



THE OHIO STATE  
UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF  
EDUCATION AND HUMAN ECOLOGY

# Walter E. Dennis Learning Center



## ANNUAL REPORT

2015 - 2016



*The DLC team following their end-of-the-year dinner.*



*Director Christopher Wolters, Senior Associate Director Lauren Hensley, and Head Academic Coach Samuel Rowe.*

## | 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. Wolters leads this group's collaborative efforts to manage the day-to-day operations of the DLC and personally directs the research team of graduate students and staff. Hensley leads an instructional team of eight graduate associates and five lecturers responsible for the DLC's credit-bearing courses. Rowe leads a coaching and outreach team consisting of six undergraduates and two graduate associates.

# WHO WE ARE

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## | Our 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 or interventions.

## | Support for the DLC |

The DLC is part of the Department of Educational Studies within the College of Education and Human Ecology. Our major funding comes from the department, college, and an endowment from Walter E. Dennis Jr. and family. We are located in the Younkin Success Center along with other units geared toward supporting students' academic and career success.



Interested in supporting the programs  
and activities of the DLC?  
Visit [give.osu.edu/tuckman](https://give.osu.edu/tuckman).



# COURSEWORK

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

## | ES EPSY 1159: *Online Learning Strategies and Skills* | 376 students in 13 sections

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 & Motivation Strategies for Success in College* | 901 students in 39 sections

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 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* | 50 students in 2 sections

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.

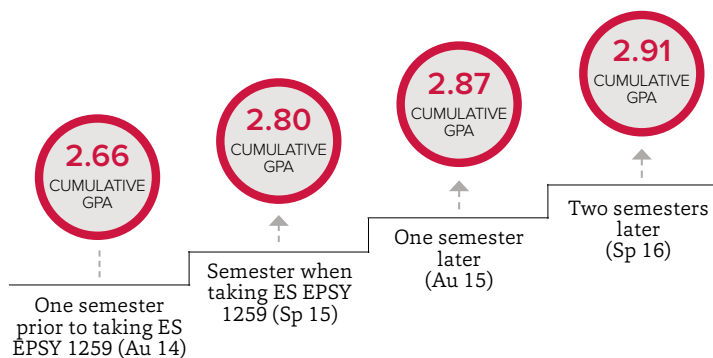
## | ES EPSY 2059: *Becoming a Self-Regulated Learner* | **New course!** | 40 students in 2 sections

At times, students meet unanticipated academic difficulties and determine that the best option is to drop a course. Our newest course, available in the seven-week second session of autumn and spring semesters, helps students maintain full-time enrollment as they gain valuable skills and mindsets to complete the semester on a strong note. The highly interactive class emphasizes creating inner motivation, developing a growth mindset, using campus resources, optimizing time management, and applying active-learning strategies. The DLC team developed this course through the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching's Course Design Institute and with the input of academic advisors and staff from Orientation and First Year Experience. This two-credit, seven-week course was offered in a face-to-face format in autumn and spring. As soon as summer 2017, it will also be included as a key component of the academic recovery program endorsed by Ohio State's Standing Committee on Student Success and Retention.

