LEARNING COMMONS

The Learning Commons serves as a centralized resource for academic support to students as well as all other members of the university community. In particular, the Learning Commons provides support to students seeking help in their course work, to students with metacognitive development goals, and to students with access needs.

There are two Learning Commons locations: for the Mount Carmel Campus, the Commons is located in the north wing of the Arnold Bernhard Library (phone: 203-582-8628); on the North Haven Campus, the Commons is on the second floor of the School of Law Center (phone: 203-582-5252). Students and others seeking academic support can inquire in person or by phone about accessing the Learning Commons services.

Peer Academic Support

Many students find that their needs for academic support are satisfied by a combination of professors’ office hours and work with a peer educator. The Learning Commons selects, trains and manages a range of peer educators who interact with students during class meetings and outside of the classroom, depending on the course and the peer educational program. Students who have questions should contact the Learning Commons to determine what types of assistance are available for their classes. The following peer educator programs are staffed by students who have earned an A or A- in the class, who have been recommended by faculty, and who have passed a Learning Commons hiring and training process:

- **Peer Tutors** – The peer tutoring program is certified by the College Reading and Learning Association to the highest level of tutor training available (master level). Tutors are available by appointment at both the Mount Carmel and North Haven Learning Commons for individual and small group meetings. Supporting a wide range of courses from the 100- to graduate level, peer tutors work with students to understand course content, build sustainable and effective learning skills, and plan strategically for test preparation, paper writing or project management as needed.

- **Peer Fellows** – The peer fellow program is led by a certified coordinator trained at UMKC’s International Center for Supplemental Instruction. Peer fellows support courses identified by faculty and the Learning Commons for their challenging nature. Meeting students in weekly voluntary group study sessions, peer fellows model a critical understanding of course content and effective study methods. Peer fellows inform work with students by attending all class lectures and coordinating with faculty.

- **Peer Catalysts** – The peer catalyst program primarily supports Quinnipiac’s general education curriculum, with the goals of increasing learning through interaction, building student autonomy and promoting intellectual engagement. Peer catalysts attend and participate in all class meetings, serving to facilitate class discussion and to exemplify the behaviors of successful college learning. Peer catalysts translate between professors and students, contributing to a more successful transition from high school into college, from course to course in the disciplines, and from general education to the disciplines. They also serve as resources to new students unfamiliar with the workings of the university.

- **Study Tables** – Peer educators (tutors, fellows or catalysts) hold open-door sessions at regular times throughout the week to field questions from students in classes identified as high-demand activities. Study table users can have specific questions answered or engage in more wide-ranging group discussion. When appropriate, study table leaders refer students to peer tutors, peer fellows or full-time staff at the Learning Commons to address their needs for academic support.

Support for Students with Disabilities

The Office of Student Accessibility provides students with disabilities equal access to all university activities and programs. OSA is an integral part of the Learning Commons at both the Mount Carmel Campus and North Haven Campus, coordinating between the academic support programs and students registered with the office. Accommodations are provided in compliance with university policy, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students seeking accommodations will meet with the OSA director or an ADA coordinator; upon review of appropriate medical documentation, the OSA staff will determine appropriate accommodations and will facilitate their implementation. Collaborating with all university departments, the OSA assists students as they develop self-advocacy skills and pursue their academic goals. Questions can be directed to access@qu.edu or 203-582-7600.

Professional Academic Support

The Learning Commons offers individual support from professional staff who help students make better choices about their learning. The Learning Commons is the place students go when they want to achieve a level of performance that they wouldn’t be capable of on their own. Academic coaches work specifically with first-year students to help them navigate the expectations of academic life at the university. Academic specialists meet with students who have finished their first year of study. Both coach and specialist meet one-on-one with students seeking to augment their study skills, time-management practices, reading and comprehension strategies, problem-solving, motivation, test preparation and organization skills. Academic coaches and academic specialists have advanced degrees in a number of fields that allow them to support the cognitive aspects of the college student experience as they affect academic performance. Academic specialists also act as consultants to the schools and college, working with faculty and departments to develop intentional support measures. First-year students begin working with their academic coaches early. Students typically seek out academic specialists to continue the work begun with their coach or when they find that their academic challenges extend beyond problems with a single class or cluster of concepts. Appointments can be made with academic coaches at the Mount Carmel Learning Commons. Appointments with academic specialists can be made at both the Mount Carmel and North Haven Learning Commons locations.

The Learning Commons’ Role in Retention

The Learning Commons serves as a centralized location for programming, for information exchange, and for practice, all of which promote academic achievement. All faculty and staff at Quinnipiac can submit referrals to help students achieve their academic goals though the Learning Commons’ academic referral system. Learning Commons staff coordinate with faculty advisers, Student Affairs and Residence Life staff, and the college and school deans to get ahead of student challenges before they turn into crises. Faculty also collaborate with learning specialists to develop unique in-class interventions to develop specific and transferrable thinking and learning skills as they manifest themselves in the classroom and beyond. Furthermore, Learning Commons staff serve to assist the Academic Integrity Board’s mission of
informing ethical behavior and remediating offenses. In all its activities, the Learning Commons engages in a consistent practice of information gathering as a means of better understanding the needs of the Quinnipiac student and planning the activities and programs to meet those needs.