



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF
EDUCATION AND HUMAN ECOLOGY

WALTER E. DENNIS LEARNING CENTER ANNUAL REPORT

2014-2015





STATEMENT OF MISSION

The Dennis Learning Center supports students so that they can enter, excel in, and successfully complete academic programs at The Ohio State University. We apply our expertise in education, psychology, instruction, and technology to provide outreach that includes elective courses, workshops, and individual academic coaching. We help students flourish by providing assistance in areas that include motivation, academic stress, procrastination, study skills, time management, test taking, learning from text, note taking, and self-regulation strategies. We also are devoted to the advancement of research that promotes greater knowledge and understanding of college students' academic success, especially the development of innovative instructional methods.

THE DLC TEAM

The DLC team included 24 individuals during the year. The core leadership group was comprised of Director Christopher Wolters, Senior Associate Director Lauren Hensley, and Head Academic Coach Samuel Rowe. Working collaboratively, this trio managed the day-to-day operations of the DLC, facilitated all ongoing activities, and planned future initiatives. Led by Hensley, the instructional group included a total of eight graduate associates and five lecturers responsible for the DLC's three credit-bearing courses. The coaching and outreach group, led by Rowe, included six undergraduates and two graduate associates.

“The things I’ve learned in this course, from study tips to organizational habits to online resources, have all been very beneficial to my studying habits and in turn my GPA but the best part about them is that I will be able to continuously apply what I’ve learned in many facets of my life.”

- Student course feedback



COURSEWORK

We offer multiple sections of three educational psychology elective courses focused on helping students become motivated, engaged learners in college settings.

ES EPSY 1159: Online Learning Strategies and Skills

Students gain familiarity with tools and strategies that promote effective and efficient online learning while bringing more interest and value to their studies. This two-credit, seven-week course was offered online in summer, autumn, and spring.

ES EPSY 1259: Learning and Motivation Strategies for Success in College

In our flagship course, students fine-tune their motivation, time management, and study skills as they learn a wide range of self-regulation strategies that enable them to perform successfully in their college coursework. This three-credit, full-semester course was taught in both face-to-face and online settings in summer, autumn, and spring.

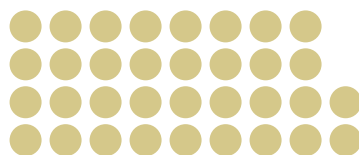
ES EPSY 1359: Technology-Enhanced Learning Strategies

Students develop self-reflection, information literacy, teamwork, and presentation strategies as they use technology to communicate findings in academic and professional settings. This three-credit, seven-week course was offered in a blended format in autumn and spring.

sections



ES EPSY 1159
357 students



ES EPSY 1259
800 students



ES EPSY 1359
53 students

IN STUDENTS' OWN WORDS

"The biggest skill I've learned in this class is the idea that when I'm faced with a problem, I have nearly limitless resources available to me online. Now I find myself attempting to track down specific examples if I'm stumped on a physics or math assignment. From there I can use these examples and additional resources to not only solve the problem, but to have a deeper understanding of the concept in question."

"I found this course to be extremely helpful in all aspects of life, not just academically."

"This should be a required or at least highly recommended course for freshmen."

STUDENT FEEDBACK ON OUR FLAGSHIP COURSE

An end-of-semester survey shows that most students viewed the course very positively. Students indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to the following.

- 91% Overall, my instructor is an excellent teacher
- 91% I would recommend the course to a friend
- 90% My instructor helped motivate me to succeed
- 87% I am more confident in my abilities to achieve academic success after taking the course

FROM SUMMER 2014 TO SPRING 2015,
TOTAL ENROLLMENTS REACHED

1,210 STUDENTS

IN 48 SECTIONS ACROSS
ALL OF OUR COURSES.

4%
YEARLY
INCREASE

WHO ARE OUR STUDENTS?



59%
FIRST- OR SECOND-
YEAR STUDENTS



20%
FIRST-GENERATION
STUDENTS



40%
FEMALE



10%
STUDENT-ATHLETES

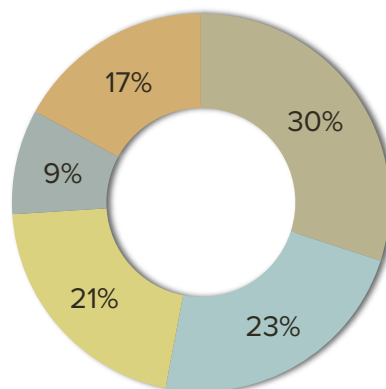


32%
RACIAL/ETHNIC
MINORITY
BACKGROUND



9%
INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS

WHAT COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS DO THEY ATTEND?