**Total enrollment increased 9% over the prior academic year, reaching 1,367 students in 56 sections of our courses.**

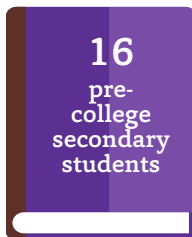
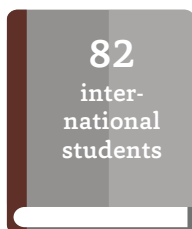
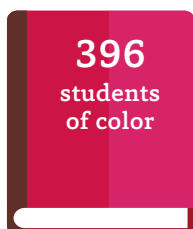
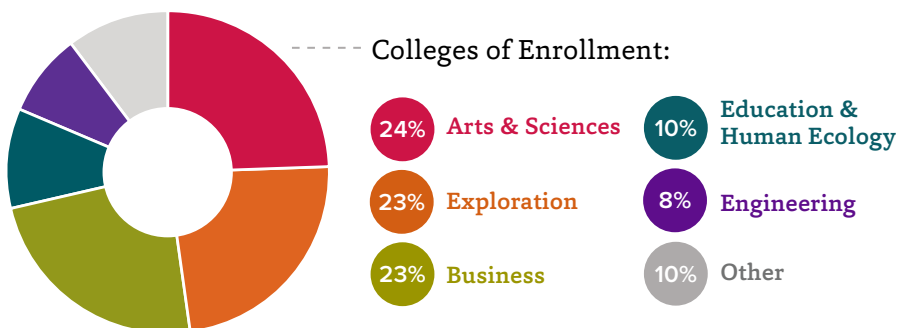
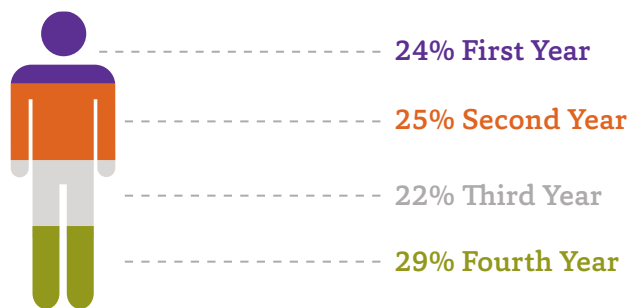
## | Coursework outcomes |

Students who take our flagship course increase their cumulative GPA semester after semester.



## | Who are our students? |

The 1,367 students enrolled in DLC courses had majors or specializations in 285 different areas of study.



## | Student feedback on our courses |

Course evaluations show that students view our courses positively. Students indicated “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to the following.

- 92% Overall, my instructor was an excellent teacher.
- 91% What I learned in this course will be useful in the future (e.g., other courses and/or career).
- 89% I am more confident in my ability to achieve academic success after taking this course.



## What did students value about their instructors?

*“She was incredibly enthusiastic and it was apparent from the very beginning that she was genuinely concerned with our wellbeing. She is a great example of what a teacher should be.”*

*“I have never experienced a class like this before where I was actually excited to learn and go to class.”*

## In what ways did students learn and develop?

*“I learned that time management is everything. Now that I know how to make schedules and to-do lists I am much better at getting my work done without as much stress.”*

*“[Test anxiety] is something I have always had issues with and this course has provided me with many different strategies to cope with it.”*

*“I really became cognizant of how different my output is based on how much planning and time I put into each assignment.”*

# WORKSHOPS

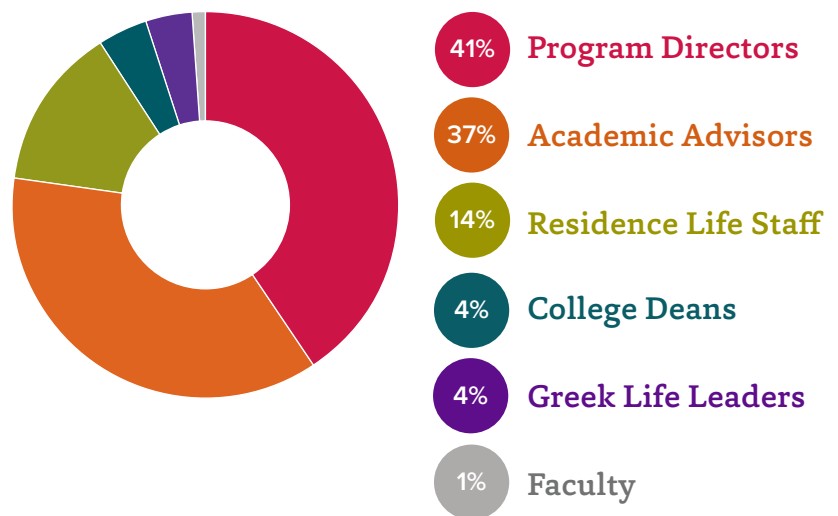
Our standard workshops are 45-60 minute interactive sessions designed to improve specific attitudes and skill sets. Student leaders, staff, and faculty are able to request these sessions directly through our website. Around 90 percent of these workshops are offered by request or for specific groups. The other 10 percent are initiated by the DLC and open to all Ohio State students.



In addition to our standard set of nine 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 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.

