

Online Tutoring Adds Value For Students

WRITTEN BY CRISTA SOUZATHURSDAY, 09 MARCH 2017



Online tutoring services offered through the California Community Colleges (CCC) [Online Education Initiative](#) (OEI) appear to be a valuable resource for those students who use the service, which is easy to access and free to students.

The NetTutor 24/7 online tutoring service from Link-Systems International (LSI) is available to all California community colleges to purchase, and can be provided to online or face-to-face students, noted Dr. Barbara Illowsky, Chief Academic Affairs Officer for the OEI. To access it, online students simply need to click on a link within the course shell in Canvas. For face-to-face students, colleges can offer NetTutor as an off-hours supplement to their on-campus tutoring centers through a general tutoring course shell or their internal technology systems.

First-hand Experience

Illowsky last summer got a chance to experience the online tutoring service first-hand while teaching two online courses: intermediate algebra and elementary statistics. To encourage students to try online tutoring, she created an extra-credit assignment to seek live online help via NetTutor.

The result: Nearly 60 percent of the students who passed the courses completed the NetTutor assignment – and every one of these students went back to the tool at least one more time during the term.

“This, to me, says that students find value in online tutoring,” Illowsky said, noting that verbal feedback from students about their experience with the NetTutor service was also positive.

While Illowsky would not speak to how online tutoring contributed to students’ ultimate success in the summer courses, it is worth noting that among the students who failed the courses, none had completed the extra-credit NetTutor assignment, attended on-campus tutoring, or asked Illowsky for assistance. However, before drawing any conclusions, more needs to be understood about why students choose not to use the services provided to them, Illowsky said.

Currently, adoption among colleges is fairly robust across the system. From July through December 2016, **22 of the OEI’s 24 pilot colleges offered the NetTutor online tutoring service, while 29 non-pilot colleges also offered it.**

NetTutor was originally provided for students in online courses to provide them with tutoring when they cannot attend in-person tutoring. However, students in on-campus courses can also utilize NetTutor when their tutoring

centers are closed, such as at night and on the weekends, or when their colleges don't have tutors in certain courses.

Colleges systemwide can obtain the NetTutor services at a discounted rate of \$25/hour through a contract negotiated by the Foundation for California Community Colleges. [Click here for a fact sheet.](#)

Easy To Get Started

From a faculty-user's standpoint, Illowsky said integrating NetTutor into her course shell and setting up office hours via NetTutor's WorldWideWhiteboard collaboration software was simple to do. Once set up, she said it was surprisingly easy to connect with students and navigate the system.

Other faculty members across the community colleges also had good things to say about what the online tutoring service offers.

"I feel that I have support – I'm not alone," said Xochitl Tirado, English Faculty at Imperial Valley College. "I'm not trying to develop other activities for individual students when my time is so limited."

"NetTutor is a great opportunity for our students who are struggling to get a little extra help," said Jacquyn Vetter, English instructor at Ohlone College. "We are still providing that initial resource and providing the feedback for students, but if they need additional help – especially in the hours that we may not be awake – NetTutor's there for them."

"I know it seems like NetTutor is one more tool for faculty to learn," Vetter added, "But I can guarantee that this one's worth that."

Learn more about online tutoring services offered through the OEI at CCOnlineEd.org/student-success-resources/tutoring.

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