

Austin Community College Compliance Certification Response  
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Austin Community College provides appropriate academic support services through its Learning Labs/Tutoring and Testing Centers. Information about academic support services are distributed to students through the *ACC Catalog* [1], the Student Handbook [2], and the college website [3, 4].

A wealth of information about lab operations and services is available on the learning lab website. Designed to offer up-to-date and relevant information to all college constituencies, the learning lab website includes information about all the labs as well as information specific to each lab, including tutoring schedules. Of special note is the *Handbook for Faculty* [5], an invaluable tool for learning about lab services.

At the beginning of each semester, the lab managers send a letter to each faculty member at their campus informing them of the services the labs provide and asking them to tell their students about tutoring services. In addition, tutors visit classes to establish rapport and encourage students to make the labs an integral part of their study habits.

To access services, students need only drop in. They may self refer to any learning lab. Schedules showing tutor availability by content area are widely available. Each lab posts its own schedule as well as those of the other labs, so students can be aware of college-wide tutoring services and hours of operation.

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These schedules are also posted on the Learning Lab website in printer-friendly formats [\[6\]](#).

### **Learning Labs**

The purpose of the ACC Learning Labs is to help ACC retain students and improve their academic success. Furthermore, the Learning Labs help students become independent and active learners. The Learning Labs work in partnership with the faculty, staff, and administration in upholding the mission, standards, and requirements of the college. The Learning Labs periodically evaluate their function and operation to support current priorities and initiatives at the college.

The Learning Labs provide free tutorial services and tailored individual instruction to a diverse student population in an open-access lab setting. Tutorial services are available for many ACC courses. The labs provide subject area tutors for all mathematics courses, English, developmental writing, reading, accounting, foreign language, and ESL. Most labs supply content tutoring support for chemistry, physics, biology, and statistics. Learning labs may also support programs specific to their campus, such as offering pharmacology tutoring at the EVC Learning Lab. Tutoring support is available for many courses that include writing and research components.

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Modes of delivery include traditional one-on-one tutoring and small group tutoring, skills review workshops, guided study groups, self-paced independent study, and computer-based tutorials.

Learning Lab Referral Process: Faculty have several means of referral for at risk students:

- They can walk in and meet with an instructional associate (IA) or the lab manager to consult about options.
- They can give written instructions to the tutor.
- They can request feedback in a variety of forms – from a tutor signature and date of session to a detailed report documenting the tutoring session(s).
- They can use the tutoring referral form, which is available on line and sent to them at least once a semester by the lab managers.

Collaboration with departments is paramount in addressing the retention needs of students. The Learning Labs promote an active relationship with faculty.

Faculty members are encouraged to contact the labs about any concerns with or ideas for tutoring support for their students. They can also refer their individual students for targeted assistance by completing the learning lab tutoring referral form. Additionally, faculty can use the writing referral form to pinpoint the exact areas tutors need to address with a particular student. Faculty are welcome,

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whenever feasible, to spend one of their office hours in the labs in order to familiarize themselves and their students with Learning Lab services.

The college ensures that its Learning Lab services are adequate and appropriate within the resource limitations of the college through a series of consultations with faculty and staff, through interaction with other student success and retention committees, and through data collected about its services.

Learning Labs at all campuses provide:

- *Content-Based and How-to Handouts.* These handouts, written by lab staff, are designed to address common questions and troublesome topics that frequently surface in tutoring sessions.
- *Online Study Skills Instructional Modules.* Instructors may require their students to complete these modules, which include note-taking, time-management, textbook reading and test-taking.
- *Review Sessions for Mid-Terms and Finals.* These sessions are advertised and led by Learning Lab Instructional Associates in coordination with other instructors.
- *Computer Support for Students Using Assistive Technology/Equipment.* In collaboration with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), and the Accommodations Assistant, the learning labs maintain an inventory of

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assistive technology and equipment. Assistive technology available in the labs includes JAWS, ZoomText, large monitors, trackball mice, scanners, and a Braille printer.