## | Who requests our workshops? |

A variety of individuals request our workshops.



## What did students value about the workshops they attended?

*"I get now that being overwhelmed sometimes is okay, and I can create a plan to manage it."*

*"This was a breath of fresh air. I don't feel as alone with my problems."*

*"This helped me get in the mindspace to begin studying confidently and intentionally for my chemistry and calculus exams."*



**Workshops were delivered at over 100 different locations on campus.**

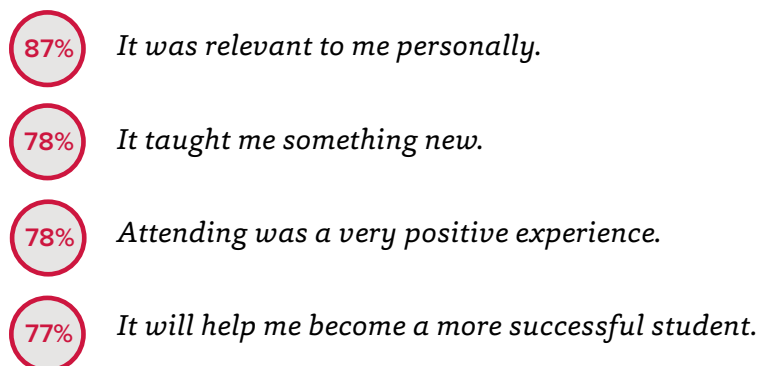
## | Workshop topics and frequency |

We offered topics from our set of nine standard workshops 157 times this year. We also offered 28 customized academic-success workshops for a variety of campus audiences.



## | Feedback on workshop quality |

An Autumn 2015 survey administered after workshops shows that sessions were well-received. Participants indicated “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to the following about each workshop:



**Together, our workshops and other outreach events had a combined total audience of greater than 8,000 in 267 sessions during the year.**

