

FAQ about the AVC Learning Center

Updated: Spring 2015

What is a Learning Specialist?

Learning Specialists are instructors who use formal and informal diagnostic tools to evaluate the way a student learns best. The AVC Learning Center currently has two different categories of faculty learning specialists (full-time positions): Writing Center and Math Center, for which coordination of each is the function of the Learning Specialist assigned to these centers. Adjunct learning specialists are typically hired to perform instructional duties in Lancaster and/or Palmdale in areas such as academic skills, ESL, math, reading, and writing. The college catalog lists LAC (Learning Assistance Center) credit and non-credit courses, all taught by Learning Specialists.

What do Learning Specialists do?

The primary function of the Learning Specialist is to work with students individually to improve their ability to learn, those referred by discipline faculty and counselors via the Learning Center Referral Form or electronically via the Early Alert system on MyAVC. The course in place for individual learning improvement plans (ILIPs) and workshops on various topics for groups is LAC 901, Supervised Learning Assistance. Learning Specialists also teach LAC 900, Supervised Tutoring, a positive attendance course through which students receive tutoring. Tutor training for program-specific areas is coordinated by the Learning Specialist who provides training in tandem with the Tutorial Specialist. Learning Specialists also teach credit LAC tutor training courses, which meet international certification standards of the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA), and other Learning Center courses.

Oftentimes, Learning Specialists act as consultants to discipline faculty and counselors about student needs and also about instructional design and learning theory. They also serve on committees such as Academic Senate, Assessment, Basic Skills, Distance Education, Faculty Development, Matriculation, Student Success and Equity, as well as engage in projects affiliated with Student Service areas with grants such as Title V, Student Success, and VTEA (career education). The two full-time Learning Specialists serve as leaders of the Learning Center Advisory Committee.

When do Learning Specialists work?

Currently, one learning specialist is a twelve month employee (35 hours per week) who teaches LAC courses primarily in Lancaster, and the other is a ten month employee (38 hours per week) who teaches LAC courses in Lancaster and at the Palmdale Center. She may also be given extra teaching assignments during intersession and summer. The work schedules of the full-time learning specialists vary, with their preferred schedule reviewed and approved by the dean at the beginning of a term. The twelve month employee arranges when she will take her ten Flex days at the beginning of the academic year (per contract). Adjunct learning specialists teach at the Lancaster campus and Palmdale Center. Their hours vary each term depending on funding.

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What is a Tutorial Specialist?

The AVC Learning Center has four Tutorial Specialist positions: Math, General Tutoring and SI, Reading, and Writing. The Tutorial Specialist is a paraprofessional position that requires expertise in tutorial theory and training as well as in the skill or content area. Tutorial Specialists are primarily responsible for the recruiting, hiring, training and supervising of the peer tutors, including the monitoring of data collection and analyzing data results. They conduct Learning Center orientations and 411 sessions in which they demonstrate practical skills. They may also develop or modify flyers, forms, and documents. The Tutorial Specialist and the Learning Specialist work as a team in each area to develop and supervise the tutorial programs and services. The Tutorial Specialist positions are twelve months, except Reading which is eleven months.

What is LAC 900?

(From the Course Outline of Record, based upon Title V guidelines – see attached)

Upon faculty/counselor referral, students will receive tutoring in a designated subject area in the Learning Center. Tutorial sessions will focus on not only the course content of the subject tutored but also the study skills necessary to be successful in college. Cumulative progress plus attendance records will be maintained for this non-credit, open-entry/open-exit course. No tuition will be charged, nor will grades be received. The course will not appear on the student's transcript. (Students may repeat as many times as content faculty or Learning Center faculty deem necessary as long as repeatability is consistent with District policy.)

What are the Student Learning Outcomes for LAC 900 and 901?

The Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for these courses are located on the website of the SLOs Committee (<http://www.avc.edu> >Administration > Campus Organizations > SLOs Committee). Hardcopies are also given to adjuncts upon employment.

What is the difference between LAC 900 and LAC 901?

LAC 901 is Supervised Learning Assistance. It is also a positive attendance course, but students in this course meet directly with the Learning Specialist (instructor) instead of a peer tutor. After using various assessment techniques (observations, inventories/surveys, questionnaires, exercises, exams, Likert-scaled instruments, etc.), the Learning Specialist and the student develop an Individual Learning Improvement Plan (ILIP) for which the Learning Specialist works with the student on the skills needed for improvement and makes referrals to other learning specialists, campus departments and services (counseling, Office of Students with Disabilities, etc.), and instructional resources such as workshops, tutoring, computer-assisted instruction, videos, and Web-based information. Each ILIP session is assessed for SLOs via a learning evaluation form completed by the student. For LAC 901 workshops, SLOs assessment is done via a student post-test.

What is a peer tutor?

The philosophy of peer tutoring is based upon the belief that good students (*tutors*) can model appropriate learning behavior for other students (*tutees*). Generally, tutors, even

though they are very good students, can remember what it is like to learn new concepts. Peer tutors can empathize with tutees. Since they are students themselves, tutors can understand the pressures of making good grades, the need to work while going to school, and the pressures of socializing, growing up, raising a family, etc. The role of the tutor is not to give tutees answers, but to help the tutees learn to find answers for themselves. Tutors, of course, do answer some questions directly, but in doing so, they model the appropriate thinking and language behavior for the particular subject.

Peer tutors are recommended by discipline faculty and receive a minimum of ten hours of training as required by Title 5 (State of California Education Code). A number of the AVC Learning Center tutors are internationally certified by CRLA and so have a great deal more training than required by the Education Code. Despite this, AVC tutors make considerably less pay than their counterparts in the K-12 system here in the Antelope Valley.

What is the difference between General Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction?

Supplemental Instruction is a copyright term by the University of Missouri, Kansas City. The term “instruction” is a misnomer. Peer tutors hired to be Supplemental Instruction leaders receive more training in group tutoring techniques. Otherwise, the selection criteria, training, pay, and level of expertise is the same.

The primary difference between the services is that Supplemental Instruction is targeted at historically difficult courses – courses that have a D, F and Withdraw rate of 30% or more. The SI leader is associated with courses taught by a particular instructor, attends the course, models good student behavior, and leads the SI study sessions. For example, Prof. Langhjahr will have one SI leader for his anatomy sections while Prof. Sullivan will have another.

General tutoring sessions are not instructor specific, nor are they restricted to courses with low success rates. Supplemental Instruction targets historically difficult courses while General Tutoring targets at risk students, though not all students seeking tutoring are “at risk.”

What is Early Alert?

The Early Alert online form on MyAVC allows discipline faculty and counselors to refer to appropriate services a student who seems to be struggling. To date, this program is under-utilized by faculty and receives re-evaluation each school year.