
— S. Gudder

The Core Curriculum

Why do students have to take core curriculum or general education courses? This is a common and reasonable question. The core curriculum was designed to provide the student with a solid foundation in the liberal arts. A liberal arts background helps prepare a person to live a full, productive life regardless of the profession pursued. The skills learned in these classes help all students from accountants to astronomers to actors.

English classes will develop reading comprehension, writing competency, and communication, as well as analytical and conceptual skills. Reading comprehension helps in understanding a history textbook assignment, a novel read for pleasure and even a car loan contract. In every job, a person needs to know how to write and communicate effectively. Miscommunication makes relationships and work tasks harder to accomplish, so doing well in English classes is a key to success no matter what discipline is being studied.

Not everyone loves math and science, and some people are even a bit anxious about taking math and science classes. Here's the truth: people use math and science all the time in their daily lives. Balancing a checkbook, figuring out what a summer school class is going to cost, or looking at how much it costs to buy a car at 8% simple interest are just some of the ways people use math to conduct business.

Math and music are linked in terms of intellectual abilities needed to succeed in either or both. All people enjoy music, right? Here's a real world example of a scientist who used music and math to "think outside the box." Peter Weyl, an oceanographer working in Chesapeake Bay, was trying to

understand a complex natural system and explain it to others. He teamed up with a musician who worked on a synthesizer so that when the data was put into a musical format, it created patterns that were clearly understandable. People who think about math with an "I can" attitude often surprise themselves with success!

Logic is another skill learned from math, science and philosophy classes. Logic helps solve complex problems by breaking them into smaller steps. With each section, the solution becomes clearer, and the whole problem is easier to work through. It is second nature for people to do this with daily problems, but when they are faced with the structured situation in class, it seems more challenging. Yet thinking logically helps everyone to make better decisions. It can even help in personal relationships.

Science furthers analytical skills. Think Sherlock Holmes and deductive reasoning. These skills can help solve the mysteries of the human body or predict animal behavior. Science classes help a person make informed decisions on everything from whether or not to eat organic food to how fast the sea level is rising. Give science and math classes a chance.

All core curriculum classes require the student to use creativity. It is important to be creative while in class, working, or in every day affairs. Creativity allows for personal self expression through words, ideas, or art

forms. When problems arise, there will not always be an obvious, or even logical, solution. A more creative approach to solving the problem might be needed. Creativity needs expertise, intelligence, independent thinking and innovation. Here's where the "off-the-wall" comment or suggestion might spark a solution! Develop the creative spirit through core classes designed to foster those skills.

As Barbara M. White said, "The basic purpose of a liberal arts education is to liberate the human being to exercise his or her potential to the fullest." Embrace core classes, discover new passions and marketable skills, and always keep an open mind. All knowledge is good knowledge.

By: Charli McBee,
Agatha O'Brien-Gayes, and
NelJean Rice

"Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it."
— Raymond Chandler