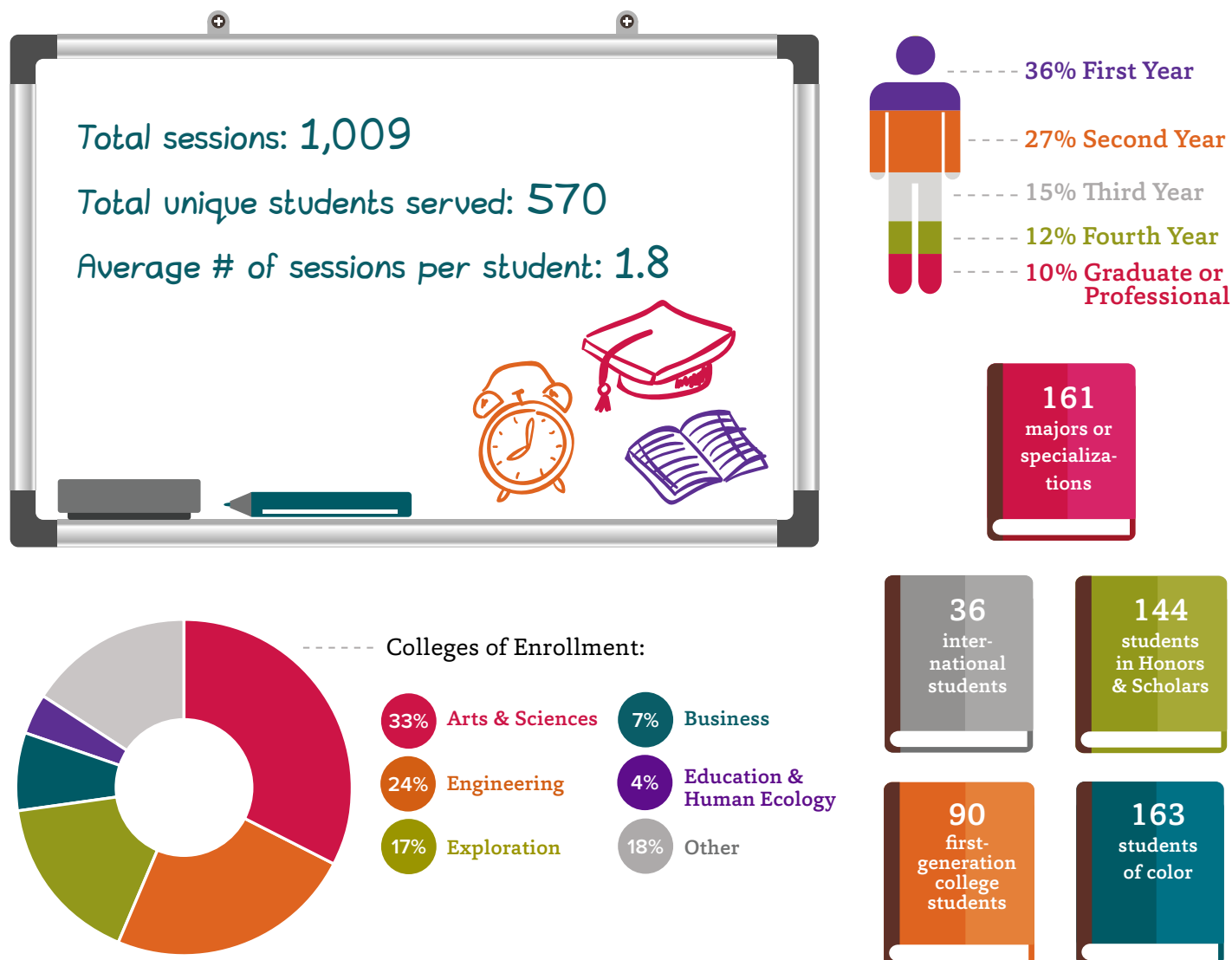
# COACHING

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. Coaches then work to introduce and practice new strategies, behaviors, or attitudes that will help students be resilient to any difficulties they face.

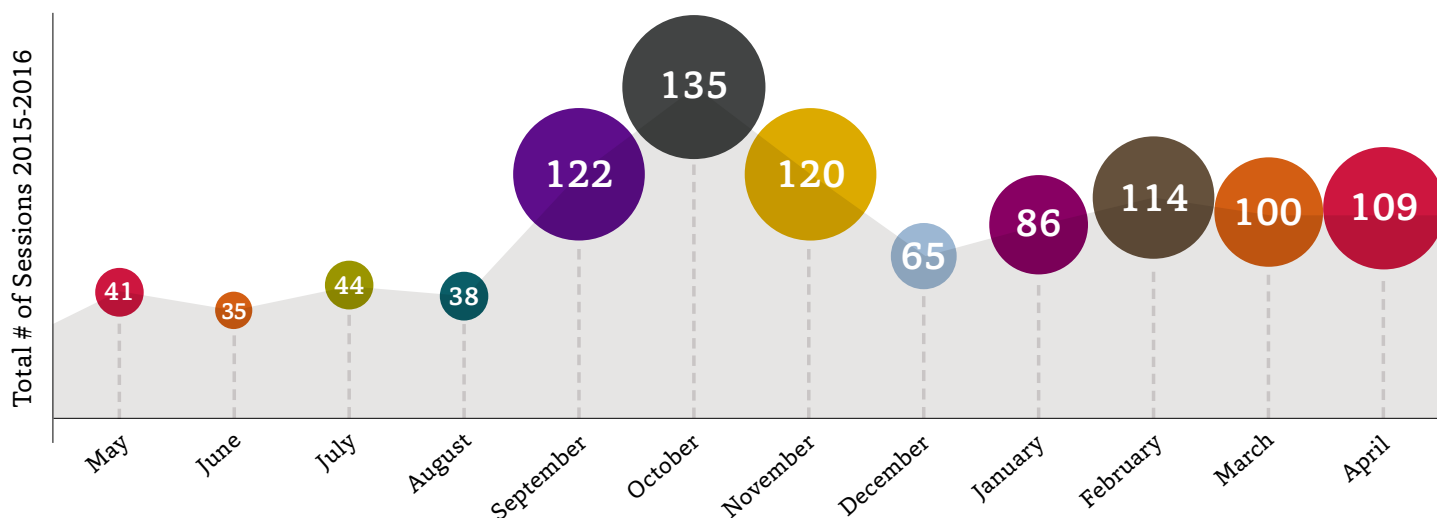
## | Who comes in for academic coaching? |

The DLC served 570 unique students in 1,009 academic coaching sessions.