- ARTS AND SCIENCES
- EXPLORATION
- BUSINESS
- ENGINEERING
- OTHER COLLEGES

“Having a class that focused on people’s lives, thoughts, and motivations created such a strong desire to learn the content and added something that no other college course has.”

- *Student course feedback*

NOTABLE COURSE UPDATES


Increased enrollment for 1159. For autumn, we updated our online learning strategies and skills course to provide a more streamlined and visually appealing experience for online learners. Changes included the use of redesigned templates throughout the course content, a new instructor introduction page, and embedded learning guides and virtual lessons. In response to continuing high demand, 1159 was expanded to four sections each term. The online course continued to be an excellent choice for students with demanding schedules such as those heavily involved in athletics or student organizations.

Revised curriculum and added location for 1259.

A thoroughly updated curriculum for our flagship course built upon the course’s record of success while incorporating new elements to enhance the instructor and student experience. Following the adoption of a new textbook, a small team of DLC staff and GTAs developed new learning objectives and designed an array of assignments that emphasized personal relevance and practical application, such as a multi-part goal setting project and action plan. New or expanded topics included self-regulated learning, concentration strategies, memory, and stress management. In addition, we introduced an online, collaborative instructor manual, which contained more than 100 ideas for activities and discussions by year-end. As another notable development in 1259, we taught two sections per term in the Royer Student Activities Building through a partnership with the Office of Residence Life. Our goal was to make the course more accessible for students in the residence halls on North campus. Based on the positive feedback it generated, we plan to continue this effort using additional living-learning spaces across campus.

AN ENVIRONMENT FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

The Graduate Teaching Associates (GTAs) for ES EPSY 1259 represented six different Educational Studies doctoral programs. The DLC provided a range of training initiatives to promote the teaching excellence and professional development of our instructional team. Prior to the start of classes, instructors completed a full-day orientation to learn about course goals and policies, the theory and practice of developing self-regulated learning, and effective uses of the Carmen learning management system. During the year, biweekly team meetings provided a forum for discussing teaching innovations and receiving additional training. Sessions focused on areas such as campus resources, student wellness, academic integrity, and evaluating student work. Peer-led activities focused on promoting individual strengths in teaching, working together on a team, and achieving individualized goals. After the autumn semester, each GTA met with Hensley to review student feedback and discuss goals for the next semester. In spring, instructors engaged in a collaborative process of peer teaching observations. As well, customized evaluations allowed us to gather detailed insights from students into specific aspects of our course and revealed statistically significant growth in their perceptions of teaching quality upon implementation of curriculum updates.



“It was great to see
how I could change my
methods for the better!”

- Student workshop feedback

WORKSHOPS

Our standard workshops are 45-60 minute interactive sessions designed to boost students' skills related to a specific topic area. Student leaders, staff, and faculty are able to request these sessions directly through our website. Around 90 percent of these workshops are offered by request or for specific groups. The other 10 percent are open registration workshops initiated by the DLC and open to all Ohio State students.

In addition to our set of nine standard workshops, we also customize or develop new sessions in order to address the specific needs of our campus partners. Although students are our primary audience, we also conduct workshops designed to provide staff and faculty with information about how they can support students' motivation and academic success within the context of their respective positions. Our outreach efforts also include informational sessions about the DLC offered at orientations, resource fairs, and other venues. In these contexts, we reach out to new and prospective students, parents, and non-university personnel.

Topics from our set of nine standard workshops were offered 163 times this year:



GEARING UP FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Helping students to understand and adapt to the demands of academic life in college.



STRESS LESS: TIPS FOR BUILDING ACADEMIC CONFIDENCE AND RESILIENCE

Enabling students to boost resilience in the face of adversity by modeling methods for approaching, rather than avoiding, high-stress situations.



KEYS TO STRATEGIC, CONFIDENT TEST-TAKING

Showing students methods for preparation, question answering, and stress management that can dispel exam fears and put them in control of their performance.