- *Assessment Preparation.* The Learning Labs provide various means of assistance to students wanting to review for the ACC assessment or Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA). This assistance is provided on a limited basis.
  - The PLATO software supplies a comprehensive array of instructional modules including a THEA alignment for review in many subjects. This program can be tailored to meet individual needs.
  - Print resources, such as THEA guidebooks, outdated texts and workbooks can be loaned for review outside the labs. Assessment packets with answer keys for reading, writing, and math preparation are available at the learning labs and may be copied by students.
  - Tutoring assistance for assessment review is available on a limited basis. Students must come prepared with specific questions.

Learning Labs may also provide Specialized Services that are targeted to assist specific groups of students and faculty particular to different campuses.

- *Workshops targeting Health Science programs.* The Learning Labs coordinate tutoring services for various health sciences courses, such as

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anatomy and physiology, pharmacology, medical terminology and ALHS faculty-led pharmacology workshops at the Eastview Campus, which houses all of ACC's Health Sciences programs. Some of these services are available on a limited basis at other campuses.

- *ABE/GED/ESL tutoring.* The Eastview Learning Lab makes its facility available ten extra hours weekly for this program to provide ABE/GED/ESL students with access to tutoring, instructional software, and other lab resources. All other labs see these students on a drop-in or referral basis.
  
- *Tutoring for deaf and hard-of-hearing students.* The Riverside Learning Lab provides tutors with content expertise who are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) to tutor students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.
  
- *Supplemental Instruction.* At the request of chemistry, mathematics and history instructors at Pinnacle and Cypress Creek campuses, supplemental instruction sessions are set up to improve student retention. Guided study groups, led by students and supervised by tutors, are offered at all campuses.

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- *Additional hours of operation.* At the end of the semester, most Learning Labs extend their hours of operation to accommodate increased demand for services.
  
- *In-lab lending library.* Depending on space availability and funds, learning labs may provide current texts for students to use in the lab. These texts are only available for certain courses.
  
- *Graphing calculator workshops.* Students needing to learn how to better use their graphing calculators are invited to sign up for a hands-on workshop at a time that is convenient to their schedule.

Additionally, Learning Labs provide facilities and computer access for community outreach programs such as the Summer Youth Academy held at the Riverside campus.

Learning Labs – Evaluation of Services: The Learning Labs also ensure that its services are adequate and appropriate to the needs of faculty and students through a comprehensive tracking system of users and evaluation system.

*Computerized Sign-In and Tracking Program*

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As early as 1988, the Learning Labs designed in-house computerized intake programs to facilitate and automate the tracking of student activity in the labs. These early intake programs were replaced by college-wide centralized systems. Developed in collaboration with ACC programmers, these intake programs became more and more sophisticated over the years. The current system, created in Datatel, allows for extensive data generation. Twelve standard traffic reports can be generated instantly and customized data on specific subjects or classes can be queried for reports. As the labs grow and evolve, the program is updated and modified to meet reporting needs of the labs.

The Learning Labs provide extensive annual reports on the lab usage of various types of students to college wide committees to ensure that the services are meeting the mission of the college and student retention and success goals [\[7\]](#).

### **Testing Centers**

Austin Community College also provides academic testing services for students and faculty on each of the six main campuses, the Round Rock Higher Education Center, and the new South Austin Campus through its Academic Testing Centers [\[8\]](#). Using established guidelines, faculty members develop and submit tests for test administration and Testing Center staff members administer and proctor the

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tests. Upon faculty request, the Testing Centers also provide opportunities for students in all disciplines to take re-tests or make-up exams. Additionally, the Testing Centers provide testing for challenge exams, testing to complete “Incomplete” grades, and basic skills assessment. Students enrolled in distance learning courses (OPC) can take course tests at any campus testing center.

Testing Centers provide information about their services, policies and procedures, and hours of operation on their website. Also, individual campuses send regular e-mails to faculty and circulate flyers about expanded hours of operation during peak testing periods.

The Testing Centers compile monthly reports on student usage, the number of tests administered by discipline, and the number of distance learning students using its services. Based upon these reports, the managers are able to determine if the centers are meeting the needs of faculty and students and the need for expanded services during peak times of usage. Furthermore, the Testing Centers conduct semester satisfaction surveys to determine what aspects of their services need modification.

### **Help Desk**

Austin Community College has a centralized Help Desk to assist students, faculty and staff with issues and questions related to administrative systems, hardware, desktop software and networking [9]. Microcomputer support technicians are

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available on each campus to provide individual assistance to more complex issues.