Henry & Edith Cerullo Learning Assistance Center

Tutoring Center ~ Math Walk-In Center ~ Writing Center
English Language Resource Center ~ Tutoring Center at the Meadowlands

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Professional Tutors On The Road to Medical School

Every year the CLAC is proud to have employed professional tutors who have not only benefitted the students of BCC, but have gone into fields that directly benefit others as well. This past year has been no different.

Professional Tutor Krystian Piatek has moved on from working at BCC to attend Medical School, and former Professional Tutor, and now BCC Lecturer, Michael Pesa, has begun the application process for medical programs.

We had the opportunity to ask them each a few questions about the choice they made to go into medicine and dedicate themselves to helping others.

First we talked with Krystian Piatek, who has just begun his medical education at a prestigious medical school in Poland.

Why Medical School and why in Poland?

Put simply, I chose medical school primarily because I want to help people (as I hope is the case with all others seeking to pursue a degree in the medical field). On a more personal note though, I have a rather close and large extended family and have therefore had many opportunities to visit the Emergency Room. After seeing members of my own family undergo various surgeries to remove cancerous masses or repairing a severed finger, I felt a desire to be that individual who helps those who are sick or injured. I felt my calling while listening to the spinal surgery procedure my cousin had just successfully undergone. The ingenuity and creativity involved in healing a patient captured my intrigue. It became apparent just how much medicine has progressed and how far it still has to go. I have always enjoyed thinking outside the box and finding new solutions and...

Grants as Far as the Eye Can See

The Cerullo Learning Assistance Center is proud to assist the BCC community through a variety of Federal Grants.

The CLAC, through the Title V grant, offers In-Class Tutoring for Developmental Math and English Basic Skills as well as specialized tutoring in the Math Walk-In Center and the Writing Center. For more information about the CLACs Title V initiative, Basic Skills Tutorial Supervisor Jasmine Delacruz (L-125) can offer assistance to students or faculty.

Through the STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math) Grant the CLAC offers Supplemental Instruction as well as one-on-one tutoring in Science, Technology and Engineering classes. CLAC STEM Supervisor Luis De Abreu (A-113) works with the Math and Science faculty as well as their students to insure positive results. Luis co-ordinates the SI program with CLAC Manager Margaret Maria Roidi.

The CLAC also offers special tutoring for students in the Turning Points for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) Grant. Students involved with this initiative received permanent specialized tutoring as well as In-Class support.

Cont. on p. 2
Tutors Making a Difference: Michael Pesa and Krystian Piatek

Cont. from p.1

approaches to various problems. The medical field is where I see my passion for science and innovation merging to create new and improved health care procedures and medicine.

I chose to attend the medical school in Poland for a few reasons. The school has an excellent and well respected English medical program and I will be able to work here in the US upon completion of my degree. Another reason is that I am half Polish and have never visited Poland. This is a great chance to learn more about my heritage and culture. Perhaps the main reason is that European medicine tends to have a different approach than I have seen here in the US. My hope is to gain a new perspective and some new ideas which I can incorporate in my medical career here. I believe strongly in learning broadly and familiarizing myself with as many points of view as possible. Aside from contributing to innovation, you never know when a seemingly random fact can help save a life! Also, who can pass up the chance to explore Europe?

What type of medicine are you most interested in studying?

So far I have only really experienced the ER. I've logged over 60 hours of shadowing in the ER and loved every minute of it. There's no telling what may come through those doors at any given moment. You get to see all sorts of things working in the ER; from re-inflating a collapsed lung, to reassuring worried, first-time parents that their child's sniffing is just a cold. You get to see many things in the ER and it is always a unique and rewarding experience. However, I would like to experience what the other specialties such as neurosurgery and pediatric surgery are like before I set my mind on one.

The road to becoming an MD is notoriously rigorous – how have you been preparing?

Well I have met people who have attended the same school I will be going to. They have been kind enough to answer any and all of my questions from "what textbooks are worth purchasing?" to "where are the best restaurants in town?" Since I will be studying abroad, a great deal of my time has been spent taking care of Visas, passports, currency exchange, and anything else that I may need access to while I'm in Poland. It also doesn't hurt to work in the tutoring center where I spend a lot of time teaching the material that would have dissolved away otherwise. Tutoring has really been a great way to make sure all the information stays fresh so I won't have to back-track while I am in school.

What will you be able to take from your experiences working in the CLAC?

Aside from keeping the material fresh, my time in the CLAC was an excellent way to practice interacting with total strangers on an hourly basis in a way that's very similar to what I will be doing with patients. Being able to interact well with people who are relying on you whether to help get a better grade or to save his or her life is one of the most important skills a doctor can have. The patients need to feel comfortable and feel that they can trust their doctor in order to ensure the best care. And of course, I can't forget all the great people and new friends I have met that have really made working as a tutor an enjoyable experience!

I enjoy potato and cheese stuffed pierogies, but the fruit-filled one kind of frighten me. Your thoughts?

You're missing out! My favorite are the blueberry pierogi my babcia (grandmother) makes. It's more like a dessert than a meal though!

Next, we spoke with current BCC Lecturer Michael Pesa about his plans for enrolling in Medical School.

What first made you think of applying to Med school?

I like people and I enjoy helping them. I loved studying medical science related topics in college / graduate school, so that all fits together nicely in medicine.

What do you believe is going to be the most challenging part?

Time management, same as undergrad and graduate school - I'm just expecting it will be a lot more intense. There's a tremendous workload that just doesn't seem possible to fit into a 24-hour day.

What will you be able to take from your experiences working in the CLAC and teaching at BCC?