## | When do students come for academic coaching? |



## | Feedback on academic coaching |

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

- 93%** *The coaching session helped me improve as a student.*
- 91%** *I am very satisfied with my experience meeting with the academic coach.*
- 89%** *I would recommend a coaching session to other students in a similar situation.*

## What did students value about their coaching experience?

*“My coach did an amazing job and definitely uplifted my self-confidence in being able to succeed in chemistry. I immediately went to my dorm and did the bookwork. I’m already improving.”*

*“My coach was able to explain why certain study methods worked better over others, which helped me better understand my own learning.”*

*“The study plan gave me a way to structure my studying. I was valedictorian in high school, and I really didn’t study a whole lot. Now, I’m not doing nearly as well as I want to, and suddenly I need to figure out how to study. The step-by-step process behind the study plan we discussed will definitely be useful as I prepare for midterms.”*



# 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. The DLC Research Group conducts research on these issues, with special focus on the experiences of students assisted by the DLC. The group's membership includes the DLC's director and senior associate director, along with four graduate students who collaborate on multiple projects.

## | Publications and presentations |

Our peer-reviewed publications and presentations during the past year contributed the following insights:

- Grit is multidimensional, relatively stable, and associated positively with aspects of college students' motivation that are tied to improved academic performance.
- Students were drawn to the behavior of procrastination because of the hope of efficiency and balance, but they also experienced the drawbacks of anxiety, limited learning, and guilt.
- When monitoring their time usage over the course of a week, students in good academic standing tracked 40% more hours of studying than did students on academic probation.
- When participating in collaborative online discussions, students with high vs. low levels of self-regulated learning skills differed in terms of their level of engagement with content, approach to seeking and providing help, and openness to disagreement.

For a full listing, visit [go.osu.edu/dlcresearch](http://go.osu.edu/dlcresearch).

We also shared our research through the following outlets in the past year:



*Journal of College  
Student Development*



*Metacognition and Learning*



*American Educational  
Research Association*



*Association for  
Psychological Science*

## | Active projects |

Ongoing empirical studies conducted by the DLC are pursuing the following lines of inquiry:

- Exploring undergraduates' written reflections of how their procrastination levels changed while taking a study-skills course, as well as factors that made procrastination resistant to change.
- Advancing a model of self-regulation of learning among college students.
- Developing measures of time management, motivational regulation, and other core aspects of self-regulation of learning.

# BETTER UNDER PRESSURE? A PHENOMENOLOGY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' ACTIVE PROCRASTINATION

Lauren Hensley

Dennis Learning Center  
STUDY SMARTER

## ABSTRACT

### Passive (Avoidant) Procrastination

- Negative associations with grades, health, mood, motivation (Steel, 2007)

### Active (Intentional) Procrastination (Cho & Choi, 2008; Cho & Minn, 2008)

- Preference for pressure
- Intentional decision to delay
- Ability to meet deadlines

### Rise in intentional procrastination possibly due to:

- Highly valuing relationships, juggling multiple activities (Lentini & Green, 2003)
- Receiving high grades in HS with little effort (Cho, 2008)
- Being accustomed to surface-level assessments (Olsen & Hochstadt, 2008)

### The big question raised by existing research:

- "whether teachers and students should be more accepting of procrastination or even attempt to promote 'fully procrastination'" (Olsen, Huchins, & Chalmers, 2007, p. 230)

## PURPOSE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

- Explore the nature of active procrastination
- Identify reasons for college students' commitment to the behavior alongside perceived limitations

## Participants

- 7 undergraduates from 6 majors at a large 4-year university
- Collaborative sampling: In-depth investigation of experiences and reflections of small group of participants with first-hand knowledge

## Data Collection

- Study journals: 1 introductory entry, 6 biweekly entries
- Semi-structured interviews: 45 minutes, reflected and elaborated on specific examples

