The Role of an Academic Coach at Trinity Christian College

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THANK YOU for your willingness to serve as an academic coach through Trinity’s Office of Learning Services. The student with whom you will be working has expressed interest in working with a successful TCC student who could help with organizational issues and/or accountability.

Motivation, personal goals, family support, emotional health – the list goes on – all contribute to an individual’s attitude toward academics. There may be attentional issues or family/life complications which interfere with academic progress. Some TCC students work many hours each week or shoulder family responsibilities and still try to balance a full-time academic load. Others may not have had the benefit of quality teaching or helpful academic role models.

You’re not a trained educational specialist or a personal counselor. Please refer your student to the director of the OLS or to Trinity’s Cooper Career/Counseling Services if you feel there are significant academic concerns or personal issues which are blocking progress. Neither are you hired to tutor in a particular course. Your role is to help a student get everything “going in the right direction.” There are two main components involved in serving as an academic coach: serving as an accountability mentor and helping with organizational skills.

Serving as an Accountability Mentor
Helping insure that your student incorporates some of the advance planning and prioritizing skills outlined below and holding him/her accountable for attending all classes and staying in communication with instructors (another essential component of college success) is the tricky part. You’ll likely need to play both the good cop and the bad cop roles, figuring out when to encourage and when to challenge.

At the beginning, you’ll need to meet face-to-face a few times a week. Be sure to set up regular meeting times and hold your student accountable for showing up. Then, as the semester goes on, perhaps one meeting and one phone, Facebook or email communication per week might work. It will all depend on how hard the student is working. Don’t accept the student’s word on everything. Ask to see evidence of completed assignments, grades on returned work, rough drafts, well-used planners, etc. You are not being paid to be a friend, but to be the person who helps to hold the student accountable for his/her learning.

The OLS has a number of learning aids on topics like managing test anxiety, notetaking, memorization, test preparation, time management, goal setting, etc.
**Organizational Skills**

1. You are a successful college student – and it’s likely that you utilize a daily/weekly **planner** of some kind. But even if you don’t, research shows that this type of organization is helpful for the majority of students, and especially for those who are struggling. So, you may need to help your student record all major and minor assignments in a planner and get in the habit of taking it to every class to record daily assignments, changes in due dates, etc. With your guidance, it can also be used to **prioritize daily work**. Help your student to **determine the order in which assignments will be completed**; determining which assignments are the most important, how long each will take, and which will be the most difficult. Studies show that studying during daylight hours is most effective, and that it helps to take on the most challenging work when you are freshest. It’s helpful to intersperse reading assignments with math or written work. Large assignments will need to be broken down into **smaller steps**. (For example, a 10-paged paper in History includes identifying the subject, researching and recording information, completing an outline, writing a first draft, possibly working with the Writing Center for advice in structure and editing, and completing the final draft.) Each of these steps should have a due date, written into the planner.

2. **Large semester calendars** are available through the OLS which give an at-a-glance overview of the whole semester. This helps to identify “crunch” times. As you work together, help your student to **plan in advance** for these busy times. Other aspects of organization include an organized **system of taking notes** and of storing class handouts and papers. Look over your student’s notebook system and suggest using color-coded file folders to store materials.

3. **Effective test preparation** is challenging for everyone. It’s an essential part of your work to help your student get into the habit of keeping up with all course readings and taking notes on them. Writing concepts in ones’ own words helps put ideas into long-term memory. Studies show that daily reviewing class notes and notes from readings is a more effective way of preparing for exams than are long cramming sessions just prior to the test. Also, joining a study group has shown to enhance learning.

*Did we say thank you for taking on this challenge? THANK YOU! We couldn’t do this without your help. If you’re frustrated or if you have concerns, contact us. If the student is standing you up or not following through with agreed-upon actions, let us know. It’s our goal to support you in your work.*