MEMORY TOOLS

Examining what constitutes high vs. low yield study time by looking at how memory works, practicing memory strategies through activities, and planning to adapt these insights to current methods.



DEALING WITH PROCRASTINATION

Equipping students with knowledge and practice related to motivation, decision-making bias, and time management to reduce unnecessary delay.



PERSONAL LEARNING STRENGTHS... UNDERSTANDING YOUR PREFERENCES FOR LEARNING AND USING THEM TO MAKE STUDYING MORE EFFECTIVE

Increasing students' self-awareness regarding their strengths and weakness as learners to enable a deeper understanding of how to tackle their unique challenges.



GREAT MINDS WORK TOGETHER: PLANNING EFFECTIVE STUDY GROUPS

Exploring the details behind group formation and helping students to turn once frustrating group dynamics into high-performance sessions for learning.



ACTIVE NOTE-TAKING STRATEGIES

Upgrading students' typical note-taking systems from what's assumed to what's backed by research to help learners retain lecture material.



PREPARING PAPERS

Breaking down the paper writing process into the steps needed to develop sound arguments, use credible sources, and create compelling content.

WHAT OUR WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS SAY

"I really liked the activities."

"The presenter kept us involved and engaged."

"The tips had research to back them up."

"Great presentation. Great delivery of information."

"It was taught by a fellow student, so the relatable insights were great."

FEEDBACK ON WORKSHOP QUALITY

A survey administered after workshops during Autumn 2014 shows that the sessions were well received. Participants indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to the following statements:

- 80% it was relevant to me personally
- 74% it will help me become a more successful student
- 72% attending was a very positive experience
- 70% it was interesting to learn about
- 70% it taught me something new

SCOPE OF OUR WORKSHOPS AND OUTREACH

All of our workshops and other outreach events together had a combined total audience greater than 7,500 in 234 sessions during the year. Sessions were delivered at over 100 locations across campus and served students from over 45 different departments, residence halls, and student organizations. Workshops were requested by resident advisors, professors, deans, hall directors, interns, student assistants, and graduate associates. The most frequent contexts for our workshops were the First Year Success Series (30) and individual residence halls or floors (22).

Some of the discrete groups we served through our workshop and outreach services included:


- First-year and transfer survey courses taught by academic advisors
- Dunn Sports and Wellness Scholars
- Incoming students and their parents at university orientation
- First-year professional students in Dentistry, Optometry, and Veterinary Medicine
- Counseling and Consultation Service trainees
- Columbus State Community College preferred pathway program
- Engineering House Learning Community
- High school seniors and counselors in the Young Scholars Program
- First-year students in Navy ROTC
- MEDPATH and DentPath post-baccalaureate programs for students from underserved backgrounds
- Professional transcribers in higher education
- Women in Engineering Program
- Peer mentors in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences
- Politics, Society, and Law Scholars
- Honors Learning Community
- Residence hall peer tutoring staff
- Advocates for Children and Education Scholars



NOTABLE WORKSHOP UPDATES

Revision of core workshops. This year, we dramatically overhauled our nine primary workshops using a meticulous process of outlining, goals adjustment, visual overhauling, and activity enhancement. Improved presentation slides and new handouts were created to enhance each session's visual appeal and increase its interactivity. This process also allowed us to align our workshop materials better with contemporary, empirically supported models of motivation and self-regulated learning.

University partnerships. Our workshop and outreach efforts are often conducted in collaboration with other units on campus. We have well established and active partnerships with University Housing, University Orientation and First Year Experience, and many academic majors, departments or colleges. We constantly work to enhance our existing collaborations and build new ones. For instance, we customized and delivered six of our workshops for participants in the summer bridge program offered by the Young Scholars Program in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. This program is for gifted high schoolers in Ohio who will be first-generation college students and have financial need. In addition, we developed a new early intervention workshop for the College of Dentistry's orientation process. Developed through consultation with college administrators, this session used immediate feedback from a survey of motivation and study strategies to expose students to a theoretical model of effective learning and to facilitate conversations regarding the study methods most pertinent to the challenges of dental school. As part of an ongoing collaboration with the Office of International Affairs, we also adapted two workshops and created four new ones to address the unique needs of students from other cultures. This set of workshops was offered twice during the year with strong positive feedback from those who participated.