## Phenomenology

- Inductive qualitative methodology that enhances understanding of a phenomenon through description of shared, core meanings
- 6 stage analysis: identifying significant statements, naming core components, clustering themes, developing written descriptions (Olsen, 1994)

## THREE MAJOR THEMES

### Three Major Themes (Table 1)

- Procrastination facilitated greater efficiency, done systematically, and reinforced by appealing outcomes
- An accompanying negative component for each potential benefit was an unexpected theme of the broader experience

### Scholarly Implications

- Refining the definition of active procrastination
- Additional research needed at different types of institutions and with broader range of students

### Practical Implications

- Create participatory classroom environments to shift authority for learning from external to internal (Hesse-Biber, 1998)
- Connect students to challenging, engaging learning experiences where they view effort as valuable (Kivimäki, 2008)
- Use self-monitoring and self-reflection to guide informed decisions about procrastination (Hesse & Nove, 2006)

Table 1: Major Themes, Codes, and Exemplary Quotes

I'M GOOD AT IT: THE EFFICIENCY OF PROCRASTINATION	
<b>I Work and Learn Effectively Close to Deadlines</b>	
<b>I'm more efficient with less time (few distractions, high focus)</b> I complete coursework best under pressure	"If it's due the next day, I can sit down and focus just on my paper, and get it done really efficiently." "When I procrastinate, I write better. I restructure things better. So as far as quality of schoolwork, I think I do better when I procrastinate."
<b>I Know I Can Respond to Academic Requirements with Procrastination</b>	
<b>Inner academic ability</b> Planning to procrastinate I've figured out a system	"My intellectual ability saves me because I can catch up or retain more information than most of my peers." "I have a plan and I believe it will help me in the end." "I've done a lot of papers and I know how long they take."
<b>IT'S WORTH IT: THE PERCEIVED VALUE OF PROCRASTINATION</b>	
<b>It's Worth It in Terms of Academic Outcomes</b>	
<b>My grades are not threatened by procrastination</b> Positive academic outcomes reinforce my behavior	"Procrastination usually doesn't have a large impact on my grade." "When I finally do them I get good grades and the paper looks pretty good. So there I think that I can just procrastinate all the time."
<b>It's Worth It in Terms of Social Outcomes</b>	
<b>Procrastinating ensures I have fun in my life</b> Procrastination makes time for meaningful experiences	"If I'd started earlier I might not have been able to hang out with my friends." "Some of my best times so far in college have been that procrastination. That's the stories that are precious."
<b>But Efficiency Comes at a Cost</b>	
<b>Procrastination causes stress</b> I don't learn as deeply as I could	"It felt very rushed when completing the assignments, which led to an overall more stressful experience than I needed to have." "If I did not procrastinate I would have preparing for exams earlier and have a better grasp of material."
<b>But This System May Not Always Work</b>	
<b>My abilities differ based on the course</b> My plans don't always work I know I can't do this forever	"In biology, that doesn't work for me. I have to read." "It was like, 'yeah, that's not happening.'" "I think in the future it's probably gonna backfire on me sometimes."
<b>But I Know I Could Still Do Better</b>	
<b>My academic outcomes could be better</b> I need to be careful not to overcommit	"I did decent, however, I think I could have done a little better if I had started anything earlier." "There's trouble when you take that procrastination and apply it to another course where that doesn't work."
<b>But What If Procrastinating Is on the Back of My Mind</b>	
<b>I can't enjoy other activities as much</b> I feel spent with myself	"When I get to do something else, I'm always thinking about what I'm supposed to be doing." "Typically I feel a kind of weird sense of guilt."

With gratitude to my dissertation committee: Dr. Anderson, Lacey Fisher, and Susan Jones. Revised paper to be published in the Journal of College Student Development (2017).

Benefits

Limitations

## The Draws and Drawbacks of College Students' Procrastination

from L. Hensley, 2016, *Journal of College Student Development*, 57, p. 467

Research conducted by DLC Senior Associate Director Lauren Hensley revealed three major themes about active procrastination: Purposeful delay facilitated greater efficiency, was done systematically, and was reinforced by appealing academic and social outcomes. The existence of a concomitant negative component for each potential benefit was an unexpected theme that emerged from the analysis. The drawbacks of active procrastination did not function separately from the benefits. Rather, they appeared as inherent counterpoints to the positive components and were part of the broader experience; active procrastination was not active procrastination without both sides.