Tutoring/teaching take very complicated scientific concepts and explaining them to someone in simpler terms but without completely dumbing it down. I think it's very important to remember that when speaking with patients.

In that regard, I'd say teaching is similar to being someone's primary doctor, explaining things to a patient for the first time, while tutoring is more similar to being a doctor in a team or a second opinion where you may have a different idea/approach than another person, but can't "bash" that other person while explaining yourself.

In the 1958 hit single "Summertime Blues," Eddie Cochran states that "there ain't no cure for the summertime blues." With the advent of modern antidepressants such as fluoxetine, paroxetine, and other Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), along with the growth in psychotherapeutic techniques such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and even Albert Ellis’ Rational-Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT), is that still true?

No.
SMARTHINKING:
Online Tutoring at BCC

The CLAC has been collaborating with Smarthinking since the fall of 2002. For the past 11 years, BCC students have been provided with the opportunity to utilize free tutorial assistance at their convenience, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Students may choose from a variety of Smarthinking services which include live sessions with an “e-structor,” research or paragraph paper submission through the online writing lab, and asynchronous question submission. Smarthinking also allows students to schedule online tutoring sessions based on tutor availability.

With Smarthinking, BCC students experience online tutoring that is simple and always available. Students connect to live tutors from any computer that has Internet access, with no special software installation or equipment required.

Using an advanced queuing system providing little or no wait time, students are connected on-demand with an expert tutor. Students work one-on-one, in real-time with a tutor, communicating using virtual whiteboard technology. Scientific and mathematical notation, symbols, geometric figures, graphing and freehand drawing can be rendered quickly and easily.

Additionally, students can submit a paragraph or essay for individualized critique by expert writing tutors. By completing a simple form that provides the tutor with information on the writing assignment and requested areas of assistance, students can receive the help they need with their writing assignment.

Students can also request a review by an ESL, Technical Writing or Creative Writing expert when appropriate. Upon completion, students are notified their review is available. Students receive feedback outlining the strengths, areas in need of improvement, and specific guidance to help them improve the quality and content of their writing.

Students who do not need instant feedback can choose to submit an asynchronous question. Using the virtual whiteboard technology, students submit their question to a tutor and the student is notified when their comprehensive response is available.

Students who prefer to plan ahead can schedule a 30 minute appointment with a tutor of their choice. At the scheduled time, the student and tutor connect live using the virtual whiteboard technology.

Supplemental Instruction and In-Class Tutoring

The Cerullo Learning Assistance Center is proud to offer multiple options for tutoring based on faculty or student need.

Supplemental Instruction (SI). Originally designed at the University of Missouri—Kansas City, Supplemental Instruction (SI) is a learning enhancement program based on the Socratic method; ultimately, the SI model combines “what to learn with how to learn.”

The SI Leader, a specially trained tutor, attends every class of the participating course/section. SI Leaders are model students; they take notes while planning their weekly SI sessions and follow the faculty member’s methodology.

SI sessions are scheduled in the CLAC based on the availability of the students from the participating course/section. Each session is designed to help students review course material while developing effective study habits.

SI Leaders work in conjunction with the faculty and CLAC Supervisors. This closely monitored service begins the first day of the semester.

In-Class Tutoring is designed to provide students with additional support during class. An In-Class Tutor attends class on a weekly basis and actively assists students who may not seek help on their own.

In-Class Tutors encourage students to utilize the resources of the CLAC and become more approachable faculty with questions and concerns regarding course material. In-Class Tutors may also arrange study groups upon faculty and students’ request.

Although In-Class Tutors work closely with faculty members, they do not serve as teaching assistants or conduct lectures/labs. In-Class Tutorial support is most successful with courses/sections in which students are given hands-on activities during class time.

Writing Center Supervisor Attends Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference

Writing Center Supervisor John Findura was one of a handful of writers accepted to this year’s prestigious Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, held on the campus of Middlebury College in Vermont.

The 88 year-old program, the nations’ oldest, was initially the impulse of Robert Frost, who attended for 29 years. The highly competitive process for acceptance centers on a manuscript-in-progress as well as past publications.

“Contributors,” as the attendees are called, spend ten days in workshops, lectures, and readings in between meetings with agents, editors, and publishers from the most respected literary institutions in the country.

This year, John attended readings, lectures, craft classes and workshops with Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner Louise Glück, three-term US Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky, Bollingen Prize winner and Academy of American Poets Chancellor Frank Bidart, and worked on his latest manuscript, Submerged, with poet and Kingsley Tufts Award winner Tom Sleigh.

A widely published poet and critic, with work appearing in dozens of journals such as Mid-American Review, Verse, and Pleiades, John received his MFA in Poetry from The New School. His manuscript Glossolalia was a finalist for the 2013 Colorado Prize in Poetry.
a wide range of important topics in mathematics as well as a number of invited paper sessions involving topics from knot theory, commutative algebra, complex geometry, coding theory, mathematical finance, and climate modeling.

As though that were not enough to fill anyone’s head, there were thirteen different contributed paper sessions, six minicourses, two workshops, and a short course on The Mathematics of Games and Puzzles led by Art Benjamin.

The Mathematical Association of America is the largest professional society that focuses on mathematics accessible at the undergraduate level. Their members include university, college, and high school teachers; graduate and undergraduate students; pure and applied mathematicians; computer scientists; statisticians; and many others in academia, government, business, and industry.

The mission of the MAA is “to advance the mathematical sciences, especially at the collegiate level.”

Next year’s MathFest will be held from August 6th—9th in Portland, Oregon.