

Academic Support Center LEARNING ADVOCATE

75 Grasslands Road, Valhalla, NY 10595 • phone 914-606-6470. www.sunywcc.edu/asc

The “IT” Girls of I.T.

By Beth Holden



Denise
Blackwell

Lucy
McGuire

Twenty windows, one after the other, rapidly fan out like a deck of playing cards on my desktop, all with menacing red X's. Like *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, the images multiply faster and faster.

“Your computer has been infected with a virus,” blinks on and off across my screen. I call 6665. My computer Karma is so bad that I equate the 666 part of the HELPDESK number with the angel who fell from grace, but it is not the number of the beast I call; it is the number of our helper angels here on campus.

“Helpdesk. Lucy speaking.” Lucy McGuire's voice is that of a late night radio talk show host: deep, sultry, mostly reassured. “Something terrible's happened. Red X's are multiplying like rabbits on my computer screen.”

“Did you reboot?” “Yes,” I answer dutifully. “What's your T- number?” she asks. In a matter of seconds, McGuire has accessed my computer, gotten to the root of the problem, and is taking steps to resolve it.

When the Writing Tutorial's printer went on the blink, Denise Blackwell came to the rescue. Blackwell's voice is melodious, peppy, and efficient. In the eleven years I've worked here, I've called the HELPDESK a multitude of times. Each time, McGuire and Blackwell have always helped me, and yet I have never met either of them. They are but disembodied voices coming over the phone lines until today.

The HELPDESK office is located at the end of a long corridor on the ground floor of the Tech building. It's like going to see the great and powerful Oz, the mastermind who keeps the kingdom running but who we never get to see. There, McGuire and Blackwell sit surrounded by the soft glow of multiple computer screens. They simultaneously answer calls, click on files, and toggle back and forth between computer screens.

It's like a triage unit. When McGuire or Blackwell take a call, they have to act quickly to diagnose what the problem is and which area of IT is going to fix it. McGuire tells me, “If it has to do with communications (wiring, cables, servers) or mail issues, it goes to the Network Group. If it's a PeopleSoft or other systems issue, it goes to the Applications Development group. If it's a problem with PC hardware or software, it goes to the Technical Services group.”

Blackwell tells me, “Calls that can be handled by the helpdesk are done on the spot. For example, printing issues. They need print queues cleared out to get them back up and running, or they've lost their folders/files. We can remotely connect and help them. Remote access is really a benefit because users sometimes have a hard time explaining what's happening on their end.”

I am amazed at their acumen with the computer. I ask them how they have learned all of this. Both tell me that they have acquired the knowledge over time and a lot of it is self-taught. Combined, they have over fifty years of experience, which makes them exceptionally well-suited to deal with the active help desk. And it is extremely active. In 2010, the two of them alone fielded a total of 12,920 calls.

Between the main campus and all extension sites, there are 3,102 PC's and Laptops and 2,578 of these are at the Valhalla campus. This is up from the 100 student computers that were on campus in the 1980's. When McGuire and Blackwell first started, the college wasn't using PC's and was connected to Westchester County's mainframe using 'terminals.' Blackwell tells me, “In the student labs, software was run from 5 ¼ inch floppy disks which were maintained by the lab techs. Students would come to the lab window and check out software as needed. Lab techs also provided instructional help to students.”

McGuire adds that one of the major changes the college went through was when it moved from a mainframe environment to PC-based client/server computing. In an industry that is constantly changing, keeping up with all the technology is difficult at best. McGuire and Blackwell stay ahead of the curve by taking classes in new applications and attending training sessions. Their advice: spend a little time learning.

McGuire adds, "There are so many free resources and great tutorials. Usually the basics are the same when you're upgraded to a new program. It's like driving a new car. You have to learn where everything is before you can drive it."

Perhaps the biggest surprise to them over the years is that people are so resistant to change. McGuire tells me, "I've seen this across the board. It surprises me when the technology is always to make things easier and to make their jobs better. When we first went to PC's, people didn't want to give up their typewriters. People are slow to embrace change, but once they do, it's the next best thing to sliced bread."

Being that this is a call center, I couldn't resist asking them if they have ever received any strange requests. "Has anyone ever called to order a pizza?" I joke. We laugh, and Blackwell tells me, "Once the message that popped up on the computer screen said *press any key to continue*. The person asked, 'Where's any key on the keyboard?' They thought there was an actual key called 'any key.'"

"My strange calls have been from people that are not computer-related at all," McGuire muses. One of the strangest calls that she ever received was a parent calling to contact their child. She was asked if she could bring the child to the phone. She remembers others who called for lunch specials and prices in the cafeteria, bus schedules and weather conditions in Valhalla. I imagine working the phone lines might have disadvantages as the anonymity of it all might make it easier for someone to unleash their inner demons. McGuire admits, "Sometimes that does happen, but most of the time, people here are courteous and friendly. I seldom meet them," McGuire continues, "But I get to know a lot of super people. We start chatting. You fill in the gaps while you're waiting."