# COLLABORATION AND STUDENT REACH

The DLC team serves a wide range of students and engages in partnerships across campus to develop and facilitate customized programming. We describe the results of these efforts over the past year here.

## 1 | Equipping STEM students for success |

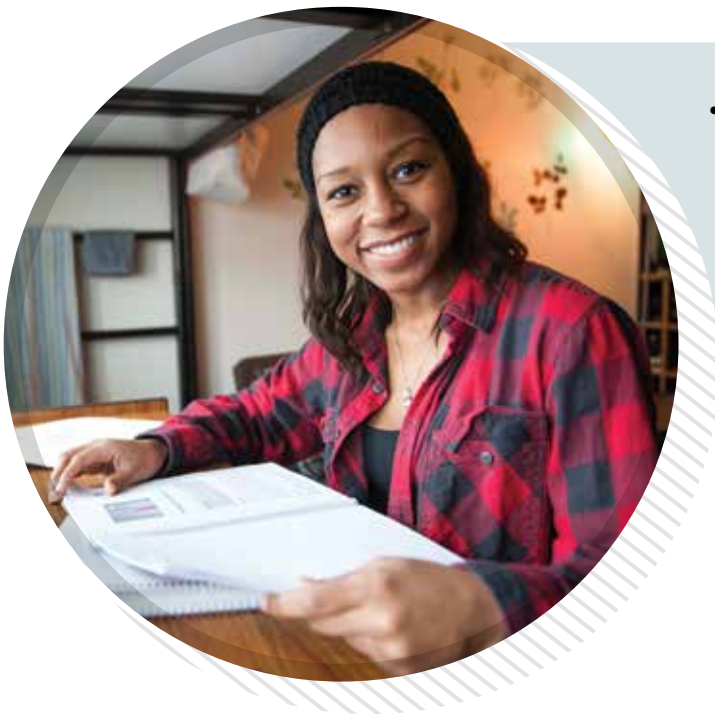
- More than 300 students in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry attended a custom workshop, “Study Strategies and Skills for STEM.”
- A partnership with advisors in the College of Engineering resulted in the inclusion of academic coaching as a recommended activity for students in survey courses. Students received proactive, one-on-one guidance to optimize the use of academic strategies in their first year.
- A two-part workshop series was part of a finals-week preparation program for the National Society of Black Engineers. The sessions focused on resilience, study methods, and test-taking strategies unique to the week’s challenges.



## 2 | Serving a diverse student population |

- A customized five-workshop series took place in both autumn and spring semesters in partnership with the Office of International Affairs. Open to all international students on campus, the workshops taught strategies for long-term memorization, communicating with faculty, test-taking, writing, and classroom participation.
- Through a custom workshop, high school students in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion’s Junior Summer Institute learned about methods for studying, handling stress, and managing time that reinforce effective college transitions.





- Overall, students taking part in our courses, workshops, or appointments were affiliated with all 14 undergraduate colleges and schools, as well as University Exploration, the academy program for pre-college secondary students, and a variety of pre-professional, professional, and graduate programs.

### 3

#### | Supporting learning in graduate and professional school |

- Orientation for the College of Pharmacy included a customized, two-part workshop, “Learning and Motivation Strategies for Success in Pharmacy School.” Students completed a guided self-assessment and learned strategies for increasing the quality and quantity of their study time.
- More than 100 incoming students in the College of Optometry attended “Gearing Up for Professional School” to learn and discuss strategies for managing an intense workload and memorizing high volumes of information.
- Students in the College of Medicine’s Medical Careers Pathway (MEDPATH) postbaccalaureate program engaged in a four-part series of academic-skills workshops and a semester-long program on concept-mapping developed in collaboration with the Associate Dean for Diversity and Cultural Affairs and the MEDPATH associate director. In the nine guided sessions, students reflected on their learning processes and incorporated concept-mapping and related strategies into their study plans.
- Students in the College of Dentistry’s DentPath postbaccalaureate program for students from underserved or underrepresented backgrounds participated in a workshop series on study groups and personal learning strengths.