A top-down view of a desk. In the top left, a portion of a white laptop is visible. Next to it is a stack of colorful books. Below the books, a spiral-bound notebook with a pencil sketch of a face is open. To the right of the notebook, a smartphone is placed on a small stand. In the background, a row of colorful pens and pencils is visible. The entire image has a warm, orange-tinted overlay.

“My coach really took time to explain everything, and make it relatable to her own life as well. She put herself in my shoes.”

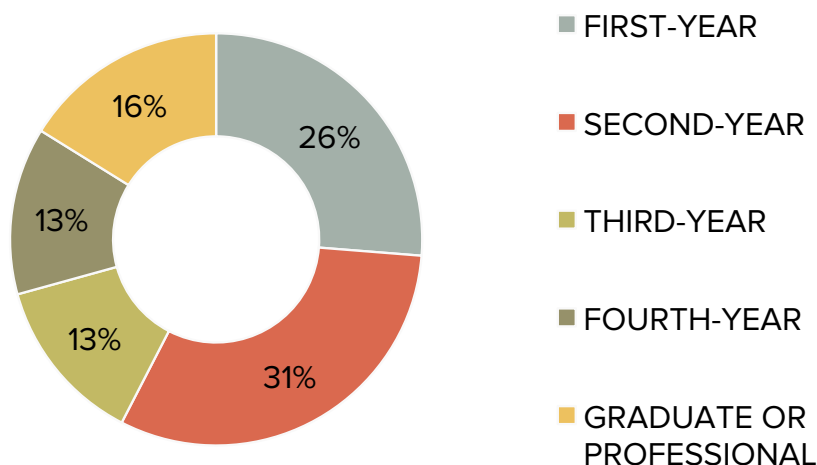
- Student coaching feedback

COACHING

Our academic coaching services provide any student a chance to consult with a trained and caring peer to discuss a range of difficulties that may be inhibiting academic success at Ohio State. A primary goal of these meetings is to foster students' development of positive forms of motivation and to equip them with self-regulation strategies needed to excel in competitive academic environments.

The sessions, lasting approximately 50 minutes, are tailored to each student's individual needs and concerns. During a session, coaches develop a clear understanding of the goals students have for college, the obstacles they may have encountered, and how they have already worked to overcome these challenges. Further, coaches work to introduce and practice new strategies, behaviors, or attitudes that will help students be resilient to any difficulties they face.

WHO COMES IN FOR ACADEMIC COACHING?

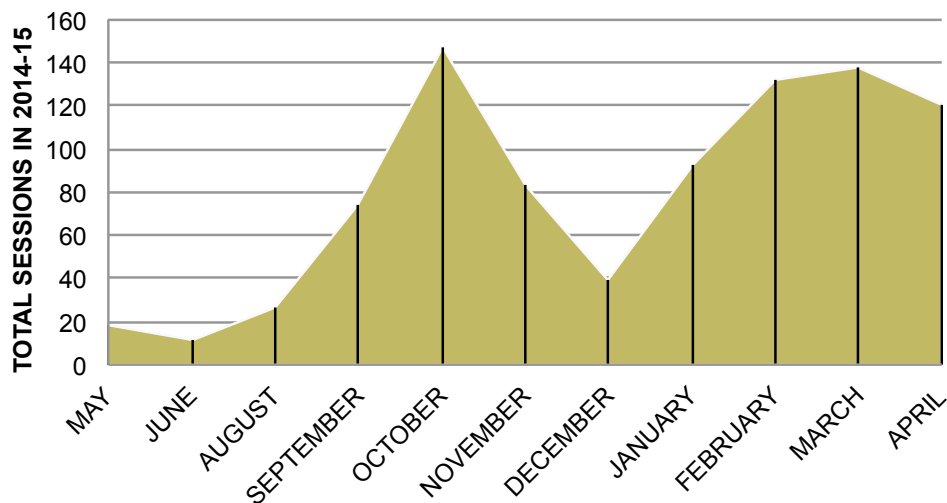


TOTAL SESSIONS / **905**

INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS SERVED / **569**

AVERAGE APPOINTMENTS PER STUDENT / **1.6**

WHEN DO STUDENTS COME FOR ACADEMIC COACHING?



WHAT OUR STUDENTS SAY ABOUT COACHING

"I liked how I received multiple suggestions on how to attack the same problem. My coach listened to all of my problems and was able to accommodate my specific needs."