Blackwell adds, "A lot of times it's the client on the other end who starts the conversation."

"It's nice. It makes them feel comfortable," McGuire muses. And it's comfortable knowing that these computer whizzes are just a phone call away the next time a campus computer goes on the blink.

Spring 2012 Academic Support Center Workshops

Math Workshops:

- 2/29: Signed Numbers
- 3/7: Solving Linear Equations
- 3/20: Graphing 101
- 3/21, 3/27, & 4/6: Factoring
- 4/11: Solving Word Problems
- 4/17: Radicals
- 4/18: The Quadratic Formula

College Algebra:

- 2/29: Functions
- 4/4: Logs
- 4/11: Trigonometry

Improve Your Study Skills and Reduce Test-Taking Anxiety Workshops:

- 2/22: Manage Your Time, Learn to Read Your Text
- 2/29: Develop Your Note-Taking Skills
- 3/7: Improve Your Memory Techniques
- 3/21: Identify Your Learning Style
- 3/28: Reduce Your Test Anxiety
- 4/4: Decrease Your Math Anxiety
- 4/11: Predict Test Questions
- 4/18: How to Take the Test
- 4/25: Review of Study Skills and

Exploring the Process of Writing:

- 2/1: Brainstorming/ Organizing
- 2/8: Writing the Introduction & Thesis
- 2/15: Focusing the Paper
- 2/22: Developing Paragraphs
- 2/29: Writing Conclusions
- 3/7: Revising the Paper

Review Your Grammar & Punctuation Workshops:

- 2/21: Build Sentences
- 2/28: Verb Forms-Agreement

Science Workshops:

- 2/1: Microscope, Eye/Ear, Metric System, Density, Significant Figures
- 2/8: Microscope, Eye/Ear, Metric System, Density-Graphing, Significant Figures
- 2/15: Tissues, Metric/ Titration 1, Chemical Conversions
- 2/22: Tissue Types, Blood, Ascorbic Acid pt 2, Metric System, Chemical Conversions
- 2/29: Muscle Phys, Blood, Ascorbic Acid, Metric System, Nomenclature
- 3/7: Muscle Anatomy, Blood, Probability/Chi Square, Naming Ionic Compounds
- 3/21: Axial Skeleton, Cardiovascular System, Mendel Genetics, Naming Ionic Compounds
- 3/28: Appendicular Skeleton, Cardiovascular System, Codon/ Anti Codons, Genetic Nomenclature, Balancing Chemical Equations
- 4/4: Skeleton, Arteries & Veins, Genetics, Balancing Chemical Equations
- 4/11: Nerves, Digestion, Genetics, Stoichiometry
- 4/18: Endocrine, Digestion, Genetics Stoichiometry
- 4/25: Reproductive System, Urinary System, Genetics, Stoichiometry

For more workshops information call:

Math, Reading & ESL: 914-606-6470

Writing Tutorial: 914-606-7853

Science Tutorial: 914-606-6906

BRUSH UP YOUR MATH; THE MYMATHTEST WAY

By Madalena Mansinho

The Academic Support Center, in collaboration with the Math Department, the Testing and Assessment Center and **Pearson Publishing**, introduced **MYMATHTEST**, a **FREE and interactive online program that helps to assess a student's** mastery skills and provides an opportunity to refresh forgotten or weakened math skills prior to taking the Placement Exam.

Students who enroll in the MYMATHTEST program at the Academic Support Center are provided with an initial 25 question diagnostic exam that will determine the topics that need to be refreshed. Once a student completes the diagnostic exam, MYMATHTEST will generate a personalized Study Plan. Practice questions in the Study Plan come with assistance via videos, step-by-step instruction, and other types of study aids all available online 24hrs/7days a week. Additionally, students enrolled in MYMATHTEST are also provided with Tutorial Assistance from the Academic Support Center. The values in each of the MYMATHTEST Study Plan practice questions are algorithmic; they change each time a student accesses the program and include both free-response questions and multiple-choice questions.

MYMATHTEST is a wonderful brush-up tool. It is completely online, interactive and, best of all, free to all incoming students at Westchester Community College. Know any students planning to take the Accuplacer Placement Exam?

MYMATHTEST can help!

For more information, please contact the Academic Support Center at 914-606-6470.

Technology and the Science Tutorial

By JoAnn Gala

Ever have the burning desire to view a cat or fetal pig dissection without all the muss and fuss? Go Online! Need help with **Metric System Conversion? Go to our website and see our video. Don't know a Punnet Square from Times Square? Help is** a mouse-click away.