- The DLC, Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Engineering, and Office of Student Life worked jointly to offer a half-day “Graduate School Survival Skills” program. Nearly 300 incoming graduate students attended the event, which included an overview of the transition to graduate school, breakout sessions featuring panels of current graduate students, and presentations from eight campus resources.
- The DLC provided 152 coaching sessions and 27 workshops for graduate and professional students from Dentistry, Medicine, Optometry, Pharmacy, Veterinary Medicine, and a range of master’s and doctoral programs.

## 4

### | Facilitating professional development of staff, faculty, and instructors |

- Resident Advisors took part in “Building Motivation and Resilience,” an hourlong training session on helping students sustain their motivation. In this train-the-trainer event, we provided models and materials to use when supporting students living on campus.
- Training sessions on the principles of peer coaching, learning, and motivation equipped a team of Veteran Services peer mentors to support student veterans as they navigated academic transitions.
- A series of three 90-minute workshops offered in partnership with the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching focused on building student-centered teaching practices. The series addressed developing self-regulated learning, boosting time management, and fostering motivation.
- “Understanding and Addressing the Roots of College Students’ Procrastination,” offered as part of the Focusing on the First Year conference, taught Ohio State staff the role of beliefs and cognitive biases in procrastination, as well as how to provide suggestions, model behaviors, and structure environments to reduce procrastination.
- A professional development workshop helped the Fisher College of Business’s advising team address five key motivational factors when facilitating academic success appointments with academically at-risk and middle-tier students.
- Two presentations for the “The Art of Referring” academic advisor training program organized semi-annually by the Office of Undergraduate Education explained the differences among various DLC services and how to guide students to the best form of support in a given situation.



# IN MEMORIAM

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## | Founding Director Bruce W. Tuckman, PhD | 1938-2016 |

Bruce W. Tuckman, professor in the Department of Educational Studies and founding director of the Walter E. Dennis Learning Center, passed away March 13, 2016. Bruce was well known for his group development theory and research on procrastination and college success. He served for six years as executive editor of the *Journal of Experimental Education*. Before coming to Ohio State in 1998, Bruce held faculty and administrative roles at Rutgers University (1965-78), Baruch College of the City University of New York (1978-83), and Florida State University (1983-98). He authored 18 books and more than 100 articles about motivation, cognition, instructional design, and measurement. As a faculty member, Bruce's efforts centered on researching and supporting learning, motivation, and academic achievement. Based on his contributions to educational research, he was named a fellow of both the American Psychological Association and American Educational Research Association.



As founding director (1998-2012), Bruce often recounted with a chuckle his first impressions of the DLC site: "It was a hole in the ground filled with water." With signature creativity and a knack for helping people grasp and remember psychological principles, he knew what to do next: "Start with an acronym." From there, Bruce worked with graduate students and staff to develop a curriculum for teaching four strategies-for-achievement (stACH) that bolstered learning and motivation in college. The soggy construction site became an endowed center with courses and services to assist thousands of students annually. The curriculum he developed has empirically demonstrated improvements in students' grade-point averages and rates of retention and graduation.

Colleagues who knew Bruce were struck by his love for the DLC and its mission to help students achieve success. Bruce's enthusiasm for scholarship in action was contagious, and the graduate students he mentored in teaching and research have moved on to faculty and administrative positions at postsecondary institutions across the country. Staff in the center knew their work was important, useful and always student-centered, and they thrived working under a leader who encouraged them to be lifelong learners.

In his final years, Bruce fought a brave battle with dementia. After a life of dedication to the academic community, his body was donated to The Ohio State University: his brain to the Department of Neurology for Alzheimer's and dementia research and his body to the Department of Anatomy for medical student education. We, along with countless others, will be forever grateful to him for the opportunities and guidance he provided. The Bruce W. Tuckman Student Enrichment Fund has been established in his memory ([give.osu.edu/Tuckman](https://give.osu.edu/Tuckman)). We believe Bruce would be pleased to know that the support he strived to provide students will continue in his name.





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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