"This meeting helped me become determined to restart my study plan."

"My coach was super helpful in providing me strategies on how to succeed in large lecture classes. She was also able to speak from personal experience about which strategies worked best for her as a student. She was very easy to talk to and had great advice."

"I was able to decipher what I know and don't know in reference to studying and was given in depth tips to help."

STUDENT FEEDBACK ON THE COACHING EXPERIENCE

Students provide feedback about their coaching session shortly after it is completed. Students indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to the following statements:

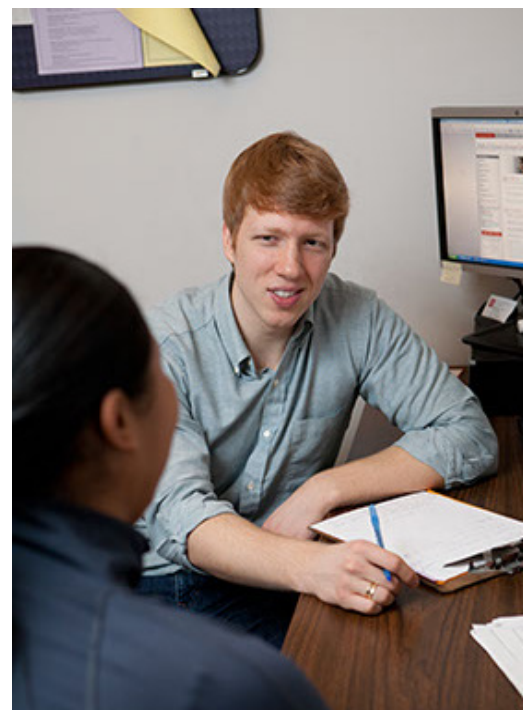
- 94%** The academic coach demonstrated a genuine desire to help
- 94%** The academic coach effectively answered my questions
- 91%** I would recommend this service to other students


NEW COACHING INITIATIVES DURING THE YEAR

We are constantly working to develop new methods and initiatives that will improve the system of academic coaching we use to support students in a one-on-one context. This year we added two more undergraduates to our coaching team to meet increased demand. In addition, we added a graduate student with a background in higher education and student affairs to assist with coaching for graduate and professional students. As a result, our service to this segment of the Ohio State population has risen to 16% of our overall coaching services.

Another notable coaching initiative this year grew out of our ongoing collaborations with personnel from the Office of Residence Life. Based on suggestions from resident advisors, we piloted an effort to offer coaching services that would allow easier access for students who might be reluctant to reach out for help. Throughout the autumn semester, coaches offered sessions on a walk-in basis at two residence halls for six hours a week. Utilization was too inconsistent to warrant an expansion of the service in its current form, but new versions are being considered.

Turning Students into Peer Coaches. The DLC uses a peer-coaching model to facilitate appointment and workshop services. Undergraduate coaches are able to connect with their fellow students on an authentic level that facilitates personal change. It's a model that owes much of its success to hiring of exceptional individuals, rigorous initial training, and the ongoing development of coaches' abilities. As part of the hiring process, undergraduate students are carefully considered to ensure they have the interests, disposition, and abilities needed to be an effective coach. Before handling any coaching duties, new team members follow a rigorous regimen of shadowing, training sessions, and curriculum review. Incoming coaches shadow no fewer than 10 coaching sessions and five workshops that are followed by debriefings to discuss valuable aspects of the procedures and content. Once students are established as full-fledged coaches, the training process continues through one-on-one feedback and review by Rowe, the Head Academic Coach. In addition, biweekly group meetings cover specialized content and periodically feature guest speakers. Although the goal of this process is to promote excellence as an academic coach, many of the skills and dispositions transfer well into whatever career path our student coaches pursue.





“It was very personalized and focused on my strengths and weaknesses.”