The Academic Support Center Science Tutorial is always looking for ways to reach students and technology. Our website is just bursting with information to make even the most extreme sciencephobe change their tune. Mastering the placement and function of internal organs for cats and/or pigs is instrumental in passing several of the Biology and Anatomy labs here at Westchester Community College.

In order to minimize the wait time for tutors and to allow our students to access this information from the comfort of their own homes, below are some links for you to check out:

Cat Dissection

<http://www.bio.psu.edu/faculty/strauss/anatomy/circ/circulat.htm>

<http://biology.kenyon.edu/heithausp/cat-tutorial/welcome.htm>

In addition to dissections, we also have several other techno tools that can help you when you can't get to us.

A few years ago, we found ourselves spending weeks and weeks every semester teaching the metric system to students who came into the tutorial. As a result, we created this vidcast using Camtasia and linked it to our ASC website. The results have far exceeded our expectations in terms of success. Professors are sending more and more of their students into the Science Tutorial for reinforcement and clarification in learning about metric system conversion. Check out the link:

http://www.sunywcc.edu/student_services/academic_support/academic_support_center/vidcast/Metric%20System%20html/Metric%20System%20html.html

We have many more examples of technology-based learning materials—please feel free to drop by the Science Tutorial (SCI 219) and find out how we can help you. Remember, every degree requirement on the campus requires two science courses! Let us help you complete these courses, learn to love science, change your major to neurophysiology, win the Nobel Peace Prize and conquer world hunger. Or, just come in and let us help you succeed in your science classes.

The ASC Science Tutorial is located in SCI 219 (Science Building).

Online Tutoring Service at WCC!

By Bishara Al-Akeel

ASKATUTOR is just one of the services that the Academic Support Center, located in the Library, room G31, provides to WCC students. ASKATUTOR started in fall 2007 as a pilot project and was completely implemented in fall 2008.

The Academic Support Center's ASKATUTOR service continues to be well-received by students, especially those who need help with writing assignments. Unedited students' comments from our yearly student survey include: 1) "They were there when I needed them, and their response was helpful. I would highly recommend the on-line tutor for anyone who couldn't make it to the tutorial center." 2) "Online tutoring is really great, I have recommended to other students that like me have a tight schedule, so it is easy for us do it on line. Online tutoring has been really helpful to me. Thanks to every tutor. You are the best." 3) "I think the online tutoring service is fabulous! I have gotten quick responses, positive feedback and great critiques that have helped me with my writing as a returning student. Keep up the great program!"

We do intend to keep up the program, and we hope that faculty and students will use the service for future assignments. Below, some frequently asked questions about ASKATUTOR for inquiring minds who want to know more.

What is ASKATUTOR? It is an email-based online tutoring assistance for students enrolled in ESL, Math, Reading, Science, and Writing who need help but are unable to come for tutoring during the hours that the tutorials are open. The main goal of ASKATUTOR is to help the Academic Support Center provide better access to all students and improve the center's services.

Who are the tutors behind the scene? The tutors who will respond to the students' inquiries are some of the best qualified ASC tutors. These tutors are assigned by each tutorial coordinator. The tutors will check the ASKATUTOR email box twice a day to reply to students quickly.

How do I access ASKATUTOR? To use this service, simply go to our web site www.sunywcc.edu/asc and click on the ASKATUTOR logo. Read the "What can you expect from us?" instructions on the second page, then click on the "Go to ASKATUTOR" link at the bottom of the page.

How long will it take to receive a response from a tutor? Answers to your questions will be addressed within 24 to 48 hours. Response time will be longer over the weekends and holidays.

Can I send my work as an attachment if I have more than one question or an essay? If attachments are to be sent, they have to be sent from a personal email address to the respective ASKATUTOR email address posted on the web site.

[Academic Support Center, LIB G-31:](#)

Math, ESL, Reading : M-F: 7:30a-5p.
Evening Hours on Tuesdays & Wednesdays
begin the week of January 23rd.
(914) 606-6470

[ASC Science Tutorial, SCI 219:](#)

General Biology, Biological Science,
Chemistry, Anatomy & Physiology,
Microbiology, Non-major Physical Sciences,
Respiratory Care and Foods/Nutrition, and
Emergency Medical Service.
M, Th & F 9a-5p, T & W 9a-6p.
(914) 606-6906

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[ASC Writing Tutorial, LIB G-13:](#)

Basic Writing I & II, Comp & Lit I & II,
papers in all disciplines. M-F 9a-5p. Evening
Hours on Tuesdays & Wednesdays begin the
week of January 23rd.
(914) 606-7853

[Mount Vernon Center :](#)

Reading, Writing, and Math:
M, T, W, Th 11a-8p, F 12p-4p, & Sat 10a-4p.
Spanish & Computers: Sat 10a-2p.
Accounting: M & T 11a-12p & Sat 10a-2p.
Principles of Inorganic Chemistry: Sat 12p-4p
(914) 606-7220