- Student coaching feedback

RESEARCH

As part of its core mission, the DLC is devoted to the advancement of rigorous, nationally recognized research that promotes greater knowledge and understanding of college students' academic success. We support the production of research that promotes theoretical understanding and contributes to the next generation of practical methods to facilitate the success of students at Ohio State.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

We advance this goal by conducting and facilitating empirical studies in collaboration with Ohio State faculty and students. Projects this past year have included:

- Mentoring an undergraduate researcher who conducted content analysis of submitted course assignments to reveal students' definitions of what it meant to be a successful college student
- Facilitating recruitment of participants for three graduate student research projects
- Exploring college students' efforts to reduce procrastination as revealed in study journals and interviews
- Examining connections between college students' grades, background characteristics, and use of time management strategies
- Evaluating whether students' level of grit and endorsement of a growth mindset changed while they were enrolled in our flagship course



NEW EVIDENCE OF OUR FLAGSHIP COURSE'S IMPACT

Combining his research and Director duties, Wolters is partnering with a researcher from the Office of Enrollment Services - Analysis and Reporting (OESAR) to evaluate the impact of taking ES EPSY 1259. Students who completed the course from Autumn 2007 to Spring 2014 are being compared to a closely matched sample of students on indicators of their academic success. Extending prior research that demonstrated benefits for first-year students, preliminary results suggest completing the course is associated with higher grades and improved graduation rates for students at *all* levels.

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

We also have advanced our research mission through scholarly publications and presentations at national conferences. Highlights from the past year included the following studies:

- Based on reflections and discussion board posts written by students in our flagship course, Hensley and a team of graduate students developed a grounded model of how college students overcome academic setbacks.
- A collaborative team from the DLC, Research Laboratory for Digital Learning, and Office of Distance Education and eLearning redesigned the online note-taking module in ES EPSY 1259. The team demonstrated gains in students' self-reported interest, competence, and autonomy.
- Wolters and Hoops reviewed the literature on students' struggles to sustain high levels of academic engagement and offered implications for practice.
- Hensley, under the direction of her dissertation committee, investigated college anatomy students' academic beliefs, time usage, and achievement to call into question the previously stated benefits of active procrastination.

For a full listing, visit go.osu.edu/dlcresearch.





ENGAGEMENT IN THE OHIO STATE COMMUNITY

The DLC prides itself on being an active part of the Ohio State community. Through partnerships with other Ohio State units, we address the shared mission of supporting student success. Ranging from consultations to collaborative initiatives, highlights of the past year included the following.

Academic Advisors. As an element of our participation in two training sessions on “The Art of Referring” for academic advisors, we piloted a flipped format for the training and produced a web-accessible screencast of our presentation. As well, we joined with staff from the Center for the Study of Student Life to consult on Peter Spreitzer and Amy Treboni’s successfully funded grant proposal from the National Academic Advising Association, “University Exploration’s ‘Support from the Start’ Program for New First-Year Students.” The DLC team was honored with the annual Friend of ACADAOS award, presented by the Academic Advising Association of The Ohio State University. The award recognized our team’s service to the academic advising community at Ohio State and dedication to supporting students.

Graduate Students. Lauren Hensley partnered with J. Marcela Hernandez (Arts and Sciences) and La’Tonia Stiner-Jones (Engineering) to develop and facilitate a 90-minute *Graduate School Survival Skills* orientation event attended by 125 incoming graduate students. The event shared strategies for making the most out of graduate school based on needs-assessment findings and featured a graduate student panel. In an evaluation, 98% agreed “This session provided me with information that will help me be successful in graduate school.”

Instructors. Lead ES EPSY 1259 instructor Nicole Brown received the Educational Studies Outstanding GTA Award at the department’s first annual GTA recognition and awards dinner. Brown, along with instructors Leah Hoops and Marissa Green, presented their insights into teaching at 30-minute table talks. Brown focused on multiculturalism in the classroom, Hoops spoke about fostering sense of belonging, and Green described key motivational principles for classrooms.

University Center for the Advancement of Teaching. Samuel Rowe and Leah Hoops presented sessions on “Increasing Student Success through the Use of Effective Study Strategies” for the annual Teaching Orientation @ Ohio State. As a UCAT-sponsored Graduate Teaching Fellow, Nicole Brown presented at the ES EPSY 1259 orientation, shared weekly tips to keep instructors on track with the new curriculum, and facilitated a new peer-observation program. We also sustained key initiatives first made possible by a UCAT seed grant: funding a lead instructor position, organizing instructor-led training sessions, and involving instructors in course development.



THE YOUNKIN
SUCCESS CENTER

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Department of Educational Studies**

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The Walter E. Dennis Learning Center is named in honor of Walter E. Dennis Jr. and family, whose endowment supports the center in its efforts to provide top-quality academic support that makes a difference in the lives of students.



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